*The Big Picture*

*Study 10: Completing the Story*

*Luke 24:13-35*

**Icebreaker**

Go around the circle, everyone say your name, where you are from, and answer this question: What’s the biggest surprise you’ve ever had?

**Intro**

Tonight we are going to read a story from the Bible together. As Christians, we study the Bible because we believe that it is God’s word to us. We believe that humans wrote the different books of the Bible, but they did that with God’s help and guidance. God gave us the Bible so that we could use it to learn who he is and understand His plans. So the Bible is full of lots of different stories and teachings, but they all help tell a bigger story about God and about the world we live in, and how He is going to restore the brokenness we see through Jesus. It is the story of God and the story of us!

In this series we have been looking at the big picture story in the Bible, starting from the beginning. The passage we are going to look at tonight is from the book of Luke, which is all about the life of Jesus. Because we believe that God wants to help us understand His story, we are going to pray and then we will get started!

**Pray**

**Intro to the Passage**Anyone remember what we read about last week? (Last week we read about how Jesus said that He was the Good shepherd who cared for his sheep. He said he came to lead people and to offer them true life, that He came so that He could sacrifice His life for the sheep.)

Jesus told both His followers and the crowds that He was going to sacrifice His life, but they didn’t seem to understand what He said. As He continued to teach people and perform miracles, the religious leaders got angrier and angrier until finally they arrested him one night during the Passover festival. His disciples tried to fight off the guards, but Jesus commanded them to stop because He understood that the time had come for Him to sacrifice His life. After He let the soldiers arrest Him, they took him before the leaders and had a trial, and all of his followers abandoned him. When they asked Him if He was the Messiah and the Son of God, He said yes, and that enraged the Jews because they thought He was lying.

The soldiers mocked him, beat him, spit on him, and then brutally whipped him, but that wasn’t enough-the leaders declared that He must be executed on a cross, which was the punishment reserved for the worst criminals. Already badly beaten and bloody, they led him out to a hill and nailed his hands and feet to a wooden cross. And though he was innocent and undeserving of the punishment, he didn’t fight back. In fact, while the crowds were making fun of him, he prayed and asked God to forgive them because they didn’t understand what they were doing. And then, after a few hours, he cried out “It is finished!” and died.

His followers were devastated…Jesus was supposed to be their new king who would save them from oppression, but now He was dead. They left everything to follow Jesus and learn from Him, but now it seemed like it was all for nothing. It seems like a pretty hopeless end to the story, but thankfully, it was not the end! Three days later, some women went to His tomb but when they got there, it was empty. The passage we will read tonight takes places later that day.

*Have everyone read the passage silently to themselves, and write down questions they have as they read. Then, read the passage out loud, each person reading one verse.*

**Now we are going to look at some questions to help us understand this passage.** Remember, if you have questions as we go, feel free to ask them!

**1. At the beginning of the passage, two of Jesus’ followers were walking along a road and talking about everything that had happened when Jesus walked up to them. What did Jesus ask them?** What are you talking about?

**2. How did the two men respond to Jesus?** Basically, they asked Him, “Are you not from around here?” (In other words...they were shocked because this man didn’t know what they were talking about. It was such a big deal that everyone in Jerusalem must’ve known what happened.) **What did they say about Jesus?** They said he was a prophet who was powerful both in what he said and what he did. They had hoped that He was going to be the one who would redeem and save Israel, but instead he was arrested and executed. They also said that some women went to His tomb and some angels told him that He was alive, but no one had seen him.

**3. How do you think these men were feeling? Why?** We know they were sad, because it says they were downcast, and this was because Jesus was their friend and they put their hope in Him. Everything that they had hoped for and expected to happen came crumbling down when He died. They were probably afraid about what might happen to them now, since they were His followers. Also, they were probably confused about why his tomb was empty and what the women had said.

**4. Last week we read about how Jesus told everyone that He was going to sacrifice His life. And a few other times, Jesus told his followers that He was going to be arrested and killed by the leaders. But they never seemed to understand what Jesus told them...why do you think they failed to get it?** Because they had such strong desires and expectations about what Jesus was going to do, they didn’t understand his words. They expected him to be a strong, military leader who would save them and be their new king, and a strong, military leader doesn’t get arrested and die. Their plans for Jesus did not fit with His own plans. Maybe they thought Jesus was confused, maybe they thought He wasn’t speaking literally, maybe they just forgot what He said. Whatever the reason, the story did not go as they had expected!

**5. After they shared about Jesus, how did He respond to them?** He scolded them for not understanding and believing all that the prophets had written about the Messiah. He asked them, “Didn’t the Christ *have* to suffer these things??”And he went on to explain everything that the Scripture had to say about him, starting at the very beginning. (In other words, He went back to the beginning of the story we’ve been looking at in this series in order to show them that the plan was for the Messiah to come and sacrifice His life all along. In order to fix the problem of sin and brokenness in the world, He had to sacrifice His life to bring healing and redemption. There are multiple places in the Old Testament that talk about the Messiah who will come and hint that He will suffer and die in order to begin the new kingdom.) Essentially, Jesus explained that He completes the story of Scripture!

**6. What happened next?** Jesus acted as if he was going to keep walking, but the men invited him to stay and eat with them, so he did. When they were at the table, he took the bread, prayed, and broke it to share with them, and in that moment they realized that it was actually Jesus.

**7. Why do you think they recognized Jesus when they did?** We can’t really say for sure. If you notice, it says their “eyes were opened” so Jesus may have supernaturally kept them from recognizing him until that point, maybe so that he could explain everything first (If they knew it was Jesus right away, they probably would have been too excited to listen well!). It also might have something to do with the fact that it was after he prayed and took the bread to share it…the last time they spent with Jesus may have been at His last meal before His death.

**8. Immediately, Jesus disappeared and they asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” What do you think they meant by that, that their “hearts were burning” as he “opened the Scriptures to us”?** They meant that as he was explaining everything to them, it was all finally making sense and they were getting very excited. And it was more than just a feeling of being happy…it was like they were understanding everything Jesus taught them before in a new way, and that their hearts were alive and passionate again after being so devastated. When it says Jesus “opened the Scriptures” to them, it was like he helped them understand them in a whole new way, like He was opening a new door for them.

**9. How do you think the men felt at this point?** Very excited, because their hope was restored. Maybe a little silly because they didn’t understand everything before, but probably thankful that Jesus explained it all. Probably a little confused about where he went, but still joyful that they saw him…and they were anxious to tell everyone else what happened (because they left immediately to go back to their friends, and it was a long journey!).

**10. So when Jesus walked and talked to the disciples on the road, he basically summarized the big-picture story that is in the Bible and showed them how he fit into it. Based on everything we’ve read so far, how would you summarize the story of the Bible to someone? (It doesn’t have to be perfect…just give it a shot!)**

**Here is how I would summarize it: (Share gospel outline)**

You can use whatever outline that you are most familiar with (The Big Story, Bridge Diagram, Wordless book, etc) Here are main points to hit on though:

-God designed the world and it was originally good; there was peace and harmony

-We –and the world- were damaged by evil and sin when we chose to disobey God.

-God sent Jesus into the world to make things right and restore things to the way God intended. (He did this by giving people a taste of the kingdom of God and dying on the cross to pay for our sins.)

-After Jesus died, He rose from the dead three days later and instructed His followers to go and tell the world about Him and His love, and work to bring healing until He comes back to make all things right.

**11. What do you think about this summary/story? What is appealing about it? (What do you like?) What do you still have questions about, or what do you not understand? (Other potentially helpful questions: Do you agree that the world is broken, and in need of help? Why or why not? Have you experienced God working in your life in some way?)**

**15. Do you have any other questions?**

**Closing**

For Christians, when we talk about the story of God and the world, Jesus is at the very center. He has the most important part in the story, because without Him, we are still separated from God and have broken relationships with each other. Without Him, we wouldn’t know how deeply God loves us and cares for us. And without Him, we wouldn’t have any hope. Because He came to the world and taught us how to live, and more importantly gave His life as a sacrifice to pay for all of our mistakes, we can find forgiveness and a restored relationship to God. And all the hurt and loneliness and brokenness in the world can and will be made right because of Him and His powerful love. Jesus came so that we could have true life, as God intended us to have, and all we have to do is believe in Him, to trust that He is our Savior and our King.

Next week, for our final Bible study of the year, we will learn about what it means to actually be a Christian and follow Jesus. But this week we want to encourage you to really think about Jesus and this story we’ve been talking about. Jesus does not just teach ***A*** way to live happily; according to Him, He taught the ***ONLY***way to find satisfaction in life, the only way to know God and understand your life’s purpose. If He was so bold in what he taught, and makes such incredible promises, it seems like it would be important enough to at least think about what he taught! So we encourage you to think about it this week…if you have more questions, please don’t hesitate to ask. And again, don’t be afraid to ask God for help in understanding. He wants to help you see the truth and He will respond to you!

**Pray**