

# MODULE 2: STORY

## MODULE OBJECTIVES:

**Explain** why the concept of story is so prominent and how it relates to discovering our purpose.

**Unpack** the overview of God's story, as told in Ephesians 1-3.

**Introduce** the Purpose Storyboard tool.

**Seed Tools:** The Purpose Storyboard

**Seed Videos:** "God's Story Shapes Ours"

**Selected Readings:** Chapter 1 of *The Drama of Scripture* by Bartholomew & Goheen.

## MODULE OVERVIEW:

This module explores God's story as told in Ephesians 1-3. These chapters offer a snapshot into God's story and provides a foundation to then frame our own story within the larger narrative of God's purposes. After the study section, the first Redemptive Design tool is introduced: The Purpose Storyboard.

## MODULE BREAKDOWN:

- 2.1 Why Story?
- 2.2 My Story in God's Story
- 2.3 Ephesians Study. A Snapshot of God's Purposes
- 2.4 Introduction to the Purpose Storyboard
- 2.5 Prayer and Reflection

## Important Information for the Grower:

This module is content rich. We're establishing the foundations of Seed's Redemptive Design, introducing some key concepts around story, digging into the first three chapters of Ephesians and introducing the first tool from the RD Toolkit: *The Purpose Storyboard*.

We want people to come away from this module feeling challenged to examine worldly concepts of purpose but not bereft in an overwhelming world of seeming infinite possibilities. The objective here is clarity, clarity of God's story, clarity of our roles and place in God's story. When we increase our clarity, we increase our confidence.

## Grower Tips:

- Remind everyone to read Ephesians 1-3 **before** you gather.
- Be flexible with your expectations, you may find it is suitable to linger in some discussions and that's fine.
- The Purpose Storyboard is a tool that we want participants to be engaging with between modules 2 & 3, so a light introduction in this module can be appropriate.
- An extension exercise is included at the end of this module, encourage participants to work through the activity there between modules.



## 2.1 WHY STORY?

SUGGESTED TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

 Stories help us make sense of the world and our place in it. Whether consciously or sub-consciously, we understand ourselves and our place in the world through the stories we tell about ourselves, our communities, and our cultures. Such stories have the power to *form* our identity. Stories are also powerful vehicles for bringing insight into who God made us to be, and what God is leading us to do in the world.

But when we tell our story, we can tend to see ourselves as the author or main character. We're easily drawn into the precarious position of trying to control the narrative and outcomes of the story.

**How can we make meaning of our lives and the events happening to and around us, without falling into the trap of assuming authority over the world and the change we want to see in it?**

In this module we are going to consider how we can gain clarity of purpose and, with that, a confidence to participate in God's purposes when we reframe our story in God's story, know God's story more intimately and practice articulating our own stories.

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## GROWER NOTES

 **Connect** with one another. Welcome and ask participants to share any key takeaways that they kept thinking about after the last module.

 **Read aloud the notes above.**

 **Mention** that we will be talking about purpose as well as story. Purpose, by definition, is the reason for which something was created. So to understand our own purpose, we begin with God's purposes, but this is a *huge* topic!

We ought to acknowledge from the start that God's will is called a "mystery" even though it has been "made known to us" through Christ. We should never forget that the revelation of Christ is our starting point for

understanding God's purposes but mystery can still shroud the details of God's plans, otherwise we wouldn't require faith! Think of Peter in Acts 10 who had a vision from the Holy Spirit that made him wonder, he didn't understand the meaning of it at first! Learning to sit in ambiguity and the unknown is a powerful posture we can adopt while we seek to understand God's purposes. We trust in a faithful God, as we seek out his will for our lives and the world around us.

 **Pray** and ask the Spirit to help us genuinely reflect on our stories, God's grace in our lives and whether we are assuming authority over our lives or allowing God to guide us into alignment with His story, His purposes.



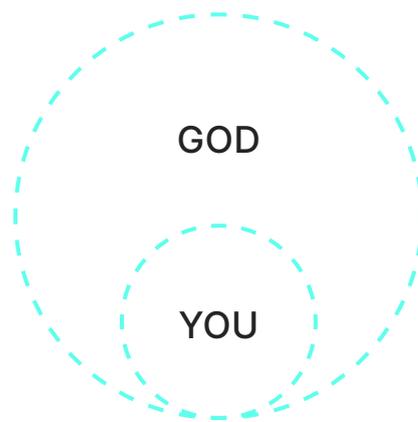
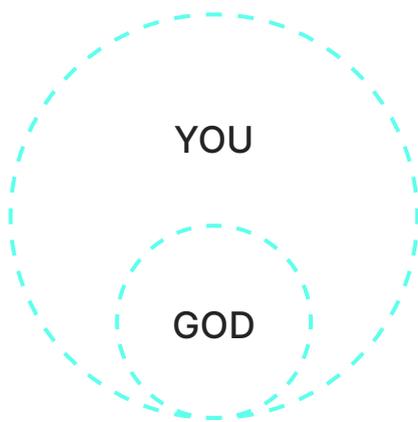
## 2.2 MY STORY IN GOD'S STORY

SUGGESTED TIME: 10-20 MINUTES

A sense of purpose can bring incredible clarity and action to people's lives. But many people assume that purpose is about self-determination and most pursuits of purpose seek to fit everything (including God) into a story we control.

As Christians, we find our purpose by first examining the purpose for which we were created. God's purpose is the central foundation for finding our purpose.

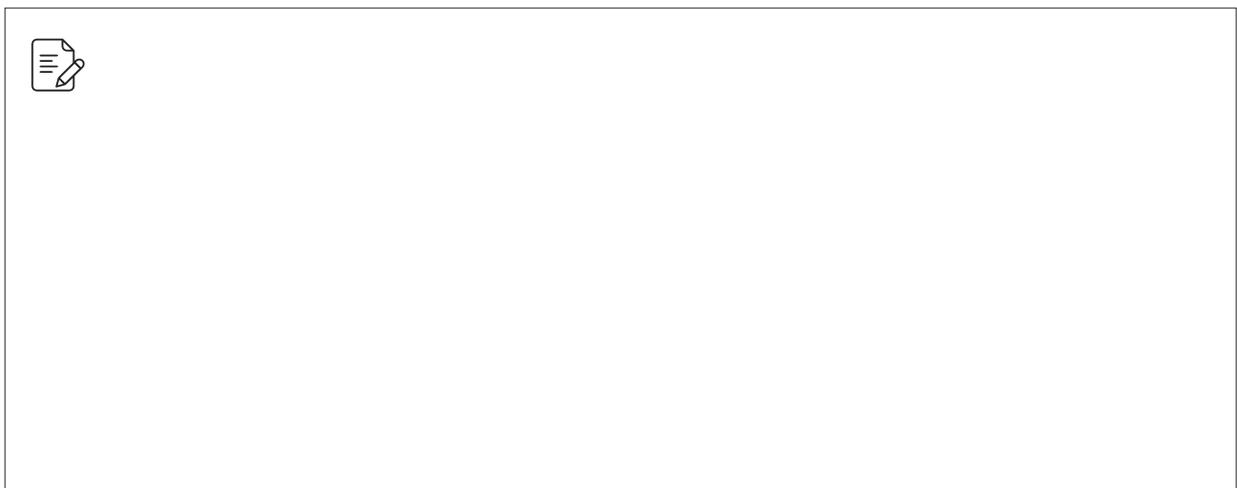
These two approaches are illustrated below.



Finding your purpose is not a process of self-determination. Rather, it is a process of aligning yourself and what you do in the world with God's purposes.

This can be a mindset shift for many of us.

**Which side of the illustration above best describes your Christian life currently? You may be a mixture of both, depending on the area of life.**



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## GROWER NOTES



**Read** aloud the notes above



**Invite** people to use the text box to reflect on the question, **Which side of the illustration above best describes your Christian life currently?**

(Optional) Prompt with the question, **What is God inviting you to consider right now?**



**Invite** people to share.

*Be aware this may be deep and vulnerable, make sure people understand that sharing is optional.*

(Optional) Rather than sharing, you may want to ask people this leading question:

**How can we both discover God's purposes in the world, and align our purpose with God's purposes?**



## ▶ 2.3 GOD'S STORY

Knowing we were created for a purpose can be a great comfort, but it can raise more questions. If my purpose is connected to God's, how do I understand God's purposes? Do I have a particular part to play in God's purposes that is unique to me?

In this module we want to create space to explore these questions and we want to adopt a posture of discovery to approach these questions with curiosity and openness while simultaneously accepting that there will never be an end point to our discovery. We will never fully understand God's purposes, we may never reach a point of total confidence in our part in God's story. But we can come closer to God, gain clarity of our purpose and grow deeper in our knowledge of God. After all, this was the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians, that they would "know him better" (1:17), may it be our prayer too."

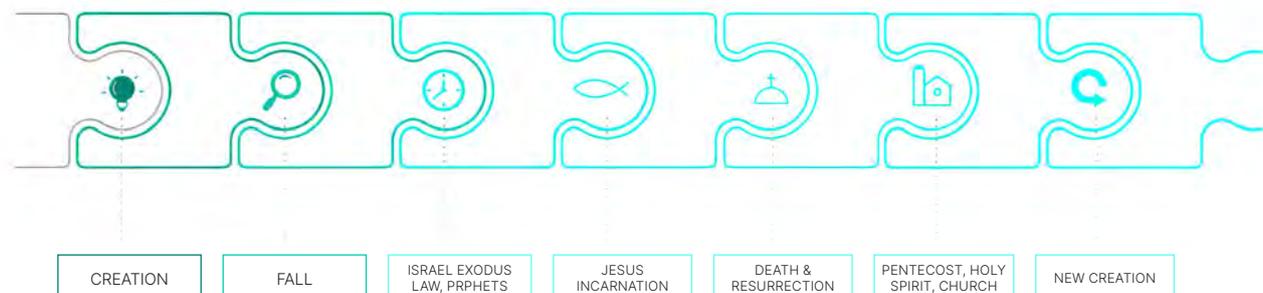
Confidence builds as we know God more and when we are more confident in who God has made us to be, by his grace, even when we fail, face difficult decisions or make choices that are not aligned with the Spirit, we won't be overly shaken by the rebuilding, faith leaping, Spirit convicting disciplines that we are all bound to face in life.

### WHAT IS GOD'S STORY?

The big picture of God's story can be summarised as a four-act story of creation, fall, redemption and renewal:

- **Creation tells** the story of beginnings in which we see God's ideal for what He has created. In Genesis 1:26-27, we find that humans are made in the image of God. As image-bearers, a key part of our purpose, is to get to know God, then bear God's image in the world.
- **The fall** (Genesis 3) introduces the problem of sin. Through human sinfulness, we find that our relationship with God, and therefore our ability to fulfill our purpose as image-bearers of God in the world, is broken.
- **The solution** is the good news of what God has done to bring redemption through Jesus Christ. In response to this good news, followers of Jesus repent and believe (Mark 1:15).
- **It is from** Jesus Christ that the final act of renewal of all things flows. As fallen yet redeemed image bearers who follow Jesus, we participate in God's purpose for the renewal of all creation (2 Cor 5:17-6:1).

All the acts are vital and are interwoven within the storyline of the Bible:



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## GROWER NOTES

 **Watch** the video “God’s Story Shapes Ours”

 Read aloud the text above.

(Optional) **Ask** participants to consider the content above with this discussion prompt:

**Many people find it helpful seeing an overview of the Biblical story as above in the text and storyline graphic. Was there anything that stood out to you as we watched the video and read about God’s story? Is there a new perspective God is inviting you to consider?**



# 2.3 EPHESIANS STUDY: A SNAPSHOT OF GOD'S PURPOSE

SUGGESTED TIME: 30-40 MINUTES

The start of Ephesians is a profound snapshot of God's story. In chapter one, we see God's mysterious will unfolding in the story, then chapter two emphasises our own purpose and place in this story, in chapters three and four we find the purpose of God highlighted again and if we were to

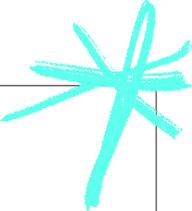
summarise the end goal of the story it is this: community and unity among us, the church.

Together, we're going to explore the incredible revelation of God's purposes and what response we can offer God considering this unfolding story.

## GOD'S PURPOSE & WILL – EPHESIANS 1:1-14

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

### 1. What stood out to you in these verses?



### 2. From these verses, what would you say God's will or purpose is?



## A NEW IDENTITY — EPHESIANS 2:1-10

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

**3. What are some ways that God's purpose affects you? What is God inviting you to do or consider?**

## FOR RECONCILIATION — EPHESIANS 2:11-22

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

**4. Paul is explicit about God's purposes in verse 15 but what can reconciliation look like for us today?**

## THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH — EPHESIANS 3:8-13

Read Ephesians 3:8-13

**5. What else is Paul revealing here about God's purposes?**



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## GROWER NOTES

We recommend asking Participants to pre-read Ephesians 1-3 and jot down their reflections to these questions so they are ready to share.

Work through the study above.

### **2. From these verses, what would you say God's will or purpose is?**

Highlight chapter 1, verses 5, 9-10, 11-12.

In particular, verse 12: "the praise of his glory"; verse 5 for us to be "adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ" or verse 10 "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

Mention that God's purposes are varied, however there isn't necessarily any hierarchy in these answers.

As Ephesians unfolds, Paul returns to the idea of unity. Eph 3:15 "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two [Gentile and Israelite], thus making peace". We could phrase it thus, God's purpose has been achieved through Christ in whom we have redemption and adoption not just for our gain, but toward the end goal: unity of all things, under the Lordship of Christ.

### **3. What are some ways that God's purpose affects you?**

#### ***What is God inviting you to do or consider?***

– Encourage participants to refer to specific verses as the answer. Point to chapter 2, verses 8-9 and emphasise that "grace through faith" is a gift of God. Another key takeaway is found in verse 8 "and this is not your own doing" this further instills the idea that our identity is found within God's story mindset shift. Note also that the end point of Jesus's work here is not merely our salvation, but a complete transformation

in the way we live/walk in the world. We now walk in the way of good works that God prepared in advance for us.

### **4. Paul is explicit about God's purposes in verse 15 but what can reconciliation look like for us today?**

The question points to the theme of reconciliation found in verse 15 "His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace". Encourage participants to link this concept of peace/reconciliation to tangible, real world, current scenario's. Prompt them with the question: Where is God already active, where are our opportunities to participate in the act of reconciliation?

Verse 19-20 is also a point for facilitated conversation, what does "you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people" look like in your context?

### **5. What else is Paul revealing here about God's purposes?**

Point to 3:10 "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known", in light of the previous passages, encourage discussion about what this specific vision for the church could look like? There is a sense of hope and encouragement in verse 12, can the church share God's story from a posture of purpose and freedom? Verse 12, "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." Is that different to what participants are doing now? Why?



## 2.4 INTRODUCTION TO THE PURPOSE STORYBOARD

SUGGESTED TIME: 20-40 MINUTES



The Purpose Storyboard Tool was developed to help you reflect on the stories and experiences that God has used to shape you. This includes how your identity, and your sense of purpose are being formed by God's story and shaped by God's grace. The tool also provides opportunities to identify your context (where you've been placed), giftings, and passions which together provide a basis for discerning your own sense of God-given purpose.

This tool comprises of six primary sections:

- **History:** Who or what has God used to shape you?
- **Context:** This can comprise of two distinct elements, place -where has God placed you now; and people – who are you serving now?
- **Gifting:** What are you 'naturally' good at? How do you use those gifts?
- **Passion:** What do you loving doing and who do you do this with?
- **Causes:** What tensions do you feel? What problems do you want to solve?
- **Vision:** God willing, what do you dream your life and impact might look like in the future? What do you long for?



The Purpose Storyboard is two pages over. There is also an electronic copy available on on the Changemaker Course section of the Seed website.



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## GROWER NOTES

 **Read** the introduction to the Purpose Storyboard above.

 **Invite** participants to write down some ideas about their History, Context, Gifting, Passions, Causes and Vision.

*We recommend allowing 10 minutes for this, an extension activity is included at the end of this module to assist participants with revisiting this tool and going deeper.*

**Mention** that this tool should be revisited again between sessions using the extension activity included at the end of this module.

**Mention** that we will be returning to the Identity and Purpose Statements at the bottom of the tool in the next session, once everyone has had a chance to go over the Storyboard again, in more depth.

 **Share** your Purpose Storyboard (in pairs).

*Split participants into pairs (1x Storyteller and 1x Listener).*

Explain that each Storyteller will share their initial thoughts prompted by their Purpose Storyboard for 6 minutes. For the storyteller, don't try to tick all the boxes or cover all aspects, just tell your story as it comes. How you choose to tell your story is a key component in identifying what is important.

The Listener listens, then spends 1-2 minutes reflecting back to the Storyteller, highlighting the parts of the story that particularly stood out and encouraging particular giftings and passions if they know that person.

Then switch so that the Storyteller becomes the Listener (& repeat the process).

*The purpose of this activity is not for participants to get to know each other. Rather it is an active listening exercise to pick up parts of a person's story that may reveal an aspect of their character, who God has made them to be, which can be relayed back to the person sharing their story. The goal is to encourage one another, to see and witness each other and to help each other reflect on how our stories fit in with God's story.*





**SEED**

*Purpose Storyboard (a story within a story)*

HISTORY (storyline)	CONTEXT	PASSION (character profile)	VISION (ending)
	GIFTING (character profile)	CAUSES (plot)	

**Purpose Statement:**



## 2.5 PRAYER & REFLECTION

SUGGESTED TIME: 5-10 MINUTES



Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:16-21 is an incredibly powerful prayer. Take a moment to read it as a prayer over one another and over your journey together.

*<sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and*

*high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Ephesians 3:16-21 (NIV)

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### GROWER NOTES



**Encourage** participants to do the Storyboard Extension Activity on the following page before the next module. Even if you've spent some quality time with the Purpose Storyboard during this session, we recommend iterating over the storyboard, with someone else if possible.

*It would be worth setting a reminder to participants to reiterate and refresh their responses to the Purpose Storyboard before the next meeting.*



**Pray** before finishing for the session. We recommend praying Ephesians 3:16-21.

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### BEFORE NEXT TIME

- **Complete** the Extension Exercise on the next page to iterate over your *Purpose Storyboard* with someone who knows you



## MODULE 2 STORYBOARD EXTENSION EXERCISES

 This exercise is intended to deepen your understanding of your story and identity by involving others in the process.

It would be great to go through this exercise before you meet for the next Module!

### TO START:

- Identify someone who knows you well (or you may want to do this in a small group of 2-3).
- Ask them if they would be happy to listen to you tell your story? This may take 1-2 hours in total.

- Give them a copy of a blank Purpose Storyboard (another copy is available on the following page).
- Tell them your story and ask them to fill in the Storyboard while they listen to you. Allow 30-45 minutes for this.
- Once you finish, spend another 30-45 minutes allowing them to reflect back to you what they heard. This is essentially a retelling of your story back to you. Ask them to highlight the elements that stand out to them.
- Discuss together the different bits that stood out to them and explore the question, **who has God made you to be?**





**SEED**

*Purpose Storyboard (a story within a story)*

HISTORY (storyline)	CONTEXT	PASSION (character profile)	VISION (ending)
	GIFTING (character profile)	CAUSES (plot)	

**Purpose Statement:**

