

SHADOWS

Small Group Discussion Guide



PREPARATION

❏ **STUDY**

Spend the week studying Romans 3:21-26 and Hebrews 1:1-3. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

❏ **PRAY**

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

❏ **LANDING POINT**

Jesus came to bring us back into relationship with God.



GROUP DISCUSSION

❏ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

❏ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

❏ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

❏ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK

The Bible isn't some dusty, outdated book. It's a love story of God working through time and space, people and events to bring us back to where we belong—in a relationship with Him. The Old Testament is filled with shadows, things that reveal to us what is to come eventually in the New Testament. Today your group will discuss some of those shadows in God's plan throughout history and how they apply to your life today. God longs for a relationship with you and Jesus came to bring you back into relationship with God.

Q: *How would you describe what the Bible is to someone who isn't familiar with it?*



DEEPER DIVE

Select 2–3 questions to discuss as a group.

GOD'S LOVE STORY

The Bible begins with God. He brings the universe into existence and even creates men and women in His own image. They enjoy a sinless relationship with God and their job is to worship God and rule the world as His representatives. But they refuse and rebel against God, bringing sin and all that comes with it into the world. Sin separates humanity from God, but God promises to send a Savior King one day to defeat sin and bring humanity back into relationship with Him.

From there, God's plan goes into action through one man, Abraham, and his family. This is the family of promise, the line through which this Savior King will come. God saves Abraham's descendants from slavery and establishes a nation through them, Israel. God's presence dwells in Israel's temple and God commands His people to obey His law and make continual sacrifices for sin. Israel's role is to be a light to the other nations but they fail to do this time and time again. God sends prophets to warn the people and remind them of His promises and the need to turn from sin and back to him. They even speak of One to come, who will sacrifice His life for the sin of all humanity. But the Israelites continue to rebel, so God sends them into exile. Eventually, the Israelites return home but then they have 400 years of silence. No one hears a single word from God.

After 400 years, Jesus, the Son of God, comes into the world, declaring that He is the Savior King who has come to

establish God's kingdom on earth. Jesus lives a sinless life and obeys God's law perfectly. He gathers followers who learn from Him about what a real relationship with God is like. Eventually Jesus is arrested and put to death on a cross. His death is the final, once for all, sacrifice for sin. After three days Jesus rises from the grave, proving that He has defeated sin and death. The broken relationship between God and humanity can now be restored. Jesus pays the penalty for sin on our behalf and gives us His perfect obedience and life in return. We can be right (or righteous) before God through faith in Jesus, the Savior King.

From this point, Jesus's followers, the Church, are commanded by Him to take this Good News (gospel) to all nations until Jesus returns to judge the world and fully establish God's kingdom reign for all time.

Q: *Have different volunteers read each paragraph of God's Love Story. How does reading an overview of the Bible help you understand it better?*

Q: *Have volunteers read Romans 3:21-26 and Hebrews 1:1-3. Where do you see God's love in these two passages?*

Q: *Reflect on the story. Where do you see shadows (i.e., things to come) in it?*



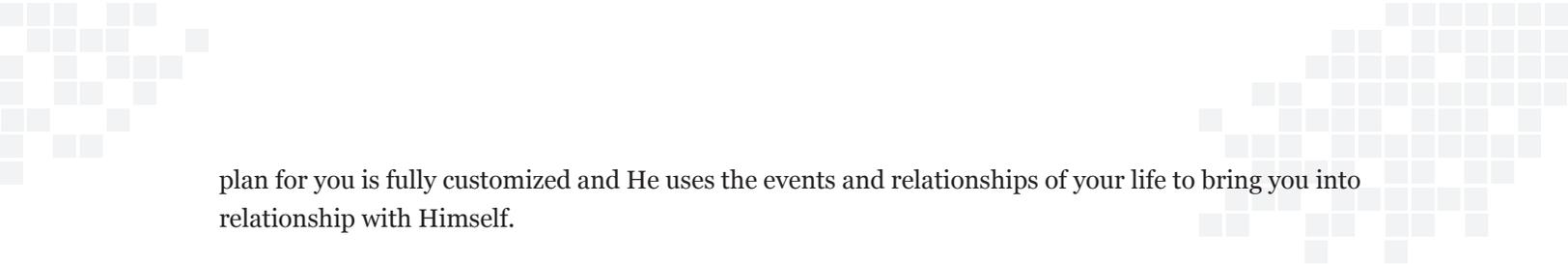
REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

LIVING THE STORY

Despite many obstacles and setbacks, nothing could stop God from loving us and making a way for us to return to Him. God's plan was veiled in shadow and mystery in the Old Testament for thousands of years before it was fully revealed to us in Jesus (Colossians 1:26). Now we can look back in awe at what God has done to bring us back to Himself.

So, what does God's Love Story teach us? How does His Story apply to our own? Let's look at four essential truths to live by:

- *God is in control.* God doesn't promise us a pain-free life. In fact, following God often includes difficulties, failures and hardships. But God stands above everything and He directs the events of our lives. Nothing that happens to us goes unnoticed by Him.
- *God has a plan.* God doesn't just have a general plan for history. He has a plan for each of us. God's



plan for you is fully customized and He uses the events and relationships of your life to bring you into relationship with Himself.

- *God is good.* Not only is God in control, but He is also good. God isn't fickle and He doesn't allow things to happen without a good purpose. His goodness makes Him trustworthy, even in the worst of circumstances.
- *God fulfills His promises.* Nothing can stop God's plans from succeeding. His promises give us hope for today. What He starts, He finishes.

🗣️: *Share about an experience that reminded you that God is in control.*

🗣️: *God is good and trustworthy. How does that change the way you relate to Him?*

🗣️: *Where do you need hope today? Which of God's promises can give you hope in that area?*

🗣️: *How can the group be praying for you this week?*



JUSTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION “In Romans Paul declares that ‘all are justified (declared not guilty but righteous by the divine Judge) only by God’s grace’ (unmerited favor). The word redemption reaches back to the OT exodus and the blood of the Passover lamb (see Exodus 12–15), by which the Lord liberated Israel from Egypt; the exodus likewise points forward to the greater redemption Jesus won for his people through his blood by forgiving them their sins through his death on the cross (cf. Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).”¹

GOD’S LOVE AND JUSTICE “God must be perfectly consistent with Himself. He cannot break His own Law or violate His own nature. ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8), and ‘God is light’ (1 John 1:5). A God of love wants to forgive sinners, but a God of holiness must punish sin and uphold His righteous Law. How can God be both ‘just and the justifier’? The answer is in Jesus Christ. When Jesus suffered the wrath of God on the cross for the sins of the world, He fully met the demands of God’s Law, *and also fully expressed the love of God’s heart*. The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament never took away sin; but when Jesus died, He reached all the way back to Adam and took care of those sins. No one (including Satan) could accuse God of being unjust or unfair because of His seeming passing over of sins in the Old Testament time.”²

THE FINAL WORD “All roads in the Bible lead to him and revelation is complete in [Jesus Christ]. Beyond Him the church’s task is to interpret these truths within the context of our day, but there is no further new revelation from God. He has spoken finally in Jesus Christ.”³

ENDNOTES:

1. Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2163.
2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 524.
3. Philip H Hacking, *Opening up Hebrews*, *Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 12.