

THE STORY

READ THE STORY. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE.

PERSONAL JOURNAL & DISCUSSION GUIDE

JEAN E. JONES



T H E S T O R Y

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The Story: Personal Journal & Discussion Guide

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About the Author

Jean E. Jones is a freelance author who began teaching the Bible to her friends in high school and has been teaching it in various capacities ever since. She has written several study guides for women's and couples' studies at various churches, including a thirteen-week study on Philippians and series for C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters*.

Jean E. is privileged to serve on the women's Heartline ministry team at Crossline Community Church in southern California. Her husband, Clay Jones, who is always her first reader and offers valuable insights, holds a D.Min. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and is an associate professor in the master of arts in Christian apologetics program at Biola University.

Jean E.'s most recent reflections can be found at www.jeanejones.net.

About the Study

The Story: Personal Journal & Discussion Guide is designed to accompany *The Story, NIV: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People*. The questions will enhance your personal devotions by guiding you to more fully understand the text, by encouraging you to find ways to apply what you've learned to your everyday life, and by stimulating small group discussion.

Some of the questions are personal. These help you put yourself in the place of the people you're reading about and help small group members get to know each other. I encourage you to write out your answers, but you need not share your answers to personal questions unless you feel comfortable doing so. You'll discover that hearing others' stories enriches everyone and makes more evident the hand of God at work today.

How I wish I could hear your answers! Any time you wish, please feel free to hop over to my website's "**Let's Talk About 'The Story'**" page (<http://jeanejones.net/lesson-resources/>). Let me know your personal stories, what you're learning, and any questions you might have.

Introduction

Discover the Bible's grand story in thirty-one weeks!

The Story: Personal Journal & Discussion Guide takes us through the Bible's main themes and reveals God's plan throughout human history. We'll read through excerpts from Genesis to Revelation using *The Story, NIV: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People*. Then we'll answer questions in this journal and discussion guide, which will help us understand the passages we read and apply them to our lives. Through the thirty-one chapters, God's plan will unfold starting with what was lost in the Garden of Eden and culminating in what is regained in eternity.

The chapters in this study guide have five divisions so that you can break them into daily devotionals of about twenty minutes if you wish. Chapters begin with a key question that illumines the main theme. They then delve into questions designed to aid deeper reflection, spur spiritual growth, and promote meaningful discussions. The text explains historical background and key concepts. Timelines and charts illustrate how pieces fit together.

For those who want to dig deeper, footnotes provide additional explanations, related verses, and hyperlinks to related reading. The footnotes are entirely optional—I wrote them for small group leaders who want to prepare for questions that might come up and for the insatiably curious. They include links to scholarly articles by my wonderful husband, Dr. Clay Jones, who teaches Christian apologetics at Biola University. If you want still more, check out the “**Let’s Talk About ‘The Story’**” page on my website (<http://jeanejones.net/lesson-resources/>), where I’m regularly adding links.

Now, I’ve a short note for those of you who are reading the Old Testament for the first time. There will be some dark scenes: the Bible doesn’t hide human sin. The lives of some of the people we’ll read about were messy, just like ours. But just as light shines more brightly in darkness, so the glory of God’s redemption shines through the depth of human failing. We’ll find lessons in the darker parts too, and your understanding of God’s grace and mercy will deepen. I hope you’ll find that you can relate to many of these imperfect characters and take comfort in the fact that we all fall sometimes, but not farther than God’s grace can reach.

I pray that your love for God and his words will abound these thirty-one weeks as you step in with me to look closely at scenes here and there and then step back to see how each affects the big picture God is painting with the brushstrokes of history.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeanette".