

A stylized, layered mountain landscape. The background is a light teal color. In the upper right, a bright yellow sun is visible. The mountains are rendered in various shades of blue and teal, with a prominent peak in the center. Below the mountains, there are rolling hills in shades of green and orange. The entire scene is framed by a white border.

# MOUNTAINS

REDISCOVERING YOUR VISION AND  
RESTORING YOUR HOPE IN GOD'S PRESENCE

— KAT ARMSTRONG —

STORYLINE

If you are longing for a breath of fresh air in your spiritual life, this study is for you. Kat Armstrong brings to life both familiar and less familiar Bible stories in such an engaging way that you can't help but see how the God of the past is also working and moving in your present. Through the captivating truths revealed in this series, you will discover more about God's faithfulness, be equipped to move past fear and disappointment, and be empowered to be who you were created to be. If your faith has felt mundane or routine, these words will be a refreshing balm to your soul and a guide to go deeper in your relationship with God.

HOSANNA WONG, international speaker and bestselling author of *How (Not) to Save the World: The Truth about Revealing God's Love to the People Right Next to You*

We are watching a new wave of Bible studies that care about the Bible's big story, from Genesis to Revelation; that plunge Bible readers into the depths of human despair and show them the glories of the Kingdom God plans for creation; and that invite readers to participate in that story in all its dimensions—in the mountains and the valleys. Anyone who ponders these Bible studies will come to terms not only with the storyline of the Bible but also with where each of us fits in God's grand narrative. I heartily commend Kat's **Storyline Bible Studies**.

REV. CANON DR. SCOT MCKNIGHT, professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary

Kat Armstrong is an able trail guide with contagious enthusiasm! In this series, she'll take you hiking through Scripture to experience mountains and valleys, sticks and stones, sinners and saints. If you are relatively new to the Bible or are struggling to see how it all fits together, your trek with Kat will be well worth it. You might even decide that hiking through the Bible is your new hobby.

CARMEN JOY IMES, associate professor of Old Testament at Biola University and author of *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters*

Kat has done two things that I love. She's taken something that is familiar and presented it in a fresh way that is understandable by all, balancing the profound with accessibility. And her trustworthy and constant approach to Bible study equips the participant to emerge from this study with the ability to keep studying and growing more.

MARTY SOLOMON, creator and executive producer of *The BEMA Podcast*

Kat Armstrong takes you into the heart of Scripture so that Scripture can grow in your heart. The **Storyline Bible Studies** have everything: the overarching story of God's redemption, the individual biblical story's historical context, and the text's interpretation that connects with today's realities. Armstrong asks insightful questions that make the Bible come alive and draws authentically on her own faith journey so that readers might deepen their relationship with Jesus. Beautifully written and accessible, the **Storyline Bible Studies** are a wonderful resource for individual or group study.

LYNN H. COHICK, PHD, provost and dean of academic affairs at Northern Seminary

Christians affirm that the Bible is God's Word and provides God's life-giving instruction and encouragement. But what good is such an authoritative and valuable text if God's people don't engage it to find the help the Scriptures provide? Here's where Kat Armstrong's studies shine. In each volume, she presents Bible study as a journey through Scripture that can be transformational. In the process, she enables readers to see the overarching storyline of the Bible and to find their place in that story. In addition, Armstrong reinforces the essential steps that make Bible study life-giving for people seeking to grow in their faith. Whether for individuals, for small groups, or as part of a church curriculum, these studies are ideally suited to draw students into a fresh and invigorating engagement with God's Word.

WILLIAM W. KLEIN, PHD, professor emeritus of New Testament interpretation and author of *Handbook for Personal Bible Study: Enriching Your Experience with God's Word*

You are in for an adventure. In this series, Kat pulls back the curtain to reveal how intentionally God has woven together seemingly disconnected moments in the collective Bible story. Her delivery is both brilliant and approachable. She will invite you to be a curious sleuth as you navigate familiar passages of Scripture, discovering things you'd never seen before. I promise you will never read the living Word the same again.

JENN JETT BARRETT, founder and visionary of The Well Summit

Kat has done it again! The same wisdom, depth, humility, and authenticity that we have come to expect from her previous work is on full display here in her new **Storyline Bible Study** series. Kat is the perfect guide through these important themes and through the story of Scripture: gentle and generous on the one hand, capable and clear on the other. She is a gifted communicator and teacher of God's Word. The format of these studies is helpful too—perfect pacing, just the right amount of new information at each turn, with plenty of space for writing and prayerful reflection as you go and some great resources for further study. I love learning from Kat, and I'm sure you will too. Grab a few friends from your church or neighborhood and dig into these incredible resources together to find your imagination awakened and your faith strengthened.

DAN LOWERY, president of Pillar Seminary

Kat Armstrong possesses something I deeply admire: a sincere and abiding respect for the Bible. Her tenaciousness to know more about her beloved Christ, her commitment to truth telling, and her desire to dig until she mines the deepest gold for her Bible-study readers makes her one of my favorite Bible teachers. I find few that match her scriptural attentiveness and even fewer that embody her humble spirit. This project is stunning, like the rest of her work.

LISA WHITTLE, bestselling author of *Jesus over Everything: Uncomplicating the Daily Struggle to Put Jesus First*, Bible teacher, and podcast host

I'm convinced that the Bible is somehow powerfully simple and beautifully complex. Like a diamond viewed from different angles, Scripture continually confronts my heart in fresh ways. This Bible-study series offers insightful perspectives and gives its participants a refreshing opportunity to admire the character of God and be transformed by the truth of his Word. Our souls need to meander through the minutiae and metanarrative of the Bible, and the **Storyline Bible Studies** help us do both.

KYLE IDLEMAN, senior pastor of Southeast Christian Church and bestselling author of *Not a Fan* and *One at a Time*



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A NavPress resource published in alliance  
with Tyndale House Publishers



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*Mountains: Rediscovering Your Vision and Restoring Your Hope in God's Presence*

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*For my dad, Ronald K. Obenhaus.*

*I think you would have loved this.*



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## A Message from Kat

THE BIBLE IS a literary masterpiece.

Whether you are new to the Christian faith or a seasoned Bible reader, I wrote the **Storyline Bible Studies** to guide you through the story of Scripture—each following a person, place, or thing in the Bible. Maybe you are practiced in dissecting a passage or verse and pulling things out of the text to apply to your life. But now you may feel as though your faith is fragmented, coming apart at the seams. The **Storyline Bible Studies** will help you put things back together. You'll discover cohesive, thematic storylines with literary elements and appreciate the Bible as the literary masterpiece that it is.

Tracing a biblical theme, with imagery like mountains and valleys or sticks and stones, will spark your holy curiosity and empower you to cultivate a biblical imagination. I'm praying that your time studying God's Word is an awe-inspiring catalyst to engage and experience God's truth—that you would marvel at the

artistry of God’s storytelling. And that the Bible will never feel dull or boring ever again.

I wrote *Mountains* during a terribly painful season of isolation. I never doubted my faith in God, and thankfully I had dear friends loving me well. But I ached to experience God’s nearness—his companionship. The global pandemic and its shutdowns, the polarizing political landscape, the rising racial tensions, and the insurrection at the Capitol were enough to make me despair, but being in vocational ministry during these fractures left me feeling very alone.

My prayer life was a broken record: *Wonderful Counselor, help!*

I needed to meet with God, desperately. I needed to hear his voice and imagine his loving, strong arms wrapped around me. That’s what started me on a quest to study mountains in the Bible. I feel so close to God when I’m on a summit, drinking in the thin air.

As it turns out, the function mountains serve in my personal life—as a place to connect with my Savior—is the same function they serve in the Scriptures.

If you need God’s presence, I wrote this study for you.

Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kat". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

## The Storyline of Scripture

YOUR DECISION TO STUDY THE BIBLE for the next few weeks is no accident—God has brought you here, to this moment. And I don't want to take it for granted. Here, at the beginning, I want to invite you into the most important step you can take, the one that brings the whole of the Bible alive in extraordinary ways: a relationship with Jesus.

The Bible is a collection of divinely inspired manuscripts written over fifteen hundred years by at least forty different authors. Together, the manuscripts make up tens of thousands of verses, sixty-six books, and two testaments. Point being: It's a lot of content.

But the Bible is really just one big story: God's story of redemption. From Genesis to Revelation the Bible includes narratives, songs, poems, wisdom literature, letters, and even apocalyptic prophecies. And yet, everything we read in God's Word helps us understand God's love and his plan to be in a relationship with us.

If you hear nothing else, hear this: God loves you.

It's easy to get lost in the vast amount of information in the Bible, so we're going to explore the storyline of Scripture in four parts. And as you locate your experience in the story of the Bible, I hope the story of redemption becomes your own.

### **PART 1: GOD MADE SOMETHING GOOD.**

The big story—God's story of redemption—started in a garden. When God launched his project for humanity, he purposed all of us—his image bearers—to flourish and co-create with him. In the beginning there was peace, beauty, order, and abundant life. The soil was good. Life was good. We rarely hear this part of our story, but it doesn't make it less true. God created something good—and that includes you.

### **PART 2: WE MESSED IT UP.**

If you've ever thought, *This isn't how it's supposed to be*, you're right. It's not. We messed up God's good world. Do you ever feel like you've won gold medals in messing things up? Me too. All humanity shares in that brokenness. We are imperfect. The people we love are imperfect. Our systems are jacked, and our world is broken. And that's on us. We made the mess, and we literally can't help ourselves. We need to be rescued from our circumstances, the systems in which we live, and ourselves.

### **PART 3: JESUS MAKES IT RIGHT.**

The good news is that God can clean up all our messes, and he does so through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No one denies that Jesus lived and died. That's just history. It's the empty tomb and the hundreds of eyewitnesses who saw Jesus after his death that make us scratch our heads. Because science can only prove something that is repeatable, we are dependent upon the eyewitness testimonies of Jesus' resurrection for this once-in-history moment. If Jesus rose from the dead—and I believe he did—Jesus is exactly who he said he was, and he accomplished exactly what had been predicted for thousands of

years. He restored us. Jesus made *it*, all of it, right. He can forgive your sins and connect you to the holy God through his life, death, and resurrection.

#### **PART 4: ONE DAY, GOD WILL MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.**

The best news is that this is not as good as it gets. A day is coming when Christ will return. He's coming back to re-create our world: a place with no tears, no pain, no suffering, no brokenness, no helplessness—just love. God will make all things new. In the meantime, God invites you to step into his storyline, to join him in his work of restoring all things. Rescued restorers live with purpose and on mission: not a life devoid of hardship, but one filled with enduring hope.

#### **RESPONDING TO GOD'S STORYLINE**

If the storyline of Scripture feels like a lightbulb turning on in your soul, that, my friend, is the one true, living God, who eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is inviting you into a relationship with him to have your sins forgiven and secure a place in his presence forever. When you locate your story within God's story of redemption, you begin a lifelong relationship with God that brings meaning, hope, and restoration to your life.

---

#### **Take a moment now to begin a relationship with Christ:**

*God, I believe the story of the Bible, that Jesus is Lord and you raised him from the dead to forgive my sins and make our relationship possible. Your storyline is now my story. I want to learn how to love you and share your love with others. Amen.*

---

**If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

ROMANS 10:9, NRSV



## How to Use This Bible Study

THE **STORYLINE BIBLE STUDIES** are versatile and can be used for

- ▲ individual study (self-paced),
- ▲ small groups (five or ten-lesson curriculum), or
- ▲ church ministry (semester-long curriculum).

### INDIVIDUAL STUDY

Each lesson in the *Mountains* Bible study is divided into four fifteen- to twenty-minute parts (sixty to eighty minutes of individual study time per lesson). You can work through the material one part at a time over a few different days or all in one sitting. Either way, this study will be like anything good in your life: What you put in, you get out. Each of the four parts of each lesson will help you practice Bible-study methods.

## SMALL GROUPS

Working through the *Mountains* Bible study with a group could be a catalyst for life change. Although the Holy Spirit can teach you truth when you read the Bible on your own, I want to encourage you to gather a small group together to work through this study for these reasons:

- ▲ God himself is in communion as one essence and three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ▲ Interconnected, interdependent relationships are hallmarks of the Christian faith life.
- ▲ When we collaborate with each other in Bible study, we have access to the viewpoints of our brothers and sisters in Christ, which enrich our understanding of the truth.

For this Bible study, every small-group member will need a copy of the *Mountains* study guide. In addition, I've created a free downloadable small-group guide that includes

- ▲ discussion questions for each lesson,
- ▲ Scripture readings, and
- ▲ prayer prompts.

Whether you've been a discussion leader for decades or just volunteered to lead a group for the first time, you'll find the resources you need to create a loving atmosphere for men and women to grow in Christlikeness. You can download the small-group guide using this QR code.



## CHURCH MINISTRY

Church and ministry leaders: Your work is sacred. I know that planning and leading through a semester of ministry can be both challenging and rewarding. That's why every **Storyline Bible Study** is written so that you can build modular semesters of ministry. The *Mountains* Bible study is designed to complement the

*Valleys* Bible study. Together, *Mountains* and *Valleys* can support a whole semester of ministry seamlessly, inviting the people you lead into God's Word and making your life simpler.

To further equip church and ministry leaders, I've created *The Leader's Guide*, a free digital resource. You can download *The Leader's Guide* using this QR code.



*The Leader's Guide* offers these resources:

- ▲ a sample ministry calendar for a ten-plus-lesson semester of ministry,
- ▲ small-group discussion questions for each lesson,
- ▲ Scripture readings for each lesson,
- ▲ prayer prompts for each lesson,
- ▲ five teaching topics for messages that could be taught in large-group settings, and
- ▲ resources for deeper study.

## SPECIAL FEATURES

However you decide to utilize the *Mountains* Bible study, whether for individual, self-paced devotional time; as a small-group curriculum; or for semester-long church ministry, you'll notice several stand-out features unique to the **Storyline Bible Studies**:

- ▲ gospel presentation at the beginning of each Bible study;
- ▲ full Scripture passages included in the study so that you can mark up the text and keep your notes in one place;
- ▲ insights from diverse scholars, authors, and Bible teachers;
- ▲ an emphasis on close readings of large portions of Scripture;
- ▲ following one theme instead of focusing on one verse or passage;
- ▲ Christological narrative theology without a lot of church-y words; and
- ▲ retrospective or imaginative readings of the Bible to help Christians follow the storyline of Scripture.

You may have studied the Bible by book, topic, or passage before; all those approaches are enriching ways to read the Word of God. The **Storyline Bible Studies** follow a literary thread to deepen your appreciation for God's master plan of redemption and develop your skill in connecting the Old Testament to the New.



## INTRODUCTION

# THE MOUNTAINS STORYLINE

I WAS SIPPING HOT CHOCOLATE and watching the sunrise with my husband, Aaron, and our son, Caleb, in a cozy cabin in Broken Bow, Oklahoma, when it dawned on me how many mountains are mentioned in the Bible. I'd been ruminating over some stories in Matthew's Gospel that all mention mountains, and it felt like someone had just pulled down on a lightbulb string and turned on my brain. Jesus was tempted on a mountain, he delivered his most famous sermon on a mountain, he was transfigured on a mountain, and he even gave his Great Commission on a mountain. Little did I know that this moment was the beginning of the **Storyline Bible Studies**.

I'd always been taught that the Bible was a cohesive and interconnected story, but frankly, I didn't believe it. On the surface, the Old and New Testaments seemed wildly different, and I rarely went beyond one single book of the Bible when I studied the Scriptures.

But the Gospel of Matthew is connected to the Old Testament, and the mountains in Genesis and Exodus carry symbolic meaning forward to mountains in the book of Matthew. Every mountain we survey in this Bible study is deeply embedded in an ancient, symbol-driven world where location didn't just matter—it had meaning. Sometimes God repurposes familiar settings to signal deeper significance. The *Mountains* Bible study will guide you through five mountaintop Bible stories because mountains symbolize places where God reveals his character and we can enjoy his presence.

In the Bible, several pivotal moments in our faith history take place on ancient mountains. As we will see, the location isn't incidental. Mountains are where God meets with his people. As one of God's preferred meeting spaces, mountains in the Bible take on symbolic meaning. Mountains are holy ground for connecting with God.

In *Mountains*, we're going to explore

- ▲ *Genesis 1–2*: the Mount of Creation, where God created the world;
- ▲ *Exodus 19–20*: Mount Sinai, where God gave the Israelites the Mosaic law;
- ▲ *Matthew 5*: the Mount of the Sermon, where Jesus delivered his most famous message;
- ▲ *Matthew 17*: the Mount of Transfiguration, where Jesus revealed his glory; and
- ▲ *Matthew 28*: the Mount of the Great Commission, where Jesus commissioned his disciples.

We're going to do this by looking at each mountain through four different lenses:

- ▲ **PART 1: CONTEXT.** Do you ever feel dropped into a Bible story disoriented? Part 1 will introduce you to the mountain you're going to study and its scriptural context. Getting your bearings before you read will enable you to answer the question *What am I about to read?*

- ▲ **PART 2: SEEING.** Do you ever read on autopilot? I do too. Sometimes I finish reading without a clue as to what just happened. A better way to read the Bible is to practice thoughtful, close reading of Scripture to absorb the message God is offering to us. That's why part 2 includes close Scripture reading and observation questions to empower you to answer the question *What is the story saying?*
- ▲ **PART 3: UNDERSTANDING.** If you've ever scratched your head after reading your Bible, part 3 will give you the tools to understand the author's intended meaning both for the original audience and for you. Plus you'll practice connecting the Old and New Testaments to get a fuller picture of God's unchanging grace. Part 3 will enable you to answer the question *What does it mean?*
- ▲ **PART 4: RESPONDING.** The purpose of Bible study is to help you become more Christlike; that's why part 4 will include journaling space for your reflection on and responses to the content and a blank checklist for actionable next steps. You'll be able to process what you're learning so that you can live out the concepts and pursue Christlikeness. Part 4 will enable you to answer the questions *What truths is this passage teaching?* and *How do I apply this to my life?*

One of my prayers for you, as a curious Bible reader, is that our journey through this study will help you cultivate a biblical imagination so that you're able to make connections throughout the whole storyline of the Bible. In each lesson, I'll do my best to include a few verses from different places in the Bible that are connected to our mountain stories. In the course of this study, we'll see the way God shows up on mountains throughout his Word—and get a glimpse of how he might show up in our lives today.

God's Word is so wonderful, I hardly know how to contain my excitement. Feel free to geek out with me; let your geek flag fly high, my friends. When we can see how interrelated all the parts of Scripture are to each other, we'll find our affection for God stirred as we see his artistic brilliance unfold.



LESSON ONE

# **BECOMING SECURE IN YOUR IDENTITY**



**MOUNT OF CREATION:  
WHERE GOD LAUNCHES THE WORLD**

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1-2





## PART 1

# CONTEXT

Before you begin your study, we will start with the context of the story we are about to read together: the setting, both cultural and historical; the people involved; and where our passage fits in the larger setting of Scripture. All these things help us make sense of what we're reading. Understanding the context of a Bible story is fundamental to reading Scripture well. Getting your bearings before you read will enable you to answer the question *What am I about to read?*

I'M AFRAID OF HEIGHTS, and I'm not the most outdoorsy person you've met. That's why my family is bewildered by my newfound love of hiking. For two decades of my marriage, vacation-Kat lounged poolside—and now (even though my skill level matches that of young children), I want to spend my summers hiking.

What happened? A mountaintop experience in Angel Fire, New Mexico.

On our way up the mountain, our feet dangling from the chairlift like dancing wind chimes, I turned to my husband, Aaron, to jokingly ask, "So, this is a mountain?" He spread out his arms like Vanna White on *Wheel of Fortune*, presenting the hillside in all its glory. "Wait till we get to the top, babe," he said.

At the top, Aaron suggested, we would find out what I was "really made of." He was right. Mountaintop experiences have a way of revealing the truth—the truth about ourselves and truths about God.

In our first lesson, we are going to study the story of Creation in the Garden

of Eden, which takes place on top of a mountain. Yes, you read that right: Eden was on top of a mountain.

Why do I believe God's paradise to be in a raised position? Let's take a look at Ezekiel 28:11-16.

**As you read, circle any time you notice God, through the prophet Ezekiel, equate Eden with God's holy mountain:**

<sup>11</sup> The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>12</sup> "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

"You were the seal of perfection,  
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

<sup>13</sup> You were in Eden,  
the garden of God;

every precious stone adorned you:  
carnelian, chrysolite and emerald,  
topaz, onyx and jasper,  
lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl.

Your settings and mountings were made of gold;  
on the day you were created they were prepared.

<sup>14</sup> You were anointed as a guardian cherub,  
for so I ordained you.

You were on the holy mount of God;  
you walked among the fiery stones.

<sup>15</sup> You were blameless in your ways  
from the day you were created  
till wickedness was found in you.

<sup>16</sup> Through your widespread trade  
you were filled with violence,  
and you sinned.

So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God,  
and I expelled you, guardian cherub,  
from among the fiery stones.”

EZEKIEL 28:11-16

I realize that placing Eden on a mountain is a new concept to many of us—it certainly was for me. But there are solid reasons to understand it this way. In addition to the scriptural evidence in Ezekiel 28:11-16, we also know that in the Ancient Near Eastern culture mountains were considered holy—hinge points for heaven meeting earth.

On the *BibleProject Podcast*, Tim Mackie and Jon Collins summarize the “imaginative framework” most of the early readers of Genesis would have been filtering the Creation story through.<sup>1</sup> Many ancient kings built temples, places to live and worship, on mountains. In Greek mythology, Mount Olympus is home to the gods. Ancient readers would have readily envisioned Eden as a cosmic mountain.

In his book *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus*, biblical studies professor L. Michael Morales defines cosmic-mountain ideology this way:

The mountain is sacred, the dwelling place of the gods, the intersection between heaven and earth, the central and highest place of the world . . . , and the foundation and navel of creation.<sup>2</sup>

Morales’s research shows that the idea of the cosmic mountain would have been fundamental to the ancient readings of the biblical narrative.<sup>3</sup> This understanding may be new to us, but when we combine the teaching of Scripture with the cultural context, I think we should imagine Eden on top of a mountain.

You are about to read your origin story. The first two chapters of God’s story of redemption are about the Creator creating creation.<sup>4</sup> Although the Creation story is not written *to us*, it is most certainly *for us*. Modern Bible readers like you and me might have lingering questions when we read the Creation narrative

because we know about dinosaurs and theories of the age of the earth. But the original audience of Genesis 1 and 2 read through a different lens, asked different questions, and lived in a different culture. As pastor and author Dan Kimball points out,

God used what the people were familiar with to communicate the true creation story. In telling this story, God was not trying to communicate modern science to an ancient people, he was trying to communicate to the Israelites that he alone is God, the true God who created everything.<sup>5</sup>

I would add that God was also revealing who we are in light of our Creator—that he secured our identity to himself.

God's story begins not with a science lesson but with the truth that he is the only one *able* to create something from nothing—and that it was good.<sup>7</sup> This would have been a revolutionary way for God's people to understand their reality because, at the time Genesis was written, they were living as exiles, questioning God's faithfulness and plan. When Moses was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write and edit the Torah, the Israelites were suffering Egyptian slavery and mourning hundreds of years of unmet expectations. As God's chosen people, they had been promised a future full of land and blessings but were experiencing neither (Genesis 12).

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Genesis introduces us to an awesome God who holds a good world in loving hands.<sup>6</sup>

Rodney S. Sadler Jr.,  
"Genesis," in *The Africana Bible*

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You've probably tried to reconcile the truth of a good God with circumstances that seem to communicate the opposite. Or the longing that fills your heart when years of unmet expectations shape your worldview. We tend to create alternative narratives to explain away our brokenness. I understand that. Times of testing really shake my confidence in God and cause me to question my identity as God's beloved. When I am disappointed in God's timing or frustrated by his plan, insecurities arise in me, causing me to question his care. *Does God care about me? Am I still a beloved child of God? If I'm not experiencing the blessings*

*that come with being one of God's children, am I really his after all? And if not his beloved, who am I?*

See my downward spiral into doubt?

When doubt arises, we need something solid and true to ground us. Imagine with me listening to the Mount Eden story as a desperate Israelite questioning your identity. You look around and see how sideways life has become for your people and wonder, *How did we get here? Are we really God's people?*

Like our brothers and sisters from the past, we hear what they heard: that the sin and injustice around us are not God's doing—they're ours.<sup>8</sup> But we also hear this good news: There is only one true, living God who eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and the creatures God creates have inherent dignity, worth, and value. We are designed to care for his creation, and we are defined by our relationship with our Creator.<sup>9</sup> The truths you learn in Genesis about your origin story have the power to make you unshakably confident in your identity as God's image bearer.

You are about to read a story not about cosmology but about covenant.<sup>10</sup>

**1. PERSONAL CONTEXT: What is going on in your life right now that might impact how you understand this Bible story?**

**2. SPIRITUAL CONTEXT: If you've never studied this Bible story before, what piques your curiosity? If you've studied this passage before, what are some things you remember being taught on the subject?**