

Becoming a Participant in God's Story Among the Nations

(Module 1-2-3—Rough Draft)

*A Universal Story that Discloses, Explains,
and Calls All People into God's Kingdom purpose on Earth*

Mentorship Guide

What is God Revealing?

Focus and Reflection

Application/Participation with Missiological Insight

(This version is simplified for non-western contexts
where translation might be necessary)

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Introduction

Chaturvedi Badrinath, a Hindu scholar of world religions, challenges the church in India to go beyond a view of Scripture that limits it to a book of religious propositions and principles.

“I can’t understand why you missionaries present the Bible to us in India as a book of religion. It is not a book of religion--and anyway we have plenty of books of religion in India. We don’t need any more! I find in your Bible a unique interpretation of universal history, the history of the whole of creation and the history of the human race. And therefore a unique interpretation of the human person as a responsible actor in history. That is unique. There is nothing else in the whole religious literature of the world to put alongside it.” (Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen (2004). “Story and Biblical Theology in Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation).

The Bible is an amazing book. It reveals an awesome plan and purpose for the whole of Creation. It’s a work that will restore the earth and its people to the glory of God. This plan will drive out everything opposed to God, his character and purpose. The god of this world will be overcome through men and women living under God’s rule and reflecting his image. It’s a story of restoration and redemption; a story of victory through suffering and weakness, a story calling all nations into the household of God *and its purpose on earth*. Those who enter this household find life, humility, peace and a cause to live for with eternal value and significance.

It’s a work being accomplished through a prophetic word (inseparable from a Son—Jn 1:1), a “pregnant word” that God is watching over to bring to fulfillment (in the Son). Its

fulfillment is determining the course of human history through all those who believe and obey its truth. The word (Son) will fulfill God’s plan and purpose for the nations of the earth.

Whole nations (peoples) are responding in faith-obedience to this Word and becoming part of His Story. Hearts and minds are turning from Satanic deception toward God, his power, his rulership, his truth and grace revealed in the Son. The purpose for which the present heavens and earth were created is moving towards its fulfillment—the earth full of His image and glory.

As this Story is being told through countless acts of God down through the course of history, spirit filled men and women have recognized it. *Inspired* prophets and servants of the Word have recorded its meaning for us. We hold that record in our hands—the Bible.

The record is a book like no other book. More people have read this book than any other book ever published. It can be read now in over 1,700 different languages. The inestimable cost of those who’ve worked to make this book available to us in our own mother tongue is awe-inspiring. It’s truly a work of God bring His story personally to us.

Every person, every family, every generation is called to become part of this story. Some might think this is a story for others; having come to us through many different peoples and cultures culturally very distant from us. But the God of this Story is working to bring this Story “home” to you, to your people, within your own language and culture. He intends to *incarnate the message* of this story in your midst.

Our purpose as human beings is to become partners with God in His work on earth. We’ve been made for it, all of us. The most

enabling, freeing, life-giving thing we can do as human beings, is to know our Maker and Redeemer, the work He is doing, and respond to Him as His people in His purpose.

Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” (John 4:34). Can we say the same thing about our lives today?

This manual leads mentors into the foundations of the Story and how to lead team members in becoming part of God’s story among an unreached people.

Every People’s True Identity and Purpose is Rooted in this Story

At the heart of every people’s culture, anthropologists are telling us, is a people’s *world-view*—the lens through which they think and understand the world, the perspective out of which their *belief system* develops. That belief system under-girds their value system, all of which is expressed in the attitudes, behaviors, products, and institutions of their culture.

A people’s worldview is usually shaped through:

- *stories about how human beings view reality—showing us the lens through which they view the world;*
- *answers to the basic questions (derived from the stories) that define meaning and purpose in life: who we are, why we are here, what has gone wrong with man, and what is the solution;*

(All cultures have this sense of identity, of place, of a problem with the way the world is, and of a way forward—a “redemptive vision” of the future, which will, or may, lead them out of that problem.)

- *ceremonies, festivals, pilgrimages, which communicate and celebrate messages which shape a people’s worldview.*
- *outward behaviors, the way-of-being-in-the-world, which press a people into their unique cultural mold. This is how we do things. Problems are “solved” in people’s cultural defined way. What people believe and therefore do is defined by that people’s way. The choice of a life-aim—whether to make money, to raise a family, to pursue a vocation, to change society or the world---- follows that people’s particular way. To live in harmony with that people one will feel the pressure to conform to these ways.*

Restoration then, for a people group, must develop as a radical shift in a people’s worldview. A people must find more adequate answers to the basic questions every people group has. The Bible answers these questions for us: *Where do we come from? What is our purpose? What has gone wrong? What is the solution?* God’s answer to these is at the heart of the Biblical Story

In India, if you start with the message of Jesus as the answer to a peoples quest for life, people will easily understand him, according to their own worldview, as another Guru, or another Avatar among mankind. They have no foundation of the earlier Biblical Story in

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which to interpret who he is and what he came for.

If we talk about Jesus among Muslim peoples, he is another prophet in a string of prophets usurped by a greater Prophet Mo-

hammad. They likewise do not have a foundation in which to interpret him in light of the earlier Biblical Story regarding former prophets and their description of Him.

But, if we start with the beginning of the Biblical Story, of the beginning of the nations and of God's work among them, at the heart of this revelation is a coming Promised Son. As the Story unfolds we gain more and more insight as to who He will be and what He will accomplish. When Jesus comes, what he says and does fulfills this earlier revelation. We then understand him as *the fulfillment of the Promised Son*.

All People Groups (Nations) Must Hear this Story

People alienated from their Creator, unaware of his redemptive work, wandering off into *name seeking* and *self-seeking--man-made efforts* to find meaning and purpose in life--are on a dead-end way. They become corrupt in their thinking and behavior. They *exchange the truth for a lie* of who they are and what they've been made for. Mankind's deepest need is to be drawn back into the *Truth*, the *True Way*, the way and life of the Creator's *Son*, to be renewed in *image, purpose*, and work as a responsible member and *heir* in his household of God to redeem the world from the deception and control of Satan.

The prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament recognized God's redemptive purpose in their own day. Their conviction of its truth takes our breath away. They were convinced that truth was being *revealed* and *written* in history by God himself. They were his spokesmen and servants. It was not truth only for them, or their time, or their people. It was not truth ap-

proximately. **It was truth for all time and for all people, now and forever.**

In our *postmodern, relativistic, polytheistic* world, such conviction can hardly be believed. How could anyone speak the way these men spoke? They were convinced God was determining the course of history, bringing it to completion according to a revealed, unfolding plan and purpose made known from the beginning of time.

History was and is proving it true. What God said he would do, He is doing. "...the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations" (Ps 33:11). *What can we say?* What man, what nation, or god, has ever said or done what we see happening according to the revelation of the Bible? As Isaiah the prophet said, to whom can He be compared? This Book is like no other book and we're called to become part of God's answer and story for the sake of the nations!

The Story is the Whole Bible

The Story spans at least 2000+ years of human history. It's a story for all nations, peoples, languages, and tribes; it's a story that has transformed thousands of nations and individuals—white, black, red, and yellow. Numerous authors, inspired by God, have written the Story from differing cultural backgrounds and perspectives over a 2,000-year period. *It takes time and careful thought to read and understand this book.* You don't get the Great Story of the Bible without studying *chronologically* the smaller stories, like streams, that unfold and flow into an increasingly large river (the Great Story of the Bible).

But for many people, handing them the Bible to read and understand is like handing a

baby a fire-hose for a drink of water—there's too much to handle without some help!

In response, many turn to the last third of the book (the New Testament.)—like walking into a movie after the intermission hoping you'll get the whole movie. At best, they only get the climax of the movie. A great deal

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is lost as to what that climax really means.

Others pick and choose what they want out of the Story, focusing on the parts of interest to them. These people often create their own stories out of the Biblical Story. They miss what the heart of the Bible is all about.

Thirty-minute sermons on Sunday mornings very seldom help us get the Great Story. Topical Bible studies, care groups sharing quiet times, seminars on the latest topic of need or interest will usually neglect the whole story. So what do we do? For the most part, we remain Biblically illiterate Christians, satisfied with the norm, un-captivated by the Great Story, uncalled by the Great Story because we've never heard its call. *We're un-commissioned* because we're not sure what the commission is about. And so it goes. We end up getting truths out of the Bible for *ourselves*, for *our* needs, for *our* concerns, for *our* problems, to support *our* interests and concerns. **We're consumer oriented Christians ransacking the Bible for what we want.** *But this is not what God gave us this book for.*

So how do we get hold of the Bible in such a way that His Story gets hold of

us...and we become participants in His Story?

Our Approach in Studying His Story

We must go through the *whole* to really understand the whole Story--the way it unfolds, from beginning to end. We must listen to the Story being passed from one generation to the next. We're captivated by this Great Story; through the smaller stories and events that make it known. Focusing on any one of these smaller stories in isolation will not give us the Big Story.

To help us through this Big Story then, key smaller stories are the focus of our study. These stories are foundational for understanding the Big Story. In time, as you carefully go through each story chronologically, you'll begin to see the Big Story. All the other stories will begin to make sense and find their place in the context of the Big Story.

This manual is *designed for mentors*—those who will teach others these stories to *be lived out and communicated* among the people they hope to reach. For the mentor to effectively guide others, they must have a solid understanding of the content of the story and its application in their own lives. To do that, the following process of study is outlined—*for both mentors and trainees.*

The Learning Process

Preferable groups will work through a three step learning process with each story within the module.

Step 1: What is God revealing? God reveals himself and his work through these stories. We need to help people with an *inductive discovery oriented* process in understanding God's message/revelation within each

story. This develops people in other cultures to discover and expressing Biblical truth within their own cultural forms. Less literate people can be helped with a similar process of inductive listening that leads to a conversation with the story (asking questions; seeking answers) as it is being told.

Step 2: Focus and Reflection: Focus on the main point of the story. What did it mean then? What was the author trying to communicate? What would be a dynamic equivalent meaning for us in today's context?

Step 3: Application with Missiological Insight: How can we then live out or incarnate this message in word and deed toward fulfilling the purpose of God on earth.