

LEADER'S OVERVIEW

What's your story, God?

A Look at Salvation History

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce your class to an overview of salvation history. We begin the story by addressing the question, “How could a good God allow so much suffering and evil?” We explore the goodness of God’s creation, how sin and evil entered the world, and God’s redemptive plan (the “plot” of salvation history), which centered on the person and work of Christ and the establishment of the Church.

With this lesson, we move from pre-evangelization to authentic evangelization, introducing candidates to the *kerygma*—the proclamation of the gospel message that invites a response.

Objectives of This Lesson

1. *Review the salvation story, God’s plan of redeeming love, as revealed to us through Scripture.* It is our story, from the creation of the world and the sin of our first parents; to the Incarnation, earthly ministry, and redemptive Death and Resurrection of Christ; and to the coming of the Holy Spirit and the ongoing life of the Church (see CCC 107).
2. *Understand that Jesus is the full revelation of God, who introduces us to the idea that “God is love” (1 John 4:8).* God is not just the Creator of the universe but a communion of Persons: an eternal exchange of love. Each of us is made in God’s image; that is, we are made for love (see CCC 221, 358).
3. *Identify signs God has given us in every age to reveal his love for us.* In addition to Scripture and the sacramental life of the Church, God has raised up “witnesses,” such as the martyrs and saints, to show his love in the world (see CCC 957, 2473).
4. *Explain that hearing and responding to the kerygma, the proclamation of the core gospel message, is essential to becoming the people God intends us to be.* The whole story has led to this moment, and the Church needs you. Christ needs you. We are all called to greatness, called to be saints (see CCC 1695).

Notes



What's your story, God?



Opening Prayer

God, I still have so much to learn about you, myself, my world. I know I don't say it enough, but thank you for all that you've done in my life so far and for all that I get to have and experience because of you. Even though at times it feels like you are very distant, and I question why you would allow bad things to happen, I'm sure you are working in ways that I do not always see or understand. So please help me to be more aware of the good things you are doing and how I fit into your eternal "story" here and now. Amen.

Fill in the blank below. Briefly explain your answer.

_____ was a great movie or show that I watched in the past year.

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STEP 1

WELCOME / REVIEW GAME / KICKOFF QUESTION (7 minutes)

Welcome the class and lead them in the video Review Game for the previous lesson. Then direct them to answer the Kickoff Question at the bottom of the page in the Student Workbook, and take a few minutes for the class to share their answers.

Since salvation history is our shared epic story, it will be good for candidates to think about a story told through a movie or show and what made it so great. They are likely to discover that some of those same elements are found in the big-picture story of God's plan for us.

STEP 2

"CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK" REVIEW (4 minutes)

Ask if anyone would like to share a challenge experience from the previous week. Try to draw candidates out by prompting them with basic questions about last week's challenges (e.g., "Did anyone choose the first challenge?").

STEP 3

OPENING PRAYER (3 minutes)

Lead the class in the Opening Prayer. Leader's notes are provided in the blue box below: The white text is for you to read aloud. You begin with those words, and the class joins in with the prayer in the Student Workbook.

OPENING PRAYER

Most of our prayers tend to center on asking God to do things for us. It is easy to overlook the good things God has done in the world and in our lives. We have much to be grateful for. We are part of something big—God's story. Despite what we might feel, he is not distant but very close and active, and he wants us to participate intimately with him in his eternal work. Let's pray. In the name of the Father ...

**STEP
4****“DIVE IN” (5 minutes)**

Read this story aloud, have a candidate read it aloud, or have the class read it silently before watching the video segments. This thought-provoking story ties into the lesson’s topic and sets up the video presentation.

DIVE IN:**A Confusing Story**

Once upon a time, there was a toad. After being coaxed out of the comfort of his hobbit hole by Gandalf the wizard, Toad went on a long journey with a talking donkey to find his pride (pack of lions) and become their king.

You see, Toad thought he killed his dad, but it was actually Mufasa who did it! When he became king, a princess kissed him, and he became a wooden puppet, but in the end, the fairy godmother made him a real boy ... and he lived happily ever after.

“I arise today
Through a mighty
strength, the invocation
of the Trinity,
Through a belief in
the Threeness,
Through confession
of the Oneness
Of the Creator of creation.”

—St. Patrick

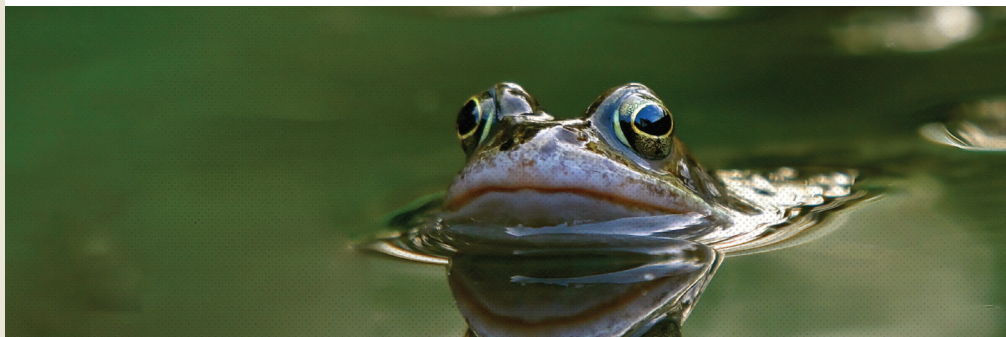
Notice anything strange about that story? There was no real beginning. No end. No meaning. It was just random images and events pieced together. You would wonder if the author was even awake while writing, or if the story just kind of wrote itself ...

That’s life without God.

If there is no intelligent mind behind life, then the story of human history and each life in particular is no more than disjointed events thrown together by chance.

Thankfully, there is more. There is a larger, overarching story that the creation of the universe, the events of human history, and the story of your life fit within. It’s written by the hand of God. It has a happy ending. And every character is a key player. That story offers us a deep sense of meaning and purpose.

Today we’re going to take a look at that story, “His-story,” otherwise known as “salvation history.”

**Segment 1 Discussion Questions**» **What is your favorite book (or story)?**

- What makes the story good?
- Pretend that I have never heard of Christianity. How would you explain what Christians believe?
- If God’s story is all about love but evil gets in the way of love, why is it important to be able to recognize and point out the presence of evil?

Segment 2 Discussion Questions» **What is the difference between the way Eve responded to God and the way Mary responded to God?**

- Why do you think that, like Adam and Eve, we often fail to trust God? How can we be more like Mary?
- How would you sum up the story of Jesus’ life in just one minute?
- We often hear that God is love. What does that mean to you?
- We are called to love as God loves, which is pouring ourselves out for someone else. Where do you see this type of love present in the world today?



WATCH IT!

SEGMENT 1: Creation and the Fall

1. The Blessed Trinity is one God in three divine Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
2. God created Adam and Eve in his image and likeness.

SEGMENT 2: Jesus' Divine Rescue Mission

1. Unlike Eve, who disobeyed God, _____ said yes to God's plan. By her obedience, she became the "New Eve."
A) Sarah B) Mary C) Elizabeth D) Esther
2. Jesus revealed to us the awesome truth that God is Love.

SEGMENT 3: A Kingdom on Earth

1. The Church is both human and _____.
A) divine B) angelic C) eternal D) earthly
2. Saints are men and women the Church recognizes for their heroic virtue. They are witnesses, intercessors, and examples of faith.

**DISCUSSION PREP GUIDE**

This discussion is designed to lead the candidates into a deeper understanding of salvation history. By starting with their own favorite stories, the group can open up about their interests, culture, and ways of thinking while also discussing what makes a story good and intriguing.

Some helpful tips:

- Connect their favorite movies and stories to the truth that we all play a role in the greatest story ever—the story of salvation.
- Compare Eve's and Mary's responses to the way other figures in books, movies, and good stories are disobedient or radically faithful.
- Share a little about your own favorite movies and stories (e.g., connecting the themes of heroism, redemption, and hope).

STEP 5**"WATCH IT!" / SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**
(50 minutes)

Play the video for Lesson 3, segment 1 (video 3.1), and then have the candidates fill in the "Watch It!" questions for segment 1. Review the correct answers with the class.

Next, lead the candidates in a small group discussion about segment 1. See the Discussion Prep Guide above for an introduction and tips for the discussion.

Follow the same steps for video segments 2 and 3. Allow about 10 minutes for discussion after each segment.

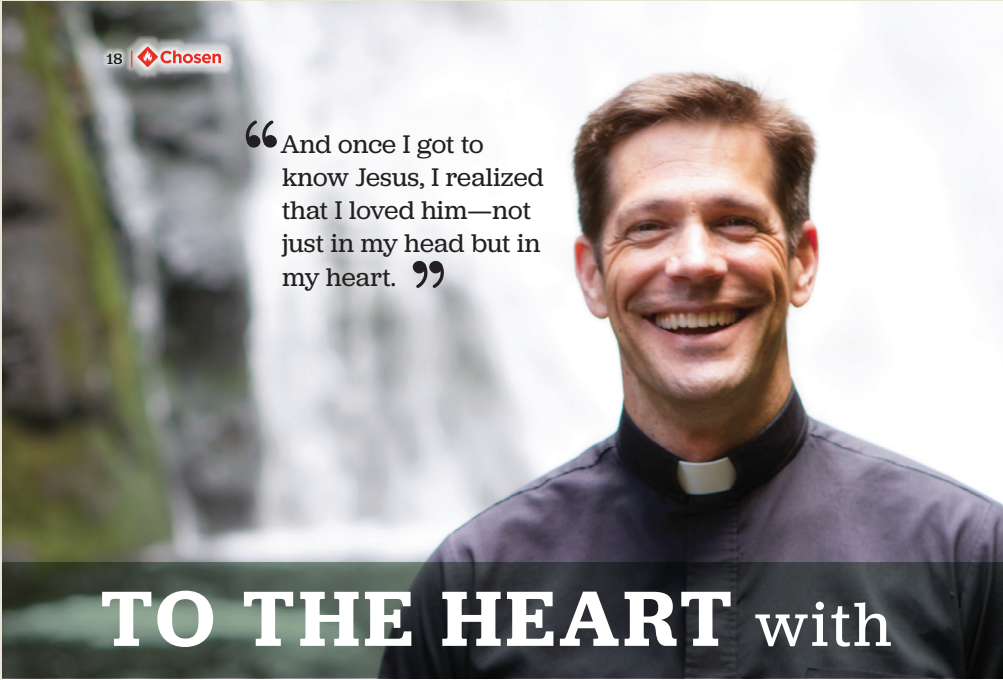
Segment 3 Discussion Questions

» **Jesus said he came to establish a kingdom. How can thinking of Jesus as a king help us better understand his plans for us and the Church?**

- The apostles were ordinary people who were called to do an extraordinary thing. How do you feel about the fact that you have been given the same mission through your Baptism?
- What are some ways in which you see God still "adding to his story" in our world today?
- Each of us has a role to play in God's plan. What do you think your role might be? What could you do to better see and understand this role?
- Who is your favorite saint and why? *Remind the candidates to choose a saint's name for Confirmation.*

**STEP
6****"TO THE HEART" (10 minutes)**

After the small group discussions, read this story aloud, have a candidate read it aloud, or have the class read it silently. After the story (written by this week's video presenter), read the thought-provoking question provided in the red box below. Time permitting, ask follow-up questions and encourage discussion.

18 |  Chosen

“And once I got to know Jesus, I realized that I loved him—not just in my head but in my heart.”

TO THE HEART with

My Uncle Tom lived in Los Angeles my entire life and worked on a number of TV shows and movies. He was a voice-over actor on *Titanic* and *Air Force One* and even wrote a couple of Hallmark movies that are still shown during the Christmas holidays!

I loved Uncle Tom. (After all, he was my uncle!) When he called, we would talk, and then I would tell him I loved him and hang up. Unfortunately, I never really *knew* my Uncle Tom, because I never got to fly hundreds of miles to California to spend time with him. (How cool would *that* have been—to go with him to “Take a Kid to Work Day”?)

If I had been able to get to know him in person, I think our phone conversations would have been different. I would have been able to say, “Uncle Tom, I love you,” and know that what I was saying wasn’t just in my head; it would have been in my heart as well.

For a long time, it was the same way with God. I was raised **CATHOLIC**, so I knew the story—God created the world and promised to set things right after sin wrecked everything. And I knew God loved me, and I guess I loved God back. But even when I came to *believe* in Jesus, I didn’t feel close to God. I loved Jesus in my *head*, but it just didn’t seem like I loved him in my *heart*.

So I went on a thirty-day retreat with some Jesuit priests in the foothills of Colorado. They challenged me to spend thirty days in *silent prayer* with Jesus in the Gospels. They told me to just take my time and read a little from the Gospels each day. They taught me how to hear Jesus and get to know him in the Scriptures, like St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Although I did not receive an incredible **REVELATION** in a blinding burst of light from God as St. Paul did, I

QUESTION

In this story, Fr. Mike talks about how interesting and exciting his uncle was and how that made him want to get to know his uncle even better. Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever met someone who seemed particularly interesting, making you want to get to know that person better? How do you think a person can get to know God better?

did get to know Jesus by observing his actions in the Gospels, by talking with him in prayer, and by going to Mass. In simply spending time with Jesus, I got to know him. And once I got to know him, I realized that I loved him—not just in my head but in my heart.

That experience taught me something important: If you want to get to know someone (instead of just

knowing about someone), you have to spend time with that person. And the best way to get to know the author of our **SALVATION** story is to spend time with him, talking to him and listening to him as you read that story together.

Father Mike Schmitz

Find It!

The Old Testament is filled with prophecies about what God would do to redeem us. Some of the most striking are about the Suffering Servant in the book of Isaiah, written hundreds of years before Jesus was born. What chapter in particular describes how Jesus would suffer to save us?

Isaiah 53

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR LESSON 3

	ACTIVITY 1	ACTIVITY 2	ACTIVITY 3
Title	“One Word Story”	“Scripture Skit”	“Hero Quest”
Suggested Timing	Before “Dive In”	After video segment 2	After video segment 3 or as a closing activity
Location in Director’s Manual	Page 12	Page 13	Page 14

All activities are available with *Chosen* Online Leader’s Access.

STEP
7

“HERO OF THE WEEK”

(5 minutes)

This saint's story helps highlight and reinforce this lesson's topic. You may choose to read it aloud, have a candidate read it aloud, or have the class read it silently.

HERO of the Week



Born:

August 21, 1567

Died:

December 28, 1622

Memorial:

January 24

Patron Saint of:

- journalists
- educators
- confessors

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

It took a long time for Francis to believe that God really loved him. He didn't feel very lovable ...

In fact, at one time, he was pretty sure he was going to HELL. He didn't *want* this to happen, of course, but he didn't see any way around it. He lived during the time of the Protestant Reformation and was surrounded by people (called Calvinists) who believed that God creates some people for the sole purpose of sending them to hell.

Over time, with a lot of prayer, Francis came to see that God is love—and even more amazing, he felt God calling him to become a *priest*!

A priest? Are you sure, God? It took God thirteen years to convince Francis that, yes, this was what he was supposed to do with his life—tell others about the God who loves them.

There was only one more problem: Nobody wanted to hear Francis preach. It wasn't that he was bad at public speaking—he had been educated for a brilliant public career. But after several years, he felt abandoned and hadn't converted one soul.

Still, he didn't give up. He once wrote, "Have patience with all things, but chiefly, have patience with yourself." Francis realized that those who most needed to hear about God's love were not flocking to the CHURCH. So he began writing notes and slipping them under doors. If people wouldn't hear what he had to say, perhaps they would read it. It was just a matter of getting their attention.

It worked. Thousands who had left the Church returned to practice the Catholic faith!

As **BISHOP**, Francis took to heart the need to minister to the people—not just the religious, but the regular, ordinary men and women who also needed spiritual direction. His greatest work, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, recounts what Francis learned about God's love through his own life experiences. This spiritual classic continues to inspire Christians today. Check it out!

*St. Francis de Sales, pray for us. Help us understand
that we are loved because we are God's.*

Notes

[illegible]

 Choose a saint to research, and jot down three interesting facts in the space below about his or her life to share with your small group at the next class.

[illegible]

Help us, Lord, to always choose you. Thank you for giving us your Son, Jesus, whom we receive in Holy Communion and who strengthens us to find the very best in ourselves. Amen.

[illegible]

As a way of building up community, ask if there are any prayer intentions. Write them down (or have candidates share them aloud), and after praying for those intentions, have the class read the Closing Prayer in the Student Workbook together.

TAKING IT HOME

For next week's Review Game, be sure to read over the following ...

1. **Watch It!** questions (page 17)
2. **Wrap-Up**
3. **"What's That Word?"**
4. **Memory Verse**

Don't forget to do your **Challenge of the Week** (page 21).

Wrap-Up

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). From the very first verse of the Bible, all of Scripture recounts an epic story, full of real men and women who encountered the living God.

As we read the Scriptures, we discover that God has revealed himself again and again to the human race, making us his own children through a series of **COVENANT** promises. The final and most perfect covenant was made in the New Testament, through God's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who created the Church.

We call this epic story "salvation history." Salvation history is the *true* story of God's relationship with the human race. This is a story with three parts.

In the Old Testament, God the Father particularly reveals himself in the creation of the world, in the sin of our first parents and the fall of the human race, in the promise of a redeemer, and in the covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and David.

In the New Testament, God the Son is especially revealed. Through the life of Christ, God's promise of a redeemer is fulfilled in the **INCARNATION**, when God took on a human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. By his suffering (or "Passion"), death, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven, Christ showed us his love, paid the price for our sins, and restored our created purpose.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is more explicitly active in the life of the Church. By instituting the **SACRAMENTS** and passing his authority on to his apostles, Christ ensured that his presence would continue in the world until the end of time. Today, he makes us coworkers in his mission to bring his kingdom to the world, until at last he will return in glory to bring our eternal reward.

Salvation history reveals the purpose of all natural and human history and of your life in particular. In this lesson, we took a closer look at this story of salvation history to show how God's story is our story, too.

¹ Mt 28:20

Did You Know?

In Greek, a common language of the New Testament writers, the word for "father" translates as "nourisher, protector, or upholder."

Notes

“What’s That Word?”

MYSTERY

When people talk about a **MYSTERY**, they usually mean something that we do not—or cannot—understand. In this sense, it is synonymous with a riddle or an enigma. In Catholic terms, though, a mystery is something we would not have known unless God had revealed it. He revealed the mysteries to us because he wanted us to know him and his plan for us. Therefore, a mystery makes sense, and we *can* understand it, but not fully, because God is infinite, and we are not. One of the reasons that **HEAVEN** will never be boring is that we will have the opportunity to explore the mysteries without ever running out of new things to learn; that exploration can begin now. (Eastern Churches use the word “mystery” for sacrament; see CCC 774.)

SIN

Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to God’s plan.² It is an offense against God and a failure in genuine love because it makes us less than we have been created to be. *Sin* is addictive and self-destructive; it weakens the sinner and makes it more difficult to find true happiness, which comes from pleasing God. Ultimately, if we are unrepentant, sin can destroy us.

The word for *sin* comes from a Greek archery term that means “missing the mark.” We sometimes sin by deliberately planning evil against another and carrying it out, but more often than not, we sin out of weakness. Overcome by selfishness, emotion, or laziness, we hurt ourselves and others because we “fall short of the target,” which is to act in a virtuous and loving way with the help of God’s grace. The antidote to sin is **RECONCILIATION**.



Memory Verse:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

—John 3:16

² CCC 1849-1851

3 CCC 234

TRINITY

The Blessed Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith, the belief that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three distinct Persons, are one God and share a single divine nature. The Trinity is an eternal communion of love: The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father in return. The love between

them is the very Person of the Holy Spirit. God invites each of us to share in this communion, both in this life (especially through the sacraments) and in heaven. This is why he created us. The Christian family (a husband and wife together with their children) uniquely images the life-giving love of the Trinity.

Any Questions?

Could you give a quick explanation of the Holy Trinity?

“The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself” (CCC 234). The Trinity could never have been known by human reason; it had to be revealed to us by God through the person of Jesus.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites understood God to be one: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:4). When we say God is one, we are saying he is complete and unchangeable, one in his essence, being, and substance. However, God is also a communion of Persons: *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. Although there are three Persons, there is one common divine nature, which each divine Person fully possesses.

God invites each of us to share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love. That’s why he created us.

Notes

Leader's Checklist

☐ 1. _____

☐ 2. _____

☐ 3. _____

☐ 4. _____

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