

STORYLINES

YOUR MAP TO
UNDERSTANDING
THE BIBLE

ANDY CROFT and MIKE PILAVACHI

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transforming lives together



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Dedications

*Andy: To Mum and Dad—slow to anger
and rich in love.*

*Mike: To Nicky and Pippa Gumbel—thank
you for showing me more of the grace,
humility, compassion, and integrity of
Jesus. It means more than you know.*



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Introduction

This is a book about a Book.

It's about a Book that tells of the birth of the cosmos. A Book that describes everything from the earthy cries of grieving mothers to the mysteries of the human soul. A Book with potential to restore our hearts and guide our lives, a Book upon which entire nations have based their worldview. This Book has literally changed the course of history. It's a Book over which people have fought and because of which people have died.

This is a book about a Book that tells a story. A true story. God's story ... our story. So why write another book about the Bible?

First, we need the money. (Just kidding. Sorta.)

And secondly, more seriously, we are worried. These days there seem to be lots of followers of the God of the Bible who don't know where to begin reading it, who don't understand what's in it, and who are intimidated by it. And truthfully we often struggle to read the Bible ourselves. But we have also discovered that abandoning this Book puts our lives in peril. We have discovered that the Bible is the Book of truth and the Book of life. It feeds us, it challenges us, it guides us, and it comforts us. But more than anything else, the Bible points us beyond itself to its author, God. To put it bluntly, it's very hard to get to know God without reading the Bible.

As we've dug deeper into the Bible, we've glimpsed and unearthed treasures that we had no idea were hidden there. We have discovered just a few of the wonders of the Bible, and like two excited children who have found a secret garden, we want to show everyone who'll come and look.

Both Mike and I (I'm Andy, and I'm the one typing—unfortunately Mike has a typing speed of around ten words per hour) have been realizing over the past year or so that the best way for us to get to grips with the whole Bible is to understand the whole story. As followers of Jesus this isn't always as easy as we'd expect. Church services, youth group meetings, and Bible studies usually focus on only a small section of the story. This is definitely important, and because the Bible is so rich, we need to do this. At the same time, it can mean we grow up as Christians without ever getting the big picture. We can sit through Sunday school for years, trot out the right answers, have a nice discussion about particular biblical characters—and still not “get it.” Going through the Bible one snapshot at a time is like watching a movie frame by frame. Sometimes we just need to press play and watch it from start to finish. Then when we do come back to watching the individual frames, we're much more likely to understand them because we “get” the big picture.

Here's a quick map of what to expect in this book: We want to give a brief yet full overview of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We could have done this in many different ways, but the way we've chosen is to “paint” the story. It may be that some people who picked up a copy of *Storylines* are more familiar with the outline of the Bible story than others. For those readers who are a little unsure about the story of Israel in the Old Testament (the call of Israel, the split of the

kingdom, and the captivity and exile), as well as the life of Jesus and the events of the early church, you may find it helpful to begin by first reading “The Bible in 20 Pages,” Appendix A at the back of the book. This gives a whistle-stop tour of the narrative of Scripture and it explores how the whole of the Bible is the love story of God calling us into relationship with himself.

For those who feel like they already have a sketch outline of the story, we want to start to shade in the many contrasting and complementing colors by telling the story again through the different windows of the great themes of the Bible. Some verses will be looked at more than once; this is deliberate as we attempt to look through these different windows. At the end of each chapter you’ll find a paperchase. In case you aren’t familiar with the word, a paperchase is a child’s thing—a playful following of a trail to see where it goes. In this book our paperchase will be similar; some fun trail-following. We’ll do this by giving a summary of some of the key scriptures for that particular storyline. You may find it helpful to sit and read through them yourself, following the trail that God shows you. We know we’ll have missed loads of amazing insights and wouldn’t want you to lose out—the Bible is our ultimate picture and authority. There will also be two or three questions that you may want to read and think about yourself, or you may enjoy chatting about them with your friends.

Although every storyline follows the story of the Bible, each is very different and unique. Yet as we discover them, we begin to see that the Bible isn’t just a random collection of sixty-six books; it’s a stunningly coherent whole with an amazing purpose and a transforming message. We’ll search out Jesus—the focus of the Bible—and

realize the extent to which his life forms the plot of the whole story. We'll examine the covenants of the Bible and see afresh God's commitment to us from beginning to end. We'll experience the presence of God and come to know the point of it all is that we can *be with* him. We'll wonder at the mighty plan of salvation forging itself from Genesis to Revelation, and we'll stand in awe as the kingdom of God is brought about on earth as it is in heaven. We'll taste some of the worship of the Bible and recognize that the Scriptures are one long journey into praising God. If we understand these great themes, then we understand the story of the Bible, and even more importantly we understand God in a way that we've never understood him before.

We invite you to grab your Bible and come on a journey of discovery with us: We promise it will be worth the effort. It's our prayer that at the end of this little book we will all love the Book and the God of the Book more than ever before....

Andy and Mike

The Jesus Storyline

Years ago, when I was in my teens and Mike was having his first midlife crisis, a series of very popular picture books came out. Perhaps you remember them: They were called *Where's Waldo?* The basic idea was you would look at a big picture that would tell a story; there'd be loads of characters in it and tons of stuff going on. Waldo (a little bloke in a red-and-white shirt) was hiding somewhere in the picture. Sometimes he'd be up a tree, sometimes under water, sometimes he'd be in a massive crowd, often he'd be peering out from behind a corner, and almost always he'd be hidden from plain view. The challenge was to find him hidden in the story the picture told.

Two thousand years ago Jesus said to a bunch of Pharisees, "Where's Waldo?" But he said it like this, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39–40). Jesus wasn't talking about the New Testament, because his biography hadn't been written yet, so he must have been talking about the Old Testament. But how could he have been? Everyone knows the Old Testament was about Israel and Moses, David, Abraham, Joshua, and others. Did Jesus

get this one wrong? Had he eaten a rotten fig for breakfast? Or ... have we all been missing something? Could it be possible that, like Waldo in the picture books, Jesus appears hidden all over the Old Testament?

You probably already know that Jesus is all over the Bible; in the Old Testament he's concealed, in the New Testament he's revealed. Finding Jesus in the Old Testament is not just a game, like finding Waldo. It's more like a treasure hunt, and it brings the story of God to life in a whole new way. Throughout the Old Testament we see strong hints, images, and prophecies about Jesus. In the New Testament those hints, images, and prophecies are unveiled; the curtain is ripped apart, from top to bottom, to reveal the star of the whole show. Let's go on a journey together to find Jesus in the crowd of Old Testament heroes.

Noah

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (Gen. 6:5–8)

The human race was so messed up there was no way to straighten it out. God decided to bring a flood and wipe out every creature. There was just one problem. Noah.

Noah and God were friends, and Noah was a righteous man. To destroy every living creature would have meant the unjust of killing his friend. God longed to save Noah, and so he commanded him to build a massive ark. We've been to the Middle East, and in case you hadn't realized, it's a desert! Despite how stupid he looked, Noah obeyed God to the point of humiliation. But it meant that, when the rains hit, Noah was saved. What's more, his whole family came with him. Why was Noah's family saved? Were they righteous? No. Noah was the only righteous one around, but because they were attached to him, his family got to come along!

The first hero of the Old Testament is our first signpost to Jesus. The flood didn't solve the problem of humanity's wickedness. God's righteous judgment is still that humanity deserves to die in its wickedness and be cut off from him forever. However, God has found one totally righteous man, even more righteous than Noah. This righteous man obeyed God to the point of utter humiliation, dying on a cross. What's more, all the unrighteous people who attach themselves to him are saved. After the flood a rainbow was the sign of God's promises; today it is the cross. All who shelter in Jesus, the ark of salvation, are not wiped out but given eternal life. Sometimes when we read about the cross, it can seem mysterious—something that's difficult to get our heads around. Discovering things like this throughout the Old Testament on one level helps us to understand it better—the patterns of salvation often reoccur. But on another level it speaks of the wonder and increases the mystery. Thousands

of years before the birth of Jesus, God was carefully laying out the foundations for his master plan ...

Abraham and Isaac

Several chapters later in Genesis, we come across a strange scene. In Genesis 22 we find an old man holding a knife over the chest of a young boy he's about to sacrifice. Years ago God had promised the old man that he would have a son, and after an age of waiting, Isaac was born. The baby became a boy, and Abraham loved him dearly. It was at that point God said to Abraham, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about" (Gen. 22:2).

How could God command someone to sacrifice his own son? And yet—"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son ..." (John 3:16). The words of John, describing God's giving of his beloved Son, deliberately echo those of Genesis 22:2. God asked no more of Abraham than God himself was willing to give. God gave up his only Son, whom he loved, completely out of choice and love for us.

The old man obeyed God: "Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey" (Gen. 22:3). Father, son, and donkey headed to the region of Moriah. When Mike and I visited Israel, we were amazed to discover that the region of Moriah is where, hundreds of years after Abraham, Jerusalem was built! And so when we read about Jesus entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey, we're reading about another father, another son, and another donkey riding into exactly the same area Abraham had been told to head to. In little,

subtle ways—ways that we wouldn't notice unless we looked for them—God is laying down hints in the Old Testament of the plans he has for his Son in the New Testament.

When Abraham and Isaac arrived, we read that the father placed the wood for the sacrifice on the back of his son: “Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife” (Gen. 22:6). Isaac then carried the wood for his own sacrifice up a hill in the region of Moriah. Isn't this amazing? Centuries later, the Father placed the cross, the wood for the sacrifice, on the back of his Son. Jesus then carried the wood for his own sacrifice up a hill in the region of Moriah.

Upon reaching the top of the hill, Isaac said to Abraham, “The fire and wood are here ... but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” (Gen. 22: 7). “Abraham answered, ‘God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son’” (Gen. 22:8). Abraham then tied his son to the wood and was about to kill him when the Lord cried for him to stop. God told Abraham to sacrifice a ram he saw caught in a hedge. Rejoicing, Abraham took it and sacrificed it in the place of his son. “So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, ‘On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided’”(Gen. 22:14). Two thousand years later on a mountain in the region of Moriah, the Lord did provide. He provided not a ram but a lamb for the offering ... the Lamb of God. He is “my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). This provision of Jesus for us was something God had planned and intended from the beginning, before any of us were born. The storyline of Jesus running through the life of Abraham and Isaac shows us that even before most of the people in the Old Testament

had been born, God knew what was going to happen, and he knew what it was going to cost him. He knew what you were going to cost—and then he went ahead anyway.

Joseph

So we move on to Joseph. Jesus is everywhere in his story. God's plan from the beginning, revealed to Joseph in his dreams (Gen. 37), was that he would achieve a high status and bring blessing and salvation to many others through that ruling status. Jesus was born to rule. He was born to be King, and because of his kingship many would find salvation.

Joseph's brothers became jealous and did what many of us want to do with our siblings: They sold him into slavery. Joseph was sold to merchants for twenty pieces of silver. Years later Jesus was sold to the Jewish leaders for thirty pieces of silver. Just think—if only it had been the same price, it would have been a perfect parallel ... what a shame ... But wait! The Bible tells us that Joseph was sold for the going price of a slave in 1900 BC and Jesus for the going price of a slave in AD 30. The price had gone up, but God had accounted for inflation!

Joseph was eventually sold to Potiphar, a high official in Egypt, and soon became his right-hand man. Mrs. Potiphar tried to seduce Joseph. She was very subtle—"Come to bed with me!" she begged. "No way, José!" Joseph replied, and when Mrs. Potiphar came in one door, he ran out the other. Jesus was tempted in the desert by the Devil. The Devil offered him all the kingdoms of the world if only Jesus would bow down and worship him. In response to the Devil's seduction, Jesus said, "Get lost!" (or words to that effect). By not

sleeping with Potiphar's wife, Joseph resisted abusing the power his master had given him; by not "getting into bed" with the Devil, Jesus refused to abuse the power God had given him.

Mrs. Potiphar accused Joseph of a crime he did not commit. He was unjustly sentenced and thrown into the deepest dungeon. Jesus, years later, was accused of crimes he did not commit and was unjustly sentenced. While Joseph was serving his sentence, two criminals came to join him. Years later, while Jesus was serving his sentence on the cross, two criminals joined him. You can read in Genesis 40 about how Joseph, through the interpretation of a dream, spoke words of life to one of those criminals. Joseph promised he would be saved, and the criminal was later released. You can also read in Luke 23 about how, as he was dying between two criminals, Jesus spoke words of life to one. Jesus promised he would be saved, and we can be sure that criminal is now with Jesus in paradise.

Joseph was eventually released from prison. From the lowest pits of jail, he became Pharaoh's prime minister, the highest position in Egypt. He named his second son Ephraim (meaning "fruitful") and said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering" (Gen. 41:52). Egypt was an alien land that was not his home. When God became man, he was born into an alien land that was not his home, and yet it was in this land of suffering that God made Jesus fruitful. He was raised up from the lowest point—death—and is now seated at the right hand of God.

Famine struck the whole area, and Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food. They were reunited with Joseph, the brother they'd sold into a life of slavery. Instead of having them killed, Joseph forgave them, assuring them, "You intended to harm me, but God

intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen. 50:20). He went on to save the lives of all his brothers, of those who had sinned against him. He brought them from a place of famine and death to one of abundant life.

The Jewish religious leaders, Pilate, and the Roman soldiers—as our representatives—accomplished what they intended in harming Jesus to the point of death on the cross. Jesus, as he was dying, cried out, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34). We, the human race, meant the death of Jesus for harm, but God meant it for good. He intended it to accomplish what is now being fulfilled, a passage from certain death to abundant life, the saving of many lives.

Isn't this incredible? Joseph was born to be a ruler, he was sold into slavery, he was severely tempted, he went through great suffering, he predicted the salvation of one he suffered with, he was raised up again by God, he forgave those who'd sinned against him, and he declared it had happened that many might be saved.

Jesus' storyline is central to the story of the Bible, and it runs like a bullet through the story of Joseph. This is more than just an amazing biblical parallel—it carries with it a message for us today. Ever felt insecure about God's love? Ever been a little unsure as to whether or not he'll bring about what he's promised? Ever messed it up and thought, “It's been one too many; God's probably going to quit on me this time”? We can draw deep confidence from the fact that God *planned* his death on the cross. The way that Joseph's life prophesies Jesus' shows in an incredible way that God always thought we were going to be worth it—his decision to come to earth wasn't a last-minute afterthought. John's gospel tells us that Jesus is from “the beginning,” and Joseph's story backs that up—he is from

the beginning, and he was always going to bring about the ending. This picture is yet another guarantee to our hearts of the love God has—and has always had—for us.

Moses

Hundreds of years later the descendants of Joseph and his brothers had undergone a population explosion. They were now the people of Israel and were being used and abused as slaves by the Egyptians.

God heard the cry of those he loved, now slaves to Pharaoh, and through Moses he set out to do something about it. We read that, at the start of Exodus (chapter 3), the Lord revealed himself to Moses and commanded him to go and save the Israelites. Before he went anywhere, Moses wanted to know who this burning bush of a God was: “Who shall I say has sent me?” he asked. God replied, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:14). God’s name was “I AM.”

Also, Moses was understandably a bit nervous about taking on Egypt single-handedly, and he asked God, “Who am I, that I should go?” This time God ignored his question. He didn’t say “You’re Moses, kung fu champion!” He just replied, “I will be with you” (Ex. 3:12). The only thing Moses needed to know on this account was that God had his back.

So God’s rescue operation for a people who were suffering as slaves involved one man. The reason this one man was going to save anyone was because God was with him. Who was this God that was with him? I AM.

Hundreds of years later God again heard the cry of those he loved who were slaves to sin, and through Jesus he set out to do

something about it. Moses had asked the God of the burning bush who he was. The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Who do you think you are?” (John 8:53). Amazingly Jesus said in response, “‘Before Abraham was born, I am!’ At this, they picked up stones to stone him ...” (8:58–59). Some of the Jews responded with outrage; they wanted to kill Jesus. Why? Because he was claiming to be God. When they asked him who he was, he told them he was I AM. The God I AM went with Moses to save a people; the God I AM came in person to save a world. One of Jesus’ titles is Emmanuel. It means “God with us.”

Moses confronted the evil powers of Egypt, defeated them—and Pharaoh released Israel. They started the hike out of Egypt, but before long Pharaoh changed his mind; he sent everything he had after them. If we pick up the trail in Exodus 14, we find Israel trapped. In front of them lay the Red Sea, and behind them the Egyptian army was closing in. They had no options. Then God told Moses to raise his staff out over the waves of the Red Sea. Moses obeyed, and the waters parted. Through Moses’ actions a way to freedom and life opened up—Israel now had one option! They passed through the waters and passed from death to life.

In front of all of us lies death; in and around all of us is the evil of this age. Do we have any options? Miraculously God provided an option for all who are trapped. Jesus defeated the evil power of this age (Satan); he conquered sin and death. Through Jesus’ actions a way to freedom and life has opened up. We now have one option! In following Jesus we can be saved. Like the Israelites following Moses, on our journey we, too, pass through water in our crossing from death to life: “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of

God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). Ours is the water of baptism.

Moses’ and Israel’s hike through the wilderness went on for years and years. Mike and I recently went hiking down the Grand Canyon. It lasted for hours rather than years. Still, when we walked through the Grand Canyon, it was baking hot and hard work. After an hour or so, Mike started to moan ... “I’m thirsty, I want some water!” He’s Greek, so he tends to exaggerate, and he started to whine, “This is the end, I’m going to die!” Throughout the hike down, Mike complained, moaned, and whined at me. First he wanted water. Then he wanted food. After he’d eaten five PowerBars, he wanted a different sort of food ... and so it went ...

Moses was in a similar situation in the desert with Israel. They moaned, they whined, they groaned, and they rebelled. If we pick up the story in Exodus 32, we read that the people of Israel had just built themselves another god! Despite all God’s amazing miracles they still mutinied and wanted to worship gods of their own hands. When Moses discovered this, he exclaimed in horror, “You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin” (Ex. 32:30).

Earlier, God, knowing what the people of Israel were up to, said to Moses, “Leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation” (Ex. 32:10).

What an offer! God told Moses to get out of the way; he was going to destroy Israel and start again with Moses’ own children. Moses had a chance to get rid of the nation that had been a pain in his backside ever since leaving Egypt, and to start his own dynasty!

There were moments when, had God appeared to me at the bottom of the Grand Canyon and offered to kill Mike, I would have replied, “Brilliant idea, Lord! In fact I’ll help you!”

Moses didn’t respond like that. He didn’t ask for a machine gun. Instead, after seeing Israel’s sin, he said this: “Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written” (Ex. 32:31–32).

Astonishing! Instead of offering to help God wipe out Israel, Moses asked to be wiped out in their place! God refused Moses’ offer. He had another plan. Moses’ offer was well meant, but he didn’t realize he didn’t have the right qualifications. God didn’t blot Moses out for the sake of Israel’s sin. He already had someone else in mind. About 1,400 years later it was the life of Jesus, not the life of Moses, that was blotted out to make up for sin.

Sometimes the Bible can seem a little disjointed—we can read one story and wonder if it’s got anything at all to do with the one we were reading the week before. Jesus is the center and the heart of the Bible; again here we see how the life and actions of Moses point forward to who Jesus is and what he was coming to do.

[Note: Mike would like it to be known that he was not allowed to contribute to this section, and in fact disassociates himself from the accuracy of the illustration used above ... I, however, insist it’s true, and I’ve got the emotional scars to prove it.]

David

David was born in the small town of Bethlehem. Samuel the prophet declared he was chosen by God to be king of Israel. When

Samuel poured the oil onto David, God anointed him for this task. Soon afterward David fought the great battle with Goliath. We find the site of the battle in 1 Samuel 17. The people of Israel were lined up against their archenemies, the Philistines. The huge Philistine champion would daily shout to all the Israelite soldiers, “C’mon then, if you think you’re tough enough!” None of Israel’s soldiers thought they were tough enough, and no one would go and fight Goliath. This went on for weeks until David the shepherd boy arrived and volunteered. He went out alone to face the enemy as the representative of his people, Israel. David won a great victory without using the weapons of the world—he refused to wear a sword or armor. Instead he used a sling, the weapon of a shepherd boy, and it was in this apparent weakness that he defeated Goliath. David declared, “All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s ...” (1 Sam. 17:47).

Jesus was born in the *same* small town of Bethlehem. At Jesus’ baptism John the Baptist declared that Jesus had been chosen by God to be the Savior of the world, and the Holy Spirit was poured out on him (Luke 3:22)—Jesus was spiritually anointed for his task. Having been prepared in this way, Jesus faced the Enemy of the human race, Satan. He entered the battlefield of the desert where he encountered and withstood Satan for forty days. Three years later he went alone to the cross as the representative of the whole world. He won the victory over Satan without using the weapons of the world. Instead Jesus, the Good Shepherd, won the victory in the weakness of the cross; it was not to be by sword or spear that the Lord would save but by laying down his life for the sheep.

David was anointed to be king of Israel. Jesus, the Christ (which means “the anointed one”), was called “The King of the Jews” at his crucifixion. Jesus was also called “the Son of David,” and people expected the Messiah to be like David. Many expected a David-type military leader who would arrive to kick the Romans’ heads in. Jesus was like David, but not in the ways that were expected.

Of all David’s psalms, Psalm 23 is the most well known, but the psalm that comes immediately before it is an incredible prophecy about the death of Jesus. It is one of the so-called “messianic psalms” (because it points ahead to the Messiah), and it begins with “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus knew his Scriptures, and so when he cried these words on the cross, he knew he was quoting from Psalm 22. Before we go on to look at this psalm further, we suggest you put this book down, open your Bible, and read Psalm 22 for yourself. Where do you see Jesus in this psalm?

Now let’s look together:

The psalm that begins with the words “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” continues with many other striking references to Jesus on the cross.

David says, “But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: ‘He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him’” (22:6–8). The cries of scorn heaped on Jesus by those present at the crucifixion are almost identical:

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,”

they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” (Matt. 27:41–43)

The psalm continues, “From my mother’s womb you have been my God” (Ps. 22:10). If anyone could say those words with more integrity than David, it was the son of Mary. The psalmist goes on, “My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death” (22:15). The phrase “my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth” is simply another way of saying “I’m thirsty.” Jesus said on the cross, “I am thirsty” (John 19:28).

The next verse is translated, “Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet” (Ps. 22:16). David wrote these words hundreds of years *before* the Roman punishment of crucifixion had even been invented....

He continues, “They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing” (22:18). Luke tells us that at the scene of Jesus’ crucifixion “... they divided up his clothes by casting lots” (Luke 23:34).

Psalm 22:22 says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you.” The stunning thing about this verse is that the writer to the Hebrews in the New Testament tells us that Jesus said it too: “So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, ‘I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises’” (Heb. 2:11–12).

Perhaps most amazing of all, the psalm that started with the words that began Jesus' crucifixion—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—ends with these five words: "for he has done it" (Ps. 22:31). Only Jesus was able to put these five words into the first person: "It is finished" (John 19:30). For he has done it—it is finished.

How amazing that David, without knowing it, should have written these words for the "Son of David," his Lord, to speak on the cross a thousand years later!

We have listed just a few of the references to Jesus in the Old Testament. There are many others. We encourage you to go on a treasure hunt of your own! None of this is to say that the stories in the Old Testament don't have a power, force, and meaning of their own—they do very much! In this chapter, however, we are only interested in tracing the storyline of Jesus through the Old Testament. It's like going to an IMAX cinema and being given special 3-D goggles when you go in. Try watching the screen without the goggles, and the pictures are there—though slightly blurred. Once you've put on the 3-D goggles, there's suddenly a whole new, sharp, remarkable dimension that comes into view. We've just watched some events of the lives of only a few of the characters of the Old Testament—Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, and David—wearing our 3-D goggles; even with only this brief snapshot, some of what was concealed has been revealed. What we need to remember is that this isn't just a clever joining of dots to make neat parallels—this is rich and glorious truth. It's the plan of salvation for our lives laid out through the lives

of the Old Testament heroes. It's part of the mystery and wonder of God that he was able to weave the story of Jesus into the lives of his most faithful followers in the Old Testament in such an incredible way. In the same way, he is weaving the story of Jesus into our lives and our individual stories.

The Messianic Prophecies

There are also over three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As we said at the beginning of this chapter, Jesus identified himself in the Old Testament when he said to the Pharisees, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39–40).

At the end of the chapter, we've listed tons of the messianic prophecies, and we hope you'll take the time to open your Bible and discover more of them. But for now, we'd like to look at one of the most significant passages, found in Isaiah 53. Before this chapter Isaiah has been talking about the plight of Israel, how they have turned from their God, worshipped idols, and broken his laws by acting unjustly toward one another. The book of Isaiah begins before the exile in Babylon and then continues during the exile. Isaiah begins to speak hope to a hopeless people. He declares that God has not given up on his people and describes the coming of an anointed one, a Messiah who will bring salvation to Israel. In chapter 53 this Messiah is described in detail. We again urge you, put down this book, open the Bible to Isaiah 53, and read it. Too much explanation of this chapter is unnecessary; it speaks clearly for itself.

In Isaiah 53:2 we notice that when God came to earth, he didn't look like Brad Pitt. We are also told the coming king would be "a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (53:3). This is key, as many of the Jews were expecting a victorious and powerful leader. Verse 6 lays out the sin for which the servant of God would die, the sin of human beings choosing their own way instead of God's. This verse reminds us that the heart of sin is going astray, choosing to live independently from him; the choice made by Adam and Eve. Verse 7 speaks of the fact that when Jesus, the Lamb of God, was brought before his accusers, he did not defend himself. Jesus himself even quotes verse 12 at the Last Supper in Luke 22:37: "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." Isaiah 53 was fulfilled hundreds of years later when Jesus, dying on the cross, "bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (53:12).

We began this chapter by saying that Jesus is concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New. The fact is that Jesus hasn't been concealed very well—we've looked at only a few examples, yet pictures and prophecies of Jesus are all over the place!

What does all this tell us? First, Jesus Christ is the central character of the whole Bible. He does not just appear in the last scene. The person of Jesus is, if you like, the glue that holds the whole Bible together. Secondly, this tells us that Jesus was not Plan B. His birth, life, death, and resurrection were written into the script from the very beginning. Our sin and rebellion did not take God by surprise, and Father, Son, and Holy Spirit did not need to have an emergency cabinet meeting in heaven to work out the rescue plan. Before

creation began, God knew that he would have to become part of, and suffer with, his creation. (Take a look at Revelation 13:8.)

A wise couple counts the cost before deciding to have a baby. There is the possibility of several months of vomiting followed by hours of agony for one partner. Then years of sleepless nights for both, followed by the expenditure of ridiculous amounts of money on toys, school uniforms, etc. Then more sleepless nights as they wonder where the teenage offspring are at 2:00 a.m. and even more expenditure if they try and send them to college.

A couple who has counted the cost of all this, but who has decided to love deeply and with commitment, decides to pay the price. God counted the cost and decided to pay the price. From the beginning he said we were worth it. From the beginning he said you were worth it. The whole of the Bible, the Word of God, is a revelation of Jesus, the Word made flesh.

A few years ago a friend of ours proposed to his girlfriend. He went all out. The day before the proposal he went into the countryside and laid an elaborate trail of messages. It began with a note hidden in the branch of a tree. The note was a love letter but also directions and clues as to where the next note was. She soon found, under a rock, another love letter with a clue as to where the next was hidden. Then there was another, inside a bottle concealed by a hedge. This went on for hours until she came to the final love letter. With this love letter, buried in the earth, was a box. When she opened the box, she saw the engagement ring, and he was already kneeling. The fact that he had gone to such a huge effort and carefully laid this elaborate trail was all to show her just how much he desired and loved her. Most women will never forget their wedding day; this

woman will never forget the day he proposed. It was spectacular. He planned it down to the last detail; he left the clues everywhere, and it meant the world to her.

In the same way, we, as the bride of Christ (and we know this can seem corny), should be rejoicing and know ourselves to be much loved because our God has laid the paper trail throughout the Old Testament. He has hidden the clues of his love and amazing salvation. It is our prayer that as you've read this chapter you have gone on a journey of discovery, not simply of Jesus, but of how deep God's love is for us—of how he loved you before you were even conceived.

Jesus Storyline Paperchase:

- John 5:39–40 (Jesus asks, “Where’s Waldo?”)

Pictures in the lives of the Old Testament characters

- Genesis 6–9 (Noah)
- Genesis 22 (Abraham and Isaac)
- Genesis 37–50 (Joseph)
- Exodus 3, 14, 32 (Moses)
- 1 Samuel 17; Psalm 22 (David)

Messianic prophecies

As we said before, there are over three hundred prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the New Testament.

To help you get started discovering the Jesus storyline throughout Scripture, we've listed a few of them for you, and we pray that God will reveal wonderful things to you as you study!

1. The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem

Micah 5:2–5a

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace.

2. He will be King

Isaiah 9:6–7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Daniel 7:13–14

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was

given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

3. He will be a descendant of David/family lineage

2 Samuel 7:12–16

When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Psalms 132:11

The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: “One of your own descendants I will place on your throne . . .”

Jeremiah 23:5–6

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.”

Jeremiah 33:15

In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land.

Isaiah 11:1

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Numbers 24:17

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.

4. He will be born of a virgin

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

5. He will be a priest

Zechariah 6:11–13

Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak. Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.”

Psalms 110:4

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

6. He will be Lord

Psalms 110:1

The LORD says to my LORD: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

7. He will be God

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Jeremiah 23:6

This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

8. He will bring salvation

Isaiah 49:6

He says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

9. He will atone for sins

Isaiah 53:4–6

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:7–8

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his

descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

Isaiah 53:10–12

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

10. He will heal the sick/preach the good news

Isaiah 61:1 (and whole chapter)

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners ...

Isaiah 35:5–6

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

11. He will teach in parables

Psalm 78:2

*I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things,
things from of old ...*

12. He will be a light to the Gentiles

Isaiah 42:6

*I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the
people and a light for the Gentiles ...*

Isaiah 49:6

*I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may
bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.*

13. He will enter Jerusalem riding a donkey

Zechariah 9:9

*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of
Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having
salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of
a donkey.*

14. He will be rejected/mockered/suffer and die

Isaiah 53:1–3 (and verses 4–12)

*Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of
the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender
shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or
majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we
should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man*

of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Psalm 118:22

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.

Psalm 22:7–8

*All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads:
“He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.”*

15. His enemies will pierce his hands and feet, divide his clothes among themselves, and cast dice for his garments; and he will be served by future generations

Psalm 22:16–18

Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

Psalm 22:30

Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.

16. He will be betrayed by a friend

Psalm 41:9

Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

17. He will be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver

Zechariah 11:12

I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver.

18. The thirty pieces of silver will be thrown to the potter.

Zechariah 11:13

And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.

19. He will be beaten, mocked, and spat upon

Isaiah 50:6

I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

20. His bones will not be broken

Psalms 34:19–20

A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.

21. His side will be pierced

Zechariah 12:10

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him

as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

22. He will be raised from the dead

Isaiah 53:8–12

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Psalm 16:10

... because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

Psalm 49:15

But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself.

23. He will ascend to heaven

Psalm 68:18

When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious—that you, O LORD God, might dwell there.

Discussion Questions:

- Are you surprised at the extent to which the Old Testament points to Jesus? If so, why? If not, then why aren't you?
- What does this tell us about the way that the Old Testament links to the New Testament?
- What practical relevance does this knowledge—that Jesus' life was foretold in so many miraculous ways—have?