

God's Story

This Leader's Guide will help you to deliver teaching and leadership about God's People. Sessions at the Clergy College will also help you to lead this session.

AIMS AND OUTCOMES

- to help participants understand the Bible's 'grand narrative' as involving God reaching out to his world;
- to help participants to question and appreciate some of the implications of this 'grand narrative'; and
- to recognise how the local church's story is connected to God's action in the world.

RESOURCES

- A room with comfortable space for all participants
- Flipchart & pens
- A projector for the Powerpoint presentation (desirable)
- Flipchart to draw necessary diagrams
- A copy of the hand-out (PP God's People HANDOUT Week 1.docx) for each participants and pens

You will need the Powerpoint presentation, available electronically from the Accompanied Ministry Development team. Make sure you have a working version before the session and that the technology and the space you plan to use are appropriate for your audience. Also make sure that you have run through the presentation so that you understand the sequence of the slides: if not, the AMD team can help by talking you through the presentation.

With very small groups it may be possible to use a printed out copy of the presentation.

SESSION PLAN

Note: the timings are approximate—they are intended to allow plenty of time for discussion
The [opening slide](#) should be on as you introduce the session.

A. Who are you? & What do you do?

5 minutes

Slide 2

ASK: Who are you as the church? And what do you do?
Write up the answers on a flip chart

A biblical answer is found in 1 Peter 2.9

Slide 3

Peter answers the uses questions like this: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" 1 Peter 2.9



This answer doesn't come out of thin air, but alludes to a much earlier part of Scripture, the Book of Exodus. Let us look in more detail at that passage and how God's mission and the mission of the people of God helps us answer the questions 'Who are you?' and 'What do you do?'

B. Our Story: God's mission and the mission of the people of God

30 minutes

Slide 4

READ Exodus 19: ⁴You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, ⁶ but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

ACTIVITY IN PAIRS: Identify the significant elements of passage

2 minutes

FEEDBACK [List on flip chart].

You will get lots of ideas. It's unlikely that they will straightforwardly connect to the following presentation, although some of them will be similar. Acknowledge the difficulty with God's destruction of the Egyptians, although try and think why this might have been considered a good thing by an oppressed slave people; what might be similar in today's world?

Summarise the first three elements

Slide 5 ([click to introduce new elements](#))

God's grace

- Part of story: God's rescue of Israelites from Egypt: "You have seen". God acted first; requirements of 'law' come later
- This passage is a 'hinge' between the this story and the 'law' in Ex 20–24 Important point: God's grace comes first in *both* testaments: *this* is not the difference between OT and NT. What we do, including being the Church in mission, is a *response* to God's prior action.

God's world [Click](#)

- Notice "all the peoples" and "the whole earth is mine"
- God is God of whole world. This theological affirmation can be found right at the beginning of the Bible in the creation narratives.
- Its echo is here. God is interested in the whole of the world.
- So what? He chooses a particular people.

God's people [Click](#)

- Rescue of particular people: Israel not Egyptians
- "Treasured possession" (segullâ) – personal treasure of monarch and his family (see also 1 Chron 29.3; Eccles 2.8); wider property of king contrasted to special treasure
- Structure of verse shows that if status of Israel is "treasured possession", its role is to be a "priestly people and holy nation"

A Priestly People

1. A Priestly people [Click](#)

QUESTION: What is a priest?

ANSWERS:

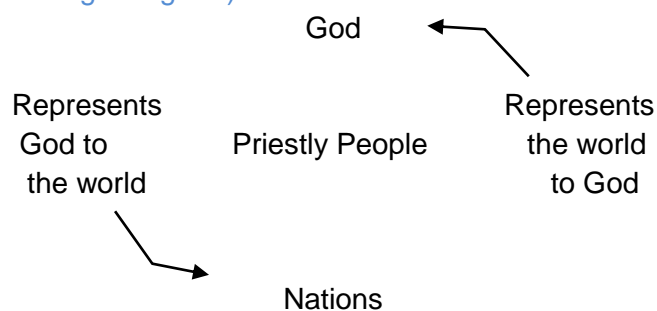
- Intermediary
- Person who teaches law (see Lev 10.11; Deut 33.10; Jer.18.18); makes known God's ways
- Person who sacrifices (Lev 1–7); so people could come to God

QUESTION: How does this help us understand this passage?

ANSWERS: summarise answers in diagram ([slide 8](#))

2 minutes

[Slide 6 \(Click to work through diagram\)](#)



A Priestly role for the Church

[Slide 7](#)

- NT takes this idea forward:
- Paul says he has a “priestly role”: to proclaim the gospel of God (Rom 15.15–16). Evangelism is a priestly task.

[Slide 8](#)

- Peter uses same vocabulary as Exodus: 1 Peter 2.9 (NRSV) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- Peter picks up on another aspect of Ex 19.6: call to holiness.
- How is the people of God to be holy and priestly? Ex 19.5a “if you obey my voice and keep my covenant”. Because grace had already come note, in Wright's words that “obedience to the covenant was not a condition of *salvation*, but a condition of *mission*.” Wright, *Mission of God's People*, p. 126.
- Conclusion:
 - o God has a mission. So he calls a people to bless his world and announce his gracious salvation — a priestly people.

C. Story of the Bible

15 minutes

[Slide 9](#)

We have looked at one part of the Bible. It's also important to see how the whole fits together as one story. A bit like chapters in a book.

Creation & Fall	Israel	Jesus	Early Church	Church	New Heavens & New Earth
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Creation & Fall: explain these terms; *not* talking about the means of creation (e.g. 6 days vs evolution), but about the theological idea that all things are created by God

- All people created by God:
 - People are important to God: value of life
 - All can know God
 - All are accountable to God
- God is different to the world: a distinctive belief – not all religions are the same.
- Fall – reflected in tale of Adam, Eve and Serpent - point is that people decided to live autonomously, without reference to God.
- After Gen 1–3 comes the tale of the Flood and the second failure of a pristine start.
- Table of the nations
- Note this: in terms of the Bible's overall storyline if Gen. 1–11 are the question, the answer starts in Gen 12
- **Slide 10** Israel: Genesis 12.1-4 *"Leave your country...I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"*. Note that God's calling of a particular person had a universal, world-wide purpose.

Slide 11

- History of Israel
- Jesus
- Early Church
- CHURCH NOW

New heavens & new earth

D. God and the world

15 minutes

Slide 12

- This can help us think about the relationship between God, God's church and God's world

One way of thinking about the relationship of God and his world is to think that he works through his church. This has a strong biblical basis and a long pedigree in the church. But it's not the whole story, since God is already working in his world.

GOD → *CHURCH* → **WORLD** Slide 12

Another way is to think that God works first in his world; the role of the church is to 'catch up with God. It's true that God is indeed the God of the whole world; and it's

important to remember that God 'got there first', before the church. But it's not the whole story.

GOD → WORLD → CHURCH Slide 13

Perhaps it best to think about God working in both the world and the church. This leaves open the question of how he works in each; and the relationship between them.



One way of considering the relationship is to think of the church as a sign of the Kingdom of God or, better, a manifestation of God's Kingdom that anticipates its eschatological fullness: it is a testimony to God and should reveal hope in God to the world. [Leslie Newbigin talks of the church as being a sign, an instrument (but not the only one) and the firstfruit of God's Kingdom.

E. Our Church's Story

20 minutes total

Slide 15

- We started by thinking about the story of the Bible
 - We looked at how the church fitted into the story of God's mission
 - Then we thought about the relationship between God, God's Church and God's world
 - To finish, we'll think about how our church's story intersects with what we've learnt.
- **ACTIVITY** In groups of five or six: "Where have you seen our church's story connecting with God's story?" Write on Flipchart; could do pictures *10 minutes*
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 - **PLENARY** Sharing. Put flipchart notes / drawings on wall. *10 minutes*

End with prayer for our church and its mission.

Led by priest or other participant

3 minutes