

# The Discipleship Project-Winter 2018–2019

## Series 1: The Big Story

*A series by Lee Ann Alexander*

**Series Big Idea:** The big story of Scripture shows us the importance of experiencing God’s divine plan and purpose.

### Lesson 1.3: Redemption Made Available

**Lesson Big Idea:** The big story of Scripture shows us the necessity of receiving the redemption Calvary offers.

#### FOUNDATION

**Scripture Focus:** I Peter 1:17-21 (PPT)

The blow pummeled his back and he fell to the rock-strewn path, only to be roused by the jeers of the soldiers. He shook his head and pushed to his feet, the blood and sweat stinging his eyes. He hadn’t been whipped like the silent stranger behind him the crowds were so obsessed with, but the soldiers had still taken their usual blows as they waited impatiently for the political games with Barabbas and this stranger to end. Every blow seemed to hurt worse as his fate drew nearer.

Not that he hadn’t deserved it. As the day drug on to the shouts of the mob and the increasingly violent attacks of the soldiers, the dark past consumed him more and more. He tried to block out the memories of it all—every vile thing he’d done. But with every memory he dismissed, another more gruesome and agonizing took its place. He was now face to face with a feeling he’d always been able to control. But now it was here. Shame. He couldn’t dismiss it, couldn’t reason it away or drown it out with the usual distractions. It was here to go along with the sure justice that was coming. As sickening as the thought of the cross was, the ceaseless plague of guilt and shame was worse.

As he topped the hill and glanced back over his shoulder, his eyes fell again to the silent man. What was it about this man they called Jesus that was so intriguing? So . . . irresistible?

A group of women offering plaintive laments broke through the jeering mob and He broke His silence, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children” (Luke 23:28, NKJV).

A chill ran through his body at the stranger’s words. The words were so certain, this Jesus so unlike anyone he had ever seen, even with all the most feared men he’d met.

But now the soldiers surrounded him and his heart pounded as the nails came. He gave in to the pain as he was hoisted and every cell protested every breath. Even the mocking couldn’t distract him from the pain. He tried to focus on it to block the other sensations, but it seemed the soldiers were consumed with tormenting this Jesus. Why were the soldiers so obsessed with Him? He was certainly the main attraction as they gambled for His clothes and taunted Him.

The longer he stared at this Jesus, the more he realized how very different He was. To the soldiers' abuse, He only answered, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34, KJV). In contrast to his own hate and fear and seething wickedness, this silent, suffering One only showed mercy and love.

Maybe that was why he said it. It had happened so fast. In the midst of the soldiers' jeers, their fellow prisoner yelled furiously, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

Instinctively something burst inside and the words angrily tumbled out, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong!"

With that he turned to find Jesus staring at Him with patience—could it be . . . love? The weight of his shame swallowing him, he pleaded, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42, NKJV).

And then He spoke. His voice seemed to emit something tangible—an arm of love as if Jesus were embracing Him. His words wrapped around him and he felt the glorious release of shame as Jesus whispered, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43, NKJV).

## FRAME

The curtain comes up on the third act of the big story with the drama at a fever pitch. After the first two characters on the stage (Adam and Eve) rejected the hero's plan, God mercifully spared them from the just penalty of death, but the stage changed with Paradise lost and the humans now toiling for survival. Generations follow who likewise bounce back and forth in bouts of sometimes choosing to follow God and sometimes choosing to follow the idols society heralded.

**Despite humanity's rejection, God continued to offer the invitation to fellowship with Him. (PPT)** He would speak intimately with a man named Abraham and call this special offer of relationship a covenant. In it, He would declare His desire to have a special people and the terms of that arrangement to allow flawed humanity to join with holy God. This conundrum necessitated man have a means of making payment for sin. And so a procession of characters representing generation after generation march across the stage to illustrate the story of battles fought, sacrifices offered, and miracles witnessed as **God pursued His people across the centuries. (PDG, PPT)**

- **How do you fit into God's timeless plan to be in relationship with His people?**

Center stage in this melee is a giant altar swathed in blood and the stench of burning animal carcasses so pungent the audience recoils. But the narrator declares **this temporary system of the Law serves to point to a better, lasting means by which humanity would be redeemed, or bought back from the penalty of sin. (PDG, PPT)**

*Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out*

*of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. (Jeremiah 31:31–34, NKJV) (PPT)*

At once the scene changes and by some impressive theatrical device, the altar is replaced with a manger lit up center stage with the spotlight. A young couple pantomimes the storyline of a baby being born—a special baby fully God and fully man. And the sound comes up as His name “Jesus” is announced. **God Himself came to save His people. (PPT)**

- **Is the true meaning of Christmas still precious to you?**
- **How can you keep the awe of Jesus’ coming fresh in your heart?**

The set changes and the audience marvels at His miraculous wisdom, in awe at the realization that He is God become flesh. He crosses to stage left and turns water into wine and then to stage right to bring to life a dead woman. The miracles defy logic, and the audience waits with bated breath to see His next feat.

And yet there is a tension. For all along the story, prophets have stepped into the spotlight with a soliloquy that foreshadows the sacrifice of a savior to reconcile the penalty for all humanity’s sin. All signs point to this perfect man. But surely it cannot be. Surely no author of a story this perfect would slay the hero.

But remember this hero is as merciful as He is mighty. He sees generations of people bound by the curse of their sins, fighting their shame and incapable of ridding themselves of their sins or overcoming its constant onslaught.

And so the lights come up on a garden—this time where our hero prays in agony, wrestling with the weight of the scene we now recognize is inevitable if humanity will be free and God can again have deep communion with His people.

The audience perks up to the sound of feet marching. Into this garden burst Roman soldiers, led by one of the characters in Jesus’ inner circle. A brief scuffle with swords and away our hero goes without a fight.

Torture, interrogation, and unjust trial dominate the scene. Soldiers mock Jesus, beat Him, and mash a crown of thorns on His head in reverse irony. The audience watches in horror as the crowd who had benefited from His miracles now cry, “Crucify Him!”

- **Why do you think the crowd cried for Jesus’ death?**
- **Are there ways in which you too could be guilty of rejecting the Savior and how He wants to be Lord in all areas of your life? Explain.**

And then He was brutally nailed to a cross, it was dropped into the earth, and **Jesus died for our sins. (PPT)** He died so we did not have to pay for our sins. Mercy trumped justice and He became the payment for our freedom.

After Jesus died, the disciples buried Him in a tomb soldiers sealed with an enormous stone. Paranoia and political maneuvering in place, Jewish and Roman leaders scurried to eliminate the political threat Jesus posed. They were convinced the disciples would steal the body to try to make it look as if Jesus had risen as He said He would. However, little did they realize the big story was powerful far beyond their many lines of the script.

The audience senses the height of the story has arrived, and indeed, something amazing happens. Women creep across the stage, fearful and furtive, coming to anoint the body of Jesus. And as they arrive at the tomb, the spotlight bathes it, but the dreadful stone is askew. Trembling, the women peer into the tomb. Empty.

Suddenly two angels appear beside them. The women collapse, bowing their faces to the ground. But the angels gently and slowly announce the truth that echoes across the stage: Jesus is risen.

The scene changes as John and Peter race across the stage to the tomb. Empty.

- **How do you think John and Peter felt when they saw the empty tomb?**
- **Are there situations in your life that feel hopeless for which you need Jesus' resurrection power? Explain.**

Audience members find themselves leaning forward in their seats, wanting to peer over the shoulders of the animated John and Peter. **Jesus rose from the grave to take dominion over the power of death. (PDG, PPT)** It was not just enough for Jesus to die. Had He only died, though His death would be admirable, He could do no more for humanity than provide the inspiration of a noble martyr. But because Jesus came back to life from death, He proved once and for all His deity, His power, and His complete authority over everything in Heaven and earth.

*Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1:20–21, NKJV) (PPT)*

As the audience stares at the open grave, the narrator explains that with Jesus' resurrection, He defeated Satan and his plan to bring eternal destruction and torment to all of humanity. With the shed blood of Jesus and His resurrection power, the curse of death was broken.

*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:14–15, NKJV) (PPT)*

- **Jesus is Lord, ruling and reigning over all the earth and heavens; is He Lord in your heart? Explain.**
- **Only you can surrender that authority to Him; is there anything you need to yield so He can have dominion in your life?**

Realization dawns on an emotional audience as they perceive that with Jesus' sacrifice, He created humanity's ultimate hope. This, the narrator announces, is the gospel. **The gospel is the good news that Jesus died, was buried, and resurrected to redeem humanity.**

*And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (I Peter 1:17–21, NKJV) (PPT)*

Scripture bears out the gospel message and how we can respond to it. As Peter wrote, "The precious blood of Christ" redeems us (I Peter 1:19). Peter's metaphor of redemption recalls the metaphor of a slave being freed from his master by the payment of a ransom. In that sense, every human is a slave to the curse of sin. Jesus paid our ransom so we can be redeemed, or bought and released from our bondage to sin. This is our hope and faith.

- **Have you responded to the gospel message? Explain.**
- **How can you share the gospel with others?**

## **FINISH**

January 22, 2012, seemed like an ordinary day—well, as ordinary as it could have been for the Tysons. Life for the Tyson family on the western coast of England was anything but typical. George Tyson, a sixty-one-year-old carpenter, cared for his son Garry, thirty-two, who was physically disabled after suffering severe head injuries when he fell out of an upstairs window as a toddler. A dedicated father, George prioritized his time with Garry, stopping his carpentry projects to devote a part of his afternoon each day to a walk with Garry along the coast of the Irish Sea.

On this particular Sunday, George was taking Garry on a stroll along a coastal road in a village near their home. Investigators say at approximately 4:00 pm a white compact car rounded a curve, careening toward them at high speeds. Perhaps the teen driver didn't see them; perhaps he lost control. Investigators may never know precisely why the accident took place.

What they do know comes from eyewitnesses. As the car hurtled toward George and

Garry, George realized Garry was in the path of the speeding vehicle. In a split second, he made a decision that his family says characterizes his heroic nature. George jumped in front of the flying car and pushed Garry out of its path to safety. As perhaps George foresaw, he bore the brunt of the impact and died at the scene. Garry was airlifted to a hospital and was later released after being treated for minor injuries and shock.

The villagers, who were accustomed to the sight of George and Garry going for walks together, grieved the loss of the man who was so deeply woven into the fabric of the community as an icon of love and care. The Tyson family naturally reeled from the shock. However, George's daughter, Melanie, added, "The story is blessed with his selfless act of saving the life of my brother." (Source: Jaya Narain, "A Father's Sacrifice: Hero Pushes Disabled Son out of Path of Car and Dies as He Takes the Full Impact," <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2091084/Father-sacrifices-life-leaping-road-save-disabled-son-run-down.html#ixzz56rClGMVc>)

George's story reached beyond the small community as countless readers were moved by the story of the depth of a father's love to sacrifice himself for his son. While the story is indeed noble and should not be minimized in any way, when compared to Jesus' act of atonement for humanity, we see George's actions are but a small glimpse of the more far-sweeping eternal act of Calvary. I was helpless to save myself, but Jesus stepped in and gave His life for me. The path to Calvary was a torturous one and I had done nothing to earn His sacrifice. In fact, I had brought the judgment and penalty on myself. But in His mercy, He offered the ultimate selflessness and became my pardon, paying my penalty in my place. What a travesty if we do not take advantage of Jesus' sacrifice. If you have not received redemption through Jesus, you are throwing away His trip to Calvary. Don't let His sacrifice be in vain; surrender to His grace today.