

# THE BIG PICTURE

## A SHORT BOOK OF AN EPIC STORY

# See the film that accompanies this book!

Bible Society New Zealand presents -

## THE BIG PICTURE: A Short Film of an Epic Story

Experience the Bible story as you've never seen it! From the creation of the world, through to the growth of the church, this incredible New Zealand made short film will inspire you to find your role in God's great story.

Watch the film now at - [www.biblesociety.org.nz/big-picture](http://www.biblesociety.org.nz/big-picture)



# THE BIG PICTURE

A SHORT BOOK OF AN EPIC STORY



Have you ever wanted  
to be part of something  
big? Something outside  
of yourself... bigger than  
everything you see  
around you... larger than  
the whole world?

Well, you are. You're a part of something that affects the whole human race.

Here's a story that's not like any story you've ever heard. It's different because it's your story. It's about you. You're not just reading this story - you're in the story!



This story is  
your story.

Long before the world began, God already was. God never began. He just existed.

But then there was a struggle – evil forces wanting to displace God as the final authority. That battle's still going on.

We don't know why, but there came a time when God created the universe. Stars, and planets, oceans, animals, atoms, electrons and neutrons. And us – people.

The Bible says that  
when God looked  
at what he'd made,  
he liked what he saw.

He says that about you too. When he looks at you he likes what he sees.

But like a war that spills from one country to another, the struggle between good and evil spilled onto earth. People began to disobey God. It began with the very first couple that God made. And it's been part of our lives ever since.

The Bible calls this rebellion sin. It has serious consequences, for our relationship with God, and our relationships with one another. Ever since it started, God has been working on a way out for us.









God's first people – your ancestors – your tupuna – were called Adam and Eve. They had two sons; Cain, and Abel. Both became farmers. Cain grew crops and Abel raised animals. One day they each brought an offering to God. Both offerings were good. Abel really wanted to please God, Cain wanted to look good, but his heart wasn't in it. God told Cain this. And Cain didn't like it.

Cain became jealous of his brother because Abel had pleased God. Cain's jealousy turned into rage, and Cain murdered his brother.

Of course God knew what Cain had done. But even when God challenged Cain, Cain didn't fess up. Cain made the mistake that lots of us make. He

thought that God wouldn't notice. But God does notice. When God looks at us he likes what he sees, but not always what we do!

It would be bad enough if Abel's murder was an isolated incident. But it wasn't.

Sin has infected  
every person ever  
since. It's a serious  
problem, and it  
needed a serious fix.

God's 'fix' was a bold plan to save us from ourselves and from sin and to restore the world to its original state. It was a long term plan, and it involved his Son, Jesus. Jesus didn't actually appear here until many years later, but he was in on the plan from the beginning.

God's plan needed people.

So he chose an old couple called Abraham and Sarah, gave them a family, and made that family into a nation. It took more than 400 years; they spent most of that time as slaves in Egypt. When they were ready, God gave them a country. They called it Israel.

Israel's first leaders were called judges and God led through them. But Israel rejected God's leadership and wanted kings. So God gave them kings.

The second and most famous king was David – a soldier, musician, poet and someone who really wanted to please God. He was good for Israel.

But David, as godly  
as he was, was still  
capable of serious sin.





On a hot afternoon, David sees his neighbour's wife bathing in a courtyard near his house. He calls her in, with one thing in mind. Then, when she becomes pregnant, David plots to kill her husband, who is a soldier in his army. David sets him up to die in battle, so he can marry the woman and cover up his sin.

But God's prophet Nathan challenges David to come clean. David makes no excuses.

He cries out to God  
for forgiveness, and  
God forgives him.

We can learn a lot from David. He tried hard to follow God, and he probably thought that he wasn't capable of the sin that he committed. But sin can get to all of us. God knew that sin was a bigger problem than any one person could deal with. It's just as well God had a plan.

It's important to know that, even though David was forgiven, his behaviour echoed through his family for years after, and eventually showed itself in a massive family feud.

We can be forgiven,  
but the effects of sin  
can't always be erased.

David has another part in the story. Joseph, in the Christmas story – the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus – was descended from King David.

After David, whenever God's people talked about the saviour they hoped God would send to save them, they talked about that person being a king like David.

Israel was good for a while after David's reign, but then it went downhill.

They never really understood that they were special, that God wanted

them as an example for everyone.

Instead, the Israelites wanted to be like everybody else, worshipping other gods and ripping off the poor. Instead of being change agents, they just blended. Sound familiar?

Eventually Israel was invaded by other countries. Most of God's people were taken away as captives. Others became refugees. A few stayed in Israel, and some returned when they could, but it was never the same. Israel could never be what God had wanted, because his people were always dominated by enemy rulers.









At the end of the Old Testament – the first part of the Bible – it looks like the whole thing was for nothing.

But God hadn't finished. Not by a long way! He still had a plan to restore his creation back to original settings – that serious fix to the serious problem.

This is where Jesus – God's son – comes in.

God came to earth  
in the person of  
Jesus, to show God's  
total love for the  
people he had made.

Jesus came as the saviour the Israelites had waited for. But in their continual search for a warrior king riding in from the east to destroy their Roman oppressors, they completely missed Jesus being born. It happened in a dirty stable amongst farm animals – the first of many disappointments to those who were looking out for a king.

## Jesus was more like a servant than a king!

He told people to love their enemies, not destroy them. He echoed the same message God had been sending them for so long: “Turn away from sin and give your heart to God.”

But people didn't want to hear him. They put their hands over their ears and hoped he'd go away.

The religious leaders hated him the most. They stalked him, looking for any excuse to get him.

## Eventually they killed him.

Jesus' last words were “It is finished.” It wasn't Jesus' life that was finished – it was God's plan to save the world from sin. When Jesus died, he died with our sin on his shoulders. And everyone else's sin too.







But for three days it seemed like God's great plan was an epic failure. This solution to the world's sin, planned way back before Abraham, seemed to be dead.

But in the greatest miracle of all time, God brought Jesus back to life.

Jesus was given a new life that would never die again. That's really important because the Bible tells us that Jesus is just the first of many who will be brought back to life in this way – including you – if you follow Jesus.

When Jesus rose from the dead, the whole Bible story suddenly made sense. This was the plan that God had been working on all that time. It was a plan that didn't just look back in history. It also looked forward – 2,000 years and more – to us. When Jesus died on the cross, you were already in God's plans.

Jesus only stayed on earth about six weeks after his resurrection. Then he returned to Heaven, where God is. Over history, God hasn't spent much physical time on earth. It's not because he's not interested. Since Jesus returned to heaven, God has chosen to work on earth in a new way - an amazing partnership - God's Holy Spirit working through people. Like you ...

## God uses individuals, and also groups. We call them churches.

Churches as in groups of people with a special calling – to love God and love one another, and to make a difference to the whole world!

One of the first churches was begun by Paul, an early Christian leader, very soon after Jesus came back to life. This church was in Corinth, a city famous for corruption and all kinds of religious beliefs. And people being what they are, this corruption spilled into the church.

They started strongly and then got bogged down in strife, with everyone arguing and no-one loving anyone very much.

Paul wrote to them, to try and stop them from arguing all the time and teaching them how to deal with immorality and how to stay true to Jesus. He told them they needed to love one another. If the church has everything else sorted but people don't love one another, then we really have nothing sorted at all.







Paul also said just how important it is that Jesus came back to life. That if he hadn't, we're wasting our time being the church. But with Jesus alive, and still involved, the church is something special. It's a lot more than just people getting together on Sunday.

The church is a movement – the church in your suburb and the church worldwide is a movement with a purpose – to be God's people in God's world, doing God's work, in God's power. Moving towards the big finale – where God will restore the creation settings to what he had always intended!

So what about you?

This story that you've just heard is still unfolding. It's a story that you are a character in, like a screenplay. If you follow Jesus, you're in this story.

You are one of God's change agents – charged with continuing the story that God started way back at the beginning of the Bible. Writing history with your life!

So take the stage.  
It's your call. Step  
into the lights and  
carry on the story.

# How you can be part of God's plan.

You've probably heard people complaining about how such-and-such-a-book was way better than the movie. This couldn't be truer for the Bible!

The Bible is the world's best-selling book, and each year sells more copies in New Zealand than any other book. But it's not an easy read. Many people, including Christians struggle to make any sense of the Bible and simply give up reading it. This is partly because it's hard for us to read such a big book in small chunks over time, and still understand the overall story.

But if you've seen *The Big Picture* film (or read this book), you'll have a better understanding of how it all fits together.







When you read the Bible, it's important to remember that it's about God's plan to deal with the problem of sin and restore the world to the way he originally created it.

God's plan of course was to do this through his son, Jesus.

*The Big Picture* movie tells the overall Bible story of creation, the fall of people into sin and then God's forgiveness or 'redemption'. As you read the Bible, you'll discover that this creation, fall, redemption theme repeats itself over and over again, especially in the lives of God's people.

A good example is King David, who was made great by God (creation), but then ruins all he has by committing a sin with Bathsheba (fall). David then asks God for forgiveness and God forgives him (redemption). Can you see this pattern repeating in your life?



## So, where do I start?

An important question! If you start reading the Bible at the beginning, like an ordinary book, you'll probably get bogged down somewhere in Exodus or Leviticus (the second and third books of the Bible). Even though these two books are an essential part of the Bible, they can be difficult to read if you're not a regular Bible reader.

So start in Genesis (the very first book of the Bible). This will help you understand how God created the universe and how people ruined the relationship they had with God. You'll also be introduced to Abraham and Sarah and the nation of Israel that God created through them.

When you've completed Genesis, skip about 1,700 years to the New Testament, which is nearly three quarters of the way through your Bible. The first four books of the New Testament are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These books are about the birth, life, death and coming back to life (resurrection) of Jesus, as seen through the eyes of four different writers. Read these, then Acts, the next book in the New Testament. Acts is about what happened after Jesus' time on earth and the beginning of the church.

After this, you could carry on reading in the New Testament, or if you want a bit more of a historical background, go back to the Old Testament and begin reading from Exodus onwards.



## Thee's and Thou's

A long time ago, the only English Bible you could get was full of Shakespeare type language – with words like thee and thou and begat. What? The King James Version of the Bible is a very important Bible in history, but it was first published way back in 1611. It's fair to say that the English language has changed heaps since then! There are now much easier to understand versions available.

Try the New Living Translation, the Good News Bible or the Contemporary English Version if you're having trouble understanding the language of your Bible. These versions translate the Bible text into plain English.



## How Do I Read the Bible?

The Bible is not like any other book. Some books, like text books, you read for information. Other books, like story books, you read to be engrossed in a great story. Still others, like manuals, you read to know how to fix things. You can read the Bible like a text book, story book or a manual, but the Bible has a whole other dimension to it!

The Bible is a book that God uses to speak to you.

Some people say the Bible is alive. The Bible comes alive through the work of the Holy Spirit.

When you read the Bible with an open heart and mind, you're putting yourself in a position for God to speak to you.

## How do I know when God speaks to me through the Bible?

It's important for you to spend time with God alone. Take your Bible to a quiet place. Begin by talking to God – acknowledge that he is God of the whole universe and thank him that he loves all the people in the world he created. Pray that whatever he wants done will be done on earth. Then talk to God about what's going on in your life.

Be straight-up with him, he wants to hear what's on your heart.

Tell him how you feel and what you need help with. Pray for others in your family, community and around the world too.

Then ask him to help you understand what you're about to read. Ask God to speak to you through the Bible.

Read the passage you've chosen slowly. It's good to read it more than once. Is there anything that stands out? Anything that God is showing you? Is there anything in the passage that gives you comfort or makes some sense of something that's going on in your life right now? If so, then this could be God speaking to you.







Make sure you pray about it over time to see if it really is something God is saying to you.

Write it down in a journal and come back to it. Seek guidance from other Christians you know and trust also.

Another important thing to remember is that the Bible reveals who God is to us.

The Bible tells us all about God, what he's like, how he treats us, what he wants us to be like and how he wants us to live in the world.

So sometimes God will speak directly to you through the Bible, other times he might just want you to learn more about him.

# A PLAN

Now you're ready to start reading the greatest book ever! If you need a plan to help you with your Bible reading, then here's one you can follow. It will take 167 days, one chapter a day.

Cross out each chapter as you read it to track your progress.



# GENESIS

Old Testament

1	11	21	31	41
2	12	22	32	42
3	13	23	33	43
4	14	24	34	44
5	15	25	35	45
6	16	26	36	46
7	17	27	37	47
8	18	28	38	48
9	19	29	39	49
10	20	30	40	50

# MATTHEW

New Testament

1	11	21
2	12	22
3	13	23
4	14	24
5	15	25
6	16	26
7	17	27
8	18	28
9	19	
10	20	

# MARK

New Testament

1	11
2	12
3	13
4	14
5	15
6	16
7	
8	
9	
10	

# LUKE

New Testament

1	11	21
2	12	22
3	13	23
4	14	24
5	15	
6	16	
7	17	
8	18	
9	19	
10	20	

# JOHN

New Testament

1	11	21
2	12	
3	13	
4	14	
5	15	
6	16	
7	17	
8	18	
9	19	
10	20	

# ACTS

New Testament

1	11	21
2	12	22
3	13	23
4	14	24
5	15	25
6	16	26
7	17	27
8	18	28
9	19	
10	20	



# ABOUT BIBLE SOCIETY NEW ZEALAND

Bible Society New Zealand is a registered Christian charity focused on getting Bibles into the hands and hearts of people in New Zealand and around the world.

We are a member of the United Bible Societies, a worldwide fellowship of Bible Societies which cooperate to make Bibles available to people everywhere in a language they can understand, in a format they can use and at a price they can afford.

To find out more about us:

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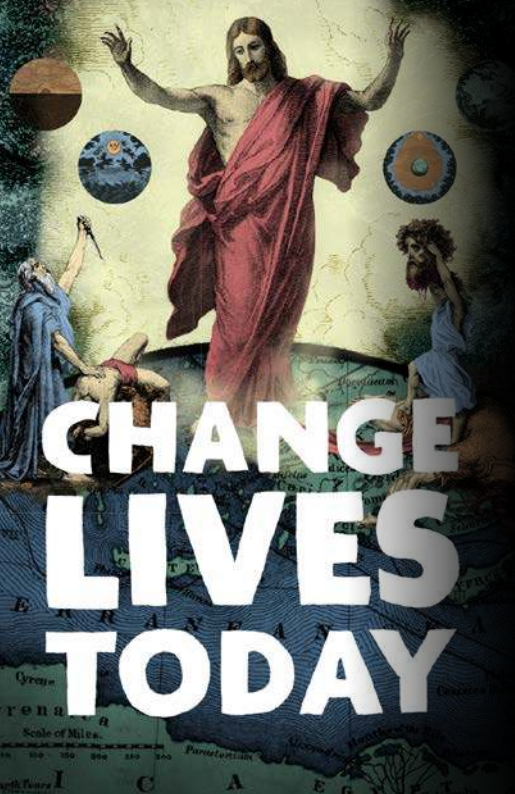
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**CHANGE  
LIVES  
TODAY**

## **BECOME A CHANGE AGENT FOR GOD TODAY**

There are so many opportunities to be change agents for God all around us every day. Read God's Word and find out how others are becoming change agents on the Bible Society NZ page on Facebook.

*Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your father in heaven.*

- Matthew 5:16



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