

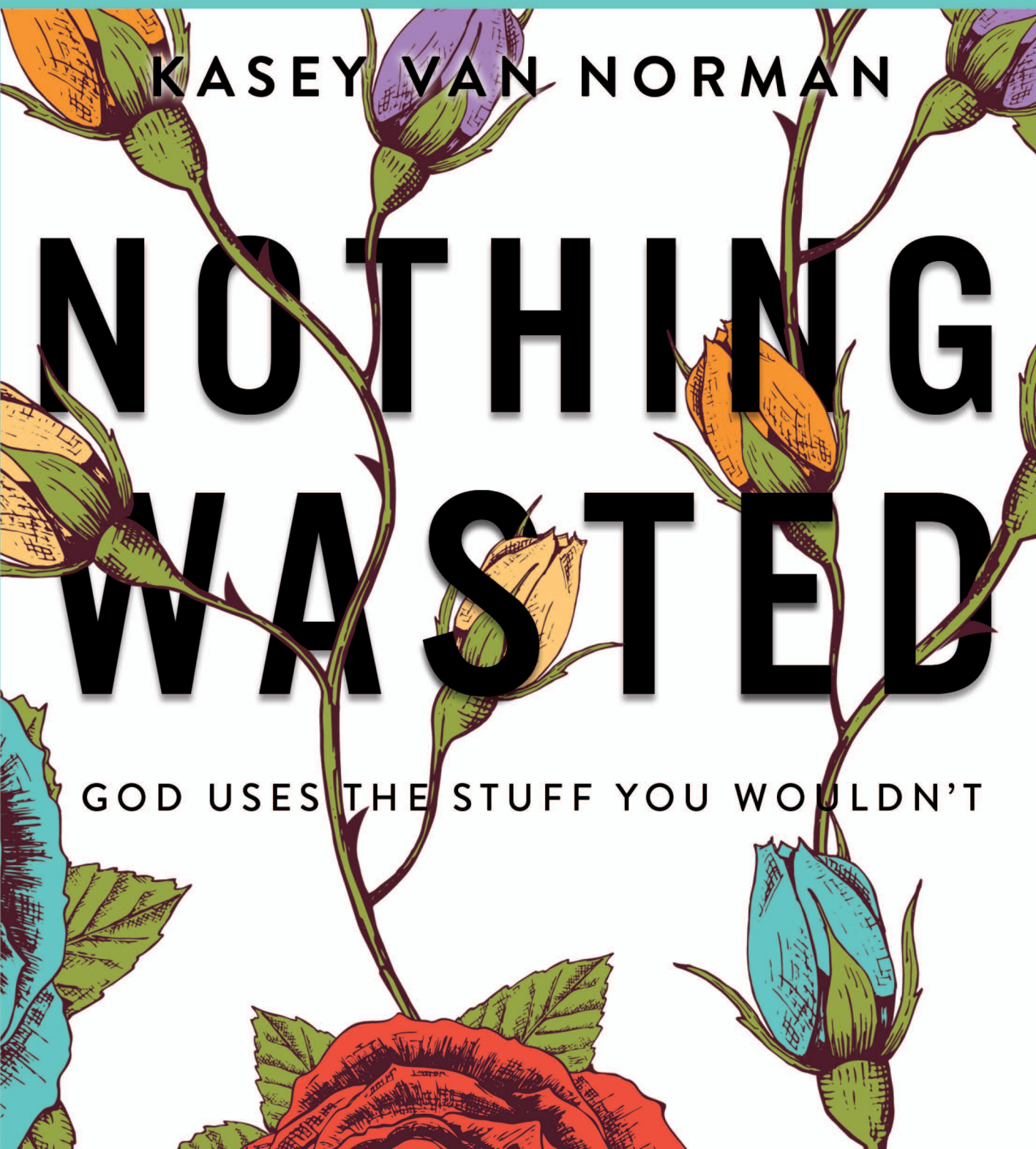
STUDY GUIDE

SIX SESSIONS

KASEY VAN NORMAN

NOTHING WASTED

GOD USES THE STUFF YOU WOULDN'T





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STUDY GUIDE | SIX SESSIONS

KASEY VAN NORMAN

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Nothing Wasted Study Guide

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A NOTE FROM ME TO YOU

Well hello there, love. Welcome. And may I be the first to say thank you. Truly and from the bottom of my heart.

Perhaps you're reluctantly showing up for the first time and already rehearsing the reasons why you don't plan to show up again. Maybe you're surrounded by trusted companions, doing your best to knee-balance a plate of tonight's potluck dinner mix (around which you unashamedly stacked store-bought mini-muffins in lieu of the home-prepared veggie tray). Perhaps, like me at this very minute, you're propped up against a pillow in bed, alone with your thoughts for the first time today, hoping this study might create some semblance of order amidst the chaos.

However and whenever our hearts meet in this crazy world, I am more grateful for you than you will ever know. Whether you're among friends, alone in a crowded room, or alone at your kitchen table, I trust the Lord has brought us together at this exact moment in time to believe him more fully than we ever have before!

In fact, I've been thinking about you for a long time. I've been sure that if this project ever made it to print, it would only be because God himself had prepared a rare and wonderful kind of human to work through it. A human whose life story completely validates the entire premise of this work, but also someone with just enough ache and desperation in their heart that they are willing to risk everything on the possibility God is exactly who he says he is. If you are reading these words right this very minute, I feel compelled to let you in on a secret, "*Pssst. It's you.*"

Perhaps, as I once did, you feel your backstory is either too scandalous or too boring to be used by God in a powerful way. If this is you, I get it. I really do.

After years leading in ministry, hundreds of hours clocked with my therapist, and the ability to share my "testimony" with ease, I reached my mid-thirties feeling more restless in my relationship with God and others than ever before; leery to approach

either with absolute honesty. Attempts to dismiss my past left me defeated; simply praying about it kept me on a loop of self-preservation; and aligning myself with the recurring cheer that our “past does not define us” seemed out of line with the very nature of the God of the Bible.

With few Christian resources available on how to biblically connect where I’ve been with where I’m going, I decided to spend the next few years researching this restlessness for myself. *Nothing Wasted* is the culmination of what I discovered—how I stopped running from, blaming others for, and sugar-coating the cringe-worthiest parts of me. How I stopped rehearsing “what if” and “what would they think,” and instead learned to trust a God with whom there are no accidents. A God who wants me, not in spite of my story but because of it.

This is my journey to finally believing God. I really hope it’s yours too.

Thank you for taking a chance. I love you.

My friends call me,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kase." The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style with a period at the end.

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS EXPERIENCE

Resources You'll Need

1. *Nothing Wasted* DVD or Digital Access (one per group)

Through live teaching, I personally walk you through each group session: challenging you, getting vulnerable with you, and connecting with you through time and distance in the supernatural love of God's Word. Each week's video session is approximately 20 minutes in length. If on your own, watch each week's video session and then journal through the discussion questions provided for you. If in a group, watch each session and openly discuss the questions together.

2. *Nothing Wasted Study Guide* (one per person)

The Bible study guide includes group discussion questions for participants after viewing each new session of video teaching. It also provides days of individual personal study exercises. Each day of personal study should take approximately 15–25 minutes.

3. Your own Bible

For both the group sessions and your individual study time, you will need a Bible you are comfortable reading. Don't stress about the translation—it doesn't have to be the same as mine or as the other people in your group. Just bring a Bible you feel drawn to and can understand easily. I primarily will be using the *New International Version* in the video session teaching and in the personal study. As a side note, some of my favorite and most used translations are the ESV, NIV, and NLT. If you don't have a Bible, get one! If cost is a factor, talk to people at your church and see if they can help you out.

4. Other resources

I recommend getting yourself a good Bible commentary. This will give you background and additional insights into the Scriptures and help you with tricky passages you may encounter. I have found *Logos Bible Software* to be helpful if you'd like an electronic option. Or, *Warren W. Wiersbe's Bible Exposition Commentary* is a favorite hardcover option.

5. *Nothing Wasted* book

The book was written to be read alongside this Bible study. Within the book I go deeper into my own story as well as my breaking point of surrender that ultimately led to God's grace-filled redemption, healing, and restoration of my life. The book will help especially if you are going through this study on your own. Because you won't be alone; you and I will be in the thick of it together.

The Group

- A small group can be as small as three or as big as thirteen. If you have a large group gathering for the video session, great! I encourage you to simply break up into smaller groups for discussion time.
- If you don't go to church and are not a part of a women's group, invite your coworkers, roommates, or moms from your kid's class, to join you!
- If possible, allow two hours of group time each week. This will allow adequate time for watching the video and discussing the questions.



SESSION

1

**GOD DOESN'T
WASTE YOUR
LIFE**

This is a great week to read chapters 1–3 in the book!

Introduction (5 MINUTES)

Leader, please read aloud to group:

Predestined = {a course of events determined in advance by divine will}
—Merriam Webster Dictionary

As humans, we tend to want to settle most matters of life in terms of “either-or.” But with God, life is often “both-and.” Although a “both-and” approach to destiny may not make sense to *our* mortal brain, we are underqualified for the job of universe-ruling. The good news is, *God* is powerful enough to hold together *both* his fixed plan for our life, while also honoring our free will to make decisions that influence our future.

The Bible teaches that while our choices *do* matter and influence the chain of events surrounding the whole of our life, they do not ultimately *determine* our future. This week we will learn that while God has given each of us the gift of free will, he also predestines our will to fit in the course of history he wants us to take. This view of God is a radical, theology-shifting, terrifyingly-liberating perspective, a perspective I sometimes regret I have experience enough to hold before you now. And yet I pray that, like me, you will never unsee the things we speak of here. That even in the midst of our greatest pain, doubt, and shame, we can confidently stake our claim in a God who says:

“Whatever I please, I do, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.”

Psalm 135:6, my paraphrase

“I work all things according to the counsel of my will.”

Ephesians 1:11, my paraphrase

“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’”

Isaiah 46:9–10, my paraphrase

Video Session 1 (18:30 MINUTES)

Watch Video Session 1 and fill in the blanks below.

1. It’s not enough to say God uses our life if he does not also _____ it.
2. All of life’s dismantling will eventually be seen for what it truly is:

_____.

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Romans 8:28 ESV

3. If we don’t believe our life is designed and purposed by God, we will _____.
4. God is using our _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, to speak to us!
5. Never forget! This life is just one big _____ by God!
6. God knows, the closer we are to him, the closer we are to _____.
7. When God asks us to _____ him, he does so only from love, and always for our good.

Group Discussion Questions (30 MINUTES)

Leader, read each question aloud to the group and encourage everyone to share.

1. What is your initial gut-reaction to the title of this Bible study: *Nothing Wasted: God Uses the Stuff You Wouldn't?* Why?
2. If you were to describe how God orders events throughout history, what language would you choose? For example, "God permits . . ." "God orchestrates . . ." "God allows . . ." "God hopes . . ." Share your reasoning.
3. What does it mean for God to be "sovereign" (refer to Intro definition) over everything? What is liberating about this belief? What is difficult about this belief?
4. Look up and read Proverbs 16:1. As a group talk for a moment about this verse. What feelings, thoughts, questions does it evoke?
5. As you think about the whole of your life story thus far, to which statement do you most relate? "My story is too *rebellious* to be useful to God." Or, "My story is too *boring* to be useful to God." Share with the group why you chose your statement. (You don't have to be detailed in your response.)

SESSION 1 FOCUS

God wastes no part of my story.

He has designed me on purpose, for purpose.

Closing Prayer

(lead out or ask for a volunteer)

Points of prayer for Session One:

- Conviction to complete the entire week of personal study.
- Supernatural energy and alertness to the way God is speaking to our hearts.
- Grace for the days we feel overwhelmed.
- Self-control to say “no” to good things and “yes” to best things.
- Patience to read and reread the Scripture prompts until our minds are clear with understanding.



PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

Session 1

GOD DOESN'T WASTE YOUR LIFE

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Day 1

The Setup

This week my aim is to help you identify who God is to you *right now*, in light of who he's been to you in the past. My hope is that by the end of your devoted week of study, you will be just as convinced as I am that God has faithfully loved you all along; shaping, designing, and guiding the path of your entire life—good, bad, and ugly.

God's work in our lives does not begin the moment we are saved or at that one time of crisis we cried out to him because nothing else seemed to work. The shape of our entire lives was clear and useful to God long before we were born. Our parents, the neighborhood we grew up in, our skin color, financial situation, and point in human history, all thread together with our individual personality, style, and abilities, to bring maximum glory and honor to God's plan for eternity.

Our lives, including marriage and parenting as examples, are just one big setup to trust him more!

No one could have prepared me for how difficult marriage and parenting would be. Oh sure, I read books, attended conferences, and listened to the advice of those experienced in both. But advice could only take me so far. Not until I was a wife and mother for *myself* did I fully grasp the reality of responsibility those positions held. Even now, after twenty years of marriage and having children who are nearly teenagers, I feel as though each day is setting me up to trust God more quickly and frequently.

So is *life* for us all.

Life is one big leading question with God as the answer.

Day after day, God is setting us up to know him more, trust him more, and be satisfied by him more. Instead of recounting our seasons of pain, rebellion, and failure in self-loathing, bitterness, or anger, God gives us the grace to receive them as opportunity—an opportunity to believe God more naturally and more confidently than we did

last time. Only in desperation and dependence will *his* nature bypass our requirements and become our reality.

Look up and read Matthew 16:13–17. Consider asking yourself the same question Jesus asks Peter in Matthew 16:15. How would you reply?

According to this passage, why is Simon Peter *blessed* by his answer?

Although Jesus is asking the question in flesh-and-blood conversation, whose voice is Peter receiving access to *through* the presence of Jesus?

God, our Father, speaks no differently to us now than he did to Peter then. He speaks to our Spirit *through* Jesus, *for* Jesus. God uses language, tone, inflection, and narrative to tell us exactly how he feels about us and what his plan is for us. God speaks to us through words. But not just any words, *the* Word.

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

Hebrews 1:1–2 ESV

List three characteristics of the WORD God speaks to us based on John 1:1–14.

1. John 1:2 _____

2. John 1:11 _____

3. John 1:14 _____

Whatever religious, comforting message wooed us in to the submission of belief and behavior, it will only lead to shame and condemnation without the words of Jesus as the *reality* of our heart. In other words, to hear from God, we must take personal *ownership* of our relationship with Jesus, not ride on the faithful coattails of others.

Is there an aspect of faith you embrace simply because someone else does it or because someone seemingly more intelligent than you said it? Example: going to church, doing this Bible study, a core belief, an opinion about someone else, serving on a committee, etc.?

If Jesus is not our *personal* reality, then he is merely a spiritual pacifier; a good feeling when we show up for church; a great idea when life takes a nose-dive; a happy concept when we need to encourage someone in a dark place. But Jesus did not bleed and die to be a feeling, idea, or concept. He died to absorb every ounce of shame and condemnation we've felt over past sinful choices. And he rose to empower us to make a new, better choice for our future.

*"Yeah, yeah, Peter. I hear what everyone else is saying about me. But what about you? Who do **you** say that I am?"* (vs. 15, my paraphrase)

At the end of the day, when no one is looking, who is Jesus to you? If no other opinion mattered, if the score card and social media never existed, how often do you trust Jesus with your life . . . really?

Place a mark next to who Jesus is to you *right now* as your eyes meet this page . . .

_____ The main character of the Bible.

_____ The reason why everything is happening.

_____ A good person who lived a good example of how to love others.

_____ A real relationship I am 100 percent committed to.

_____ The only way I will truly hear the voice of God.

God wants us to take ownership of our faith. Therefore, he uses our life story to set us up for an honest, intimate relationship with him, a relationship so real and true that we communicate with him as a friend and seek wisdom from him as a father. God also wants to speak directly to us inside that reality, not as a mystical force or comforting concept, but as a *real relationship*. He will continue to ask us “who do you say I am?” through the people and experiences of our lives, *until* we believe his word for ourselves and, in turn, make decisions and take action from the ownership of that belief.

Please describe one way God is setting you up to believe him more right now. How does your current season of life reveal a need to trust God more today than you did yesterday?

What is one area of your theology or core belief that you need to investigate more thoroughly? In other words, is there a particular subject of your faith you need to take ownership of? (i.e., what God says about premarital sex, how to pray, who to trust, political position, or your stance on homosexual relationships)

Day 2

Trust the Process

God's Word encourages us to remember our past. To think deeply about the experiences and people who have shaped us, and how they continue to influence our decisions in the present. He wants us to ask questions about the hard things, investigate the unexplainable things, get mad about the painful things, and celebrate the best things.

What he doesn't want? For us to get stuck on the thing itself as our identity.

He has no desire for a specific event or person to give meaning to our lives. Instead, he predetermines every event and person to impact our lives at the exact, right moment to see his meaning more clearly.

**“I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes,
I will remember your wonders of old.
I will ponder all your work, and meditate
on your mighty deeds.”**

Psalm 77:11–12 ESV

**“I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;
I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.”**

Psalm 9:1 ESV

**“And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan,
Joshua set up at Gilgal. And he said to the people of Israel,
‘When your children ask their fathers in times to come, “What
do these stones mean?” then you shall let your children
know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’”**

Joshua 4:20–21 ESV

**“Remember the former things, those of long ago;
I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me.”**

Isaiah 46:9

Slowing down long enough to remember how our past shapes our present, is critically important to our future relationship with God. Think for a moment about the important people in your life: a parent, boyfriend/girlfriend, child, best friend, or spouse. How did these particular people become special to you? In what way did they claim their position of priority in your life? That’s right, over time.

It took time for you to get to know them, trust them, learn about them. Think about how methodically you studied your greatest romances. We can spend hours on the phone, infatuated with questions over someone we really care about. The same is true for our relationship with God. If we really want to know him, we must study him. And yes, of course, through the reading of his Word, but also through the specific ways he has shown that Word to be true over the course of our entire lives.

Look up and read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Based on this verse, is trusting God in relationship a fast or slow process? _____

We can enjoy loads of freedom in the imagery that our relationship grows in God by “degree.” Think of the slow shift in temperature from 70 to 71 degrees. Most people may not even notice the change. Perhaps we don’t even realize the shift of atmosphere at first. But slowly, over time, we can look back and see the small, gradual moves from cold to hot faith in God.

If 10 degrees represents apathy and complacency in your relationship with God, and 100 degrees represents a burning passion to trust and obey God, place a mark on the degree of your relationship with God right now.

10 _____ 30 _____ 50 _____ 70 _____ 100

If you marked 50 or below, can you remember a time in your past when your love for God burned hotter? If so, describe what was going on at that time:

If you marked 50 or above, what is currently going on in your life to help you raise the temperature of your desire to be in relationship with God?

Read Ephesians 1:3–12 to answer the following questions (circle correct answer):

1. At what point in time did we receive God's full blessing on our life?

The moment of our
salvation

Once we got our act
together

Before the founda-
tions of the world

2. God's purpose for our entire life first needed input from _____
to become a reality.

Us

Jesus

No one

3. According to verse 11, how much of our life happens according to the predeter-
mined will of God?

Some of it

Most of it

All of it

It's overwhelming. I get it. To believe God is in control over the good and happy moments of our life is one thing, but to trust he also had in mind all of the bad stuff too? It's a traumatizing consideration.

How could it be that God foreknew the evil of rape, and still let it happen? Or the devastation of poverty, racial discrimination, and addiction? How could God let someone be born to an absent or abusive father, or foresee a marriage that would end in divorce without sending flashing lights and signs to run the other direction?

According to verse 12, God's plan for our life is working out exactly the way he intends for one simple reason:

So that we can make sense of it

That we will feel better about our situation

To bring praise to Jesus

Nothing in the universe exists for its own sake. Everything exists to make the greatness of Christ more fully known—including you, the most annoying person you know, your worst day, and their worst day.

This truth changes everything for us. The concept of a sovereign God, governing both good and evil, ought to send a wave of emotion through your body, the consideration itself leading us to ask even more questions.

Good. It's time to start asking questions. It's time to investigate and dig for the absolute truth God is offering us in a world spinning on the axis of subjectivity.

How does it make you feel to consider God predetermines every person and event of your life? Is it liberating, maddening, confusing? Take a moment to write down your most honest thoughts:

As we move forward in study, don't let go of the "degree" imagery. Remember, a solid relationship takes times to build. Trust must be established through consistency of presence in both the hills and valleys. Our world teaches us to get what we want when we want it. But with God, the process is the point.

Let yourself be free to consider your life as a journey, not an arrival. Slowly and intentionally, step by step, trust the process of God.

Day 3

A Story to Be Told

God uses our mortal lifespan to slowly and intentionally transcend what we think we know about him, in order to give us a *true experience* of him. He uses one specific tool to accomplish this mission—a story.

Everyone's life is a story. And God clearly uses the art of storytelling as the language to stimulate the parts of us that are deeply connected to him.

Look up and read Ecclesiastes 3:11. According to this verse, what specific part of God are we designed to connect with?

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–15.

What parts of David's person are stimulated through Nathan's storytelling?

His mind

His emotions

His behavior

Storylines not only connect us to one another, they create an opportunity for our nature to sync up to God's.

Storytelling is the oldest tool of influence in human history because it forces both the left and right side of our brain to work together—logic with creativity, facts with feelings, analysis with dreaming.

Read Exodus 6:1–8 for a *left-brain* experience.

Read Galatians 5:1 for a *right-brain* experience.

Both passages are saying the same thing in different ways. Now that both your left and right brain are working together, write the collaborative point of both passages?

Like eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11), our desire to know and be known by others through the movement of story is deeply engrained in us. God created us with this desire, but also because he created his Son to be incredibly passionate about communicating through the art of storytelling.

Look up and read Matthew 13:34, then fill in the blanks.

All these things Jesus said to the crowds in _____; indeed, he said nothing to them without a _____.

Our life story allows us access to the grand narrative God is writing. But remembering our past is far from easy. Most of the messages we have heard over the course of our life evoke fear or shame when it comes to our past. Somewhere along the way we have believed the lie that our past does not define our present, and if it did, that would be a bad thing.

God tethers a pattern to our soul—a rhythm that our heart beats to without us realizing it—a loop that is replayed over and over throughout the course of the best and worst parts of our life. Redemption.

On pages 26–28 read each passage, answer the questions, and consider the related thought.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

Genesis 1:1–2 ESV

What seems to be the setting of this story? _____

Who do you think is the main character? _____

Consider: In the beginning, God; not in the beginning, us. What thoughts/feelings do you experience when you read that this world started for God and not for us?

“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

Genesis 1:3

What tells us something is about to happen here? _____

Consider: Despite the darkness we may feel, light is what happens when we engage the love of God and apply it to our past.

What are some of the darkest feelings or thoughts you experience when the lights are out?

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’”

Genesis 1:26 ESV

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

Genesis 2:15–17 ESV

What is the “Rising Action” here? Rising action is the movement in a scene that makes you want to stick around to see what will happen next.

Consider: God creates his masterpiece, human beings, to reflect him and represent him on earth. In the garden, man and woman do not need God because they are sinful but simply because they are created beings—a result of intelligent design, not random mutation. Because God loves them so much, he wants to show them love through his promise of provision, blessing, abundant life, and the sweetest gift of all—the freedom in not being God.

Do you currently feel as though someone is constantly disappointing you or that you are disappointing someone? How would this relationship specifically change if you/they resigned yourselves to not be God?

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Genesis 3:15 ESV

The “Falling Action” of a story is oftentimes a hard, painful, or sad scene to watch, but it is also the movement leading toward a resolution. Describe what you think is happening here.

Consider: A new scene in God’s story has just been introduced to the humans. The Director wrote the story from beginning to end long before “the beginning” credits. He knew that this would be the scene that changes everything. Enter: the hero—the “he” referred to above is Jesus. A rescue mission has commenced.

Where are you in this scene? Write a few words about your first encounter with Jesus and how exactly you feel that you need (or don’t need) him to rescue you right now . . .

Day 4

Context Is Key

God knows his glory and holiness is too much for rebel humans to behold. Why? Because it changes us. His glory reminds us that we are dependent on something besides ourselves for life, love, and happiness. The realization that we are not God and incapable of saving people can paralyze us in doubt, shame, or fear. Therefore, God came to us in a form more palatable and identifiable to our frailty. He came as a human. He made himself one of us.

Jesus told more than thirty stories during his public ministry. Stories that help us think deeply. Stories that come through the back door of our preconceived notions, stereotypes, and defenses.

Stories such as the “Speck and the Log,” warning us against the hypocrisy of judging another person. Or, the story of the “Lost Sheep,” helping us understand the magnitude of God’s love in his pursuit of a relationship with us.

An outline is a necessary first step to any good story. So, let’s do that!

Think of one *descriptive word* for each *season of life* I have listed below. Your word does not need to be deep, profound, or even 100 percent accurate—just the first word you think of that would best describe that time as you remember it. I have given you an example from my life to help get you started.

NAME: Kasey

LIFE-STAGE (IN YEARS)	DESCRIPTIVE WORD
5 to 10	Confusing
11 to 14	Overwhelmed
15 to 18	Rebellious
19 to 25	Hard
26 to 30	Lowest Point
31 to 40	Reckoning
41 to 50	Redemptive

NAME: _____

LIFE-STAGE (IN YEARS)	DESCRIPTIVE WORD
5 to 10	
11 to 14	
15 to 18	
19 to 25	
26 to 30	
31 to 40	
41 to 50	
51 to 60	
61 to 70+	

Read Exodus 1:1–6. The children of Israel were originally from Canaan and descendants of who? _____

Who was Joseph? (Read Genesis 41:39–45) _____

Why did the descendants of Joseph travel to Egypt? (Read Genesis 41:56–57)

The Israelite people were originally welcomed into Egypt under the watchful eye of Joseph, but many years had passed, and the new king of Egypt was not a fan.

Why was the new king so intimidated? (Read Exodus 1:8) _____

Apparently, Egypt was a great place to live under Joseph’s rule, because the Israelites never returned to their homeland of Canaan. Instead, they settled in, found work, got married, and had babies—lots and lots of babies.

What orders were given by the king when his fear of being overthrown by the Israelites consumed him? (Read Exodus 1:15–16) _____

But what happened instead? (Read Exodus 1:17) _____

At this time, Hebrew women could have easily been assimilated into the Egyptian population. Females would have been integrated into the Egyptian families through marriage, as concubines, or as servants. Yet, the large number of men made it impossible for the Egyptians to achieve the one-world domination and government they desired. So, the king gave orders to kill all the male Hebrew babies.

Can you imagine the length of creativity a mother would be willing to go in such desperate times as this?

What did Jochebed do to save the life of her son? (Read Exodus 2:1–4) _____

Who found Jochebed’s son? (Read Exodus 2:5–6) _____

Who raised the boy? (Read Exodus 2:7–10)

Now this is God’s redemptive artistry at its finest!

As you may remember, Moses went on to lead the massive population of Israelites out of their Egyptian oppression. But he, and he alone, would be the only one qualified to lead such an exodus.

Here’s the setup:

For the first five to eight years of Moses’ life he was raised by his own family! This development allowed him access to his identity, heritage, his biological parents, and genetic predeterminants.

If Moses had not been raised by his own family, he would have lacked a racial identity, which would veto him from the trust of the Israelites when it came time to lead them out of their slavery.

In his teens and young adulthood, Moses lived as an Egyptian. He received an education, training, and the respect he would have never received as a poor Hebrew slave. Moses could have never been the deliverer of his people unless identifying with both people groups—Israelite and Egyptian.

Not only was Moses’ identity a blend, his feelings and behaviors were a mix too. You can see his struggle in what happens next. Read Exodus 2:11–15.

Moses’ life could no longer bear the weight of existing as both a prince of Egypt and a prince of Israel. When the decision to choose one or the other was finally upon him, he panicked—in his anger, confusion, and anxiety, Moses killed an Egyptian taskmaster, which was no biggie to the Egyptian authorities. Moses didn’t run because he feared punishment for his crime (it was common for a leader to kill a slave if he wanted to). Moses ran because he was not at home—born of God’s chosen people, yet living as a pagan, makes for one epic identity crisis.

Moses also had a temper that needed to be dealt with. He was arrogant and prideful. He had the heart of an Israelite but the habits and defenses of an Egyptian.

By the time Moses met the shepherdess of his dreams, he'd been roaming around in the wilderness forty years! Doubtful Moses realized that his forty years of shepherding sheep were preparing him for another forty years of shepherding people.

All of this context is key. Puzzle-piecing the seasons of Moses' life together like this points to the proof of God's hand in all of it! The same is true for us.

God had Moses in training. As a shepherd in the wilderness, Moses was learning to be responsive to the Spirit, aware of his anger and pride, learning the patience required to protect and care for a flock of unruly animals, and understanding what it feels like to be totally dependent on God.

As you consider how important the context/story of your past is to your present, are specific insecurities and/or fears beginning to surface? If so, please describe some of what you are feeling.

Day 5

Planned on Purpose

Our story is truer than any other reality we know, and each of us must discover the meaning of what God has written as our life story.

As a child, Moses could have been driven by his desire to earn the approval of his parents. As a teenager, he may have been motivated by the platform and power of the

Egyptian throne. We know that as a young man, he was driven by a desire for justice with a sprinkling of pride, anger, and fear.

But as an old man, after considerable time spent thinking about his life and listening to the right voice, Moses was driven by only one thing—deliverance.

Perhaps it's time we consider what internal force might be driving our life.

Place a number (1–10) in the blank next to the statement as it most honestly applies to you right now.

1 = never feel this way, 5 = sometimes feel this way, 10 = always feel this way

STATEMENT 1

_____ I feel as though there are secret places in me that if I were to openly share would cause people to leave me or treat me differently.

STATEMENT 2

_____ I do not feel comfortable receiving love from others without giving them something in return. I am often worried about what other people think of me and will change my mood, tone of voice, or behavior to fit their desired perception of me.

STATEMENT 3

_____ I think through every angle of an opportunity to the point that I forget why I wanted it in the first place. I appreciate controlled environments that lend themselves to a result I am comfortable with.

STATEMENT 4

_____ I think and/or talk about a painful event from my past often. I feel helpless to change things that haunt me.

STATEMENT 5

_____ I want to enjoy life more than I do right now, and I am willing to do whatever it takes to get there. I don't hesitate to put an expense on the credit card if there is not enough money in my bank account.

Take a look back at your numbers.

Each statement describes a significant motivation of a person's heart—the mind-set that can drive us in daily decision-making. The higher your number, the higher the likelihood you are functioning from this place; or at least, have the tendency to go there more frequently than the others—especially during times of high stress, life-transitions, relational strife, or conflict.

Statement 1: Guilt-driven

Statement 2: Approval-driven

Statement 3: Fear-driven

Statement 4: Resentment-driven

Statement 5: Material-driven

Which motivation was your highest number? _____

Was there a tie between two? _____

Which motivation was your lowest? _____

How does this inventory make you feel? Do you agree or disagree? _____

If you agree, can you identify an event or person in your past that you attach this motivation to? If so, please write it here: _____

If you disagree, then would you say you are surprised? Saddened? Don't care? Do you think it is difficult for you to be honest about the sinful places inside of you that tend to creep up? Why or why not? _____

Ephesians 1:4–5 tells us that God is motivated by what? _____

Like Moses, where our human motivations and mind-sets push us into static inertia, the love of God bids us to move.

For example, if Pharaoh had not attempted to kill the Hebrew baby boys in Egypt, Moses would have never had his unique background that made him a champion capable of leading an oppressed people out of a major world power. Not only that, if Moses had not totally blown it by killing a man, he would have never spent those 40 years in the wilderness to identify himself as a child of the God of his forefathers. Moses needed that time in the wilderness to remember—to slow down defenses, think about his motives, be deeply self-aware of his sin and grief, and to finally be at peace with a storyline that even he could not mess up.

God is weaving together the impossible, wonderful scenes of our life story to point us to the best story ever told—Jesus loves *all* of you. Not in spite of you, because of you.

Perhaps you are young and struggling with quick, selfish responses. Maybe you are middle-aged and finding yourself smack dab in wilderness training. Or perhaps you are seasoned, steady, and fully-prepared to walk back into Egypt to set the captives free.

Wherever you are on this journey, trust the voice of God, the process of God, and the story God is telling with your life.

No detail has been left to chance. No circumstance is random. No hardship wasted.

No part of your life is wasted by God. But instead, useful to bring his Son glory.

“For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

“My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

“Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.”

Psalm 139:13–16





NOTHING WASTED

By KASEY VAN NORMAN

We all have past experiences we wish we could redo, undo, or hide altogether. In *Nothing Wasted*, counselor and teacher Kasey Van Norman shares how God revealed his specific plan for her life through the most unlikely, embarrassing, and painful seasons of her past. A difficult childhood, public infidelity, and a fight with cancer - Kasey has walked a rocky road of regret and loss. Shockingly, God would take her back to move her forward, uprooting her undealt-with wounds, secret shame, and intimacy-sabotaging patterns of behavior.

No longer running from her past, but instead, allowing herself to be defined by it, Kasey discovered a God more intentional and loving than she'd ever believed him to be. Today, she shares the truth that no part of our life story is wasted - but purposefully designed and used by God to shape who we are meant to be. Her vulnerability invites you to discover God's personal and purposeful design for your future, not in spite of your story, but through it.

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