

A THREE-PART REFLECTION SERIES

Understanding Your Story

Discovering the goodness of God in your life

Personal or group discussion guide

Why this series

Everyone has a story. Many of us have never been taught how to look at ours with God in the room. This series follows a simple path: look honestly at where your story began, believe that redemption is possible, then find meaning in the scars and share what God has done.

Your story is not finally about you. It is about God's work in you. People connect through stories. Vulnerability is courage, not weakness. These three sessions give language for that work — using the lives of three athletes who learned the same things the hard way.

Series map

SESSION	FOCUS	FEATURED STORY
One	Discovering your story — where it begins	Kristi Overton Johnson
Two	Believing the goodness and redemption	Brian Sumner
Three	Finding meaning, renewal, and sharing	Ronnie Baker

Suggested time: 45–60 minutes per session after watching or reading the featured story. If time is short, use the starred questions first.

How to use this guide

On your own

Read the session story snapshot. Sit with the questions that catch you. Use the journal prompt before the next session. You do not have to finish every line in one sitting.

In a group

Watch or read the featured story together. Use 4–6 questions. Leave silence. No one has to share more than they are ready to share. Close with the prayer.

Through the week: keep a short journal using the prompt at the end of each session. By session three you should be able to speak a simple version of your own story out loud.

SESSION ONE

Discovering Your Story

Where it begins

Featured story: Kristi Overton Johnson · World champion water skier

Key concept

Understanding your story starts with looking honestly at your beginnings — the gifts God gave you and the brokenness that entered. Many of us build walls of shame, performance, and fear that keep us from seeing His hand. The first step is courage to look back without hiding.

Story snapshot

Kristi's life on the water began at age four when her father tied her skis together and she said "Hit it" for the first time. She said that word for thirty years. It helped make her a world champion and world record holder. Somewhere along the way she began to feel she was not enough. Those little red slalom buoys became her idol. She based her worth on rounding them. When she missed, she hated herself. She would sink at the end of the lake and hit herself in the face.

She believed in Jesus from childhood, but she was afraid to say "Hit it" to God. She thought following Him would suck the life out of her. It took hitting rock bottom physically and emotionally to look at Him as more than a ticket to heaven. She learned His love was not based on buoys, trophies, clothes, or crowds. When she released those things and used the gift for His glory, she found rest the water had never given her.

"Trophies break. There's dust all over them. Money that you win gets spent. But the things that you do for the Lord — they last forever."

— Kristi Overton Johnson

Look at the story

1. What are the early chapters of your story — family, first gifts, first wounds? *
2. Kristi said "Hit it" for thirty years on the water but was afraid to say it to God. What are you afraid God will take if you follow Him fully?
3. What have you used as your "red buoys" — the thing that tells you whether you are worth something today?
4. Where did you first learn that love or belonging had to be earned by performance?

Look at your story

1. What walls have you built around your story — shame, comparison, “it’s not that bad,” or “I should be over this”? *
 2. If a trusted friend named the idol in your life the way Kristi finally named the buoys, what would they name?
 3. Where is God inviting you to look back without hiding this week?
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Scripture

Genesis 1:27 — Created in God’s image.

Psalms 139:13–14 — You knit me together.

Romans 3:23 — All have sinned and fall short.

Hebrews 11:6 — Without faith it is impossible to please God.

Journal this week

Write your Creation and Fall story. Start with: “My story really begins when...” Include the good gifts and the places where sin or misplaced identity took hold. Do not write for an audience. Write for you and God.

Prayer

Father, thank You for creating me on purpose. I have said “Hit it” to a lot of things that cannot hold my worth. Give me courage to look at the beginning of my story without shame. Show me where You were, even when I did not see You. Amen.

SESSION TWO

Believing the Goodness

Redemption in your story

Featured story: Brian Sumner · Professional skateboarder

Key concept

God's goodness reaches into brokenness. Redemption is a gift, not a wage. When we finally stop trying to disprove God or earn His love, Christ meets us and gives new identity and new desires. The old chapter does not have to be the last one.

Story snapshot

Brian Sumner left a raw childhood in Liverpool for the American dream — Tony Hawk's company, California sun, a Vegas wedding. Then marriage cracked under jealousy, touring, and selfishness. Divorce forced a question he had never answered: What do I actually believe?

He spent seven months daring God to show up or he was done. He read, argued, and worked community service in a Christian thrift store because of fights and tickets. Folding old clothes, he began to see his sin and the cross. One night he knelt in his office while his ex-wife and young son were in the other room and asked Jesus to forgive him and apply His blood to his life. In a moment everything changed. New desires replaced the old ones. He is remarried. God is still doing the work.

"I need more than a crutch. I need the whole gospel — everything about Jesus Christ."

— Brian Sumner

Look at the story

1. Brian had the dream and still sat in emptiness. Where has "everything you're supposed to have" left you lonely? *
2. He set out to prove God was not real. When have you tested God, bargained with Him, or hoped He would fail so you could stay in control?
3. What unexpected place — a job, a store, a conversation, a book — has God used to get your attention?
4. Brian's change was instant and still unfinished. How does that free you if your story is not tidy yet?

Look at your story

1. In your own words, what is the difference between using God and knowing God? *
2. Where are you still trying to work your way into right standing — with God, a parent, a spouse, or an audience?
3. If Jesus walked into the room where your worst chapter happened, what would you want Him to say first?
4. What new desire would be evidence that God is rewriting you?

Scripture

James 1:17 — Every good and perfect gift is from above.

Romans 5:8 — While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2 Corinthians 5:17 — The old has gone, the new has come.

Ephesians 2:8–10 — Saved by grace, created for good works.

Journal this week

Write your Redemption chapter. Use the line: “When I finally cried out to God...” If you have not cried out yet, write the prayer you would pray if you were ready. Be specific about what needs forgiving.

Prayer

Jesus, I have tried to run the story myself. I have asked You to prove You are real on my terms. Meet me the way You met Brian — not after I cleaned it up, but in the room where it actually is. Forgive me. Make me new. Give me desires I did not have before. Amen.

SESSION THREE

Finding Meaning

Renewal and sharing your story

Featured story: Ronnie Baker · Olympic and world champion sprinter

Key concept

God does not waste scars. He transforms them, keeps renewing us, and then sends us to tell the truth. Sharing your story is not self-promotion. It is a way of pointing to Jesus in both winning and losing.

Story snapshot

Ronnie Baker ran the third-fastest 60 meters in history and still felt empty. Track had been his way to get the validation his dad's absence left behind. He made the 2021 Olympic team healthy, then faded to fifth in an empty stadium and fell into a depression he had never understood. He said he had nothing to stand on.

After the Games he read the Bible through for the first time. He saw that God loved him apart from outcomes. For three years he wrestled with pride and could not run the old times. Something in him said this was not the end of the story. He went back to Tokyo for the World Championships to give everything — win or lose — as a way to show the love of Christ. Team USA won gold. He says no medal compared to the transformation.

“There was no medal that was gonna be better than the transformation that I’d gone through in the last four years.”

— Ronnie Baker

Look at the story

1. Ronnie felt God had abandoned him after the Olympics. When have you felt that — and what helps you tell a truer story about those years? *
2. What “medal” in your life is smaller than the work God is doing underneath it?
3. For three years the old speed would not come. Where are you in a slow season, and what might God be forming there?
4. How do you tell healthy drive from pride that still needs you to win?

Look at your story

1. If no one kept score this year, what would giving your all look like where God has you? *

2. Who needs to hear a piece of your story — not the highlight reel, the actual chapter?

3. What would it cost you to share it, and what might it cost someone else if you never do?

4. Finish this in one sentence you could say out loud: “This is my story, and God...”

Scripture

Deuteronomy 31:6 — He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Genesis 50:20 — What was meant for evil, God meant for good.

2 Corinthians 1:3–4 — He comforts us so we can comfort others.

Psalms 107:2 — Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.

Philippians 3:7–14 — I count it loss compared with knowing Christ.

Journal this week

Write a one-page version of your story using the three movements of this series: beginning, redemption, meaning. End with: “This is my story, and here is how God is still writing it...” Be ready to share a portion with someone.

Prayer

Father, You never left. Forgive me for calling the hard chapter abandonment. Take the medals I have worshipped and the failures I have hidden. Make both of them a way to show the love of Jesus. Give me courage to tell the truth. Write the next chapter. Amen.

One sentence for the series

Finish this line in your own words:

If my story is about God and not about me, then _____.

You have a story. He is still in it. Now tell it.