



Lesson 11: THE BIG PICTURE — FROM PAIN TO PURPOSE

By Holly Beitel

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)

Opening Song: Broken Things – Matthew West

In Review (Group Discussion): For the past few weeks, you have started to really learn your true story. Last week you reflected on the moments of grace, those times God intervened in your story in ways you might not have noticed at the time. Let's each share one moment we were surprised or relieved to see God's grace in our story.

Watch video: THE BIG PICTURE

Lesson: Our journey is now taking a turn, looking forward, and anticipating the exciting road ahead. One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Isaiah 43:18–19a (NIV), *Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?* You may be thinking, "But we just spent weeks looking at the things of the past." We seem to think that not "thinking" about what has happened in our past is the way to forget the former things. But, until we are willing to allow the Lord to redeem those places, we are never able to really "forget the former things." Once He does though, they no longer have a hold on us, and God begins to do a "new thing".

God has implanted in every heart a subconscious knowledge that there is more to life than just simply existing on this earth. The eternity that has been set in our hearts reveals a knowledge deep down that there has to be more. Our hearts cry out to know the Author of our story, and if we have a part to play in His Story. He has uniquely created humans with a longing to know who we are and why we are here. Why do you think we are the only species in creation that will, tragically, sometimes choose to end our existence if we cannot find an answer to those two questions? Dogs, cats, horses... they just don't have that same deeply-embedded need. We have been created to seek out a Creator and to know that our existence has purpose!

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) says, *"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."* The original Greek word, which our English Bibles translates as "masterpiece" is "poiema," which means a work made by God. If that word looks familiar to you, it is because it is the root word from which we derive the word "poem" in our English language. In Christ, your life should make a poetic statement of God's goodness!

Psalms 139:13 & 16 (NIV) says, *"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb . . . Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."* Do you see it? You were written into God's Story before you were even conceived, for such a time as this! He created you on purpose!

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. Genesis 50:20 (NASB)

As we have seen and experienced, the enemy tries to wound us early in life, over and over in the areas that are most dangerous to him – knowing our identity in Christ and our intended purpose. God, however, takes the pain in our stories and **makes it a platform to accomplish His purposes in and through us**. He gives PURPOSE to our pain and redeems the wounds and lies of the enemy. This is meant for His glory, for our abundance, and for the sake of others.

Your story matters! YOU are a masterpiece, and the world is reading and studying you to see if the Divine Author of your story might possibly be able to redeem their story. They are searching for a God that loves them, cares about them, and has a plan for their good and His glory.

We have all been created to reflect some unique, specially designed aspect of the image of Christ. And our stories have been carefully crafted to portray the power of the Gospel to a dying and desperate world. If I could coin my own definition of purpose, it would look like this:

Your purpose is for God to be glorified through your unique expression of the power of the Gospel in both your story and your personal reflection of Christ's image in your divine design. No one else can do this in the same way that you can. The world will know Him better and love Him more through His reflection in you and your redeemed and transformed story!

In your homework this week, we will ask the Lord to show you the themes in your story: the places where the enemy has sought to wound you, and where the Lord intends to bring purpose and redemption for your abundance, for His glory and for the benefit of others. We will examine stories of how He has done this in the lives of different characters in the Bible and we'll give you a vision for how He might intend to use your pain for His purpose. You truly do play an important part in a bigger story!

Group Activity:

Option 1: Sometimes we are blind to the things that are unique and special about us. Your group has journeyed together for many weeks now, and I can imagine that you have gained an appreciation for, and an understanding of, one another that has knit you together. For this week's group activity, spend time speaking into each member of the group. 1) Share with each woman what she has taught you or shown you that has made you know or love Jesus more. 2) Affirm in her what you see as her unique giftings, talents, and passions that impact her world in a way that no one else does quite the same. This will give you a jump start on your homework for the week.

Option 2: Using magazines, cut out words or pictures that affirm the work the Lord is doing in your story. Glue them to card stock or construction paper and be prepared to share this vision board with the group.