FROM GARDEN

to GLORY

COURTNEY DOCTOR

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For my mom, Mary Ellen Randall.
You have shown me how to keep my eyes
on the big picture and trust the One who holds the
whole story together from beginning to end.
I love you.

*"The LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations."*

—PSALM 100:5

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Last, but hardly least, I want to thank my family. I am so grateful for each of you and all the wonderful ways you love so well. My cup overflows!

Now to him who is able to do far more
abundantly than all that we ask or think,
according to the power at work within us,
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
throughout all generations, forever and ever.
Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

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FOREWORD
NANCY GUTHRIE

The collective voice of the world around us and the instinctual voice inside us teaches us to think and say, "My life is about me—who I am, what I will do, what I will accomplish and become." We think this is empowering and freeing. But it can also be defeating. The truth is, we are limited. Our lives are fragile. We fail. So it is actually very good news that our lives are not defined by our own accomplishments or failures, by what we've made happen or what has happened to us, by what we've consumed or what has consumed us. The good news of gospel is that if we are joined to Christ, our lives are defined by who Christ is, by what Christ has accomplished, and is yet to accomplish in the future. It is his story that gives meaning and purpose and hope to our stories. This means that we really need to know his story. We need to understand how his story has developed to this point in history, where we are in the story, and what is yet to come. That is what *From Garden to Glory* does for us. It brings together our bits of Bible knowledge into a cohesive storyline that helps us make sense of the Bible and make sense of our lives.

In this book, Courtney Doctor ably grounds our understanding of what this beautiful and yet broken world is all about in what happened in the Garden of Eden. It anchors our understanding of our need for salvation in the salvation of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. It feeds our hope of living in a world under a just government and righteous ruler in God's gift of a king. It explains our longing for a future and a home and relationship in the future home and the relationship God set out to restore to his people after they forfeited that

home and relationship in the first garden. This ancient story answers some of the most significant questions in our lives. It explains what we were made for and therefore why we feel so much joy when we're fulfilling that purpose. It also explains why we experience so much pain, frustration, and sorrow in this life even as it sets our hope on a day in the future when that pain, frustration, and sorrow will be a thing of the past.

Every good story has a crisis. And the crisis in this story is the impact of Adam's sin on all of humanity. Every good story also comes to a climax. And, oh, what an incredible climax the story of the Bible comes to in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! In *From Garden to Glory*, we get more than a vague sense of what that means as Courtney pulls back the curtain of the simple phrase "Jesus saves," enabling us to see the way Jesus saves in specifics. We see what it means for us that he is the Second Adam. We see how in his death and resurrection he reconciled us to God, redeemed us from slavery to sin, offered himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for sin and overcame the serpent and his evil.

Seeing what Jesus did to accomplish our salvation in his first coming increases our love for him. And catching a glimpse of how he will bring us into the fullness of that salvation when he comes again makes us long for him! We say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

This is a story that resolves into glory—the glory we long for, the glory we were made for. I hope you will take in the wonder of the story Courtney so helpfully articulates on the pages to come. May it saturate your thinking about your own story so that you will more clearly see what it means that you have been united to him by faith. May it increase your longing for the glory to come.

In anticipation of the greater garden and the unending glory to come.

—Nancy Guthrie

WHY THIS BOOK?

For many of us, the Bible is a somewhat mysterious book. I look back and realize that, as a child, I was fairly superstitious about it. I owned a small, white leather Bible with a zippered cover. My grandmother brought it to me from Israel, which only added to its mystery. I put it on a special shelf, by itself, and I certainly never put other books on top of it! I rarely took it off that shelf; but when I did, I would ceremoniously open it and hope somehow the "magic" verse would appear before me. I had great reverence for the Bible, but no love of it. I suspected it held deep mysteries and even treasures, although I had no idea what it was about. But what I now know is that God has given us his Word not to *be* a mystery, but to *reveal* mystery.

God is mysterious, but he has given us his Word to reveal himself—make himself known—to us. He does not merely make a list of his attributes in order that we would know *about* him (i.e., I am holy, eternal, powerful, good, loving, etc.). Instead, he recorded a story that both tells us who he is and shows us what he is like. For example, he tells us he is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Exodus 34:6), and then he shows us throughout the story that he is merciful, gracious, loving, and slow to anger with the rebellious Israelites—and ultimately, with us—by sending Jesus! The whole Bible is a story about God, and it has been given to us so that we can know him—not just about him, but know him personally.

The Bible is a book that is meant to be read, understood, loved, and applied. As we learn about God, we also learn about us. We learn who we are, who we were created to be, and how we are to live. We learn that God is holy and we are not; we learn that he is omnipotent and we are dependent; we learn that he is the redeemer and we are the ones who need to be redeemed. And we learn that, because we are created in his image and are meant to multiply that image throughout the world, we have meaning, purpose, and significance. As we read this story, we are learning not just about God, but about ourselves, our purpose, and even our final destiny.

But when it comes to reading the Bible, it's not always easy to know where to start. If we're not supposed to just open the Bible and hope the perfect verse will appear before our eyes, then how should we approach it? My hope is that this book will help us answer that question. This is an overview of the whole story the Bible tells—a story that begins in a garden and ends in glory. It is a 30,000-foot view of the grand sweep of redemption. We are going to "fly over" the story in such a way that we can look at it in its entirety, from beginning to end.

Every chapter has a Scripture passage for you to memorize. There is a page at the end of the book on which you'll have the opportunity to write each passage from memory. Memorizing these verses will help you to hide God's Word in your heart, and enable you to remember and more easily share God's redemptive story with others.

As we look at the story from this 30,000-foot perspective, I pray four things will happen. First, that the Bible will become less mysterious and more loved as we learn to read it as the story it is. The individual parts will make sense only when they are read in light of the entire story. Second, that your hunger for the Word of God will grow as you discover how amazing and brilliant this story

is. We will see how it began, how it ends, and how the pieces in between fit together. I hope that you will experience a spark that ignites a passion for studying God's Word, as well as gain a tool that will equip you in that study. Third, I pray that you will come to a greater understanding of your own value and significance as you come to a deeper appreciation of how your life is wrapped up in this story. The Author invites you to know this great story, enter into it, and share it with others because this story is your story too. This story is meant to change your story. And fourth, I pray that the God of the Bible—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—will be exalted, proclaimed, and worshipped because of our time together in his Word.

YOUR INVITATION TO JOIN THE GREATEST DRAMA OF ALL TIME

If you've seen *The Passion of the Christ*, you know that it evokes strong emotions. This movie tells the story of the brutal 24 hours surrounding Jesus's crucifixion. When it was first released, most people were so moved by the depiction of Christ's sufferings that they left the theater either in silence or tears—or both. Some said that they didn't (or couldn't) talk to anyone until the next day.

But not everyone felt that way. One young man, when interviewed and asked about his reaction to the movie, reflected sincerely and said, "I guess it was okay, but it didn't have much of a plot." That might strike some of us as funny at first, and as tragic once we let his comment sink in. But he has a point.

If you grew up in the church or went to Sunday school as a child, when you saw *The Passion*, you sat down in the theater knowing the movie was picking up a storyline that was already underway. You knew most of the back story. But for this young man, it was like going to see *Tangled* (Disney's version of the Rapunzel story) and only viewing the part where Rapunzel was rescued from the tower. If you didn't know why she was in the tower in the first place or what was going to happen to her now that she was out, your understanding would be diminished. Or it would be like watching *The Lord of the Rings* and only seeing the scene where Frodo and Sam struggle up the mountain and throw the

ring into the pit of fire. Surely, you would wonder why the struggle was so difficult and why disposing of the ring was so necessary.

Maybe you didn't grow up hearing what Paul Harvey called "the rest of the story," and, like the young moviegoer, wonder what difference the horrible and gruesome death of a man on a cross more than 2,000 years ago could possibly make to you. Well, if that is the case, have I got a story for you!

But for those of us who did grow up hearing the backstory, before we either chuckle or roll our eyes at this young man, we need to stop and think about how, so often, we explain our Christian faith to others in a way that perpetuates this truncated version of the story. If you are like me, you have probably been taught to share your faith by explaining, "Jesus died on the cross to forgive us of our sins and take us to live with him in heaven for all eternity." And that is true. But it's far from all! We are living in the middle of the greatest drama of all time, and the Bible is the recording of how this great story began—as well as how it will end.

Herman Bavinck, a Dutch theologian in the 1800s, summed it up this way: "The essence of the Christian religion is this, that the creation of the Father, devastated by sin, is restored in the death of the Son of God, and re-created by the Holy Spirit into the kingdom of God."[1] Do you see what Bavinck did? He started with creation and ended with the consummated kingdom of God; he started in the garden and ended in glory. He was saying that this great story involves God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He showed that the original creation was very good, and the final re-creation will be very, very good—but that something, namely sin, has devastated that good creation. We can see that something had to happen in order to rescue and restore that original good creation. And that is the story of redemption—God

working through real events and real people for the salvation of his people!

Before we begin, let me offer a word of warning: Please don't think that by calling this a story that I mean it's not true. Sometimes the word *story* is used to refer to something that is made up or make-believe. Sometimes it is used to mean a lie (Did you just tell a story?). But *story* can also be used to mean an accurate account of something that happened (Have I told you the story of our crazy summer vacation?). It is in this last sense that I call the grand drama of redemption a story—not just *a* story, but *the* story, the one in which our very lives are anchored. However, don't for a minute think that you can just sit back and enjoy the show. This drama invites you in, calls you onto the stage, and transforms you into one of its innumerable participants. So, without further ado, let the lights dim and the curtain go up. Get ready for the greatest drama of all time.

CHAPTER 1

CLIFFSNOTES

Scripture Memory

"No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

Pray

"Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known" (Jeremiah 33:3). Father, open my heart and eyes to the wonders of your Word and the glories of your work.

When I was growing up, family vacations were great. But the process of getting out the door to begin the vacation was not great. Usually, my brother and I were hyped up, eager to leave. My dad was focused on the goal: Get everyone in the car and get on the road. My mom was running around making sure the coffee pot was off, the windows were locked, the vacuum was put away, and the pillows were straight. Eventually the moment came when all of us were finally in the car and ready to go! Or so we thought. Inevitably, before we left the driveway, my dad would

stop and look at the map (this was long before GPS) one more time to make sure he knew exactly where we were headed.

This first chapter is somewhat like that. You are here, ready to get going. But before we "hit the road" (in chapter 2), we are going to stop and make sure we are properly oriented. We need to "look at the map" before we head out.

When you were in high school, did you use CliffsNotes (those handy little summaries of literary works written for students) to help you pass an English class? If you were like me, you used them for all the wrong reasons—mainly so you wouldn't have to actually read the assigned book. But just because we might have used them wrongly does not mean they didn't have a helpful purpose.

CliffsNotes are written to help provide a framework for understanding a book. CliffsNotes usually start with some fundamental elements—information about the author, the setting, the genre, major themes, and purpose of the book—and then they break down the individual chapters. That is how we are going to start this study. Chapter 1 is like reading a CliffsNotes guide for the Bible. We are going to consider the Author (and authors), the setting, the genre, the plot summaries, and the purpose of the Bible so that we have a framework to help us better understand the story the Bible tells.

AUTHOR(S)

Have you ever had times when, as you read a book, you felt as though you could almost hear the author's voice? Or maybe you've had that happen when you received a note from a dear friend. As you read the note, you could almost hear the writer's voice.

When I read a book, if I don't know the author personally, I like to know something about them. If I'm reading a book on