

## Orthodoxy: Core Doctrinal Beliefs

**Introduction:** God's Story Bible Curriculum has been purposefully designed to present and teach the Bible as a complete and connected story revealing the character and plan of God. This plan is historical and covenantal in nature. This way of seeing God's story is in contrast to a dispensational view that breaks Biblical history into parts that have a beginning and ending. God begins with something perfect and wonderful and then sin and mankind find a way to mess it so that God must end that dispensation and begin a new better one. The goal of God's story is the redemption of a fallen world. This means that throughout God's story He makes covenants (promises) with His people that throughout His plan He fulfills in His timing and according to His greater plan. The four key parts to God's story revealed in scripture are: **Creation** (perfect originally), **Fall** (the entrance of sin into the world which begins to break and destroy it), **Redemption** (How God will break the power of sin with the goal of redeeming and restoring His creation), **Glorification / Consummation** (The final judgment against sin and Satan and the glorification of those who are transformed children of God.)

## Basic Theological Beliefs Explained

We will use the acrostic **G.O.D.S. S.T.O.R.Y.** to help explain the core and most important doctrinal beliefs of those that wrote the God's story curriculum.

**G - God** is the main character, creator, sustainer, and completer of His story and plan. God made mankind in His image to originally reflect Him. The Bible is first and foremost a story about God and how God has planned and orchestrated a beautiful tapestry for restoring much of His creation through His actions on the cross in the person of Jesus Christ the third member of the Trinity. **Colossians 1:15-21**

\*We also believe that God's word teaches truths that reveal what a relationship with Him should look like (**Exodus 20:1-11**) and what a relationship with other people should and will look like when one's relationship with God is growing (**Exodus 20:12-17**). We also believe that God teaches us how to take good care of His creation (**Genesis 1:28**), and how to best love our neighbor and bear fruit (**Luke 10:27 / John 15**). Therefore, God's word does require unique faith steps that lead to appropriate application.

**O - Orthopraxy** is a word used to describe the actions and fruit that are the result of right Orthodoxy or doctrine. Many times Christians stop at right doctrine only filling their minds and spirits with rich insight and truth. Over time this doctrine can become old and ineffectual because it is not working itself out in reality. God's Story teaches us the truth about God and man so that we can know how to step out in faith and grow as the fruits of the spirit become a reality in our life. **James 2:14-26**

**D - Doctrine (Orthodoxy)** or the teaching of the truth is essential to right thinking and right living. Every person on earth lives according to presuppositional ideas or truths they truly believe. This means that one's Biblical worldview is limited by their understandings of God's word and God's world. We believe one must invest time, energy, and resources into effective study and understanding of the Bible from beginning to end and in historical and chronological order. **2 Timothy 3:15-17**

**S - Sovereignty** basically means power over all. We believe that God is totally and completely sovereign over the past, present, and the future. This means that He is **Omnipotent** - all powerful. He is **Omniscient** - All knowing, **Omnipresent** - Not bound by the confines of time and space. Before the concept of time, space, and matter were created by God, the Trinity in perfect communion made a plan that included the creation of the universe (including the earth), the fall of mankind into sin, a plan for redemption, and a conclusion that would bring all things and people to a final point of consummation. If God is not completely sovereign over all these things then He ceases to be totally sovereign and therefore a lesser God. **Ephesians 1**

**S - Salvation (Soteriology)** is a point in time where God saves one of His fallen children. This may be a set time and date that someone might mark on a calendar or it may be a season where God is pulling that person closer to transformation and finally salvation. In either scenario, God is the one who makes it possible for someone to be transformed into the image of His son both through the actions of Jesus on the cross and the drawing and awakening power of the Holy Spirit. This does NOT mean that man is not responsible for evangelism, it simply relieves man from the pressure of believing that another person's salvation is only the result of whether or not they evangelize. Now sharing the Gospel message becomes the result of loving Jesus (who He is and what He has done). It becomes an outward expression of love and devotion and is an act of worship. We also believe that God has chosen to use mankind as one of His primary means of bringing others to a saving knowledge of Himself. Therefore, we get the privilege of watching and seeing what God is doing in the life of another. **1 Peter 1:3-5** \***Salvation** is the result of being **Justified** by God (declared Not Guilty by the blood of Jesus), which leads to **Sanctification** which is the work of the Holy Spirit leading and empowering real change and transformation into the likeness of Jesus.

**T - True Truth** is a phrase used to describe a **Truth that connects with reality**. Many people claim to have the Truth or a Truth that works for them and the society they have chosen to connect themselves with. We believe that at an early age students can be taught that the truths found in the Bible and the truths discovered and vetted in God's created world help us to live and function in reality best. This does not mean it is the easiest. In fact the best is often harder and more difficult than what is easiest or false. It is imperative that students learn how to think critically about the foundational ideas and presuppositions they believe so that they can accurately examine and assess the consistency of their claims and the results of believing false ideas at the foundational level. A song from our childhood explains it best when it says, *"the wise man built his house upon the rock, the foolish man built his house on the sand."* This is why we believe it is paramount that we begin early teaching children **why they believe** what they claim to believe. We do this through a systematic Worldview Training plan that uses developmentally appropriate principles to train young children on how to think from a foundational belief system to the natural outworking consequences. Ideas have consequences. **1 Peter 3:15,16 / Colossians 2:8 / 2 Corinthians 10:5**

**O - Organizing** and teaching God's word **historically and chronologically** is our preferred method of teaching the Bible. We believe that since the Bible is one complete story of God from beginning to end, that teaching it that way makes the most sense. We would call this an **Exegetical** approach. We also believe that teaching through a book or many books in order of event will greatly help the teacher and student to most accurately understand the context and culture present in each situation. It is very easy to pull one or two verses out of context and create a belief that is not the author's (Gods) original intent and as a result teach something false. This is called **Eisegesis**, which means inserting one's own views or beliefs onto scripture so that it means something you desire. Topical teaching can be accomplished but still requires effective hermeneutical study for the teacher. **2 Timothy 2:15**

**R - Reformed** is a word often used in theological circles to describe a belief that one believes the Bible teaches that man is saved by God's grace alone (**sola gratia**) through Faith in God alone (**sola fide**) as the result of studying and believing that the word of God is the primary power behind someone's salvation (**sola scriptura**). It means that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (**solo Christo**) is at the center of God's story and the only way someone comes to faith in God and as a result is saved. The result of this understanding is worshipping God alone as the source of all things good and wonderful (**soil de gloria** - Glory to God alone). The creators of this curriculum hold to these beliefs and ideas and would consider this curriculum "reformed". Works and following God's law do NOT save a person. Faithful association or involvement to a church or Christian organization does NOT save a person. We believe that once God's changes the heart (or spirit) of a person that they no longer are bound by the chains of sin and works as a means of salvation. Once freed from the law of sin and works that person is now free to love like Jesus did and obey God's laws not because they have to but because they want to. The word reformed also points to a time in history where the Catholic church had become corrupt and political. They began to teach that one is saved by specific acts and works, even selling indulgences and pardons. Luther, Calvin and other reformers revolted against this idea and began preaching that no work can save a person, and that a person is saved by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ. **Ephesians 2:8,9 / John 14:6 / Romans 6:18 / Galatians 5:1-5**

**Y - Your part (part 1)** of the story highlights the actions and responsibility of mankind under the umbrella of God's Sovereign story. We still believe (along with reformed theologians such as R.C. Sproul and John Piper) that God gave man free will (in a Biblical definition) and that we are not preprogrammed robots in a preprogrammed story. Without free will man cannot choose whether to love and obey God or not. Without free will man cannot be held responsible for the sin that will be judged or forgiven. We believe that from birth mankind has been taught a false or confused version of human choice or volition in the sense that we start from a neutral and untampered with position of good vs. evil. Most reformed theologians do believe that all mankind has a faculty of choosing even after the fall. For example, you chose to eat breakfast this morning or you chose not to. We sin because we choose to sin, in fact it is in our nature to choose sin. We may choose something good and that is the result of being made in the image of God. This is what is meant by free will. However, the Bible makes it clear that outside of the saving grace through faith in Jesus Christ we are in bondage and slavery to sin and death - obviously not free. Because we are born with a sin nature we are predisposed to sinful desires and choices. It is our overarching inclination. The Bible says we are dead in our trespasses and the heart is increasingly wicked. We need an outside power to intervene and change this. Before the fall we had the ability to choose and the liberty of choosing good as opposed to evil. Now we still have the ability to choose and be held responsible, but have an overwhelming influence called sin that dictates the nature of our decisions and keeps us from the freedom to choose God over other sinful things. **Ephesians 2:1 / Colossians 2:13 / Romans 6:11**

**Y - Your part (part 2)** - Those who have been saved now have the ability to access the freedom available before the fall even though we will still fight the fleshly sinful nature until we die and are united with a new sinless body. Our choices can now reflect a Godly nature and should grow in this way. For those we teach and build relationships with, it is vital to understand that it is not our abilities, talents, or skills that wake the dead to life. However God tends to use those that have an attitude of worship, are willing, obedient, and available to be part of His plan. Our job to present the most truthful and beautiful picture of God so that when He opens their eyes they have an amazing source of love and wisdom from whence to benefit. **2 Timothy 4:2 / 1 Timothy 4:6 / Mark 16:15**