

AN ORIENTATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

# THE STORY

*His Story | My Story | Our Story*

Connecting Our Story  
with God's Story

**A STORY.** Everyone has one. It's a tale of how we got here, who we are, and who we hope to be. Our story is unique and powerful because it is truly ours.

Just like with any story, our story is part of something bigger. It's connected and intertwined with other stories. Our friends, our family, where we grew up, all of these important details are mixed in to make our lives more colorful and full.

***It's History. Our History.***

- ✧ But what if our story was even bigger than that?
- ✧ What if our lives were intertwined and interwoven with The Story?
- ✧ The one that connects all of human history, each life, every detail together?
- ✧ What if your story was our story and our story was His-Story?

It is! What makes you unique, what has brought you to this time and this place in your life is part of something so big that it can only be called ***His-Story, God's story.*** God's story is the story of all of us. It's the story of how we got here, why things are the way they are, and where things are going. His is a tale of invention and innovation, of love lost and love found. God's story is filled with action and adventure, trials and triumph. ***God's story is the greatest story ever told.***

However, this story is unlike any other because this story is for you. ***You personally.*** God wrote the whole thing, all of it, so that he could tell it to you. That's what makes God's story so unique. His story is your story. And just like with your personal story, your personal history, God's story helps us understand who we are, where we come from, and where we are going.

But we can't jump ahead too far. That would spoil it right? So let's begin with the characters who are starring right now. ***You.*** What's your story?

***Take a few minutes to tell us who you are and how you got here. If it would be helpful, the space below can be used to jot down a couple of things.***

---

---

---

---

---

---

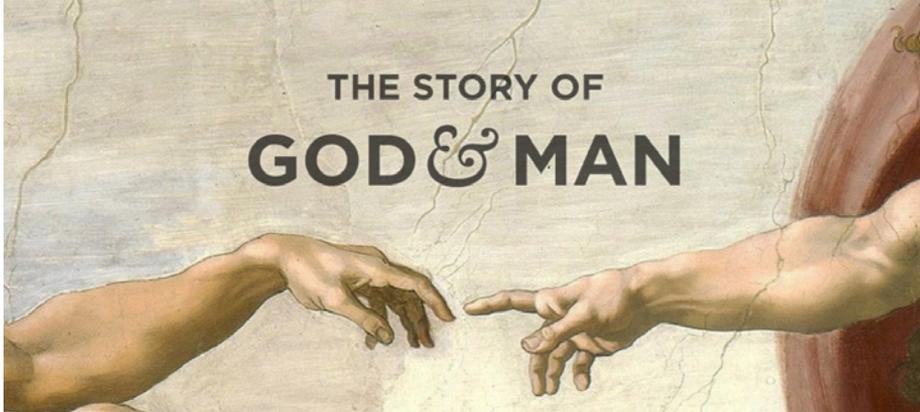
---

---

---

---

# THE STORY OF GOD & MAN



Now that we have done a little bit of character development for one of the main characters, let's bring in the lead. His story begins before time began. God is the Uncreated Creator. We sometimes call him the Alpha and the Omega, a cool way of saying the Beginning and the End. That's who he is. He is the beginning and the end of all things. In him, everything that exists finds its being, including you!

That's where your story and His story first come together. He made you. He created you uniquely and specially because your uniqueness, your individuality shows how creative God can be. Think about it. There are almost 7 billion people on the earth right now. None of them are exactly the same. Each is a unique creation, with an individual personality and a unique set of abilities, and their own story to tell.

And that's how God first introduces himself to us, as Creator of all we see. In his autobiography, the Bible, the first thing God wants us to know about him is that he is the Creator. Let's take a look at Genesis 1 to see how God's story starts.

## **READ: Genesis 1**

*What kind of a world did God create?*

---

---

*What was special about the relationship that God had with humankind?*

---

---

*If someone asked you "Why did God create the world?" What would you say?*

---

---

The setting that God created for his story to play out was perfect. No pain, no death, no need. That's the world he wanted you to live in. Imagine, no news stories about hunger or homelessness. No worries about climate change or credit debt. ***Sounds pretty good right? So what happened?***

Well, Adam and Eve thought they could improve on perfection. They wanted a different relationship with God. Now they didn't come to this on their own. The Devil, or Satan, an angel that God had created, had already broken his relationship with God as his Creator. So, in his misery and malice, he came to Eve and told a little lie. "Did God really say?" (Genesis 3:1) And in that one little question, he laid the trap that would change our story completely.

***So what was the big deal?***

Well, when Eve did what God had asked her not to do, eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she changed her relationship with God. No longer was he the Beginning and End. No longer was she thinking of him as a loving Father with her best interests at heart. No, now she wanted to be equal to God, to make her own decisions about what was right and wrong. And in that moment, when she took the fruit and gave it to Adam, and they ate, they changed our relationship with God. They were no longer the same perfect creatures that God had created. They had sinned, or marred the perfect image of God in which they had been made.



***If they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and now knew the difference between the two, what did they know before they ate of the fruit?***

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **BUT IT GETS WORSE...**

As if it weren't enough that Adam and Eve screwed up their own relationship with God, their decision effected everything else in all creation as well, including you. God had asked Adam and Eve to watch over and care for his creation. Since they had disobeyed, all of creation would suffer. It's like when parents ask two siblings to be good while they are gone. One is while the other is not. However, when the parents get home and see the stove on fire, the dog wearing lipstick, and the bathtub overflowing to make a waterslide down the stairs, you know both kids are gonna get it! In the same way, when Adam and Eve didn't listen to God's one request (Don't eat the fruit!) everyone and everything felt the effects.

What does that mean? Well, if you don't like death... thanks Adam and Eve! You weren't supposed to die! If you don't like messed up relationships... thanks Adam and Eve! But it goes even further. If you're worried about what's happening to the planet... it's because it was affected by Adam and Eve's sin.

**Stress?** An effect of sin. **Poverty?** An effect of sin. **War?** An effect of sin.

You can look at the world and you can see it. You can feel it. It's not the way its supposed to be. You're right! It's not. But remember, His Story is our story...



and yours. Adam and Eve's fall was passed down through the generations, a genetic anomaly, a birth defect that was passed on to you. Sin is hereditary. Adam and Eve sinned. Your Grandparents, your parents, and now you, all affected with this same brokenness. You feel it. Sometimes you don't know why you don't do the right thing. Why did I blow up at my spouse? Why did I cheat on that test? Why did I lie?

The answer is the same for all of us because your story is our story. It's my story too. Paul, another person in God's story, once wrote, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

## **Going a Little Deeper**

*Where have you experienced brokenness in the world or in your own life?*

---

---

---

*What would it mean to you to have that repaired or restored?*

---

---

---

If that were the end of the story, we would have to say it's one of the darkest tragedies of all time. Perfection lost. Relationships broken. Destruction and chaos win.

But that's just the beginning of what God wants to share. Instead of leaving his creation broken, bruised, and buried in the devastation of sin, God does the unthinkable. He stoops down into the muck and the mire that we created in order to recreate, remake, and redeem what had been lost. In the perfect world that God had created for Adam and Eve, he went to them. He spent time with them personally. He walked with them.



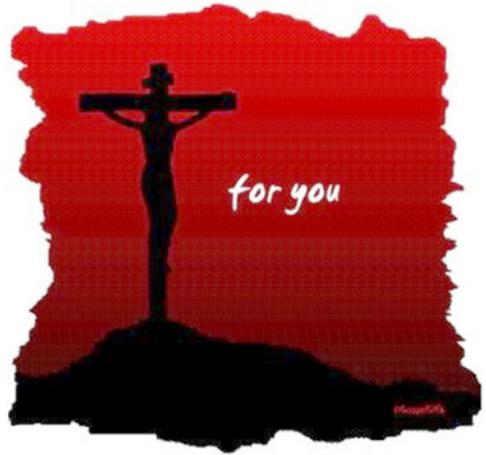
Jesus, God's Son, God made flesh, did exactly the same. He came to walk among us. He came to reverse the curse of sin. He was sent to redeem, buy back what had been lost. We were enslaved to our sin. Jesus came and paid the price to set us free. The hope that once again we would be reunited with our Maker, that once again our story would be joined to his story, was made real and physical in Jesus Christ. People, real historical people, got to see God reverse the effects of sin. Jesus healed the sick (John 4:46-54). He removed the plight of the poor (Matthew 17:24-27). He made sure that the hungry hungered no more. (Mark 6:35-44). He even reversed the affects of sin on the environment (Luke 8:22-25). Jesus came as the answer to every problem that sin had caused for us.

But the biggest reversal, the biggest "fix" came when Jesus, who lived perfectly, without sin even though he was tempted, chose to go to the cross of Calvary to take away the sins of the world. He was crucified by the Roman Governor at the time, Pontius Pilate. He was sent there by the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees and Sadducees. He was mocked for 6 hours by the crowds. And he was left alone by his own followers. He, and he alone, as both God and Man, could take the punishment that was meant for us. Eternal death and separation from God. Jesus died. He stopped breathing. His heart stopped pounding and his blood stopped flowing. He died.

He was placed in a tomb, borrowed from someone else, Joseph of Arimathea to be exact. For three days he remained. But on that third day, Jesus finished what he had started. He defeated death itself. And by rising again from the dead, he showed once and for all that nothing, not even death itself is more powerful than the love that God has for his Creation.

And that's where God's story truly becomes your story. You have felt the affects of sin. You see the brokenness. You have felt the sting of broken relationships and busted promises. It can be enough to make you throw up your hands in despair and disgust and say, "Enough!"

But that's exactly what God did. He did enough. He did enough to remove your guilt and shame over your past. He did enough to take away your sin and defeat death for you. He did enough to rebuild a relationship that was broken with you. And he did it because he loves you enough to do it. No, He loves you more than enough. He loves you as only he can. Perfectly. Fully. Wholly. Just as you are. God's story wouldn't be complete without you in it. That's why he came. That's why he



walked among us. That's why he couldn't just walk away from the mess. It would have meant walking away from you. And nothing is bad enough, nothing you've done, nothing that has happened to you, nothing that is happening around you. Nothing is bad enough to make God walk away from you. You are too loved. Too valuable. Too gifted. Too unique to walk away from. Jesus came for you.

***Have you ever thought that God just couldn't walk away from it all just because it would mean walking away from you? How does that strike you?***

---

---

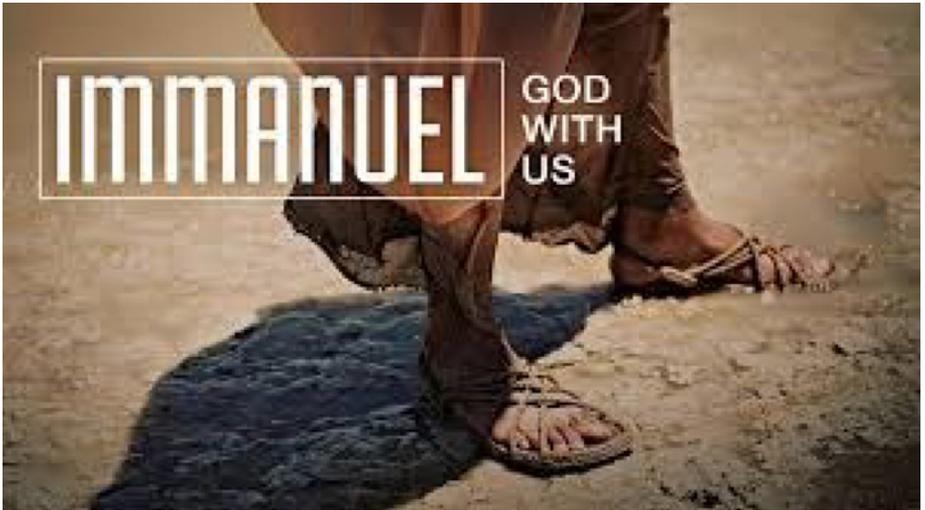
---

---

---

---

---



God's story is truly summed up in one word: Immanuel which means "*God with us.*" Because of his love, God sent Immanuel, Jesus to be with us. It's overwhelming to think that the same Creator who hung the stars and formed the Earth took the same care and showed the same amazing creativity when he formed you! And because you are that special and unique, he came to be one of us, to be with us, in order to make sure that you have a personal relationship with him.

### **OUR STORY...**

That personal connection, that incredible closeness is what led the people who started this congregation to choose the name Immanuel. God is with us.

Immanuel was founded in 1912, a mission outpost sent to make the love of Jesus real and visible to the growing German population that began to call Schenectady home. The congregation started by meeting in people's homes, literally bringing the love of Jesus directly to the people! Soon, the homes weren't able to hold the congregation, so they built their first structure just outside of Downtown Schenectady. The move opened new opportunities to reach out into the neighborhood, bringing new mission opportunities to this young congregation. Immanuel responded by starting to hold services in both English and German.



When the change was made, God blessed Immanuel with growth. Soon, the building that had moved the mission forward just wasn't able to keep up with what God had in mind. So again, Immanuel looked toward where the need for the Gospel was the greatest. They looked north to the open farm fields of Niskayuna.

And once again, God blessed the congregation in their mission. A parcel of land was given and the church moved. It wasn't long after the move that Niskayuna itself began to see people moving in in greater numbers. Immanuel was right where God needed them to be: with people.

*Who has God put around you to make himself known to you?*

---

---

---

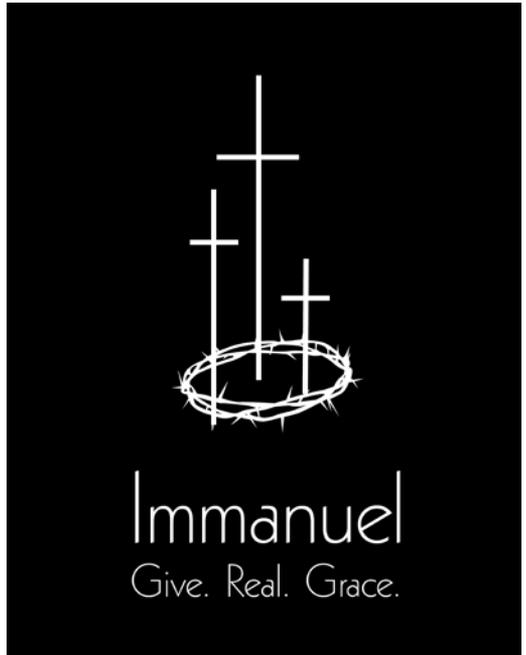
---

Through the years, through the ups and downs, God has been good to Immanuel. He truly has been 'with us' as we seek to be with others. Even when things have been tough God has worked in miraculous ways to ensure that the Gospel outpost, established for the people in 1912, is able to continue to make God's love real and visible and live out what is in its name: to let the people of our area know that God is with them.

Today, Immanuel is working to live out our congregation's story and God's story by focusing on three words. *Give. Real. Grace.* We believe that this is what God did for us in Jesus Christ. He freely and generously *gave* his Son. Jesus made God's love *real*, physical, and visible for the world to see. And it is because of grace. Not because of what we do, not because we are better people or more deserving. Jesus did all of this simply because he loves us. It's *grace*.

So we follow in Jesus' footsteps and do what he did. We Give. Real. Grace. It's who we are because of whose we are. It's what we do because of what he has done for us.

His story is that he came for us. Our story is that we were sent for others because Jesus was sent for us. Which brings us back to your story.



## **UNIQUELY FORMED... GIFTED... CALLED!**

Your story. What makes it yours? It's unique to you. The unique and one of a kind experiences, relationships, and opportunities that have brought you to this moment in your life. They are yours and yours alone.

But they didn't happen by accident. God has built, brought and bought you for this moment. Each day is another opportunity that you have to make God's story known as only you can!

As part of our ministry together, Immanuel seeks to equip and empower disciples of Jesus Christ to use the gifts that God has given them in a way that helps them grow and flourish as a follower of Jesus.



To that end, let's take a moment to talk about and fill out the following information to so that we can most effectively walk with you as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We want to assure you that this information is not shared. Also, you are not obligating yourself to anything. Knowing who you are, your preferences and passions, your gifts and goals will only allow us to serve you more effectively.

If you are uncomfortable or would rather not participate, please do not feel any pressure to do so.

We are truly honored that you would consider making our story part of yours. If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Pastor Schultz to speak with him privately.

# Uniquely You!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you prefer to receive text messages for updates and cancellations?

YES      NO

How did you find out about Immanuel? \_\_\_\_\_

How can you best serve you to strengthen your relationship with Jesus?

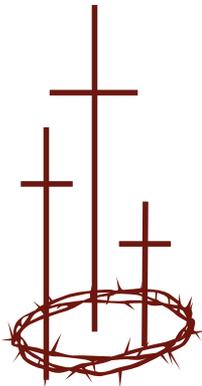
What is your current occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your dream job? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you like to do for fun? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a particular need in the community that you feel strongly about? Why?

Is there a particular area of service in the congregation that you would like to do... or not (both are important!)



# Immanuel

Give. Real. Grace.

Immanuel Lutheran Church  
**Rev. Matthew Schultz**

1850 Union Street, Schenectady, New York 12309

[pastormcschultz@gmail.com](mailto:pastormcschultz@gmail.com)

Office Phone: 518-346-1958