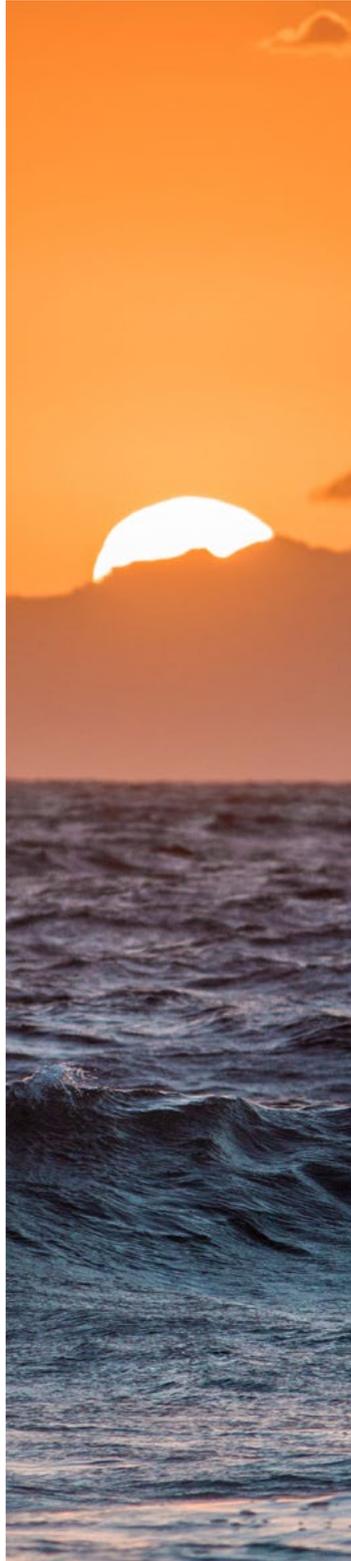


# GOD'S BIG STORY

AN INITIATIVE OF



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# INTRODUCTION

God's Big Story is an invitation for you to participate in the immense depth and breadth of the Biblical Narrative, and to move toward connecting the dots between the story of God and the story of your school community, your classroom and your curriculum. It seeks to expand our understanding of God, humanity and the world in a way that helps us wrestle with some of the inherent tensions, challenges and opportunities that being a Christian educator presents us with.

It is our conviction that the story of God, as told through the Bible, is inspired, expansive, inclusive and redemptive. Through the many stories we encounter, God speaks, and when this happens we are presented with the opportunity to walk away forever changed. So it is with the students in our schools, the manner in which they learn and the curriculum that we teach. These contexts provide the opportunity to encounter the hope of Christ in a myriad of dynamic, creative and transformative ways: every lesson, every activity and experience provides an opportunity for God's Big Story to permeate into all dimensions of the schooling experience. Each of these moments carry with them the possibility of experiencing the God who created them.

At the core of being a staff member in a Christian school is knowing how to understand the scope and meaning of God's Big Story, as well as being able to integrate it into our daily practice. That is what this resource is about: **integrating the story of God into every aspect of our curriculum and teaching practice.**

The videos accompanying this Playbook provide a broad and inspiring brush stroke of the length, width, height and depth of God's Big Story across four key themes within the Story: Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration. From these overarching themes, the playbook will seek to orientate you towards how this finds expression in your curriculum and your planning. It will also provide a short taster for you to then refer back to the more fully explained GBS Primer and the entire suite of KLA companion documents across all Key Learning Areas in the Australian curriculum.

The shape of this suite of resources is simple. It focuses on three foundational elements required for distinctively Christian teaching and learning: **THEOLOGY, INTEGRATION and CURRICULUM.**

# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

## THEOLOGY

Theology is a word that means to speak of or to study God. In the theology portion of the resource we won't overwhelm you with complicated words, or intricate ideas - all we want to do is speak about the depth and beauty of the Biblical story.

We do this by following a framework which is often used to understand the flow of the story: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration. This is also the language that is used in the God's Big Story Primer and the entire suite of curriculum resource materials.

What we have done however, is added another layer to each of these themes to help explore some of the creative tension that lies just under the surface of these concepts. The point of this is to immerse us in the idea that through the story of Scripture we encounter a God who longs to meet us in every corner of our lives. A God who reaches into every facet of the human experience. And into every aspect of our classroom pedagogy, planning and practice.

When we talk about **Creation** we talk about how life is often seen as both chaos and order, and that at different times we all - including our colleagues and students - will go through seasons that reflect this. We will also speak about the inherent purpose behind creation, that there is order, patterns, principles and processes in the midst of chaos and uncertainty. Creation also speaks of design, creativity and wonder and our image bearing nature as imago dei - made in God's image to reflect Him in all our work and our loves.

When we talk about the **Fall** we embrace the idea that no person is inherently either good or bad, but that we are all a complicated and sometimes beautiful mixture of light and shadow. We will speak of the brokenness and dislocation that sin and the fall have brought upon all of creation and how purpose and knowledge has been distorted in deep and significant ways. We will also recognise that such distortion impacts on our understanding of truth and necessitates we discern things wisely as we seek to identify both light and shadow in our lives and our learning.

When we talk about **Redemption** we will introduce the tension that often exists between hope and despair, recognising that whilst life can be filled with grief and tragedy, the message of Jesus is one that always moves us toward redemptive hope. We will explore the exciting possibilities that arise from our responses in seeking shalom or wholeness, across all of creation and how these responses enable each of us to play an important role as witnesses of His glory and carriers of His love to all of the broken and disconnected world.

Finally, when we talk about **Restoration** we recognise the challenge of living in-between worlds; dreaming of a world that is yet to come - the one made new by God - and yet living as if that world is available to us in the present. We recognise that our ultimate hope is the final restoration of all of creation and live in the tensions between the now and the glorious restoration that is to come. We will also explore how we can be faithful in this in-between space and hold to the promise and hope filled expectation of a new creation where all things are made new and put right acknowledging that complete healing, reconciliation and renewal of all things will only occur when all things are made new upon Christ's return.

By presenting these ideas we hope to take a powerful journey through the deepest meanings given to us through the Bible, as well as recognising how they connect so intimately with our own lives and stories. We also want to integrate these ideas into our everyday practice as educators and find ways to enact God's Big Story across every facet of our vocation.

## INTEGRATION

The integration section builds upon these 4 theological themes and brings them into our educational practice, opening up creative and imaginative discussions that will move us toward a deeper understanding of our work in Christian schooling and how our planning can seamlessly infuse God's Big Story across every lesson and learning experience and across all subject areas.

In the introduction video, we speak of four overarching elements that assist us in understanding God's Big Story in practical and context specific ways within schools - Self, student, pedagogy and school.

These are ideal starting points for conversations regarding the social, personal, spiritual, and embodied elements of applying God's Big Story to our school communities and are especially useful when considering our pedagogical frameworks and emphases.

Specifically, when we come to curriculum design, development, and implementation, we can reframe these elements of integration to focus on into the following concepts:

1. **God** - How does this subject, concept, theme, or topic reveal God the Creator, Jesus the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit are and how they are at work?
2. **Self** - How does this subject, concept, theme, or topic provide opportunities to understand this purpose and plan for my life?
3. **Others** - How does this subject, concept, theme, or topic show how we can contribute to the lives of others?
4. **World** - How does this subject, concept, theme, or topic show us ways that we can participate in God's reconciling work in the world today?

By addressing each of these sections and their relevant questions, we will take a journey toward what it means for God's Big Story to shape the way that we teach, how students learn and how we can plan for integration across every aspect of our vocation.

For a comprehensive process of how to use these core areas for integration, please access the suite of GBS Companion documents across every Key Learning Area within the Australian Curriculum.

## CURRICULUM

Finally, the curriculum section seeks to apply the 4 core theological elements and the themes of integration to the specific processes of our curriculum and our planning as we seek to infuse a biblical worldview shaped by God's Big Story into everything we do within our classrooms. At the end of each video there is a section where we look at embedding the four core elements of the biblical story into the classroom through curriculum planning and teaching. This section explores the practical implications of God's Big Story for educators as we seek ways to re-frame our content learning experiences and formation activities and learn how to implement it across our subjects and disciplines.

However, bringing Biblical perspectives into curriculum is more than simply attributing everything to Jesus or using proof texts; it's about an intentional and deliberate attempt to tune our students to discover and understand the fingerprints of God which are present everywhere across every subject. The curriculum section, combined with the bigger GBS Primer resource and the companion documents for each Key Learning Area will equip you to locate the narratives of Scripture within every subject that you teach in a way that empowers your students to understand, identify and find their own place within God's Big Story.

## ON USING THE RESOURCE

This playbook contains the foundations for understanding God's Big Story in ways that are relevant to your practice and seeks to equip and inspire you to explore how you can integrate the Biblical narrative within your planning and instructional design. The playbook is not intended to be comprehensive, but contains thoughts, questions and prompts to reflect upon. Use them however you see fit.

Complementing this playbook are a series of high-quality videos which unpack the greatness and wonder of God's Big Story as a visually compelling narrative. These videos include:

1. Introduction to God's Big Story
2. Creation: Chaos & Order
3. Fall: Light & Shadow
4. Redemption: Hope & Despair
5. Restoration: Now & Not Yet

It is recommended that you watch the first video once you have finished reading this introduction, and then engage in each video as you find prompts throughout the playbook.

We hope this suite of resources inspires, excites, empowers and equips you to reflect, explore, reimagine and infuse all that you do within your classroom to seamlessly align with God's Big Story and that students will be transformed to find their unique place within this narrative.

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### VIDEO 1

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#### INTRODUCTION TO GOD'S BIG STORY



# CREATION

## CHAOS AND ORDER

## THEOLOGY

### VIDEO 2

#### CREATION



Throughout God's Big Story one thing stands out clearly: there is a purpose to everything. From the opening moments of the creation story we see God is at work bringing form and structure to the raw materials of the universe. God's original purpose for Creation was a cosmos that was designed for good. Mankind, as His crown of creation, as purposed to reflect His creativity, delight in this created order and cultivate this world that God had purposed.

There is design in creation which reflects God's original intention and once we appreciate this purposeful intention, we can also appreciate that there was an intended direction for all of creation. This is often called a telos – an overarching purpose for people and for all created things. From chaos God brought order, but this doesn't always mean that life is perfectly balanced. We see the divine reflected through all things.

Theologically speaking, what we want to convey is the reality that whilst there is a clear purpose running through all of life, it's not always easy to identify. Sometimes our lives feel well structured and orderly, but other times they feel chaotic and wild. This is the same with our students. It is also true of the subjects we teach and the ideas and knowledge that form our curriculum. Our task is to recognise God's purpose in all things, as well as identifying the opportunities God is giving us through them. Seeing God at work throughout all of life's seasons, as well as understanding the purpose that runs below the surface, positions us well to contribute to the world. He has created us to be creative and imaginative regarding the possibilities for all of creation through His divine purposes for all of His created order.

## INTEGRATION

Thinking through these theological themes is vitally important within our role as Christian educators.

Understanding that these ideas are central to human life, and have been since the creation of all things, helps us to rediscover the rhythms of grace in our everyday existence. Significantly, it also assists Christian teachers in finding purpose within every subject area, theme, idea and concept and compels us to integrate these principles of purpose and design, order and chaos across the entire curriculum.

To assist in framing our understanding of God's purpose and design within every subject or theme, the GBS materials commence with 4 essential questions relating to God, self, others and the world. These integrating themes identify the topic or unit we are seeking to teach within our classrooms and enable better clarity and understanding of the important threads of God's Big Story that can be woven into this specific subject area.

1. God – Through studying this subject, what do we learn about God's purposes and identity as worker, creator and sustainer of all that created things? How can we partner with God in cultivating creativity, wonder and purpose within this chosen topic or theme?
2. Self – What does it mean to be human and does the concept of imago dei impact upon this subject area? How does this subject, concept, theme, or topic provide opportunities to understand this purpose and plan? Where do God's purposes, the world's needs and my deepest passions and gifts meet in my call as a steward of His creation?
3. Who are our neighbours and what do they most want and truly love? How can this subject assist in serving others needs and reorientate all things back to their original purpose and design? Others – How does this subject, concept, theme, or topic show how we can contribute to the lives of others?
4. What is the nature and intended purpose for this subject area and does that reveal the order within creation? Where is the wonder and creativity within this subject? How does this subject, concept, theme, or topic show us ways that we can participate in God's reconciling work in the world today?

For a comprehensive process of how to use these essential questions for integration, please access the suite of GBS Companion documents across every Key Learning Area within the Australian Curriculum.

[GBS Companion Documents](#)



## CURRICULUM

Now that we have considered the theological and integration priorities of God's Big Story in regard to creation, how do we then practically apply these understandings to our curriculum and our teaching?

Whilst this will vary from subject to subject, and according to the age and ability of our students, the key concept when it comes to creation is that God has a purpose. Whilst chaos and order are inherent parts of life, ultimately everything moves in the direction of God's design and purpose for humanity and the world.

The idea of purpose is important for our curriculum because it helps students to make sense of what they are learning. Specific subjects move from being individual disciplines, to being held together by the purpose of God. Christian curriculum is teleological, which means that it moves toward something. This is one of the defining characteristics of Christian schooling, that everything is connected to God's plan for the world, and the biggest questions of life get answered along the way.

To assist in finding what this purpose may be for a subject, theme, idea or concept, the following questions can be asked:

- What might be God's purpose and intention for this particular subject area?
- Why is learning about this topic or subject important in light of this original purpose?
- What might be God's purpose for this subject now in light of current understanding and knowledge regarding this subject?
- How can God's creativity and wonder be highlighted within this subject or theme?

Practically speaking, we might choose to do this by helping students understand the way in which God brings order to the apparent chaos of life. We could talk to them about the history of governments

- from ancient civilizations to the empires of Rome, to modern western democracies - showing them how humans are constantly trying to bring order from social chaos, and that when we do this in partnership with God, the purpose is that we might reflect the Kingdom design for the world.

We might turn to nature and the natural world and immerse our students in the wonder of ecological order, showing them how at the same time nature is meticulously ordered and inherently wild. It has intricate and structured mathematical patterns and unpredictable yet dynamic eco-systems. It has a food chain that requires everything to work as it should, but that very ordered system is also brutal and violent - chaotic. But it works, it has a purpose, it is a part of God's telos - God's design.

Forming students from a biblical worldview means we are revealing to them that life is teleological - meaning that life is moving toward something. This something is God, and God's kingdom plan for the world.

**"Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good."**

- Genesis 1:31 NKJV

**"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."**

- Genesis 1:26 NIV.

### Q: AS A TEACHER, WHAT TELOS ARE YOU ENCOURAGING YOUR STUDENTS TOWARD BY TEACHING THIS SUBJECT AREA?

In light of the Creation story and how the Creation lens can be applied to every aspect of your role as a Christian teacher, reflect and consider a specific subject area now. What are some specific ways you can integrate a biblical worldview and God's Big Story into your teaching in a way that highlights this sense of purpose. This needs to be more than throwaway lines like "God's got this" - it needs to be an examination of the fundamental reality that God is actively at work through life and history and through all things within His created order.

#### REFLECTIVE TASK USING CREATION LENS:

*Subject, theme, idea or concept:*

*Year Level:*

*What is God's intended design and purpose for this subject?*

*What aspects of this subject reveal God's order?*



English teachers could immerse their students in the works of CS Lewis, or Dostoevsky, or Jane Austin, and not only explore the beauty of language, but examine how they engaged the social issues of their time from the perspective of faith, as a way of moving society forward. Biology teachers can explore with their students how the natural environment has the inbuilt mechanisms of chaos and order – intricate ecosystems and violent food chains – both of which reveal the character and nature of God. Even for younger students, learning that their own imaginations are a gift from God that can be used – as they have throughout history – to imagine new frontiers of justice and compassion, is an invaluable teaching practice.

**Q: REFLECT ON YOUR SPECIFIC SUBJECT AREA/DISCIPLINE. IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT YOU TANGIBLY HELP YOUR STUDENTS TO CONNECT TO THE REALITY OF GOD’S PURPOSE?**

Integral to building on this idea of God’s purpose is understanding that all humans bear the image of God, and were created from the goodness and love of God. There are many threads that run through the Bible that illuminate this reality<sup>[1]</sup> but as you consider how to strengthen your biblical worldview as you locate your students in God’s Big Story, reflect on these questions:

**Q: HOW DOES THE SUBJECT I TEACH ILLUMINATE THE PLANS AND PURPOSES OF GOD TO MY STUDENTS?**

The challenge is to consider how we can be intentional in establishing learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessment tasks that illuminate God’s Big Story<sup>[2]</sup>. Across different areas of the curriculum, we can highlight how we discover meaning through language, develop wellness through health and physical activity, explore the diversity and interconnectivity of the world, and learn that as God’s image bearers we are tasked to bring creativity, imagination, care and service to all of His creation.

**Q: HOW DO I WANT MY STUDENTS TO EXPERIENCE GOD, CREATIVITY AND WONDER THROUGH LEARNING ABOUT THIS SUBJECT?**

Now that we have established a theological and teleological understanding of the purpose and design within all of creation, within this important first act of God’s Big Story, it is essential that we now explore the cosmic implications of second part of this story – the fall – and how the distortion of God’s good intention and purpose has impacted upon every aspect of our lives and the created order which we are called to cultivate. The effects of sin and the fall have brought upon all of creation a brokenness and a distortion of purpose and order in deep and significant ways. Our next video will help us to recognise that such distortion impacts on our understanding of truth and necessitates we discern things wisely as we seek to find identify both light and shadow in our lives and our learning.

<sup>[1]</sup> See pp.71–72 of the GBS 2.0 Primer for more detail about these threads

<sup>[2]</sup> See pp.22–26 of the GBS 2.0 Planner for more detail around developing units of work

# FALL

## LIGHT AND SHADOW



## THEOLOGY

### VIDEO 3

### FALL



The story that began with such promise quickly turns sour.

Adam and Eve, perhaps blinded by their longing for more autonomy, take the forbidden fruit and set the story into a rapid descent. It is the first in a long series of rebellions. The child of the world's first parents turns out to be a murderer – as he kills his brother Abel. Evil sweeps through the world so quickly that God sends a flood to halt its spread. In time those who survive build a tower at Babel to boast of their achievements and to announce that they can reach heaven unaided. The people of the world are scattered far and wide.

Chaos reigns.

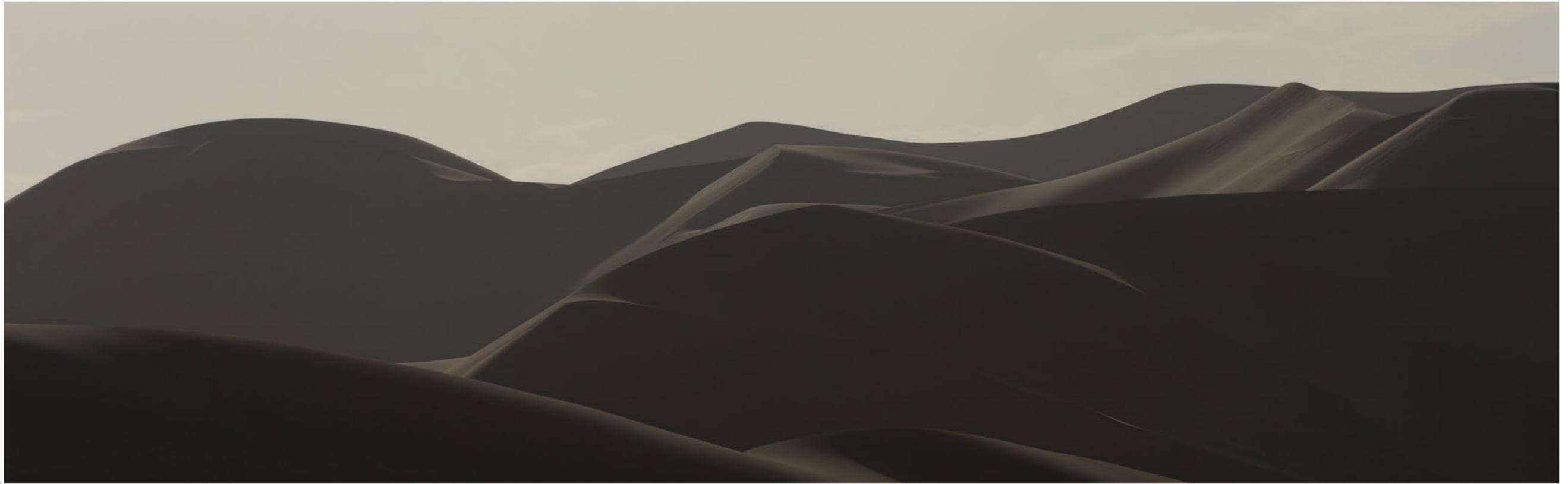
It is easy to read a story that unravels so quickly and conclude that humans are radically depraved, broken or malicious. There are so many moments that bring us face to face with the hostility of human desire, from the fratricidal urges of Cain to the power-hungry architects behind Babel. Even looking forward to the New Testament and knowing what we do about those that strung Jesus up on a Cross, it is all too easy to write humans off as simply too evil to redeem. It can feel as if there is something broken deep within us that no one seems to be able to fix. But the Bible refuses to allow us to embrace this kind of thinking.

Whilst God's Big Story is not shy about the failings of its protagonists, the underlying theme is always clear: God is good, and whilst deeply flawed and broken, mankind has been created as an image bearer of this good God. The *Imago Dei* that was revealed at creation is still the most important story, and despite our many wanderings and failings, and our propensity to focus upon ourselves or what Augustine termed in *Curvatus In Se*, the inward curve, God is always at work calling humanity back to himself. He makes covenants, he listens and responds to the desperate cries for help, he steps into the story in powerful ways to reveal himself to us. All the way through there is this beautiful thread: in the midst of light and shadow, God is always with us.

Because of this image bearing capacity, perhaps it is better to think of ourselves as mirrors of the divine, created to reflect the beauty of God into the world, but the mirror is broken. It still reflects, but the image it portrays is incomplete, and harder to see. It refracts light, but also casts shadows.

Our goal is to recognise that each and every person embodies both light and shadow. We bring remarkable gifts to the world, but we also bring sin and our own unique struggles and distortions. To be unaware of either is a devastating tragedy. Those who believe themselves incapable of darkness are either prone to narcissism or blind to their impact on others. Those who see themselves as incapable of doing good can often be crippled by their own inadequacies and paralysed by low self-esteem.

The brokenness and dislocation that sin and the fall have brought upon all of creation has distorted God's intended purpose in deep and significant ways. Such an understanding of these devastating consequences of the fall enables us to recognise that such distortion impacts on our understanding of truth and necessitates we discern things wisely as we seek to identify both light and shadow in our lives and our learning.



## INTEGRATION

Acknowledging the fall as part of the human story is about recognising that whilst the world is moving in the direction of God's purpose, all is not well. There is a fracture, or a brokenness that runs throughout life that reminds us of our own frailty. Things that are intended for good are so easily twisted and distorted by our own corruption or misunderstood desire. Plans that begin with good intentions are easily waylaid by greed, selfishness, envy or hurt. Through integrating these ideas into all our work as educators, we help students recognise the brokenness around them without letting them despair. Reminding them that despite the frailty of the human condition, God is still at work, revealing his purposes and reminding us of our definition as children of God.

Some questions that these ideas provoke that can be brought into our subject areas can include:

- **God:** in what ways do we see God working amidst the brokenness of the world? What are some examples of God bringing beauty out of ashes? What might be God's intended purpose for this topic, idea, theme or community that has been distorted by sin?

- **Self:** Where do we identify brokenness and distortion within the subject, theme, concept or idea we are learning about? What are the implications for our stories in light of this? How does our shadow contribute to our own difficulty; does it ever cause pain to those around us? How might we find ways to anchor ourselves, our teaching and our subject matter in the goodness and love of God whilst recognising and confronting things like pain, broken relationships, suffering and grief?
- **Others:** How is the topic we are learning about impacted by distortion, brokenness and a sense of poor/ wrong choices and consequences? What is our response within a given topic or theme when it comes to bringing a message of healing and wholeness, especially in areas that are broken?
- **World:** what systems or forces are at work within our subject area or topic or theme that reflect and represent sin and brokenness?

## CURRICULUM

When it comes to bringing the idea of the fall, or "light and shadow", into our subject areas the goal is simple: to identify the areas in which God is at work, as well as the areas where brokenness and sin are at work. The challenge is that most often, we can see both.

For example when it comes to subjects like politics and religion, we can speak about things like democracy, and the building of great civilisations. We can look at the history of the world and marvel at how humanity has risen to the challenge of building great cities, establishing great empires and cultivating eras of peace, wealth and prosperity. But every journey through history also reveals examples of corruption, poverty, inequality and systemic injustice. Look to Genesis 11, the building of a great tower. On one hand this is a remarkable sign of human ingenuity, but on the other it was done as an attempt to usurp God. So often we are people of mixed motives.

**"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil"**

- Genesis 3:21-22

**"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"**

- Ephesians 6:12



**Q: WHERE IN YOUR SUBJECT AREA CAN YOU GIVE EXAMPLES OF THESE KINDS OF MIXED MOTIVES AT WORK?**

**Q: HOW DOES THE AREA YOU TEACH REVEAL AN ELEMENT OF HUMAN SIN AND BROKENNESS? WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN GET YOUR STUDENTS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THIS, WHILST GIVING THEM THE OPPORTUNITIES TO ALSO SEE HOW GOD IS AT WORK REDEEMING IT?**

Many of the great literary works of the past centuries have tried hard to capture the complicated frailty of human beings. Christian thinkers like Tolkien and Lewis are wonderful examples of authors who created characters who are simultaneously carriers of both light and shadow. Think about Frodo from Lord of the Rings, he is a sweet and innocent young Hobbit, but is quickly and easily corrupted by the power of the ring that he carries. Is he a bad person? Is he a good person? Surely the answer is more complicated than that. Giving students guidance as they traverse the landscape of these kinds of stories can help them to understand the nature of human brokenness whilst also revealing more about who they are, and how God sees them.

The notion of light and shadow is an important pedagogical tool because it enables us to move beyond cheap dualisms and draw students into an engagement with the world that transcends polarity. The world is an increasingly fractious place. Social media and the rapidly evolving landscape of technological development often make moral or political conversations fraught with complexity. When faced with such complexity, humans often break the world into simple categories which leads to unfair polarisation.

In educating students for a better world we have the opportunity to lead them away from polarisation by showing them that every person has a story, and that it includes themes of great hope and also great pain. Remember King David who had a heart for God but still made choices that led to murder and abuse. Helping students recognise that everyone has a story enables them to humanise the world, seeing through a lens of empathy rather than judgement. Understanding how competing stories have also powerfully shaped the subjects we teach also provides a thoughtful and reflective launching pad for ways that we can respond to the impacts of distortion and where things may have deviated from God's original purpose.

Building a curriculum that embraces this, rather than moving people toward simple and naïve conclusions, opens up both minds and hearts to the possibility that life is indeed complex, but also more filled with wonder, than we may have considered before.



**Q: HOW DO YOUR LESSONS WITH STUDENTS FOSTER THE KIND OF CREATIVE THINKING THAT HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE MOVE BEYOND SEEING THINGS IN A DUALISTIC OR IGNORANT MANNER?**

**Q: WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE CHOICES?**

**Q: CONSIDER HOW GOD'S GOOD PURPOSE FOR THIS UNIT, TOPIC OR IDEA YOU ARE TEACHING HAS BEEN DISTORTED OR IMPACTED BY WRONG CHOICES/ ACTIONS/ IDEAS**

**Q: HOW MIGHT SUCH A DISTORTION BE REMEDIED OR MADE RIGHT WITHIN A GIVEN SUBJECT, IDEA OR THEME?**



# REDEMPTION

## HOPE AND DESPAIR

## THEOLOGY

### VIDEO 4

#### REDEMPTION



The cross of Jesus stands at the heart of the Christian faith. It is also at the peak of the CSA architecture, as we declare that we are *people of the cross*.

The cross is a confusing icon though. We wear it around our neck, or hang replicas in our churches, or embed it into our school logos, often forgetting the trepidation that the simple shape would have struck into the hearts of anyone living under Roman rule. The brutality of a crucifixion is recorded through countless historical accounts and yet for Christians it has become a symbol of profound hope. But it is a hope that emerges from the pain and horror of violence and betrayal.

The cross represents the powerful truth that there is no darkness capable of overwhelming the love and goodness of God. There is no force capable of ending the story of God, and though sin has caused brokenness, distortion, suffering and pain, and we may be faced with great disappointment and despair, there is, because of the cross, a glorious and redemptive hope which demands a response.

The Cross speaks words of hope, new beginnings and love. Instead of wrath and retaliation, we hear the words of Jesus "Father, forgive them..." Why those words? We can't answer, but the impact is undeniable. Something changes because of the Cross – it changes deep inside all those who stand at the Cross and accept the forgiveness that transforms.

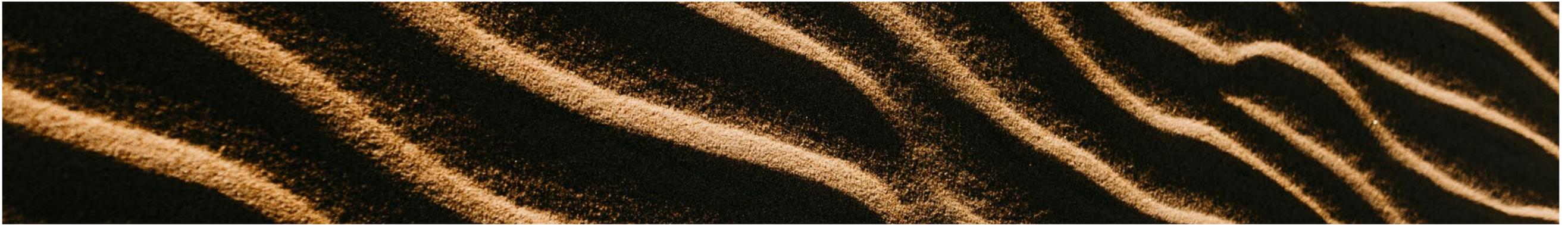
The Cross starts as devastating injustice, defeat and death. But when Jesus was dead, buried and soon to be forgotten, God intervened and raised him from the dead. This was the turning point of all history. The day death died. The day despair morphed to hope, the day that speaks of immortality and the ultimate defeat of all evil. The day that starts with such despair becomes the day of hope and redemption.

## INTEGRATION

Whilst the fall is a story of brokenness, the cross is a story of redemption and forgiveness. The central goal of integration in this part of God's Big Story is to connect students with the truth that Jesus has brought forgiveness through his love, and healing through his Gospel, and that the Gospel demands a response from us – individually and corporately.

This has a profound impact on us as individuals, and also on the way we teach and the subject matter we engage with. Recognising that there is nothing beyond the love of God enables us to see our work as educators through a lens that recognises God has a solution to the many problems we face. The solution might not always be easy to see, but as we sit with our students and explore and investigate our subjects, we can help them to explore the areas in which God has always been working, longing to bring redemption, change and hope.

The finished work of the cross allows us to explore the exciting possibilities that arise as we seek to respond through shalom – peace, healing and wholeness, across every part of creation. These responses enable each of us to play an important role as witnesses of His glory and carriers of His love to all of the world.



## CURRICULUM

Some questions that can orient this work of integration are:

- **God:** How does this topic, idea or concept need reordering or realigning back to God's intended design and purpose? Where in my subject area can I see God providing solutions to the many problems we create? How is God revealing himself as healer? Peacemaker? Redeemer? Saviour? What is the response to God we should have in regards to this?
- **Self:** where within the subject we are studying or the idea or theme we are exploring can I reflect on my own responses and actions and how I could be a co-agent in his redemption and healing? How should my life be oriented now that I have a restored relationship with God and what implications does this have to the subject I am learning?
- **Others:** Where can I see God working in the lives of the people around me? If I recognise that God is redeeming all people, where in my life do I need to set aside prejudice, bias or hate? How does the subject and theme I am teaching seek to contribute to the lives of others? How do I respond to others in light of this redemption and how can I more fully act according to this grace and forgiveness?
- **World:** How does this subject, topic or theme show us ways to participate in the reconciling of all of creation back to God? How does the love and forgiveness of God extend to the world in which we live and how can we practically respond to this? What practical ways can we be involved in God's project of forgiveness and redemption?

For many people, it is easier to identify the *purpose* of God, or the *brokenness* of humanity in their subject areas, than to begin to articulate the arenas in which God is bringing wholeness, *forgiveness* and *healing*. But this is a major part of our curriculum work. In this way, we can challenge our students to see where God is providing possible solutions to the problems that have been created, and how we might be a part of his solutions as we seek shalom and redemption for all of creation.

In many instances this might come through examples of individuals who have experienced changed lives, and who have gone on to do remarkable things. Studying complicated historical figures like Marcus Aurelius, Augustine, and Martin Luther King Jnr reveal that each person was on their own path until they encountered God in some powerful way, and this shifted the trajectory of their lives, and consequently the world around them. Just like Paul on the road to Damascus, God intervenes in life to bring about a change in direction.

**“Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”**

- Luke 23:34

**“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”**

- 1 Corinthians 2:2

**Q: WHERE IN YOUR SUBJECT AREA CAN YOU ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO SEE THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF GOD IN PRACTICAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE WAYS, THAT SHOWS HE IS BRINGING ABOUT WHOLENESS, CHANGE AND HEALING?**



For humans, it is often the experience of forgiveness that brings about change. The same could be said of the natural world. There are so many examples of humans overusing the planet's resources in order to build, and grow, and advance - but when we stop for a moment and let the ground rest, suddenly new life springs forward. After the fires that ravaged Australia in 2020 it was hard to see how things might ever grow again, how lives, farms and families might be able to recover, but slowly and surely we have been able to see trees regrow, plants restored, and communities gradually recovering.

We don't see this as incidental, but as part of the unfolding of God's redemptive plan on earth. How might you be able to get students to reflect on the unexpected beauty that comes in the midst of tragedy, in your own curriculum area? How might our responses be practically outworked to reflect his grace and redemption?

**Q: HOW DOES BEING "PEOPLE OF THE CROSS" IMPACT YOUR APPROACH TO CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY?**

**Q: WHAT PRACTICAL AND ACTION-ORIENTATED BEHAVIOURS CAN ARISE FROM THIS TOPIC OR THEME THAT REORDER OR REALIGN THINGS BACK TO GOD'S INTENDED DESIGN AND PURPOSE?**

The tilt from despair towards hope is a significant part of the journey of helping our students flourish. If students are to safely take this journey, our schools and classrooms need to be places where hope is lived out in authentic ways. Where relationships between staff and students are built on a platform of trust and safe conversations; where classroom environments are relational, warm, inviting and safe; and where students feel a strong sense of belonging and the freedom to explore and take risks in their learning. We must also cultivate learning experiences that are creative, challenging and developmentally appropriate, providing opportunities for all students to feel they can meaningfully engage. Perhaps most fundamentally we must also provide an environment where students can learn about the "Jesus they never knew," the one who walks with them in suffering and joy; and in life's most devastating moments brings hope in the midst of despair.



# RESTORATION

## NOW AND NOT YET

## THEOLOGY

### VIDEO 5

#### RESTORATION



Part of the tension of being human is that we live between worlds. We live in the past, because our lives are built on the foundations of memory and the things that have come before. We live in the present, in the world that is unfolding all around us even as we read these words. We also live in the future, the contours of which are defined by our hopes, aspirations, fears and anxieties. To be a person of faith means that our vision of the future is defined by the promises of God, and the promises found in God's Big Story are not small.

The vision at the end of the book of Revelation tells of a world remade into the image of God and his intended purpose. Not a return to Eden as such, but something more. A world where every tear and pain is vanquished by hope. A world where suffering and injustice has been overwhelmed by the power of God, and a world where the distance between God and his children is no more.

If this were just a vision for the future it would be quite something, but it is so much more than this. This vision is one that we are invited to participate in now. Following in the way of Jesus, empowered by the Spirit of God, we are able to participate with God in the project of restoration as we bring hope, love and justice to a world in desperate need of it.

God's Big Story tells us of the renewal and restoration of all things and because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, we know this is more than wishful thinking, for the resurrection is a glimpse of ultimate reality and immortality. It confirms that there will be a day when Jesus' prayer is answered: Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

But there is a creative tension. We wait for the restoration of all things, and sense the contours of the future - but we live in the now. Our decisions should be shaped by the world we are moving towards - God's Kingdom and its values. We recognise that our ultimate hope is the final restoration of all of creation and we live in the tension between the now and the glorious restoration that is to come. In between the now and not yet, we hold to the promise and hope filled expectation of a new creation where all things are made new and put right acknowledging that complete healing, reconciliation and renewal of all things will only occur when all things are made new upon Christ's return.

## INTEGRATION

Participating in God's project of restoration is no small calling, and our work as Christian educators plays a significant part in this work. We are part of forming young minds for God's Kingdom. The work of education includes intellectual formation but extends far beyond it, into the moral, social and spiritual life as well.

Because of this, understanding that God's Big Story is one that requires us to be attentive *in the present*, is critical. If we see our task as simply waiting until the end, when God will come and whisk us all away, then there is very little point in doing anything. However, if we recognise that God has invited us to partner in the project of renewal then we locate our calling as educators within this Big Story, and engage in our work as those who are committed to His work and pray for His kingdom to come now and into the future.



## CURRICULUM

Some questions to help us begin this integrative work:

- **God:** in what ways is God bringing hope and restoration to the subject or topic I am teaching? Where can we see God bringing restoration in the midst of broken places? How can this specific topic, idea or theme contribute to God's restorative plans for the world?
- **Self:** what is my own personal story of redemption and restoration? How can I see the restorative hand of God in my own life? How can I learn to be attentive to the present while still recognising that God has a future and a plan for both me and all those under my care? What are the hope-filled possibilities and imaginings for the topic or theme I am exploring?
- **Others:** how do the restorative plans of God inspire me in my relationship with others, particularly those I find difficult? What does it look like to be a community of people, all partnering with God in his project of healing and hope? What are the implications for hope filled outcomes and scenarios in the lessons I am teaching and in the topics I am engaging with?
- **World:** how is God bringing healing to the world around us, and how can we be a part of this project? What are the hope-filled ways we can connect our students to the handiwork and restorative work of God in the subject matter we are teaching and throughout his created order?

We all have aspirations for our future. Sometimes these are dreams that help keep us focused on our present goals, and sometimes they are hopes that burden us as they seem too far away from our present reality. Whatever your relationship with the future is, it is simply true to say that we move in the direction of our gaze. Whatever we focus on, we move toward. As a Christian we are all part of God's project of restoration, which means that we are charged with being agents of reconciliation and redemption in all that we do. As a staff member in a Christian school our mission field is well defined, our participation in God's project is playing out in the forming of young lives for his kingdom.

**“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”**

- Jeremiah 29:11

**“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”**

- Revelation 21:3-5



**Q: IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU PARTICIPATING IN THE FORMATION OF YOUR STUDENTS (OUTSIDE OF THE PARTICULAR SUBJECT-AREA YOU TEACH, OR TASKS YOU PERFORM)?**

From their earliest years students can be taught about the process of restored relationships and given a framework for resolving conflict and restoring relationships. They can be taught about the importance of dealing with, not denying, conflict and recognise when it is positive. They can also be taught about tensions of wanting something but needing to wait for the right time. This kind of cultivation of virtue is a significant part of a distinctly Christian education.

When injustice (i.e. a disparity between the *now* and the *not yet*) is found at home, at school or further afield, students can be given opportunities and encouraged to respond. Helping them to identify injustice and teaching them the skills whereby they can most effectively use their voice to appropriately protest against it (respectfully and peacefully of course) is a wise investment. This is about empowering students to find and utilise their voice, which is a significant aspect of Christian educational pedagogy.

**Q: JUSTICE IS BOTH GLOBAL AND PERSONAL. IT RELATES TO BIG ISSUES SUCH AS ECONOMIC INEQUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE, BUT IT IS ALSO ABOUT HOW WE TREAT PEOPLE IN OUR DAILY INTERACTIONS. IN WHAT WAYS DOES OUR SCHOOL ENGAGE STUDENTS AROUND ISSUES OF JUSTICE?**

**Q: WHAT IS GOD'S INTENDED PURPOSE FOR THIS SUBJECT AREA IN HIS NEW CREATION? HOW CAN THIS UNIT OR THEME REINFORCE AND REMIND STUDENTS OF THIS HOPE-FILLED PURPOSE?**



**Q: WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FOR STUDENTS TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARD THE WORLD IN WAYS THAT REFLECT THE KINGDOM OF GOD?**

We all long to exist in a thriving school community, but the thing about culture is that it doesn't build itself, and it doesn't happen by accident. Learning how to foster vision, manage conflict, communicate effectively and advocate appropriately are all ongoing skills that any complex ecosystem needs to master, and it must be done with a keen eye on the future that is being constructed.

Whatever the "now" of your school community looks like, the most effective witness it can offer the world is the kind of culture and community it embodies. John 17.21 lets us listen in on Jesus' prayer as he prays "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." The love we carry for one another, the way our community looks and feels, is absolutely central to everything that we do.

**Q: IN WHAT WAYS CAN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATE THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE WAYS THAT WE RESPOND TO EACH OTHER?**

**Q: HOW DOES THIS SUBJECT/ TOPIC/ THEME INSPIRE FRESH VISION AND IMAGINATION OF HOW WE MIGHT PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS?**

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