

napkin theology

EXPLORE: Where are you on your Spiritual Journey? Are you moving towards or away from God? Why? If you were to die tonight and God asked you why he should let you into heaven, how would you answer?

1. creation God designed the universe to be centered on Himself



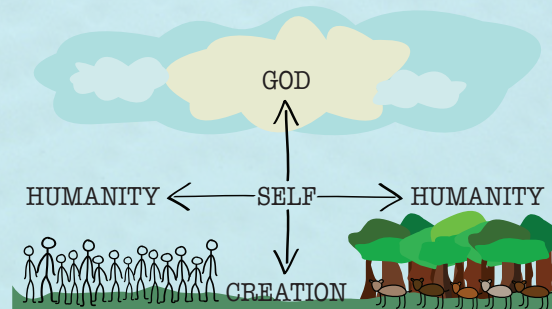
Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

Genesis 1:27 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

SPEAK: These may be the most important verses for our generation. If God was in the beginning, he is the author and designer of life. He knows how life should be lived. ("If" is a big question, but for the sake of the conversation, let's assume this is true.)

SPEAK: God created everything to be centered around Himself. He designed humans as the pinnacle of his creation and to live in relationship with Him. When we are in relationship with God we are secure in who He made us and we are free to live as we were designed. We then live rightly in three main relationships:

1. Relationship with God: *subordinate*
2. Relationship with humanity: *love one another*
3. Relationship with the natural order: *stewardship*



EXPLORE: What are the greatest problems of the world today? Can you think of any root causes of those problems?

2. fall All of us have centered life on ourselves

SPEAK: Our souls were created to worship God. We have all replaced God with other things that seem more fulfilling. The result is an endless self-centered obsession with finding peace through things, or people, but if God created us to find peace in Him, then the Bible calls these self-attempts at peace, "sin".

Philosophers have said it this way:

Pascal *There is a God shaped vacuum inside of every human heart.*

Augustine *Our heart is restless until it finds rest in You.*

Kierkegaard *Sin is trying to find your identity apart from God*

The Bible says it this way:

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Romans 1:25 *They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.*

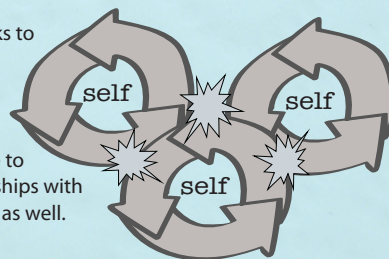
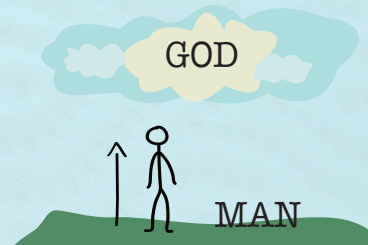
Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death.*

LISTEN: What do those verses and quotes mean?

SPEAK: Sin is NOT just an action. Sin is a HEART ATTITUDE that seeks to find peace apart from God. Sin searches for wisdom, meaning and beauty in **freedom from** God rather than in **submission to** God. We think that fame, power, money, popularity, freedom, relationships and even religion will satisfy us. But these are not God's way to find ultimate meaning. This turning from God's way is offensive to Him and thus keeps us each from his perfect presence. As our relationships with God have been broken through sin, this affects other key relationships as well. Now we all:

1. Center our lives on self rather than God,
2. are on collision courses with one another,
3. and exploit the earth instead of caring for it.

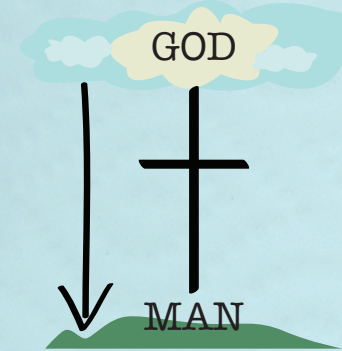
EXPLORE: Before moving on, what do you think? At this point, in your understanding of the Bible, what did Jesus' death do to fix the human situation?



3. redemption God made a way for us to re-center our lives on Him

SPEAK: The message of the Bible is that there is great hope for us and for the world. God made a way for us to return to our original design. But it's not enough to try to be a good person. Who really is a good person deep down? However, perfection is the requirement for us to return to a right relationship with a perfect God. How could someone who is not perfect restore a relationship with a God who is?

SPEAK: Here is the solution! God came down to man through Jesus on the cross. He made a bridge for the separation which we created through our self-centeredness. Jesus' gift of death can now cancel out the debt of sin that we owe and purify our hearts so that we can return to a relationship with God. All this happens through faith in Jesus and his promises. Faith is shown by turning to God and admitting that he is real and that we have offended him and given worship to **freedom from God** rather than in **submission to God**.



The Bible says it this way:

John 1:12 *All those that receive Christ, to them He gave the right to become children of God.*

Ephesians 2:8-9 *By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

LISTEN: What does grace mean? What does it mean to be 'saved'? What is faith? (trust- belief in action) What is a gift? How do you receive a gift? According to all of this, How has God designed a way back to Him?

Receive Jesus

Revelation 3:20 *I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

LISTEN: Christ is speaking, what are the steps of response? (hear Him, open the door, receive by faith)

4. restoration One day, God will ultimately restore all of creation

EXPLORE: "IF" all this is true, what would God want to do with all the problems of the world?



Revelation 21: 1-4 (NLT) *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. [a] 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."*

SPEAK: God can restore the brokenness of our hearts AND the brokenness of the world. He wants to use us as a part of that restoration. When we return to our central relationship of worship towards God, He can begin to change us to be more like Himself from the inside out. Then all other relationships begin to be mended by His power working through us.

EXPLORE: What do you think? What does it mean to be a Christian according to these Biblical ideas?

LISTEN: Who is doing the work? Diagram #1 vs. Diagram #2

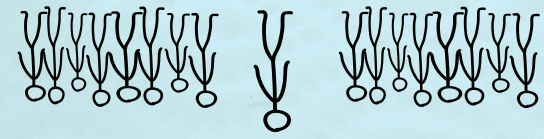
1. According to the diagram, who is doing the work between God and man?
2. Whose works is man relying on?
3. Who is man's faith in?
4. Who would have to pay the penalty for the separation between God and man?

LISTEN: Describe the differences between each circle in your own words. Which of the two circle circles represent your life? Which one would you like to represent your life? Why?

Receive Christ through faith by prayer.

God, I believe in you and I admit that I need you. You created me to center my life on you. I have sinned against you by trying to find fulfillment and freedom apart from you. Thank you for dying on the cross to pay the debt for sin that I owe. I ask you to forgive me of my sin toward you. Come into my life and start to change me to center my life on you rather than center my life on myself.

Amen.



Say you're in your living area hall at 2 a.m. and your friend walks in from a rough night. They really want to talk. As you listen to what has happened you are compelled to tell them about how Jesus has changed your life and caused you to view all of life and relationships differently. What do you do? What do you say in order to communicate the basic outline of the Bible's message of salvation? A massive amount of information floods through your head and you are confused at where to start. On the floor next to you lies your rescue--a napkin and a pen. You quickly think, "napkin theology!"

The following pages are arranged like four sides of a napkin. They highlight the four major movements of the Bible--Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration. They are meant as a guide to learn and even memorize so that you will be able to recount the information, writing it down for you and a friend to track along together. By having a napkin before you, you have a focal point to harness attention. You can also be ready to draw some diagrams that really help illuminate the gospel message. Alongside that information, it can be really helpful to have some investigating questions to ask to uncover people's hearts and breakdown walls that might be up. Finally, it can be really helpful to have some scripture memorized to communicate what God says in the Bible about how to know Him. Here's what you need to look for in the following pages.

napkin theology

napkin [nap-kin] noun- a small piece of cloth or paper, usually square, for use in wiping the lips and fingers and to protect the clothes while eating.

theology [thee-ol uh-jee] noun the study of religious faith, practice, and experience especially : the study of God and of God's relation to the world

OK, so what do a napkin and theology have to do with one another? Well everyONE, whether they know it or not thinks about theology. EveryONE has a view of who they think God is or isn't. And no matter where you go, coffee shops, restaurants, dorm rooms, fraternities, napkins are everyWHERE. With a little bit of thought, practice and willingness to engage your friends, you can combine the two to have meaningful dialogue about the things that matter most....God and people. Napkin Theology is a tool that will equip you to use every day objects, a napkin and a pen, to EXPLORE people's lives, LISTEN to how they think, and SHARE the overarching story of the Bible. You and I were created to join others in their spiritual journeys. Come explore how to be a napkin theologian.

- EXPLORE:** memorize these questions that help you figure out what a person feels about theology
- LISTEN:** memorize these questions to help you understand what a person thinks about theology
- SPEAK:** memorize these themes and verses to explain the overarching story of the Bible

