

WRITE YOUR STORY!

A guide to processing your pain, captivating readers,
and pointing back to God as He humbles your heart.



Ericka Clay

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From the Author



Not all stories are lovely. But God encourages us to dig deep, see the beauty in the ashes, and walk with Him as we walk away from our pasts and into His incredible forever.

This study prayerfully gives you the Scriptural tools and insights to write your testimony. It's also the first step in gaining the courage to share it with those who could learn and grow from it.

As we walk together through Genesis 1, Psalm 88, and Revelation 22, we'll watch as God shares His own story of creation and allow His Holy Spirit to guide us in reflecting on our lives, offering them as a living sacrifice to our Lord.

So come, let's get started viewing what Satan meant for evil as what God has always meant for good.

Yours in Jesus,

Ericka¹

1. <https://erickaclay.com/about>

Part I: The Beginning

What We Can Learn from Genesis

Before you begin: Watch *Part I¹* and *Part II²* of the Book of Genesis Summary by The Bible Project.

Genesis³: the beginning of God's story, where he loves His creation so much, He gives His only Son over to death to save them.

But that's not the end of the story, something that is vital to remember when reflecting on our own.

Jesus was raised to life after conquering death, and as Christians (or "little Christs"), we, too, have been redeemed and saved from the jaws of darkness.

Our ultimate goal? To write our story in a way that points to that future goal of revealing God's glory, even when it looks impossible in the beginning stages.

This lesson focuses on those "beginning stages" – the seeds that were first planted by others around us, both good and bad.

Like how Genesis spotlights the Garden of Eden, we'll spotlight the soil we were planted in as children, revealing the care (or lack thereof) that was given to us right until the cusp of a decision we eventually have to make.

Will we choose God's way or our own?

1. <https://youtu.be/GQI72THyOSI?si=menaJ5upXkcJgkXb>

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4isSyemFo>

3. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%201&version=NIV>

Take some time to sit quietly and reflect on your "beginning" (no pen or paper necessary). Allow God to bring to mind the best way to start your story. And when you're ready, let's move to the next lesson and dive into Genesis 1.

Free Journaling: Genesis 1



Read all of **Genesis 1**¹.

Write freely about what you've learned about God in this chapter. By focusing on who God is, we see more of who we were before we were saved and who He's sanctifying us to be.

Need a little guidance? Download **this journal page**² for a more structured approach to journaling your thoughts.

Now, let's pray.

Dear Lord,

We're offering up our stories, our lives as living sacrifices. We're diving into Your ultimate story so we can learn how to share our own with others, always pointing back to You and Your glory. Be with us as we move forward into remembering past hurts, not to stay there or wallow in them, but to give them truly over to You. Help us to learn from our pasts so we can help others find a firm future in You.

We pray all of this through our precious Lord Jesus.

Amen.

After you've reflected on the beginning of God's story, we'll move on to our next exercise, where you'll reflect on your own.

1. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%201&version=NIV>

2. <https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQBVJbvdEVs1RZp2f8TfbHTDAVb5540fig-Mofm6Wtrb2pJs?e=zQpRfc>

Tending the Soil: A Memory



It's now time to write a memory from your childhood (where your story began).

Use **this journal page**¹ or write your thoughts in your own notebook. Feel free to write bullet points about what happened or to flesh out an entire scene.

This exercise will help you connect with your past, seeing it from the perspective of someone who doesn't live there anymore. Be sure to keep in mind how this pivotal moment led you to Jesus, no matter how hard or difficult it might have been. Or perhaps it's a joyful memory showing how God has been gracious and kind from the very beginning.

Childhood is the soil from which we were birthed. Sometimes it's nourishing, sometimes it's dry and brittle. But fortunately, the ultimate Gardener still uses it so we can flourish and grow.

1. <https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQB488dAdWQRTPsS6X04GQFIAQ3PReN-xvwEDd4CWKXrPXc?e=PyK69M>

How to Write the Beginning



Beginnings can be brutal, both in life and on the page.

Have you ever read a story that took FOREVER to get to the turning point for the protagonist, dragging you through murky prose and making you wonder how a story could be any more boring?

I certainly have (and I may or may not have written a few!).

Good editing sets the tone for an enjoyable read, and that is why it's important to effectively edit the beginning of your testimony. It's also important to keep in mind that the beginning is the perfect opportunity to **foreshadow**¹, giving your readers a taste of what's to come and keeping them engaged.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- *The first sentence can either make or break your story.*

As easy as it would be to break out "It was a dark and stormy night," God has given us a whole myriad of words to use to set the stage for the beginning of our stories. How you share your journey should reflect the person He's made you to be. Are you often humorous? Serious? Reflective? Be sure to use language you'd typically use. After all, this story is yours and nobody else's.

- *When in doubt, say more with less.*

I, for one, can often get carried away with trying to say "all the things." This is where good editing comes in. I've found that getting to the point

1. <https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/foreshadowing>

in fewer words (while still keeping my reader engaged and entertained) is always the best option. Unfortunately, nowadays, attention spans are short, so inviting your reader in from the get-go is key. Think about Scripture here. Genesis 1 begins with, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth." Talk about attention-grabbing! Think about how you can start your story in a similar fashion.

- *On that note, remember the words of William Faulkner.*

To help with the "say more with less" aspect of writing your introduction, remembering William Faulkner's famous quote might come in handy here. He's reported to have said, "Kill your darlings," meaning we, as writers, should be willing to remove any aspect of our writing that impedes the flow and readability of our work, no matter how precious those words are to us. It's a bit of a sacrifice, but one that's well worth it when we end up with a testimony that people truly connect with.

Move on to the next lesson to hear some of my thoughts on writing the beginning of your story.

A Writer's Thoughts on "The Beginning"



You can listen to my thoughts on what it's like to write the beginning of your story **here**¹.

Happy listening!

1. <https://1drv.ms/u/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQBwzNnjnzPPSbcia5WmB6tBAZIS7S1cL8uy-DexoTxo-ccQ?e=gs1dRp>

Time to Write!



It's finally time to start writing!

Remember, this isn't about perfection. This is about baring your soul before God. It sounds daunting, but it's basically trusting our Father enough to give Him every inch of ourselves, including the hurts we've endured and have inflicted on others.

God gives us the beautiful gift of repentance, but life change can only come first with confessing the things we've done that we're not proud of. It's a painful process, but it's even more painful keeping these things in our hearts for them to fester.

You can use this journal page¹ to write the beginning of your story. Or feel free to type it up, write it down in a favorite journal – the choice is yours!

Need a little inspiration?

*Listen to **this song**² before starting to write. Read along to the beautiful lyrics **here**³.*

1. https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQCYYzgUWQbwSSEcDUzMTL9DAam-bE-vx_Qs-zoIDMDemBfM?e=EMLqrv

2. https://youtu.be/QaEx2A7p9Dk?si=ZgBuR_wnFOY-Cpd8

3. <https://genius.com/Hillsong-worship-seasons-live-lyrics>

Part II: The Middle

What We Can Learn from Psalms

Before you begin: Watch *The Book of Psalms Summary*¹ by The Bible Project.

Psalms²: a book that aptly represents what being in the middle of hardship can look like, and the God who doesn't give up on us.

And it's important to note that even though the middle is often "rough," it's also the turning point that leads to God's redemptive power.

King David wrote a good bulk of the Psalms, and we can learn a lot from his journey. Often, he's lamenting the current state he finds himself in, caught in "the middle," if you will, of terrifying circumstances where his enemies are trying to vanquish him.

But like David, we can have a heart that looks to God during our toughest trials, as He fights on our behalf and we stand still and watch our stories change from ones of defeat to ones of hope.

The middle is often the place in our writing where we can share the gritty details. This often seems like a daunting task, but it's less daunting when we remember two important things:

1. *God is by our side, protecting us from evil and moving us forward to His glorious end.*
2. *Sharing our hardships with others can be a beautiful way to connect them with our Lord, the ultimate goal when sharing the Good News of Jesus.*

1. https://youtu.be/j9phNEaPrv8?si=QQ3MLDLiUiu_E3aa

2. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%201&version=NIV>

Taking a page from King David, we'll pour our hearts out to our God, bringing the darkness of our past into the light where it can no longer claim a hold on us.

Are you ready to face your demons and let God slay them for good?

Take some time to sit quietly and reflect on your "middle" (no pen or paper necessary). Allow God to bring to mind the best way flesh out the "meat" of your story. And when you're ready, let's move to the next lesson and dive into Psalm 88.

Free Journaling: Psalm 88



Read all of **Psalm 88**¹.

Write freely about what you've learned about God in this Psalm. By focusing on who God is, we see more of who we were and who He's sanctifying us to be.

Need a little guidance? Download **this journal page**² for a more structured approach to journaling your thoughts.

Now, let's pray.

Dear Lord,

As we reflect on "the meat" of our stories, we ask that You continue to make your presence known. Give us peace that surpasses all understanding as we sit still and know that You are Lord. Like David and the other Psalmists, help us to be free in sharing our hearts, knowing that you can handle our fears, our desires, our shame, and every aspect of ourselves that may be holding us back from true freedom in You.

We pray all of this through our precious Lord Jesus.

Amen.

After you've reflected on the middle of God's story, we'll move on to our next exercise, where you'll reflect on your own.

1. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2088&version=NIV>

2. <https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQCXBv0y1wAFQb0ACmu-W1BPARzukjI-wAGHfkFazgSWKw4?e=fjsNLd>

Breaking New Ground: A Memory

It's now time to write a memory from when you hit rock bottom (the middle of your story).

Use **this journal page**¹ or write your thoughts in your own notebook. Feel free to write bullet points about what happened or to flesh out an entire scene.

This exercise will help you to remember what it was like to be a person who didn't have the hope of Jesus. This is the point where God broke through to you and broke new ground, introducing you to a world limitless in His goodness. It's true, not everyone will have a "rock bottom moment," but you will have a turning point where God was no longer just some idea or a being your parents taught you about, but your own personal Father and Savior.

"Rock bottom" moments are often the point God tills our soil, shaking up our thinking and circumstances and drawing us close to Him. It's not until our soil is broken that we can grow and flourish.

1. <https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQB488dAdWQRTPsS6X04GQFIAQ3PReN-xvwEDd4CWKXrPXc?e=JG6G70>

How to Write the Middle

The middle is often a tough place to be.

When you're in the thick of it, life can sometimes feel hopeless, bleak. It's something we've already seen in **Psalm 88**¹, but as we know from resting in God's world, the middle isn't the end.

The whole world held its breath when Jesus died to defeat death. But defeat it He did.

And the same power that raised Jesus from the grave is working through your life too.

Just think about that!

So when we present the middle to our readers, we need to come at it from a place of objectivity. When we take a step back, we can be honest, revealing the hard truths of our stories, but we can also deliver them in a way that points to the hope of things to come.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- *Outlining events will help keep you on track.*

I can't believe I'm saying this because I am, what we call in the industry, a "**panster**"² (it's not as perverted as it sounds) when it comes to outlining. But I've learned the benefit of writing out the course of my storyline while writing my current novel, a gift that keeps me focused and the reader ready for "what's next."

1. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2088&version=NIV>

2. <https://thewritepractice.com/plotters-pantsters/>

When outlining the middle of your story, reflect on three to five "big" events that God has used to lead you to where you are today. Consider the people you've met who have helped change your mindset, the experiences you've endured that helped you to see God in a whole new way. Allow those major milestones to be the major points of your story, leading you to the finish line.

- **Good pacing is a gift to your reader.**

Coupled with a strong outline is the gift of good pacing. I think we've all seen a movie that tends to drag as if the production team forgot that editing is a thing that exists. Knowing when to travel into your next milestone is key. You certainly want to bring color and vivacity to a pivotal moment of your story, but you also want to make sure you don't stew in the details for too long. As with Faulkner's insistence that we kill our darlings, we also need to be mindful of when to remove "dead air," so to speak, and keep the storyline moving.

- **You can only be honest with your reader if you're honest with yourself.**

Honesty and transparency often feel like dying arts. But in reality, they're a core tenant of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Lying to ourselves or others is a fruitless practice, and until we can be truthful about our pasts – about what we've done and what others have done to us – then we can't thoroughly confess and repent. And a testimony should point to these gifts God gives us – the opportunity to lay our burdens at His feet and choose His yoke and not the one that's been strangling us this entire time. If our ultimate goal is to show others the goodness of God through our stories, then it's important to confront the mess of ourselves and know that we're loved despite it.

Move on to the next lesson to hear some of my thoughts on writing the middle of your story.

A Writer's Thoughts on the Middle



You can listen to my thoughts on what it's like to write the middle of your story **here**¹.

Happy listening!

1. https://1drv.ms/u/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQBejNicc8kHTL0D_EsypiTIAVZglvdu-AcP1K0ES8T1r7Z4?e=TjJtHq

Time to Write!



Time to tackle the middle!

Now that you've already got your feet wet with your beginning, it's time to move the story along.

The middle can often be an uncomfortable place, wrought with disappointment, pain, and sometimes even complete evil. But, as we learn from our Lord on the cross, our stories don't end there. Our God is a God of redemption, and when we trust in that, we're able to conquer the page and our pasts.

You can use this journal page¹ to write the middle of your story. Or feel free to type it up, write it down in a favorite journal – the choice is yours!

Need a little inspiration?

*Listen to **this song**² before starting to write. Read along to the beautiful lyrics **here**³.*

1. https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQA4BJwall3aTqRQ_MhmNLXzAZIL-nd_Me_8pyYfc6LBKSUc?e=R0qOdZ

2. https://youtu.be/b8G-XXPVRPI?si=4YN7xNXtHP5_adFz

3. <https://genius.com/Samantha-ebert-flowers-lyrics>

Part III: The End

What We Can Learn from Revelation

Before you begin: Watch *Part I*¹ and *Part II*² of the Book of Revelation Summary by The Bible Project.

Revelation³: the last book of the Bible that is only seemingly the end of the story.

Revelation looks forward to things to come – the restoration of Eden, and our broken, sinful hearts. There is much we can learn from Revelation 22, the final book of the Bible, especially when it comes to the closing of one chapter and the beginning of another.

I think we can then safely say that the end is never truly the end. It's the opening of a door to our future, and when it comes to our personal stories, that future is pointing towards the glory of God.

And when it comes to the ultimate story of mankind, we can safely say the same.

When we see how far God's led us from our initial sin in Genesis to not only redeeming our iniquity *but* creating a reality with Him that is better than anything we've ever experienced, we can find that same line of hope in our own stories.

No matter what we've been through, we can look forward to living securely in God's glorious light.

Towards the end of the last chapter of Revelation, there's an interesting part where Jesus tells John that anyone who adds to or takes away from

1. <https://youtu.be/5nvVVcYD-0w?si=PJNNS2bD2Xjqv9T>

2. <https://youtu.be/QpnIrbq2bKo?si=EwJISvWWLGMGxAcS>

3. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2022&version=NIV>

this prophecy will either experience plagues or be denied any share in the tree of life.

So how can this warning assist us in writing the ending to our own stories?

1. Being honest about our stories until the very end and attempting not to keep anything in the dark is an act of obedience to our pure and holy Lord.
2. Adding to our stories or "fluffing" them up (so to speak) is an egregious affront to God. We're not writing these to make ourselves the hero. We're writing these to show others who the Savior of the world was, is, and always will be.

If we can take away anything from our study of Genesis 1, Psalm 88, and Revelation 22, it's that God so loved the world that He redeemed us and saved us from ourselves, despite the pit we once found ourselves in.

And what an honor it is to be able to create testimonies that help light that flicker of hope in others.

Take some time to sit quietly and reflect on your "end" (no pen or paper necessary). Allow God to bring to mind the best way to finish your story. And when you're ready, let's move to the next lesson and dive into Revelation 22.

Free Journaling: Revelation 22



Read all of **Revelation 22**¹.

Write freely about what you've learned about God in this chapter. By focusing on who God is, we see more of who we were and who He's sanctifying us to be.

Need a little guidance? Download **this journal page**² for a more structured approach to journaling your thoughts.

Now, let's pray.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for ensuring our stories don't end in our sin but in your redemption. Allow us to remember you are forever in control and give us ample opportunity to right our course and return to you. We pray for perseverance and vigilance, forever abiding in your precious peace and bringing the truth of Your Son to all those in need of a healer. We are honored You have chosen us for this life-giving task.

We pray all of this through our precious Lord Jesus.

Amen.

After you've reflected on the end of God's story, we'll move on to our next exercise, where you'll reflect on your own.

1. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2022&version=NIV>

2. [https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQDKzL5umYJxQYFKOASM89d-](https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQDKzL5umYJxQYFKOASM89d-AWKcVcVHSmimKUXLikPm1K8?e=Z1PHDt)

[AWKcVcVHSmimKUXLikPm1K8?e=Z1PHDt](https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQDKzL5umYJxQYFKOASM89d-AWKcVcVHSmimKUXLikPm1K8?e=Z1PHDt)

Growing and Flourishing: A Memory



It's now time to write a memory about the time Jesus saved you (the "ending" to your story).

Use **this journal page**¹ or write your thoughts in your own notebook. Feel free to write bullet points about what happened or to flesh out an entire scene.

Your entire story has led up to this moment: the time Jesus reached down and saved you from your sins. As we already know, this "ending" became the beginning of a beautiful relationship between you and Jesus, so be sure to write with that perspective in mind.

Meeting Jesus and taking His hand allows Him to water and nourish your soul. This is the point where you get to grow and flourish and share with others all He has done for you.

1. <https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQB488dAdWQRTPsS6X04GQFIAQ3PRcN-xvwEDd4CWKXrPXc?e=QtY3ao>

How to Write the End

The end is often just the beginning.

We've learned several things from Revelation 22 when it comes to writing a strong ending to our stories, but here are a few key points that stand out the most to me:

- *God has an uncanny way of making our ending even better than our beginning.*
- We may have had a beginning full of hope and promise, but because of our own doing or the decisions of others (think of **Joseph's story**¹), we found ourselves nearly drowning in the middle of a mess. But God reaches down to grasp the hands of those who love Him, making everything right and new again, something we see in Revelation 22 (and is also echoed in **Romans 8:28**²).
- *God allows us to participate in our redemption.*
- Jesus says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city" in the last chapter of Revelation. This verse reminds us that God has given us autonomy and the ability to *choose* to live a pure and redeemed life.
- *The truth needs no embellishment or amendment.*
- At the end of Revelation 22, Jesus warns that those who take away or add to His prophecy will suffer the consequences. In

1. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Joseph-brothers.html>

2. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%208%3A28&version=NIV>

light of our own testimonies, we can be encouraged to share the truth, even when difficult, and know that sharing our stories isn't about making ourselves look better or being in control of the narrative. It's allowing God to work through our lives and giving all glory to Him in the process.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- **The ending is an opportunity to point back to the beginning.**

We previously talked about "foreshadowing," where the beginning of your story hints at what's to come. And I think we can flip this concept when it comes to the ending, especially after observing how the last chapter of Revelation points to the garden in Genesis 1. As you write your ending, keep mindful of where you started, gently pointing your reader back to the beginning to remind them of God's redeeming intervention until the very end.

- **Be sure to keep your overall purpose in mind.**

Remember, this is a story that ultimately should point people to Jesus. The human side of us might see it as an opportunity to get back at or slander those who have hurt us in the past. But I always remember what Jesus says about **those who have been forgiven much**³. They love much, and because God has made us white as snow, let's not use this beautiful gift of writing to bring more evil into the world. Instead, let's look at our past as the way forward to a perfect future with Christ, our Lord.

- **Give credit where credit is due.**

3. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%207%3A47&cversion=NIV>

The ability to write, live, breathe – it's all in the hands of the Father. As we're writing our testimonies, we need to keep this in mind. These stories aren't for our own glory but for His. And even though He graciously gives us a part to play, we're only given that part because He grants it. When we come to Him with grateful hearts, our stories are even more potent because they're not just written by human hands but with the help of His Spirit.

Move on to the next lesson to hear some of my thoughts on writing the end of your story.

A Writer's Thoughts on the "The End"



You can listen to my thoughts on what it's like to write the end of your story **here**¹.

Happy listening!

1. <https://1drv.ms/u/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQAYSRNPOdp8TLIpJxhxwYlrAbXE1XSzBzGc-cA3mwDyvsHI?e=kDsuzD>

Time to Write!



Ready to write the end?

As we've learned, the end really isn't the end. It's a hope-filled possibility where you have the opportunity to show God's continued goodness in your life.

As you jump into this final phase of your testimony, remember whose you are and that you've been given authority by Jesus to share the light He's given you with others who may be consumed in darkness. This is no small feat, but His Spirit is with you as you share the Gospel through your story.

You can use this journal page¹ to start writing the end of your story. Or feel free to type it up, write it down in a favorite journal – the choice is yours!

Need a little inspiration?

*Listen to **this song**² before starting to write. Read along to the beautiful lyrics **here**³.*

1. <https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQCyWqQIVCTAS5UI4a7z3wZRAZUb7dsZExyH-bGu20pzzkAw?e=sNy4qE>

2. <https://youtu.be/u-1fwZtKJSM?si=eln4fdRBmFO9Vp4b>

3. <https://genius.com/Phil-wickham-living-hope-lyrics>

Your Finished Story



You're finally at the point where all parts of your story can come together. How exciting!

Use this journal page¹ as a template to write your complete story if you'd like.

Be sure to pray over what God would like you to do with what you've created.

It might be something that can help others. Or it may just have been a beautiful exercise to get even closer to Jesus as He heals your heart.

Regardless, it's been an honor being a part of this journey with you! God bless you, friend!

Dear Lord,

This story is Yours as is the breath in my lungs, the heart in my chest. You knew me in my mother's womb, and you know me now, humbled and heart-broken, and yet? Fortified by Your love and commitment to me. Thank you for giving me a small glimpse into what it must have been like to write the story of the world and allowing me to be in awe of the great and mighty Author.

May this story be pleasing to You and bring all who read it to the altar at Your feet.

We pray all of this through our precious Lord Jesus.

1. <https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQBG->

[WhA_cmSvSJhn8X0eyVF6AV_6PjpDe0pInB0IdDU2ctQ?e=r40a6Y](https://1drv.ms/b/c/3e8044110998eb33/IQBG-WhA_cmSvSJhn8X0eyVF6AV_6PjpDe0pInB0IdDU2ctQ?e=r40a6Y)

Amen.

Set the mood.

*You can softly play **this instrumental worship song**² as you write your complete story.*

2. https://youtu.be/1UA4Q53TuWk?si=engIUHth54IUu2HEy-hip.com%2F&source_ve_path=MjM4NTE

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1

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1. <http://erickaclay.com/>

2. <http://erickaclay.com>

