

The Story of the Kingdom

Matt Croasmun & Josh Williams

VIKTB-1000

About the Teachers



Matt Croasmun is Associate Research Scholar and Director of the Life Worth Living Program at the Yale Center for Faith & Culture and Lecturer of Divinity and Humanities at Yale University. His main research interests lie in the Pauline Epistles, illuminated by various streams of contemporary philosophy of science, theological reflection, and critical theory. He is author of *The Emergence of Sin* (Oxford University Press: 2017) and staff pastor at the Elm City Vineyard, where for six years he served as lead pastor. With deep grounding in both the church and the academy, Matt brings to all of his work a passion for the intersection of the life of faith and the life of the mind.



Josh Williams, originally from Iowa, moved to New Haven for school. While not knowing what was in store, Josh came for an adventure. He found it through studying and trying to live out justice, love, and community. After graduating Yale in the spring of 2008, he decided to stay in New Haven to go to Yale Divinity School for a M.Div

Around the same time, Josh plugged into Elm City Vineyard and soon became its first intern. During that process, Josh started prayer groups on Yale's campus and established and grew ECV's connection with Agape Church for the Housed and Unhoused where Josh serves along with a core group of ECVers. Right before his graduation in 2011, Josh was ordained as a pastor in the Vineyard and accepted a job with InterVarsity where he served as a campus minister for Yale College. Josh is ECV's first full-time Lead Pastor, and he is thankful and excited for how God is maturing ECV's vision and taking them to new places.

Course Description

As human beings, we are storytellers. We can't help but tell stories—about ourselves, one another, the world around us. The most important story in the world is the story of God. Our very selves and the world around us have been—and continue to be—profoundly shaped by God's work creating us, healing us, and drawing us to our final end.

This course begins with four basic human intuitions about the world:

- 1 The world is beautiful.
- 2 The world is broken.
- 3 The world can be healed.
- 4 There must be more.

These four intuitions shape the world as we know it and our lives within it. The course uses these four intuitions as lenses through which to tell and come to more deeply understand the Big Story—the biggest story there is: a story Jesus liked to tell as the Story of the Kingdom of God. Even if you already think you “know” the Bible, this course will help you see the unity of Scripture, read every part of the Bible in light of the whole, consider your life in light of God's Story, and share that story with others.

Course Objectives

As a result of successful completion, you will:

- 1 Be able to tell the “Big Story of the Kingdom” in its four chapters: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation.
- 2 Be able to describe the way that these four chapters of the Story structure the world as we experience it, having left behind “layers of sediment” that are part of the “furniture” of life as we know it.
- 3 Be able to distinguish God's work as Creator, Redeemer, and Consummator—and describe the interrelationship between these three aspects of God's work.

- 4 Be able to tell the story of Creation, articulate the ongoing significance of God relating to us as Creator, and describe our responsibility as human beings to contribute to the flourishing of the creation.
- 5 Be able to describe the dominion of Sin at the personal, social, and cosmic levels.
- 6 Be able to tell the story of God's work of redemption through Israel, Jesus, and the Church and articulate the ongoing significance of God relating to us as the One who redeems the creation from its enslavement to Sin and heals what we, in our sin, have broken.
- 7 Be able to tell the story of God's work of consummation, inaugurated in the ministry of Jesus, and articulate the "eschatological tension" in which we now live in the overlap between this world and the fully-realized Kingdom of God now breaking in.
- 8 Be able to identify these four "layers" within Scripture across every major body of biblical literature.
- 9 Be able to articulate the intuitions that correspond to each of the four chapters of the Big Story.
- 10 Be able to think through practical issues within the framework of the Big Story.
- 11 Be able to share the Big Story with your non-Christian friends and neighbors.

Course Aims

The most important framework to carry with you through your VI education is the story of God relating to the world. This story has four acts: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. This story is told, retold, assumed, expanded, and revised again and again in scripture (it is for this reason that each session will draw on scripture from both testaments and, usually, from each of the main bodies of biblical literature). It is told in different ways with various emphases but, of course, Jesus's favorite way of telling this story is as the story of the Kingdom of God. Understanding the broad strokes of this story unlocks the whole of scripture. And because the four chapters of this story structure the world as we experience it, a foundation in this big story provides a context in which to think theologically about any given topic, and a way of inviting those not yet following Jesus to enter into the story of God.

Required Reading

As already stated, the bible is your textbook for this course. Each Learning Block will list the required readings with links to those readings on biblegateway.com (NIV). If you prefer to read from a word or pdf file we have

compiled all of the reading assignments into a single file which can be downloaded at the bottom of the Course Resources Block (NRSV). We recommend a modern English translation, preferably the New International Version (NIV), 2011 revision. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) or English Standard Version (ESV) would also be acceptable. For students interested in the history of biblical texts (not the major focus of this course), a good study bible (e.g., the NIV Study Bible) can help provide some context, but don't let the notes distract you from the biblical text itself!

Learning Blocks 1-6

Each Learning Block below will provide you with the video lecture and the learning objectives for that lecture, a brief quiz based on the learning objectives, and study questions that can be used in a group or independent setting which are in the study guide.

The Final Assignment Instructions

Learning Block 6 features a series of interviews where each one addresses working out the kingdom story in a given sphere of life. These examples are intended to make you think about how you would apply the story as creation, fall, redemption and consummation to a given sphere of life.

Your final assignment is to select a given sphere of life (the above list is not exhaustive, only suggestive) and using all you have now learned in this course as the lens you wear, reflect on how this sphere of life would be viewed in terms of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. Write a short essay (450-500 words) where you explore each chapter of the big story for your sphere of life.

Here are some possible spheres of life you might want to consider:

- A given society: city, state/province, country, or a given people group and the gospel as "salt and light" in that society
- A particular issue of justice
- The healing ministry
- The Christian life (sanctification/transformation)
- Your body
- A particular environmental issue
- Parts of human culture, like the arts, music, literature, drama, architecture, etc.

Here is your assignment:

Once you have written your essay you will upload it to the Final Assignment Forum and then you must take the Final Assignment Quiz, a short true-false quiz to verify that you have done the final assignment. **Your essay will not receive specific feedback from the professor or Vineyard Staff.** Your grade for this assignment will come entirely from the Final Assignment Quiz which is used to confirm that you did the assignment.

Think of this as somewhere between a blog and contributing to a wiki.

- 1 Ensure that you have an introduction, body and conclusion, with the body having four headings, one for each of the four areas.**
- 2 The short essay should be 450-500 words (typically 250 words/page), **double-spaced, Times New Roman or Calibri/Cambria, 12-point font.**
- 3 When you use citations, choose one format and be consistent: MLA, Turabian/Harvard, or Numeric style.**
- 4 Include at least two biblical citations for each of the four, but do not write out the biblical text in full. Either simply cite chapter and verses, or refer to some key biblical words and expressions along with the citation.
- 5 Upload your paper in the course section as a pdf document.**
- 6 After uploading complete a short true-false quiz** (below) where you will verify that you have done this.