

I. The Power of Story

A. The Four Assumptions of Story

1. God is the author:

He is our authority because he is our author (psalm 139:15) Before you even lived a single day of life God had written your life (sovereignty) (doesn't address human responsibility at this point.)

God wrote you with precious thoughts, wrote your being with delight. (This stands against personal judgement, every thought of condemnation) You uniquely reflect something about God that no one else on the earth reveals or will ever reveal in the way you were meant to do so. He intends to use us for his eternal purposes.

Who are you? What core stories cause you to be who you are? How did you get here?

Stories never stand alone. One story leads to another. The only way to understand a story is to have the time to tell another.

There are at least 3 or 4 major stories in your life that you have not spent the time to see the parameters, characters, dialogue. etc. We tell the story but don't study the story. What are the contours, patterns, and themes written by God to reveal himself? Stories need to be named, articulated, pondered, & blessed so they have the power they were intended to.

2. God is not the author of sin

James 1:13, 1 Cor. 13:11...

How can both realities be put together? He didn't author my past abuse, or my escape from the damage of the abuse in my addictions.

The stories of God are not an effort to explain. They are an effort to expose. Stories are difficult to interpret. We are not meant to read bible stories and be able to say this _____ is the principle. Instead they are meant to be a context to understand the nature of our hearts.

We are in a story war. There are realities in the universe opposed to us and our stories revealing God's glory.

3. God gives us the right to name

We have the right to name and write our own stories with God. We are to be God's coauthor. Genesis 1 & 2. God creates all, then gives Adam the responsibility to name the animals. In that culture to name something was to give it meaning. Even more important than the creation of the thing. The Humility, grace and kindness of God calls us to cowrite with him the story we are called to tell.

You are responsible for your story. How can you be if you haven't put time and effort in reflecting on the nature of your story? Your story will be written by someone. If not you, then who? Your government, your school systems, your churches, your culture, race, ethnicity, family, gender.

God asks Adam Where are you? We need to be asking ourselves the same question. How is it that my life is meant to reveal God? If you are waiting for retirement for your life to be yours, you are probably not writing your story now.

*assumption he is working with:

Everyone in this room knows we live in a fallen world. Harm is inevitable. You cannot live in this world without you sinning and others sinning against you. It all causes heartache. All stories are bound in the mess of sin. (sin= everyone struggles with lust. Lust is more than sex. Lust means desire gone mad. It is feeling like until the desire is fulfilled, you cannot live well with what you've been given. It is the core of narcissism. Jesus talks about our sin saying we all struggle with anger. When my lusts are not fulfilled, there is someone I want to make pay (myself or others). We project on others the emptiness we don't know what to do with in our own hearts. Every important person in your life has failed you. And you have failed all those in your life. *If you cannot name brokenness, you will not have ability to name beauty.* We are an amazing interplay between brokenness and beauty. Many times it is easier to speak of our brokenness. We have a hard time naming the beauty we have made in us that brings glory to God.

4. We are the translator of God's story in our story

You have no right to your own story. But we feel some of our story is off limits to others, even to our own sense of consciousness. We think these off-limits, forgotten stories have no effect on us. But trauma remains in the body. Stories that have deeply affected you don't go away. No one is ever "done" in this life time. God is continually at work in the work of redemption. We will even be growing in redemption through eternity.

If I'm married to you, I'm meant to read and interpret your story. I am a Witness of your stories and dreams and glory. Our lives are meant to be a deep intersection where my story becomes your story & vice versa. Our stories become His story. Are we meant to share every detail with everyone? No, but is your story available?

What is your calling? Not to "do", Your calling is *how* you do what you do. Each of the how's of our lives is meant to be utterly different than any one else on this earth. You are meant to reveal something about God that no one else is meant to reveal in anytime on this earth than you. Huge responsibility and privilege.

You cannot know the future until you do the work of the past; to understand your UR story. (UR =The ground, foundation story.) Those stories involve trauma & redemption.

Genesis 16

Bazaar story. Redemption is equally if not more bazaar. When God rescues us, it never makes a lot of sense, and never comes at our timing. Why would the Hebrew God reveal himself in scripture directly to this woman? Women were less than cattle in that time. And an Egyptian woman, and a slave— Lowest possible status.

Gen 12:1 The story of the beginning of the people of God. Abram & Sarai leaving on God's command. Mother & father of faith. What kind of mother and father do you have? You, your mother, your father are all sinners; are adulterers & murderers. The father of faith is a coward who hates conflict and would rather give wife what she wants rather than dealing with her desire to be God. The covenant ceremony with Abram is key to this story. Crazy stories, but so are ours. Our plot evolves when we take over when we think God is failing, and we create more

havoc. Mother of faith is a manipulative woman. Hagar flees to Negev desert. It is suicide for Hagar to go there. Then God shows up. He asks two questions:

1. Where are you from? (What has brought you to be who you are)
2. Where are you going? (past & future) This will help her interpret her present.

God lets us name him. Elohim, Jehovah. There are hundreds of names of Gods in OT but this is the first naming of God where God doesn't name himself. He lets an Egyptian woman slave name him. WHAT?!

What is your name for God? It's your story that will help you name who God is. The humility of God is that he lets us co-author with him. Out of the brokenness of our story he delights to hear our name for him. He meets us in the desert, in places of death. Not to resolve our heartache but to ask us questions. If we allow ourselves the time and space to do that work, we will have a better sense.

B. Shape of Stories

What composes a story?

a beginning, a middle, an end.

(postmodern: but not necessarily in that order)

* All stories have a *setting*. We set scene by setting context.

Draw a map of the place that you are in. This helps you set the stage. You activate the portion between limbic (emotional brain) and cortical system (thinking brain). If you think but don't feel about your story, you haven't activated limbic system. Getting into the context helps. Until we can see the story we won't feel it. But many times we don't want to do either.

*All stories have *characters*. They have personality.

*All stories have *Dialogue*. Even without words, characters speak with nonverbals.

*All stories have a trajectory. Have a *plot*. Evolves from moment to moment.

*All stories have an *ending*. *denouement*.

Have you let yourself do the work of working through those 5 things in your own story?
There is hard labor of doing excavation, digging up the ground to find the shards of pots to make assumptions about the culture or world that's being studied.

Plot of Story:

1. Shalom: Innocence

All story begins in innocence. We take Shalom to mean peace. By this we mean absence of conflict. But it's more; it's where all discordant parts come into some kind of harmony that brings sense of delight and goodness. Shalom is like jazz, where the discordant sounds of various instruments when they come together and create a kind of beauty that doesn't come from ordinary harmonies. Shalom is the lamb slaughtered, glorified. Revelations 5. The scars of the cross remain on his glorified body. Right now he is fully god and fully man. His scarred body leads the people of God in worship in Revelations.

We are meant to sing the psalms to one another in a way to engage our stories with one another. Most of psalms are songs of lament. Our stories are meant to show shalom, but they are marked by death. We are meant to hold shalom together, with the sense that the disparate parts of our stories comes together in a way that doesn't deny the scars, and in ways you would never expect.

What has brought you a taste of of shalom?
As a young person, what was a taste of shalom?

How did it bring shalom?

God has woven that taste of shalom into your dreams of what redemption is meant to be.

Nature alone sings to our heart if there is very little other shalom in our life. Even small moments of natural beauty like sunrises.

B. Shalom Shattered: Tragedy

Shalom never lasts:. Something broke into our story and stole our hearts. Comes with an experience of injustice. It was not meant to be this way. When did tragedy prevail? It doesn't have to be huge. It is when you know you are an outsider. When you know You cannot make this better. Betrayed, powerless, shamed. Gives us an awareness that our world doesn't work. There is a huge price to be paid to enter into the heartache we are experiencing. Tragedy sets context for lives to take a radical turn.

Write down 2 or 3 tragedies that opened the door to betrayal, powerlessness, shame:

Without entering death, you will not know the real meaning of resurrection. Everybody has tragedy, but one person's tragedy does not look like another's.