

## “The Bible Has a Story—Before You Have a Story”

The Ministry of the Word (pt. 7)

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...Our “Story” (Life-Experience) is in Search of an Answer/Explanation! ...Because **it’s a Story w/i A Story**

“...we have never had so much and yet we have never had so little. Never have we had more choices, more easily accessible education, more freedoms, more affluence, more sophisticated appliances, better cars, better houses, more comfort, or better health care. This is one side of the paradox. ...The other side though, is that by every measure, depression has never been more prevalent, anxiety higher or confusion more widespread. We are not holding our marriages together very well, our children are more demoralized than ever, our teens are committing suicide at the highest rate ever, we are incarcerating more and more people, and cohabitation has never been more widespread.

...Many therapists are now finding that this paradox has worked itself into the lives of those who come to see them. Among those are many who are younger. They often report that though they grew up in good homes, had all they wanted, went on to college, (perhaps) entered the workplace, they are nevertheless baffled by the emptiness they feel. Their self-esteem is high but their self is empty. They grew up being told they could be anything that they wanted to be, but they do not know what they want to be. They are unhappy, but there seems to be no cause for their unhappiness. They are more connected to more people through the Internet, and yet they have never felt more lonely. They want to be accepted, and yet they often feel alienated. Never have we had so much; never have we had so little. That is our paradox.” **David Wells**, “God in the Whirlwind”, p.22

### ...THIS—Is How Our ‘Stories’ Can/Do FEEL! ...but WHY??

**INTRO** ...We are “PLUG-N-PLAY” creatures ...We ARE a bunch of unique individuals with specific, detailed design features—And we’re all in need of Plugging In to Something Beyond Us! ...No One wants a Life of “Distance, Detachment, and Disconnected Definition”!

?? – What Am I Looking to—to help me make sense of the “Story of Me”??

“If you were to discern a main point from graduation ceremonies across the United States, you’d come up with something like this: *‘the purpose of life is to discover yourself by looking deep down, and then express yourself to the world, no matter what anyone else—family members, friends, colleagues, previous generations or religious institutions—might say.’*” **Trevin Wax**, “Rethink Yourself”, p. 2

### “So, What’s Your Story?”

“...Everyone has in his or her mind a story about the way the world actually is, even if they haven’t thought about it much or worked out all the details. ...The story-in-their-mind is what people are referring to when they say they have certain beliefs about things like meaning, value, purpose, and significance. ...It is their belief system. If they did not have a basic story in their minds, they would have a difficult time making any of the important decisions people are faced with in life.” **Greg Koukl**, “The Story of Reality”, p. 23

...Something has to CALIBRATE everything so we can locate moments & events on the “map of human experiences”

?? – What “Story” do You Plug-in-To ...when you attempt to make sense of your life?

“Why does the earth exist? What is the purpose of human life? ...One of the distinctive features of modern Western culture is the particular emphasis now given to telling one’s story. Everyone has a story to tell, although some may be more interesting than others. ... Yet, no matter how many stories we hear, we may still be left with a sense of emptiness, for few stories address the fundamental questions of life. ...Yet, one story stands apart from all the rest. It claims for itself an authority not derived from human beings but from God. As divine revelation it presents us with a meta-story that claims to communicate absolute truth that cannot be discovered by any other means. ...a remarkably unified story that addresses two of life’s most fundamental questions: (1)

Why was the earth created? (2) What is the reason for human existence?" **T. Desmond Alexander**, "From Eden to the New Jerusalem – An Introduction to Biblical Theology", p. 9

The BIBLE is Presenting a Philosophical/Religious Worldview—an Operating System that touches and defines and organizes all of our Existence! ...An Ultimate Story to Plug-in Our Little Story!

The Bible's Big Organizing Paradigms: **Creation** (Origin) ... **Fall** (Understanding) ... **Redemption** (Solution)

"The story starts in a garden (the Garden of Eden) and ends in a city (the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven). If you don't understand the place of creation, the extent of the fall, and the extent of redemption, and perhaps we could add here, the destiny toward which the whole story drives—the consummation—then we can easily get off track." **Art Lindsey**, "Creation, Fall, Redemption" (C.S. Lewis Institute)

## CREATION

**Creation** – the doctrine of Creation provides essential understandings for how we create definitions, assign purpose, locate authority, etc.. Creation reveals original design and purpose from which we draw our self-understanding and self-identity.

"One of Francis Shaeffer's most memorable sayings was that Christianity does not start with 'Jesus saves you from your sins.' It starts with 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.' ...Christianity cannot be reduced to a tract or a technique for getting 'saved'. It is a comprehensive account of the structure of reality, a rational and real-world account of the history of the universe, a verifiable storyline of the unfolding of the cosmos.

...It is perfectly true that Jesus came to save us from that deforming disorder called 'sin.' But starting with that theme is like going into a movie theater halfway through the film. You don't know who the characters are, you can't figure out the plot, and you are constantly guessing at the events leading up to that point. Most important, you cannot appreciate the depth and complexity of the problem that needs to be solved. ...That illustrates a major reason the message of Christianity no longer makes sense to many people today. They are no longer familiar with the first part of the drama. As a result, not surprisingly, they cannot make sense of key concepts such as sin and salvation." **Nancy Percy** (from the Foreword to "The Story of Reality", p. 13)

...John 1:1— gives away a Major Bible Reading INSIGHT!! ...Gospels are about Jesus Christ—They're Biographical Narratives. They speak about a 33-year period of time, mostly focused on a 3 year window of Jesus life & ministry! ...BUT—to Understand and truly Take-in this content—We Need to OWN Other Aspects of the Bible's Story!

"God's story begins with creation, and it ends with a new creation. If nothing else, this fact alone suggests that creation is crucial to understanding who God is and what he is about. ... "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). Genesis 1 provides the cosmic overview. Everything that exists comes into being at God's command. As we move into Genesis 2, the story focuses tightly on the details of the creation of mankind, the very first marriage, and the responsibilities entrusted to men and women. Everything is good. Everything is perfect. Everything is just as it should be." **Michael Lawrence**, Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church, p. 151

**Gen 1:31** "And God saw everything he had made, and behold it was very good."

...BUT ...there are 2 Chapters of "GOOD" followed by 1,187 chapters on the other side of the Great FALL!!

...So much of our lives is spent trying to make sense out of the disorder & dysfunction of our existence—How Critical is it that we are Given a "Reference Point" to Creation's HARMONY!?

...Every Page of Scripture—and Every Day of Our Lives—NEEDS the Active Awareness of Understanding Our ORIGIN ...ie, the Story of Creation is Relevant Everyday to Every One of Us!

## FALL

**Fall** - the Doctrine of the Fall provides essential understandings to critical life elements like evil, sin, corruption, brokenness, pain, suffering, death, etc. ...the essential 'nature & need of man' ...the essential understanding of human conflict ...the essential understanding to the type of problem the Gospel is suited to solve.

### Genesis 3's "Essential Elements" (Satan, Temptation, & Sin ...a Fallen World under Judgment—Subjected to Futility)

**Gen 3:1-6** <sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

**...Everyday (and in Every Way) my little story is interacting with a Bigger Story that includes Satan, temptations, sin, and judgment—ie, "The Fallen World Condition"**

### Isaiah 1:2-6

<sup>2</sup> Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

<sup>3</sup> The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."

<sup>4</sup> Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.

<sup>5</sup> Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

<sup>6</sup> From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil.

### The Fall's Organizing Paradigm/Explanation

"This world is not the way it's supposed to be. God created it to be a place of joy; instead, we know it to be a source of constant frustration. God created it to be a habitat of life; we know it to be a crucible of death. God created it to be our home; we know it to be our graveyard. ...In some ways the storyline of the entire Old Testament focuses on explaining the sinfulness of humanity and the absolute futility of any solution to creation's demise and human sin that we might conjure up—whether towers, or mighty nations, or rigorous self-discipline. ...And from all of this, we draw conclusions for our theology. It helps us understand human nature, the futility of work, even government and the corrupting influence of power. We could get a doctrine of sin simply by looking at Romans 3:23—"all have sinned," it says. There it is. Isn't that really the bottom line?" **Michael Lawrence**, "Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church," p. 163

"So when your own child turns two and begins to throw temper tantrums when he doesn't get his way, you may think of Romans 3:23. But you'll also think of the book of Numbers and thousands of years of Israelite history, and you'll know what's behind Romans 3:23 and what exactly your child is doing. He's worshipping an idol. Its name isn't Baal, but it might as well be. Of course, this isn't just useful for explaining your two-year-old's heart; it's useful for explaining your own heart as well." **Michael Lawrence**, "Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church," p. 164

## REDEMPTION

**Redemption** - the Doctrine of Redemption provides essential understandings as to what actually fixes man's problem. At the center of man's existence is a particular problem that needs a particular solution. This solution is the main point of the Bible!

2 Cor 5:19-21 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

"...what I'm aiming to do with this book—give you a briefing about what you're going to see, what you're going to experience, what you should look for and look out for as you set off on the long trek of reading the entire Bible. ...A trek. That's exactly what it is when you decide to read the entire Bible. ...it's sixty-six different books with thirty-something different authors, written over the course of a millennium and a half. And it's long—almost 1,200 chapters and three-quarter of a million words, meaning that if you decide to read the entire thing aloud, all at once, it would take you just under three days to do it—about seventy hours and forty minutes if you're an average speed reader. Moreover, the Bible contains many different kinds of literature. There's poetry and narrative, lists and genealogies, biographies and law codes and prophecies and sermons and open letters and personal letters and even something called 'apocalyptic.' It's no wonder so many people feel bewildered when they open up the Bible and attempt to read it. Actually, most people do pretty well through Genesis and the first part of Exodus. But once Exodus starts launching into Old Testament Law and doesn't really come up for air for a book and a half, that's when many people start thinking, 'Wow, life's gotten busy! Maybe I'll give this another try next week...or month...or year.'

I think the key to reading the Bible, though, is to understand that all those authors and books—all 1,189 chapters of them, are actually working together to tell one overarching, mind-blowing story about God's action to save human beings from their high-handed rebellion against him, and from the effects and consequences of that rebellion. And the thing is, the story of how he did that is quite literally EPIC in its scope and its sweep." **Greg Gilbert**, "The Epic Story of the Bible – How to Read and Understand God's Word", p. 14-15

***...My "Story" (existence... experiences... emotions... relationships... conflicts... struggles ...successes... goals... dreams... suffering... evil... goodness...) is part of a Bigger Story! I really can't understand my small story without the Big Story.***