

The Story

The text for Christian living is the Bible. Our Bible turns out to be a large, comprehensive story. The Christian life is conducted in story conditions. Story is the primary verbal means of bringing God's word to us. Young and old love stories. Literate and illiterate alike tell and listen to stories. Neither stupidity nor sophistication puts us outside the magnetic field of story.

“A good storyteller gathers us into the story. We feel the emotions, get caught up in the drama, identify with the characters, see into nooks and crannies of life that we had overlooked, realize that there is more to this business of being human than we had yet explored. If the storyteller is good, doors and windows open.

Honest stories respect our freedom; they don't manipulate us, don't force us, and don't distract us from life. They bring us into the spacious world in which God creates and saves and blesses. First, through our imaginations, and then, through faith. The biblical story invites us in as participants in something larger than our sin-defined needs, into something truer than our culture-stunted ambitions. We enter these stories and recognize ourselves as participants, whether willing or unwilling, in the life of God.

Our contemporary unbiblical preference, both inside and outside the church, is for information over story. We typically gather impersonal information, whether doctrinal or philosophical or historical, in order to take things into our own hands and take charge of how we will live our lives. And we commonly consult outside experts to interpret the information for us.

But we don't live our lives by information; we live them in relationships in the context of a personal God who cannot be reduced to formula or definition, who has designs on us for justice and salvation. Picking a text for living that is characterized by information-gathering and consultation with experts leaves out nearly everything that is uniquely us-our personal histories and relationships, our sins and guilt, our moral character and believing obedience to God.

A story is immediate, concrete, plotted, relational, personal. And so when we lose touch with our lives, with our souls - our moral, spiritual, embodied God-personal lives - story is the best verbal way of getting us back in touch again. And that is why God's word is given for the most part in the form of story, this vast, overarching, all-encompassing story.”

(Condensed from Eat This Book: The Art of Spiritual Reading Eugene H. Peterson. Hodder & Stoughton 2006, pp40-42)

Our messages over the next few weeks focus on stories about God's dramatic action in making sinners saints.