

Session 12 — Living the Story

Reading and Assignments

- ❖ **Book:** *The Secret Message of Jesus* by Brian D. McLaren. Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2006.
 - ⊕ **Assignment:** Read the entire book

- ❖ **Book:** *In the Name of Jesus* by Henri JM Nouwen. New York: Crossroad, 1997.
 - ⊕ **Assignment:** Read the entire book

The Story of God

- ❖ The Bible is a book of books - a book of stories if you will. Primarily, the story of God - His Story - a history of God's interaction with His lost love (if you'll permit us to call humanity a lost love). The Bible is in some ways a love story: love found, love lost and love restored.

- ❖ Over 75% of the Bible is narrative or story. The Bible is then a story that reveals God's heart as relates to His wayward and lost creature.

- ❖ The significance of story is that it embraces life, capturing the essence of lives that have lived, how God dealt with people in the past bringing us encouragement that the Bible we are reading is about real people living a real life in relationship to a real God.
 - ⊕ Spirituality is then not something simply above and beyond us, but also includes the sphere of existence we call life - a whole life spirituality.

- ❖ We are spiritual and whole when we love the Creator with our whole heart, love our the creature as ourselves and then love the creation.
 - ⊕ Spirituality involves living as sons/daughters of God in relationship to Him and to His creation and servants and stewards of the Kingdom.

- ❖ Our Story: Understanding the Jesus in me
 - ⊕ Revelation 12:11 tells us that one of the key ways the saints overcame the evil one was by *"the word of their testimony."* One of the aspects that Hell likes to take from us is our story, our testimony.

 - ⊕ Who is the Jesus you know? In other words, what has He saved you from? Healed you of?
 - ❖ The blind man in John 9 did not fully comprehend who Jesus was. He simply knew that he was blind and then he was able to see because of Jesus (John 9:25). He later comes to faith in the Messiah (John 9:35-38).

 - ⊕ We can only give away the comfort we have received (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

- ❖ The Irrelevance of the Story
 - ⊕ The story of the Kingdom of God does not merge well with the story of the world. The values of the two kingdoms are diametrically opposed to each other. More simply, two stories that sit in opposition to each other.

 - ⊕ The story of the Kingdom includes humanity in the central plot where the center of the story

revolves around the eternal and loving Creator, God. This is the metaphor or picture of the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life which was at the center of the garden (Genesis 2:9). The story of the world has humanity as the center of the story, the major character and everything else as the sub-plot or minor characters.

- ✧ The story of the Kingdom is a story of lost love and how that love is redeemed through an act of incredible sacrifice - a love that gives. As the song writer says, "*Love crucified, arose.*"
- ✧ The story of the world is a story of love that is sought for the sake of self - a love that takes.
- ✧ The Kingdom of God (Kingdom of Light) sits in juxtaposition to the kingdom of the world (the Kingdom of Darkness).
- ✧ Many appear to be saved in the Kingdom of Light while living out their lives in the Kingdom of Darkness.
- ✧ They do this by living out the values of one Kingdom while verbally addressing the values of the other. More simply, many do not walk the talk.
- ✧ The problem of our church world is that we are relevant with music, language, arts, etc., but too relevant in our worldview and life practice. In other words, we tell the story of the Kingdom while trying to live in the center of the

story - in the place of God.

- ⊕ The Kingdom of Light is a Kingdom of Love where the battle that is waged is done so in a power that silences and subdues the Kingdom of Darkness.
 - ✧ The mystery of the All Powerful God who can be rejected, despised, and killed.
 - ✧ A Kingdom of weakness with weapons of vulnerability, sacrifice, and love
- ⊕ The Kingdom of God comes and assaults our world.
 - ✧ An assault that brings peace, healing, forgiveness and life through warriors of love, agents of peace, advocates of justice, and heralds of hope.
- ⊕ *"The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it."* (Martin Luther)
 - ✧ Human love is about receiving something from the object loved.
 - ✧ Divine love is not elicited by its object. It simply is. It does not depend on beauty, truth, or goodness of the beloved.
 - ✧ In the human world, when someone rejects us we feel pain for the loss we have received. Our pain is about us.
 - ✧ In the world of our Father's Kingdom, when we reject God He hurts because of

our loss of Him. His pain is for us.

- ⊕ God (Love) is accepting, giving, and forgiving.
 - ◇ Accepting - the giving of value through the "Gift of Presence". The greatest human gift we can give is to fully present when we are with people. When we do so, we not only give the gift of our presence, we also give the Gift of His Presence as we incarnate the Presence of the One who brings life, hope and healing.
 - ◇ Giving - love gives and when it does it...
 - Re-values people.
 - Re-humanizes people
 - Re-dignifies people.
 - Our presence with others, with Him abiding in us, and us in Him, brings transformation
 - ◆ Jesus is the Way embracing us
 - ◆ We are the means that the Way embraces others
 - ◇ Forgiving - love forgives because it longs to find a way to restore the person to wholeness and relationship.
- ⊕ Like God we are to be accepting, giving, and forgiving.

- ✧ Accepting (Romans 5:6-8; Revelation 3:20; I Corinthians 9:19-23)
- ✧ Giving (John 3:16; 17:1-26; 2 Corinthians 8:9)
- ✧ Forgiving (Isaiah 1:18; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Matthew 6:14-15; 18:22-35)

- ❖ Living the Story
 - ⊕ The aim of any doctrine is to move us to right living — *“Clothe yourselves with the armor of right living, as those who live in the light.”* (Romans 13:12, NLT).
 - ✧ We seek to develop doctrine that based on confession that is embraced by one’s life. That is the simple and profound purpose of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - ⊕ Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers these powerful words that remind us that it is about living in Christ.
 - ✧ *With an abstract idea it is possible to enter into a relation of formal knowledge, to become enthusiastic about it, and perhaps even to put it into practice; but it can never be followed in personal obedience. Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth that has a place for the Fatherhood of God, but omits Christ as the living Son. A Christianity of that kind is nothing more or less than the end of discipleship. (The*

Cost of Discipleship, p. 64)

- ⊕ For the story of the Kingdom of God to be lived out it must first begin in the transformation of our hearts, expressed in our daily lives with our family, our day to day endeavors and then in the economy of the Kingdom - doing our Father's business.

Discussion Questions

❖ Reflect

- ⊕ How has your life been changed by Jesus? How can you say, "I was blind but now I see"?
- ⊕ When you reflect on the love of Jesus what does it do in your heart and mind?

❖ Evaluate

- ⊕ How is your discipleship with your family?
- ⊕ When you are not doing ministry describe and evaluate the godliness of your actions and heart?

❖ Adjust

- ⊕ What do I need I need to change in the way I live the story?
- ⊕ What do I need to change in the way I tell the story?

❖ Do

- ⊕ What will I now do based on the Story of the Kingdom?
- ⊕ How will I now minister and relate to people based on the irrelevance of the Story of the Kingdom?