



## *The Stories We Tell:*

### *Class 5, May 20 – Stories of Restoration*

*As humans, we love stories, and they affect the way we see our world. As Christians, true story of scripture is a metanarrative that reflects the “one big story” of God’s love woven through many smaller stories and characters. Our world offers other narratives –some adding to the cacophony of our modern culture and some echoing the divine author. Stories have incredible power. They can help bring order and context to our lives, pointing us to God as the source of life. Our own stories also have power, so we seek to share stories of God’s work in our lives. God’s Story, the stories of our culture, and our stories. These are the the stories we tell.*

### **Scripture’s Storyline of Redemption: Creation, Fall, Rescue, Restoration**

#### **Dr. James Choung, evangelist, *Big Story* framework:**

*We are designed for good. We are damaged by evil. We are restored for better. We are sent to heal.*

#### **Dan Allender, *To Be Told* framework:**

- **Shalom:** “Stories begin with life at peace. Such shalom is not merely an absence of tension or the presence of perfect pleasure. It is a deep inner and external harmony...”
- **Shalom Shattered:** “Shalom is shattered by sin, by the intrusion of a lie, a distortion of the truth that mars the pleasure of being naked, transparent, trusting, and true.”
- **Shalom Sought:** “The search for shalom is infused with the fundamental question of meaning: Is life as random, pointless, and absurd as it seems? Or is it ordained, purposeful, and meaningful?”
- **Denouement (“*untying*” in French):** “Denouement is the rest that comes when all the disparate plot lines of a story, gnarled and taut, have been untied and an order has come about that brings a new moment of shalom.”

How can we see this story arc in Joseph’s life?

#### **The power of telling our stories in community:**

“Your brain is social. Your brain is meant to engage the drama of life most deeply in social relationships. So not only do you get insight and perspective that varies with each participant, but in some ways what you find is your brain heals by the presence of others—assuming that they have the capacity to ask good, hard questions and engage you well in that process.” (Dan Allender)

“A person who listens empathically and responsively as someone else tells his or her story is able to validate the storyteller and, through questions and musing, arouse that individual’s curiosity so he or she will consider alternative ways to imagine his or her story.” (Curt Thompson, *Anatomy of the Soul*)

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**Concepts and Questions to help you process your stories:**

- **Defining Moments:** What childhood memories stick with you? These can be stories of blessing (delight, beauty, goodness) and/or memories and stories of harm (trauma, rejection, shame).
- **Recurring Patterns:** What themes are common within and across your stories? For example, do you have a pattern of taking risks or seeking stability? Or, are there specific people who have prominent roles in your stories?
- **Internalized Messages:** How have you interpreted this story? What have you told yourself is true about yourself, others, or God based on this story? How has this story affected your life?
- **Revisiting the story:** What other angles can be used to interpret this story? What do other people see and hear in this story? Are the messages that I internalized true or are they lies? What truth does God want me to know about myself and Him?

Consider the stories of Paul and Peter. What were some patterns or themes in their lives? What messages might they have internalized? How did God use those patterns or themes for good?

**Is what I experienced really “trauma”?** <https://theallendercenter.org/2016/07/spectrum-of-trauma/>

- “Every loss, every goodbye, every fright, every moment of shame, is, to a degree, a traumatic experience in contrast to what we were meant to experience in Eden.”
- “When you remember significant events that brought you heartache, disruption, sorrow, shame, you will experience, in the present, something of the traumatic effect of what you felt when the event was going on years and years ago. The brain does not differentiate present and past.” Dan argues that we need to be able to hold both—the devastation of capital T Trauma and the slow, often unseen destruction of smaller traumas.

**Resources or Suggestions for Further Explorations:**

- *Cure for the Common Life*, by Max Lucado
- *Anatomy of the Soul* and *The Soul of Shame*, by Curt Thompson
- *To Be Told*, by Dan Allender (accompanying workbook *To Be Told Workbook*)
- The Allender Center <https://theallendercenter.org> has great resources and workshops
  - <https://theallendercenter.org/category/podcast/story-questions/>: a 4-week podcast series on “Story Questions” covers much of *To Be Told* material
  - <https://theallendercenter.org/resources/examining-the-story/>: This website will guide you through a 3-week process to examine your story: Each week has 10-15 minutes of audio instructions from Dan Allender and a worksheet for guided reflection and prayer that you can download.