

The Power of Story

Imagine the stories your children will tell their children about the year 2020! The disruption of life caused by a pandemic! The fear, the confusion, the frustration! The ways your family chose to navigate the upheaval of life. Stories hold great power. They can transform the storyteller and the listeners. Jesus understood the power of story. “He was never without a story when he spoke. (Mark 4:34 MSG) The stories Jesus told were intended to transform his listeners’ hearts and draw them closer to the Father’s heart. Our personal stories can have that kind of power too.

Listening to other people’s personal stories can change our hearts. When Rick and I were in Greece in 2019, we were awestruck to hear stories told by Afghan and Iranian refugees. Each of them told how they had been drawn to faith in Jesus through their personal struggles. Each story was different, unique. As Rick and I listened, we came to understand that Jesus uses many means – visions, dreams, symbols, nature, music – to draw people to himself. Scripture is certainly one of the tools he uses, but it is not the only one. Hearing their personal experiences expanded our minds to see how wonderfully God works in the world.

Telling our own personal stories “is also a tool to heal ourselves.”¹ Some of you know that I struggle with issues related to childhood sexual abuse. Each time I share my story, “it makes me feel heard – makes me feel validated – makes me feel like someone cares. It’s my opportunity to get it out instead of holding it in.”² This is why 12-step programs like Celebrate Recovery are so helpful for us. They provide a platform for sharing our stories in a safe, affirming environment.

You, too, have a story to tell. Life is hard. “How frail is humanity! How short is life, how full of trouble!” (Job 14:1 NLT) Have you lost someone you loved through a misunderstanding? Has someone close to you lost their life? Have you struggled with financial hardships? Has your character been questioned because of your ethnicity, your gender, or your political affiliation? How has your faith been challenged through life’s struggles?

We need to tell our stories to help others and to find healing ourselves. “Story is what connects us and binds us to each other. . . Story is what defines us and sets us apart. . . [Story helps us] to truly know and be known.”³ But before we are ready to tell our personal story, we need to “find the gift in it.”⁴ We need to be able to understand how our troubles in life have transformed us to be more like the person God created us to be.

Our personal stories are still being written as we navigate this year of 2020! Have you been able to find its gifts? Let’s take off our “masks” and share our stories with one another.

1,2,4 “The Power of Sharing Your Story Endorsed By Oprah”, Kelly Swanson, Jan 2019
3 “Why I Believe in the Power of Story”, Jeff Goins, goinswriter.com