

Christian Perspectives ? the power of your stories

Early in June I had the opportunity to attend a training weekend in which I experienced, in a new way, how the stories which make up a person's life can be used to effectively influence and benefit the lives of others. Those in attendance were encouraged to begin to put down on paper stories from our own life and relate how events, situations and circumstances impacted not only the initial moment, but how they are woven into who we are today. We were encouraged to think about how the lessons learned make us a better person today.

As I thought about the challenge to follow through on the exercises my thoughts turned to what the Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:15-16. The Amplified Bible translates these verses this way: "But in your hearts set Christ apart as holy [and acknowledge Him] as Lord. Always be ready to give a logical defence to anyone who asks you to account for the hope that is in you, but do it courteously and respectfully. {16} [And see to it that] your conscience is entirely clear (unimpaired), so that, when you are falsely accused as evildoers, those who threaten you abusively and revile your right behaviour in Christ may come to be ashamed [of slandering your good lives]."

When you go back and reflect on how God has been involved in your life and start writing things down, it provides not only an opportunity to remember His goodness, but also to express your appreciation, thankfulness, and gratitude again. It is a chance to do as the hymn writer suggests, "Count your many blessings and see what God has done."

In writing and refining your stories to fit the appropriate situation, you are expressing your faith in a powerful influential way. Jesus used stories as His way of connecting truth and the power and love of God to life. "Always being ready" involves preparation and thoughtful planning. Giving account of your hope relates to your personal experience and encounters with the God "who works all things for good." Being courteous and respectful or your lack of the same, in your approach to how you deal with other people demonstrates a great deal about the inner you. It is a window into your heart motivational level and will either attract someone to Jesus or repel them.

Criticism and judgmentalism do not provide a platform to attract anyone towards God and His Kingdom. Remember, when you point your finger at someone to condemn them or their actions, you have three fingers pointing back at yourself. If you want to draw someone towards God, demonstrate the value and benefits to them through your personal experiences and stories of how God has intersected your life and how this would benefit their life and do it with courtesy and respect.

Demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit as outlined by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV), "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Jesus' response to the woman caught in adultery, an act which the Mosaic Law of His day said was punishable by death, was to say to the accusers, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." When everyone had left Jesus said, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." John 8:11 (NIV)

Focus your life on the positive outcomes you want to achieve. What you think and what you believe and what you say and the intentions of your heart impact your actions which determine the outcomes in your life. You reap what you sow. It might be worth considering using the power of the God stories of your life to influence people in a positive way for Him and His Kingdom through Jesus Christ.

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