

THE LIFE-SHAPING POWER OF STORY: GOD'S AND OURS

For a deep dive into a sermon and article by Dan Carter, a retired professor at Bethel University, on Telling God's Story use this QR code. This is well worth your time. Below is an abridged version of his sermon.



Psalm 102:18 "Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord."

Who is this future generation for whom this story has been recorded? It includes, among others, you and me. How is it that we have the opportunity to know the God who created us? Because someone lived the story, someone else told the story, someone wrote it down, others chose to repeat it, and many were willing to die for it. And so, generation after generation after generation, the story of God's love for his creation has been told — and we are the beneficiaries.

This prompts a question: *are we going to be the generation that does not pass on the story?* Stories are never more than a generation from extinction. Our institutions for the elderly are filled with stories that are disappearing every day, just as the elderly are. So will the story of faith, unless we tell it in ways that draw people to make that story their own.

The Bible is many things, but among the most important, it is a big storybook devoted to memory. Not *memories* in the sentimental sense, but memory in the crucial sense of understanding where you come from and what you are to do. And the key to memory is story. The Bible is a book of stories in many different forms — poetry, biography, song, history, letters, and more. It is a collection of stories, chapters of the one great story: the story of God and his love for his creation. This is the meaning, says the Bible, of the story we call human history: God made us, God loves us, God calls us. That is the master plot of the greatest story ever told.

If you do not understand this story, you will never correctly understand who you are or why you are here. Americans, especially, have a great preoccupation with the self — self-analysis, self-help, self-fulfillment, and on and on. Do you want to understand yourself? Do you want to know the meaning of life or what you are to do? Let me tell you a story: "In the beginning God . . ." That is the opening line of the story of God's relationship with his creation. It is the story by which all other stories, including our individual stories, are to be understood.

"Are we going to be the generation that does not pass on the story?" The Bible offers a master story that we are invited to make our personal story. We become characters in that story. If we join that story, we have both rights and responsibilities. One of those responsibilities is to remember what God has done and to tell it to the next generation.