

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. ***Enjoy discovering more about Him!***

"THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES: MY PAST DEFINES ME" | JOHN 4:29 | PASTOR DAN EFFINGER

WARM-UP QUESTION:

- What was an embarrassing moment when you were growing up?

"The False Story"

Many believe their past sticks to them and controls them.

- Why does our past have so much impact on our present and future?

"Jesus Doesn't Erase Our Story, He Enters It." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Jesus gives us a new life; the old life is gone. We can celebrate the grace that gives our story greater meaning.

- How does grace change our past into a better story?

"A New Way to Carry Your Story" Romans 5:8

Jesus came to us while we were still sinners and paid for them all. That means He secures our future.

- How does knowing Jesus secures your future change how you live in the present and think about your past?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Many people have things they've done in their past that brings shame and a sense of being worthless. Yet God, who knows everyone better than anyone chose to send His son Jesus to pay for all their wrong. His death and resurrection gives them grace so that their story has a beautiful future with Him.

- What are ways you have been letting your past define and control you?
- How can you let God have your past and walk in His grace?
- Praise Jesus for His grace and the hope that you have for life with Him.

- Church prayer in the agape room.

- Worship Night

1. (SLIDE 1) WE KEEP TELLING STORIES ABOUT FINDING OUR WAY HOME. – “with great power comes great responsibility.

- a. The point is that **WE ARE DRAWN TO STORIES WHERE THE PAST CAN BE CHANGED** – someone overcomes a great obstacle to rewrite and redeem a new and better outcome.
- b. “There is no path home that does not demand a price. You can only choose who pays it.” - Odyssey
- c. It is not quite as optimistic as Spider-Man’s “With great power comes great responsibility,” but it carries a similar moral weight: we cannot choose a better story without accepting responsibility for what that choice will cost.
- d. Our old story says, “Our story is stuck to us” - **We can leave our past, but our past doesn't necessarily leave you.**
- e. The gospel does more than contradict it—Christ comes to us there.

2. (SLIDE 2) We acquire a story before we know we're writing one -“WHERE DOES OUR STORY BEGIN TO STICK TO US?”

- a. WHAT HAPPENED > WHAT IT MEANT > WHAT I BECAME
- b. **REJECTED** | I'M UNWANTED - I **FAILED** | I'M A FAILURE - **ABANDONED** | I'M NOT WORTH STAYING WITH - **SHAMED** | I'M BAD. – **LOSS** | I'M ON MY OWN – **UNPROTECTED** | DON'T TAKE RISK
- c. Meaning and the Event aren't the same thing.... “I am not worth choosing” – “I am a failure and can't be loved” – “I am unsafe, people can't be trusted.”
 - We respond to our story in a host of ways
- d. (SLIDE 3) A beautiful contrast “You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.” — Psalm 139:1
- e. Before David tells us what God thinks about him, he establishes
 - who possesses sufficient knowledge
 - who speaks authoritatively about him.
- f. God knows the whole story. -“How precious are your thoughts towards me O God they can not be numbered.”
- g. The story eventually becomes an “I am” vs. 14 “Therefore I am wonderfully made.”

- **I am not an accident.**
I am intentionally formed.
I am completely known.
I am never outside God's presence.
I am worthy of God's close attention.

- h. Odysseus I.D. is in question king, warrior, husband, father, hero – He establishes
- i. But after 20 years he returns to reestablish | what if I can't?

Am I successful ENOUGH > AM I attractive ENOUGH > Am I needed > AM I a good ENOUGH father > AM I a good ENOUGH Christian.

Because underneath every fragile “I am” lurks a frightening question:

If I am no longer that, then who am I?

For David he gives us a glimpse into the 139th The God who knew me before my story began knows me more truthfully than either my enemies or I know myself.

3. (SLIDE 4) THE HEART NEEDS PROTECTION AND REST

- a. Proverbs actually recognizes this enormous power of our inner world:
- b. “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”
— Proverbs 4:23 NLT
- c. Our past doesn't merely remind us about what **did** happen. It begins predicting what **will** happen.

***Don't trust.** Remember what happened last time. **Don't try.** You'll fail again.*

***Don't need** anybody. They'll leave. **Don't let them see** that part of you. They'll reject you.*

***Leave first.** Then they can't abandon you.*

- a. **GUARD WHO GETS TO SPEAK TO YOUR STORY**
- b. POND

4. (SLIDE 5) JESUS DOESN'T ERASE OUR STORY. HE ENTERS IT.

- a. “Anyone who **belongs** to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”
— 2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT
- b. Our story no longer has the final word..... but!

- c. We can believe our **redemption theologically** while continuing to carry our history **experientially**.
 - We celebrate grace while still carrying the bags.

Rejection. > Abandonment. > Failure. > Shame. > What somebody did to me. > What I did to somebody

- d. **The gospel does more than contradict it—Christ comes to us there.**
- e. **The past remains part of the story—its not the whole story.**

5. (SLIDE 6) THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

- a. **- HE KNOWS AND STAYS.** We will never have a new ending to our story if we don't let Jesus know and stay in our story.....
- b. **"Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!"**
— John 4:29

6. (SLIDE 7) PAUL

- a. **HE DOESN'T DENY HIS PAST;** "I persecuted God's church."
— 1 Corinthians 15:9
 - b. **IT DOESN'T POSSES AUTHORITY** - "But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me."
— 1 Corinthians 15:10 NLT
 - c. **THE GOSPEL DOESN'T REQUIRE ME TO CHANGE OR DENY MY PAST.** It removes my past's authority to name me.
 - d. **THE GOSPEL DOESN'T DENY MY PAST** it removes its authority to name me.
- Because my past does not possess sufficient knowledge of me to tell me who I am.
 - **"I have called you by name; you are mine."**
— Isaiah 43:1

7. (SLIDE 8) PETER

- a. **Peter failed. KEEP ME AROUND I'VE GOT THIS.....**
 - A devastating detail - **"At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter." I LOVE YOU PETER.....**
— Luke 22:61 NLT
- That look we carry into our memory is everything.
 - Peter goes away and weeps bitterly.
 - The resurrection has already happened.
 - The cross has happened.
 - The tomb is empty.
 - Sin has been atoned for.
 - Peter is standing in front of the resurrected Jesus.
 - Theologically, everything has changed.

- b. Bring your story to the One **who knows how it ends**
 - c. **“Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time.”**
— John 21:17 NLT
8. **And Jesus still takes Peter back to the painful place. – “DO YOU LOVE ME?”**
9. because Jesus loves Peter enough to meet him **where Peter is still carrying the story.**
- a. Do you love me and finally “You know everything”.
 - b. Peter no longer is interested in defining his own story.....
 - c. **JESUS ISN'T AFRAID OF PETER'S PAIN. – BECAUSE HE KNOWS THE rewrite to the STORY**
10. **(SLIDE 9) A NEW WAY TO CARRY YOUR STORY.**
- a. **“God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”— Romans 5:8 NLT**
 - b. That's why Jesus has the authority to speak about our ending.
 - c. He doesn't merely knows, stays with, and doesn't deny our past. **-He paid for it.**
 - d. He doesn't merely promise us a better present. **- He defeated death and secured our future.**
 - e. **KNOW AND NOTICE > NAME IT > BRING IT INTO RELATIONSHIP > RECEIVE GRACE**
11. **(SLIDE 10) GRACE MEETS US INSIDE THE STORY - YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY HOME**
- a. **GOD CAME LOOKING FOR US.**
 - b. **“The Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”**
— Luke 19:10 NLT
 - c. **The great surprise of grace is that Jesus doesn't merely promise us a better ending. He meets us in the painful chapters we thought we had to hide and begins renewing what those chapters mean.**