



"If I asked you to tell me your story, what would you say? God is the author of your life story. God is engaged in an ongoing creative work in your life. You are a story—a well-written, intentional story that is authored by the greatest Writer of all time, and even before time and after time. You are a living story that is meant to reveal and create glory. What makes your life a glorious bestseller is that the plot reveals not a mere moral or lesson but the very person and being of God." - Dan Allender, PhD, in *TO BE TOLD – Know Your Story – Share your Future*

## TELL US YOUR STORY

### The Wonder of God in the midst of Failure & Frustration

**Summary:** A Man embraces his story as an expression of the Wonder of God even in the midst of failure and frustration.

**Bible Verses:** Genesis 3; Ecclesiastes 1:1-9; Ecclesiastes 12:13,14

**Video Clips:** YouTube – "THE TREE OF LIFE Official HD Trailer" and "THE TREE OF LIFE: The Story"

**Music:** "Show Me Your Glory" by Third Day

**Resources:** *TO BE TOLD – Know Your Story, Shape Your Future* by Dan Allender and *THE STORIES WE TELL – How TV and Movies Long For and Echo the Truth* by Mike Cosper

April 14, 2016

### YOU WERE NOT DESIGNED FOR FAILURE!

1. The world was not meant for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. It was not intended for destruction and chaos. Your story was not meant to be full of tragedy and hardship. It was meant to be a place of life and harmony, where God and mankind lived in deep fellowship and community.
2. Genesis 3 documents the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of Adam and Eve. The ancient story echoes throughout history—mankind steals something forbidden, which opens new worlds to them while also incurring the wrath of their God. The creation is cursed and lashes out against us with thorns and thistles. The elements that we lived with in harmony are now hostile.
3. The Fall is the story of a \_\_\_\_\_, and its \_\_\_\_\_ are inherently relational. We have become disconnected from the One who gives us meaning, whose image we bear. Adam and Eve experience immediate consequences of their sin. They also see the seeds of their sin bear fruit in their own son, who murders his brother out of envy and spite.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is costly. It takes a piece of you and leaves you with a hard-to-articulate feeling of longing and brokenness—a sense that there's a hollow spot inside your soul. Genesis 3 isn't simply condemnable; it's also pitiable. God Himself—the only righteous Judge of the world—shows mercy again and again to sinners, clothing Adam and Eve, marking Cain, preserving Noah, Isaac, Lot, Israel, and of course, you and me. Quote by Luther.
5. "\_\_\_\_\_ " help orient you to a world that doesn't work out how you expect. They help you to make sense of the ruin you see around you. They help you to know you are not alone in your sorrows and failures, and they point to the deep need we all have for answers, for hope, and for redemption.

### YOUR EXPERIENCE APART FROM GOD > Frustration! - Ecclesiastes 1:1-9; 12:13,14

1. \_\_\_\_\_ > There is the Fall and there is FALLENNESS. There is failure, and there is frustration. Life is daily, and it can be hard. Suffering is real and it seems to be so random.
2. \_\_\_\_\_? > Old Testament Wisdom Literature—Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs > one of the great gifts God has given his people for meditations on life in this fallen, complex world, where injustices often leave you baffled and frustrated.
3. \_\_\_\_\_? > Wisdom Books invite you to set your hopes on knowing and being known by the God who made you. And to lower your expectations, expecting less satisfaction from work, pleasure, status, and success.
4. \_\_\_\_\_? > Life is full of good things—love, friendships, and feasts. But these are mere goods, able to satisfy you only temporarily. Throughout Ecclesiastes, Solomon reminds us to enjoy food and wine, to enjoy life with the one you love—because this is all you have.
5. LIFE = \_\_\_\_\_ > A deeper and ultimately lasting satisfaction can be found only in the Giver of these gifts. If you devote your life to attempts at finding satisfaction in these mere goods, you will end your days weary and frustrated in these mere goods.

### Tell Us Your Story: Guideline #9 > Men's Coaching invites you to utilize journaling, feedback, and story to better see life as it was designed

1. Journaling is a way to become aware of what you are feeling, thinking, and desiring. It is an exercise that will help you to become whole and mature.
2. Feedback is the discipline to see yourself through the eyes of others. Your willingness to invite other's view of yourself will help you to overcome blind spots about your own life.
3. Story is the offering of your life as openly and truthfully. Your story is what connects you to yourself and others.

### ACTION: Journal This!

1. How have you benefited from failure?
2. What frustrations seem to never leave you?
3. How would your life be different if you could overcome failure and frustration?

## Bible Verses

### Genesis 3

<sup>1</sup> The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal GOD had made. He spoke to the Woman: "Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any tree in the garden?"

<sup>2-3</sup> The Woman said to the serpent, "Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It's only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'Don't eat from it; don't even touch it or you'll die.'"

<sup>4-5</sup> The serpent told the Woman, "You won't die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you'll see what's really going on. You'll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil."

<sup>6</sup> When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realized what she would get out of it—she'd know everything!—she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate.

<sup>7</sup> Immediately the two of them did "see what's really going on"—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves.

<sup>8</sup> When they heard the sound of GOD strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from GOD.

<sup>9</sup> GOD called to the Man: "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup> He said, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid."

<sup>11</sup> GOD said, "Who told you you were naked? Did you eat from that tree I told you not to eat from?"

<sup>12</sup> The Man said, "The Woman you gave me as a companion, she gave me fruit from the tree, and, yes, I ate it." GOD said to the Woman, "What is this that you've done?"

<sup>13</sup> "The serpent seduced me," she said, "and I ate."

<sup>14-15</sup> GOD told the serpent:

"Because you've done this, you're cursed, cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals, cursed to slink on your belly and eat dirt all your life. I'm declaring war between you and the Woman, between your offspring and hers. He'll wound your head, you'll wound his heel."

<sup>16</sup> He told the Woman:

"I'll multiply your pains in childbirth; you'll give birth to your babies in pain. You'll want to please your husband, but he'll lord it over you."

<sup>17-19</sup> He told the Man:

"Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from, 'Don't eat from this tree,' the very ground is cursed because of you; getting food from the ground will be as painful as having babies is for your wife; you'll be working in pain all your life long. The ground will sprout thorns and weeds, you'll get your food the hard way, planting and tilling and harvesting, sweating in the fields

from dawn to dusk, until you return to that ground yourself, dead and buried; you started out as dirt, you'll end up dirt."

<sup>20</sup> The Man, known as Adam, named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living.

<sup>21</sup> GOD made leather clothing for Adam and his wife and dressed them.

<sup>22</sup> GOD said, "The Man has become like one of us, capable of knowing everything, ranging from good to evil. What if he now should reach out and take fruit from the Tree-of-Life and eat, and live forever? Never—this cannot happen!"

<sup>23-24</sup> So GOD expelled them from the Garden of Eden and sent them to work the ground, the same dirt out of which they'd been made. He threw them out of the garden and stationed angel-cherubim and a revolving sword of fire east of it, guarding the path to the Tree-of-Life.

### Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

<sup>1</sup> These are the words of the Quester, David's son and king in Jerusalem

<sup>2-11</sup> Smoke, nothing but smoke. [That's what the Quester says.]

There's nothing to anything—it's all smoke. What's there to show for a lifetime of work, a lifetime of working your fingers to the bone? One generation goes its way, the next one arrives, but nothing changes—it's business as usual for old planet earth. The sun comes up and the sun goes down, then does it again, and again—the same old round. The wind blows south, the wind blows north. Around and around and around it blows, blowing this way, then that—the whirling, erratic wind. All the rivers flow into the sea, but the sea never fills up. The rivers keep flowing to the same old place, and then start all over and do it again. Everything's boring, utterly boring—no one can find any meaning in it. Boring to the eye, boring to the ear. What was will be again, what happened will happen again. There's nothing new on this earth. Year after year it's the same old thing. Does someone call out, "Hey, *this* is new"? Don't get excited—it's the same old story. Nobody remembers what happened yesterday. And the things that will happen tomorrow? Nobody'll remember them either. Don't count on being remembered.

### Ecclesiastes 12:12-14

<sup>12-13</sup> But regarding anything beyond this, dear friend, go easy.

There's no end to the publishing of books, and constant study wears you out so you're no good for anything else. The last and final word is this:

Fear God. Do what he tells you.

<sup>14</sup> And that's it. Eventually God will bring everything that we do out into the open and judge it according to its hidden intent, whether it's good or evil.

## SHOW ME YOUR GLORY

Written and performed by Third Day

I caught a glimpse of Your splendor  
In the corner of my eye  
The most beautiful thing I've ever seen  
And it was like a flash of lightning  
Reflected off the sky  
And I know I'll never be the same  
Show me Your glory  
Send down Your presence  
I want to see Your face  
Show me Your glory  
Majesty shines about You

I can't go on without You, Lord  
When I climb down the mountain  
And get back to my life  
I won't settle for ordinary things  
I'm gonna follow You forever  
And for all of my days  
I won't rest 'til I see You again  
Show me Your glory  
Show me Your glory  
I can't live without You

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**TELL US YOUR STORY**

# TELL US YOUR STORY!

If I asked you to tell me your story, what would you say? God is the author of your life story.

God is engaged in an ongoing creative work in your life. You are a story—a well-written, intentional story that is authored by the greatest Writer of all time, and even before time and after time. You are a living story that is meant to reveal and create glory. What makes your life a glorious bestseller is that the plot reveals not a mere moral or lesson but the very person and being of God.

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What's your story?

## THE WONDER OF GOD IN THE MIDST OF FAILURE & FRUSTRATION?

Genesis 3

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3. The Fall is the story of a broken relationship, and its consequences are inherently relational. We have become disconnected from the One who gives us meaning, whose image we bear. Adam and Eve experience immediate consequences of their sin. They also see the seeds of their sin bear fruit in their own son, who murders his brother out of envy and spite.
4. Sin is costly. It takes a piece of you and leaves you with a hard-to-articulate feeling of longing and brokenness—a sense that there's a hollow spot inside your soul. Genesis 3 isn't simply condemnable; it's also pitiable. God Himself—the only righteous Judge of the world—shows mercy again and again to sinners, clothing Adam and Eve, marking Cain, preserving Noah, Isaac, Lot, Israel, and of course, you and me. Quote by Luther.
5. “Fall Stories” help orient you to a world that doesn't work out how you expect. They help you to make sense of the ruin you see around you. They help you to know you are not alone in your sorrows and failures, and they point to the deep need we all have for answers, for hope, and for redemption.

# Interview with Irene Alexander by David Benner

**David:** How would you describe your most essential spiritual practices?

**Irene:** Let me mention three. The beauty of creation and finding the Creator present might not seem like a spiritual discipline. But I find the intentional recognition of the Creator very life giving, when I'm out for a walk, or waking to a new day, or parking my car a little distance from where I'm going so I can be more contemplative. Another is centering prayer. I felt I was no good at it. My thoughts wandered and so I gave it up after a few months. But then later when my marriage was falling apart my spiritual director suggested strongly I try again. I used it to get back to sleep when I was awake in the night – which was almost every night. After a month I found a difference in my sense of self. It was only a few years later when I did an extended silent retreat that I began to begin my day with centering prayer. I still 'fail' but now I see the 'failing' as part of the practice, a surrender of my self and my efforts, a letting go and opening to God.

The final practice has to do with the imagination. I have come to agree with the 14th century Cloud of Unknowing that our rational minds are too small to perceive God as God is – a God we can only know through love. I have been reading the gospel stories since I was a child – but for a long time I thought about them rationally rather than imaginably. In the last fifteen years I have learned to imagine myself as one of the people in the story. Doing this I find that I encounter Jesus as a real person. It becomes an experiential encounter and a more intuitive knowing. I have written about that in *Practicing the Presence of Jesus*.

# YOUR EXPERIENCE APART FROM GOD > Frustration!

- Ecclesiastes 1:1-9; 12:13,14

1. **REALITY** > There is the Fall and there is FALLENNESS. There is failure, and there is frustration. Life is daily, and it can be hard. Suffering is real and it seems to be so random.
2. **Where Do You Go?** > Old Testament Wisdom Literature—Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs > one of the great gifts God has given his people for meditations on life in this fallen, complex world, where injustices often leave you baffled and frustrated.
3. **What Do You Do?** > Wisdom Books invite you to set your hopes on knowing and being known by the God who made you. And to lower your expectations, expecting less satisfaction from work, pleasure, status, and success.

# YOUR EXPERIENCE APART FROM GOD > Frustration!

## - Ecclesiastes 1:1-9; 12:13,14 (Continued)

4. What is Life? > Life is full of good things—love, friendships, and feasts. But these are mere goods, able to satisfy you only temporarily. Throughout Ecclesiastes, Solomon reminds us to enjoy food and wine, to enjoy life with the one you love—because this is all you have.
5. LIFE = Intimacy with God > A deeper and ultimately lasting satisfaction can be found only in the Giver of these gifts. If you devote your life to attempts at finding satisfaction in these mere goods, you will end your days weary and frustrated in these mere goods.



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