

I. Sermon

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood. Today I'm wrapping up our summer series. Our series is called Simply Said Soulful, Satisfying Scripture Stories. Each weekend, we've been looking at a different story.
- B. So all summer long, we've been looking at Bible stories, and today I'm wrapping it up with one more story.
- C. So here's my talk today: *The Story of the Story of the Bible*
- D. Look, every day you're confronted with choices, You have to choose, you have to choose a fork in the road, you have to go left, you have to go right. you have to go straight.
- E. Every day, you're making choices.
 - 1. You're making moral choices: Is this right? Is this wrong? Is this good? Is this evil?
 - 2. You're making lifestyle choices? Should I do this? Or that you're making relationship choices? Should I date this person or care about this person? or fall in love with that person?
 - 3. You're making sexual choices? How will I express the gift of sexuality that God has placed in my life
- F. Every single day, you are making your way through the jungle of the world.
 - 1. How would you decide what is healthy? How will you choose your career?
 - 2. How will you discern what will mess you up versus what will bless you and give you a great life?
 - a) How you going to make those choices?
- G. I'm telling you, that if you just go with the flow, If you just go with culture, you're going to be heartbroken because that's where our culture is at right now.
 - 1. Our culture is fragmented.
 - 2. Our culture is fractured.
 - 3. Our culture is heartbroken.
 - a) That is society today.
- H. And the weird thing is we have collectively chosen the mess we're in.
- I. The good thing is that you have an alternative, you have a different way, a better way.
- J. You have the most life-giving, life-affirming, joy-producing, heart-filling guide and map anybody has ever had, and it's all right here in the Bible. So let me tell you how this book came to be and where it came from.
- K. My hope is that you will come out of this, believing that there is a guide that will lead you to the best life you can ever had.
 - 1. *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. (Hebrews 1:1,2)*
 - 2. God has spoken, and he has spoken in his Bible.

II. The Whole Bible in Six Minutes

- A. Twelve Words...
 - 1. **CREATION**
 - a) You and I and everything and everyone is not the result of accident or chance. We are the personal creation of a loving God—an infinite Creator God—and we are designed for relationship with him.
 - (1) *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)*
 - 2. **CHAOS**
 - a) The order and love that was in the world was all spoiled by Sin. Sin started with the devil. Sin entered the human race. All chaos, all pain, all brokenness, and all death is the legacy of sin in the world.
 - (1) *But the LORD God gave him this warning: "You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die." (Genesis 2:16, 17)*
 - 3. **CURSE**
 - a) If we live in a universe created by God, and if God is holy and good, then we live in a moral universe.
 - b) And if we live in a moral universe, evil gets punished.
 - c) So God did the only thing a holy God could do: God judged this world of chaos and sin.
 - d) This judgement is called God's Curse. The whole world is under a curse.
 - e) We did the crime, and we've got to do the time... in this case, a death penalty.
 - (1) *Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse. (Romans 8:20, NLT)*
 - 4. **COVERING**
 - a) God came down to reverse the chaos and the curse.
 - b) He performed the first sacrifice in history, right there in the garden of Eden.
 - c) With the skin of that animal, God covered the shame and sin of the human race.
 - (1) One died for another. One death covered the sins of another.
 - d) This will be God's pattern, God's policy, and God's plan for salvation. One will die for another.
 - e) So the great question, from the very beginning, is *Who is the One?*
 - (1) *And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife. (Genesis 3:21)*
 - 5. **CHOSEN**
 - a) God wanted all the world to know there was a way out from underneath the curse and the chaos of sin.
 - b) That way would be through the sacrifice of One who was to come.
 - c) To tell the world of that great hope, God chose a race of people.
 - d) A large part of the Bible zooms in on the story of God's Chosen People, the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

- (1) *"The LORD did not choose you and lavish his love on you because you were larger or greater than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! It was simply because the LORD loves you..." (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8)*

6. CONSEQUENCES

- a) The Bible the follows the gritty story of the Jews and the nations around them.
 - (1) When they went God's way, the consequences were great.
 - (2) When they went against God's way the consequences were horrible—which basically describes a couple thousand years of history.
- b) God sent prophets to keep reminding his people that there can never be a more life-giving life-style than the way of life given in the Bible—because choices have consequences.
 - (1) *All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us, who live at the time when this age is drawing to a close. (1 Corinthians 10:11)*

7. CHRIST

- a) In the right time in the story of the story of Bible, God sent Christ into the world. He was born of a virgin, lived, loved, and taught, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven.
- b) Christ was The One. Christ was the deliverer the world was longing for.
- c) By his death, he forgave our sins. By his resurrection, he shattered every power of darkness in your life.
- d) Christ is the One.

- (1) *When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. (Romans 5:6)*

8. CHURCH

- a) God's message never changes, but his methods do.
- b) Before Christ was his chosen people the Jews, who were to spread his message.
- c) Ever since Christ, it is God's saved people, the Church, who are to spread his message.
- d) The Bible tells the story of the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to around the world, because of the beautiful, messy, persecuted, imperfect, group of people called the church.

- (1) *...upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. (Matthew 16:18)*

9. COMING

- a) Jesus Christ is Coming Again. We don't know when, but it will be awesome. He will right every wrong and destroy the devil and all evil at its source.

- (1) *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:3)*

10. CORONATION

- a) When Jesus comes again, he will change history as we know it. When that happens, all the universe will be assembled. Every angel, every demon, every sinner, every saint, every rock, every tree, every particle of nature... all will bow and praise him, as the Father crowns Jesus Christ, the God-Man, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

- (1) *...God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)*

11. COMPLETION

- a) Only Jesus could do all this.
 - (1) Only Jesus could undo the consequences of sin.
 - (2) Only Jesus could provide eternal covering of our guilt and shame.
 - (3) Only Jesus could reverse the curse.
 - (4) Only Jesus could restore order to the chaos of the giant pain machine called earth.
- b) And when he has judged the world, and when he has correctly assigned each person to their eternal destiny—those who receive him to eternal life, and those who ignore him and reject him to eternal condemnation—on that day, he will complete the story.
- c) The story that began "In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth"—that story will have its very own THE END—one so beautiful, so fiercely holy, and so loving that it will raise a shout from the redeemed people of God for all the ages long.

- (1) *No longer will anything be cursed. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. (Revelation 22:3)*

12. CELEBRATION

- a) In all the story of the Bible, the greatest wonder of all is me.
 - (1) That God should love a sinner like me is amazing.
 - (2) That Christ should shed his blood for me is amazing.
 - (3) That God should look at me, with all my failures and weakness, my faults and imperfections — that he should cast his searing gaze my way and call me a saint, is amazing.
- b) Me being in heaven, face to face with my God, is an epic story of grace and kindness to fill my heart with celebration for all the ages long.
- c) No more sorrows. No more tears. No more pains. No more loss. Just a Celebration of the grace of God that keeps getting better and better forever.

(1) *that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:7)*

III. You're In It

- A. The Bible is not disconnected. The Bible is not random. It is not a bunch of fragments or rules.
- B. The Bible is the unifying story of our world and our cosmos and our lives. This is the story of the Bible.
- C. Please don't miss the fact that you're in it. This is the story of the cosmos, yes. This is the story of redemption, yes.
- D. But this is the story of you too.
 - 1. You're in here.
 - 2. If any part of your life feels like a puzzle, here's the box top.
- E. This is why the Bible is so incredibly powerful for anybody who gives it an honest shot.
 - 1. It explains your origins.
 - 2. It reveals your destiny.
 - 3. It clarifies your purpose.
 - 4. It erases your doubts.
 - 5. It eases your fears.
 - 6. It beats Google Maps, Apple Maps, Waze, and every map, because it shows you the pathway to heaven.
- F. It's one big story. It's His Story. Every one of us lives, and dies, and lives again as part of God's awesome story of redemption.

IV. Unparalleled

- A. This Bible is unparalleled. There is nothing like it.
- B. The authors were flawed, imperfect humans.
- C. At the same time, the Author was our flawless, and perfect God.
 - 1. *for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21)*
- D. This process is called inspiration. Inspiration is one of the most important qualities of the Bible.
 - 1. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17)*
- E. There's a kind of dual authorship of Scripture. Scripture is written by humans AND Scripture is written by God. That's the important thing to remember about the story of the Bible.
 - 1. *INSPIRATION: God influenced the human authors, so that without bypassing their personality or culture, or vocabulary, or style, they recorded God's complete message to the world with word for word perfection in the Bible.*
- F. When you pick up a Bible, I don't care if it is digital, or leather bound, or paperback, or whatever, you are holding a miracle in your hands. You are holding a spiritual power plant.
- G. You are holding the truest truth, the deepest truth, the non-negotiable truth, the only truth worth basing your life upon.
- H. All competing claims are false.
- I. The words of the Bible are solid rock.
- J. Every other philosophy is sinking sand.

V. Enemies

- A. The story of the story of the Bible tells the tale of intense opposition. Many people have tried to destroy the Bible.
- B. They are all gone, but the Bible still stands.
 - 1. The heirs of Alexander the Great ordered all copies of the Bible to be destroyed. Anyone caught not turning in their Bible was put to death.
 - 2. The Roman Emperor Diocletian unleashed merciless persecutions against Christians. One of his edicts demands the burning of every copy of the Bible and the death of those who refused to comply.
- C. When violence against the Bible didn't work, the devil turned to philosophy.
 - 1. A philosopher named Celsus wrote the first literary attack upon the Bible.
 - 2. A long train of skeptics from the earliest days to those who call the Bible a myth today have all tried to tear down the Bible.
 - 3. The French skeptic Voltaire tied a copy of the Bible to the tail of a donkey. He dragged it through the filthy streets to the city dump. There, he ceremoniously burned it.
 - 4. Voltaire predicted that pithing a hundred years of his death (1778), Christianity would be erased from existence.
 - a) Since that prediction, the government of France has fallen 35 times.
 - b) Since that prediction, two centuries have come and gone. Very few homes have the writings of Voltaire, but in the Western World, almost every home has a Bible or a neighbor who has a Bible.
- D. The Bible is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.
- E. One author said,
 - 1. "We might as well put our shoulder to the burning wheel of the sun, and try to stop it on its flaming course, as attempt to stop the circulation of the Bible" (Collett, All About the Bible, p. 63).
- F. Another wrote,
 - 1. "Men have died on the gallows for reading it, and have been burned at the stake for owning it. Tortures too fiendish to describe have been visited upon delicate women and tender children for looking on its pages. Yet in spite of the strongest forces that Hell could unleash and in the face of the animosity of tyrants and despots, there are more Bibles in the earth today than there are copies of any other book ever written by the hand of man!" (Rimmer, op. cit. p. 15).
 - a) *The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (Isaiah 40:8)*

VI. The Bible's Power

- A. There is no book like the Bible. No other sacred literature, and no work of philosophy in all the ages of humankind can compare.
 - 1. If you want a book of moral precepts to guide us into love and respect for one another, there is no book like the Bible.
 - 2. If you want an origin story that dignifies the human race as created in the image of God, there is no book like the Bible.
 - 3. If you want a revelation of a God who not only shows love, but is love, there is no book like the Bible.
 - 4. If you want a book that satisfies our intellectual curiosity while simultaneously fulfilling our emotional needs, there is no book like the Bible.
- B. The Bible is God's love-letter to the world. It is his message of truth and grace to us. Its power is peerless, its scope is limitless, and its truth is timeless.
- C. From cover to cover, the Bible lays bare God's heart, calling us to infinity and beyond in relationship to him.
- D. Search the sacred literature of all the world. Comb through the annals of history. Study the finest points of religion and philosophy. You will never find a compendium of meaning, truth, realism, and hope that can even begin to compare to the Bible. There is nothing like it.
 - 1. The encouragement you crave is in the Bible.
 - 2. The guidance you seek is in the Bible.
 - 3. The correction you need is in the Bible.
 - 4. The power you lack is in the Bible, waiting to be taken up by you.
 - 5. The weapons of your warfare are in the Bible.
 - 6. The clarity you just can't find is waiting in the Bible.
 - 7. The hope that you hunger for is in the Bible.
- E. To enter the Bible is to enter a zone. To enter the Bible is to enter a realm of fellowship with God. It isn't just information; it's power. It's relationship. It's communion and community and fellowship with each other and God.
- F. The greatest tragedy that can ever happen to a church or to a Christian is to lay down your Bible.
 - 1. *For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:22-24)*

VII. Baptism

- A. If you have laid down your Bible, pick it back up again.
- B. We will partner with you in that. We will search the Scriptures with you.
- C. This weekend, we are super excited to baptize 27 people.
- D. When they go down into that water and are lifted up again, every single one is acknowledging what has always been true:
 - 1. The Savior described in the Bible is their Savior.
 - 2. The Salvation offered in the Bible has become their personal possession.
 - 3. The way of life described in the Bible is the pathway that they now choose.
 - 4. The eternal destiny of heaven promised in the Bible has become theirs.
- E. To be baptized is to say *I am saved for eternity, and will walk with God in time because I believe in Jesus. And I believe in Jesus because the record is true.*
- F. This is me, inviting you, to follow their steps.
- G. God saves you. God blesses you. God grows you. God uses you.