

Taking Action!

Transformed by the Story

May 4, 2014



Welcome to a place where **we diagnose the deceptions that blind us, and take 'em to the Great Physician.** We had an epic Easter! How many of you were here?

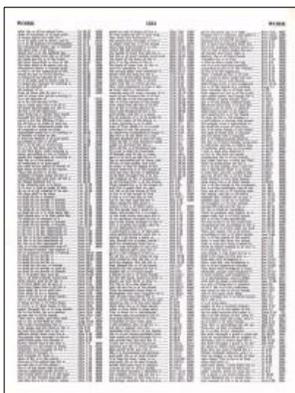
Should we show off your superpower? If you weren't here, watch this: Who was the 11th president? And after him? And then? Then? Then? And Then?

They saw six word-pictures, *one time, two weeks ago!* **We're wired for word-pictures!** Enter, the Bible. **God's Epic Story was written precisely in the way that unlocks our secret superpower.**

God speaks like this.



But, we think He speaks like this.



The enemy has convinced us that **God's Epic Story Book is a study manual, because we embrace story, and avoid study.**

I say, "Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore," and our mental gallery is filled with colors and costumes. I say, "Luke, I am your father," and it's dark and ominous. But, I say, "**For God so loved the world,**" and **the walls of our gallery are strikingly bare. We've been robbed!**

We got 400 Action Bibles, to help those who wanted to start hanging the pictures that go with the Bible's 215 stories, so we can see their verses in living color. I was hoping we wouldn't have to send too many back. Silly me. We sold and presold about 850! Wow. Epic.



God is drawing us into the story; so ... *now what?* Well, **we're drawn into the Word to be drawn out of the World.**



So today, we're putting the games on the shelf, and taking action!

God forbid the result of Easter is seeing the Story, hanging the pictures, reading voraciously, and allowing it to have no more impact on your heart than knowing Buchanan was ... *which president?*



For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. – Romans 15:4 NIV

The more we'll remain in God's Word, the more God's Word will remain in us. We must remain true to the One who *is* Truth, so His Spirit can remain in us, convict us, empower us, and transform us.

“You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **Remain** in me, and I will **remain** in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must **remain** in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you **remain** in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man **remains** in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart** from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not **remain** in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.” – John 15:3-6 NIV

If we remain in it, we'll believe in it. If we believe in it, we'll submit to it. When we submit to it, we act on it. When we act on it we see the fruit of it, and we trust it all the more.

How many of you wish you had better Bible reading habits?

I don't want you to raise your hand; you need to hear yourself say it like you mean it, good and loud, say: **“I wish I had better Bible reading habits!”**

Doesn't it make you feel better just saying it? Don't let it! It's a trap. **We give ourselves a pass for *not* taking action, and *not* doing what's right, as long as our good heart wishes we had.**



Don't confuse wishing with wanting. I *wish* I played the piano.

Now, I don't *want* to play the piano mind you (*that* requires time and effort and *remaining*) but I *wish* I could. *I really do.*

If you *only wish* you walked in a more profound relationship with God, let's be honest, you have no intention of taking action.

I'm not condemning you; I'm helping you diagnose the deception that blinds you and binds you. **If you want to get closer, you'll get into God's Word; if you *only wish* you were ... you won't.**

True desire desires action, craves action, takes action!

Do you *want* to have better Bible reading habits? If so, you need to hear yourself say it *and* mean it, say: **“I *want* better Bible reading habits!”**



Do you have conviction callouses?

Anytime conviction comes calling, and you ignore it, reject it, or wish it away, another thin callous layer builds on your heart. The more you ignore, the harder your heart.

That's the battle. That's certainly been *my* struggle, turning my wishes into wants and responding with action to soften my heart.

But, **how do you make yourself *want to do what you don't want to do*? Admit it. Confess it. Surrender it.** "But, I know I'll just do it again." Then admit it *again*, confess it *again*, and surrender it *again*. ***Wrestle those principalities! This is kingdom warfare!***

The Spirit of God is *in* you! Fight! Flee! Act! And, **ask God to empower you to *want to want to*. If you mean it, He'll honor it.** He *loves* that prayer. **Just don't sit in your sin and try to wish it away. He *hates that!* Says He prefers outright rejection to lukewarm reception.**

Here, I'll let Him say it in His own words ...

"These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see." **[Where is this cure found? In His Word!]** — Revelation 3:14b-18 NIV

Make a decision already! **Rebel or respond, but take some action! A parked car can't be steered in *any* direction. And, a bicycle that isn't moving is falling. Take action.**

You know how far most believers miss living in the power of God's Kingdom by? One foot. The one foot they keep in the world.



If you were drowning, deep underwater, would you use only one leg to kick your way to the life and light above? We *are* underwater, in so many ways, aren't we? *All* of us. Deep.

Are you using both legs to break free and breathe, or keeping one foot in the bottom muck and *wishing* your way to the top?

How can you enter God's Word with one foot in the world?

You might as well try to swim and sit at the same time. Sadly, when faced with this dilemma, most seem to stick with the stuck foot. **You might as well be locked out if you never enter in.**

How many of you have been *more excited* and *enthusiastic* about entering into God's Word in the last couple of weeks? If so, declare: **"I'm more engaged with God's Word!"**

How many of you know that excitement is a fleeting feeling with a rather short shelf life? If so, declare it: **“My enthusiasm will fade!”**

And yet, the salve that Jesus, our Great Physician, said to “put on your eyes, so you can see,” requires *daily application*, you know. So, what’ll you do when this current, momentary, excitement fades back into a dark, lukewarm, dull over your eyes?

I suggest you seize the moment and turn it into a habit *before* that happens!

Talk to each other after service about all the phone apps and podcasts and websites and email subscription at your disposal.

What’s the plan? What’ll you do? Will you make it in time?

Even now, your enthusiasm is slipping away, like sand in an hourglass.



Imagine being slapped awake by a flight attendant in a 747, and told you had to take the controls and try to fly it home and land it on your own! Worst nightmare, right?

So, having been likewise slapped awake by a doctor and told to take the controls of life, shouldn’t we be a bit more ... *concerned?*

Correct me if I’m wrong, but none of us have ever done this before!

Once you’re in the cockpit, you have a decision to make: **you can sit and wish you knew what to do, or you can take action, open the manual, talk to the tower, and bring that baby home!**