

Creating Connections!

Relating to Those in God's Word

June 8, 2014

Welcome to a place where we diagnose the deceptions that blind us, and take 'em to the Great Physician. And a place where we're learning to be honest with ourselves and authentic with others.



It's time for your *checkup*: **did you become a slightly better reflection of the heart and mind and courage of Christ this week?** No? Why do you think? Yes? Why do you think?

A few weeks ago I said: **The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make us like the Son of God.** That's *almost* completely true. He also uses the *people of God, especially the people of God in the Word of God.*

One of the diabolical deceptions is that we can't relate to the very real people who populate the stories in the Scriptures.

[But, we very really can!] For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. – Hebrews 4:12 NIV

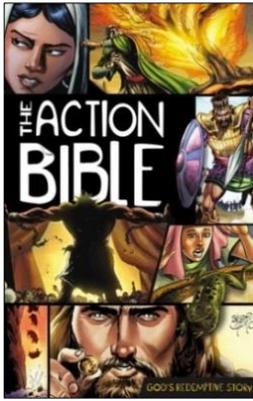
Is this because we respond so well to rules? You kiddin'?! It's because our Creator has composed it in such a way, that you can enter it and relate to it in a deeply personal and dynamic way.

A few weeks ago, I asked why the complex plotline of The Wizard of Oz is so much easier to recall than simple stories in the Bible. It's because, because, because, because, because ... because of the mental im'a'ges!

Who do you *most relate to* in the Wizard of Oz? **Between the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion, how many of you connect best with the Scarecrow? Who relates most to the Tin Man? And, which of you most associates with the Cowardly Lion?**



Now, be honest with yourself and authentic with others ... How many of you connect and relate more with the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion, than with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?



Why is that? **Why do you relate *more* to made-up creatures in a fantasy world?** “Because, they’re in *Technicolor?*” True. But that’s not why. Plus, you now have an Action Bible in *living color!*

I’m hearing so many great stories about how you’re hanging those colorful, scriptural, pictures on the white walls of your mental gallery!

[The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, that] All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. – 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV

Again, is this because we respond so well to *rules*? Nope.



In Waikiki, we saw huge, wild turtles. I had *no desire* to touch ‘em, or even get close to ‘em ... *till I was told it was illegal*. Then I was like, “Hey, Turtle dude, gi’me me some fin!”

It’s not the rules; it’s the relations. It’s not about commands; it’s about connections. It’s because it’s God-breathed and life-giving, inspired and empowered to relate and connect with *all* God breathed into life.

You relate to the Wizard of Oz characters in a similar, but much less significant, but still very insightful way, because you’ve created a connection, an affinity, a shared desire, a kinship. **You see yourself in ‘em:** their faults, flaws, desires, struggles, set-backs, victories, compassion, sorrow, pain, and joy. **You’re not really relating to a cowardly lion, too timid to fulfill his created purpose; or a rusting hunk-of-junk with a longing heart; you’re relating profoundly with your own spirit.**

And, rightly so; you were created that way.

And when this happens with those in the stories that our Creator authorized for *us*; and *His* Spirit joins the mix, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow!

God’s narratives aren’t mere stories, they’re mirror stories. Painfully honest mirrors.



The moment those pictures are securely hung in your mental gallery they become mirrors into your heart’s private gallery, with a profound power to change only those who cherish ‘em.

[Speaking of reading the Old Testament, Paul says] But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. – 2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJ

How intently do you tend to look in the mirror? Why? We examine the mirror so we can adjust accordingly. Same goes for God’s Word.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. – James 1:22-25 NIV



The truly courageous get those magnifying mirrors! Do you sometimes hate your mirror? **The mirror says it like it is.**

Remember the evil queen in Snow White getting upset when her magic mirror said she wasn't the fairest? **The self-deceived don't honor the honesty of the mirror.**

They hear the Word, see the reflection, but make no adjustments. Why do you suppose that is?

They excuse themselves by falsely viewing the heroes of the Bible more as *superheroes* with spiritual abilities far beyond that of mortal, relatable, man; thus missing the point entirely.

The point is what *God* can do through someone as broken as *me*.

If you had to live with 'em, I guarantee they'd all seem fairly dysfunctional, very typical, and quite irritating, whether it's rebellious Adam and Eve, who disobeyed the one and only rule; discontented King Solomon, who turned to false idols; the rash and impulsive disciple, Peter, who denied Christ; the murderous Apostle, Paul, who persecuted Christians; uncompassionate Jonah who got mad at God's grace to others; Zacchaeus, the fraudulent tax collector; Rahab, the prostitute; David, who murdered to cover up his adultery; Balaam, the greedy donkey beater; Aaron, who made the Golden Calf; Jacob, who swindled his own twin brother; the entire nation of Israel, God's adulterous wife; the Cowardly, lyin' Abraham who passed his wife off as his sister and allowed another man to claim her; Jacob's jealous sons, the heartless ten men who sold Joseph; Elijah, the prophet who ran away scared, was fed by crows; or King Saul, who consulted the wicked witch of Endor.

These are your relations. Your kin. Abraham's Father is your Father. Isaac's Creator, your Creator. Jacob's God, your God. **When you can believe *their* God wants to be *your* God, you can trust His presence and provision and power and peace just as *they* did.** And it'll begin when *you* begin to identify *personally* with 'em.



"But they lived too long ago, and their world is too weird to relate to."

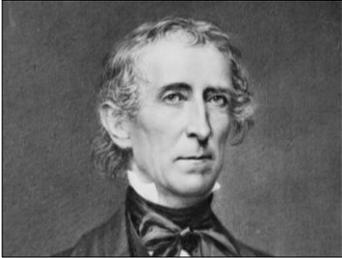
The Titanic, 1912, seemed unrelatably distant until a Pharmacist at Hagen told me His mom's brother was drowned when it sank.

How many of you are old? Isn't it true, that you don't feel nearly as old as young people think you should? Who has socks in a drawer, older than some of the people in this room? Relative.



Does George Washington, our 1st president, 1790, seem *long ago*? Well, does your *grandpa* seem that far removed and unrelatable?

Who was the 11th president? Polk. (Got'a keep your superpowers refreshed!) The president before Polk was John Tyler.¹ John Tyler was born in 1790, George Washington's first year in office.



John Tyler is as seemingly distant and unrelatable to us as John the Baptist or John the Apostle.

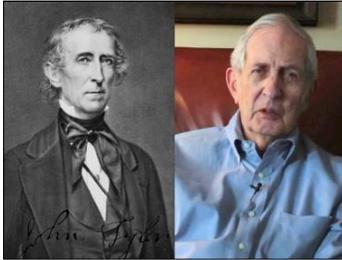
Well ... John Tyler's grandson is alive and doing quite well. His name is Harrison Tyler, he was born in 1924, when his dad was 71.

Harrison's dad was born to John Tyler in 1853, when John Tyler, our 10th president, was a mere 63.



This is Harrison's brother, Lyon. Their grandpa, their dad's dad, was born during George Washington's *first year* in office!

Do you think that seems as far removed to *them* as it did to you? **The problem isn't the past; it's your personal connection.**



"Well ... their world is still way too weird to relate to."

So you find it easier to relate to a dancing scarecrow, an empty robot, and a talking lion, who live somewhere over the rainbow?

It's not about *their* culture; it's all about *your* connection.

People haven't changed.

God hasn't changed.

He's waiting in His Word.

Make the connection.

Check your reflection.

Allow the Spirit of God to use the Word of God, and the people of God, to make you like the Son of God just a little more this week.

¹ Remember Polk in his polka dot suit pants? Above that, picture him wearing a neck **TIE** with a fishing **LURE** on it.