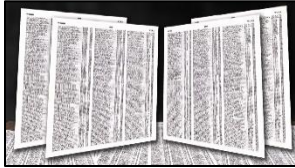


Storybook

A Treasury of the Heart

April 24, 2022



Is your Bible fun yet? I only ask because I remember when I *first* came here decades ago and heard Bruce preach... I was like, “I want *his* Bible! *Mine’s* clearly defective!” And last week, I lit up watching *him* catch all these cool connections on our biblical treasure-hunt and thought, “I should *expose* him!” Because he’s *not* a Bible genius – he just *found* some *secrets* for reading the Word and has been practicing ever since! So I stole some and know what? They *worked!* And all they *do* is transform your perspective; from seeing the Bible as a burdensome book loaded with God’s high-brow holiness to an exciting but simple story of salvation that Dad wrote down to draw us in!

And here’s the rub, **these secrets are hidden in plain sight!** All we gotta do is keep moving and we’ll trip over them. That’s how God designed it. Because, **down here, we’re born dazed and confused, like wandering travelers with amnesia.** But even *before* we know the *Lord*, we know this *isn’t* home. We can *feel* it. There’s *some* familiarity and fuzzy memory, but we can’t quite recall what went down. So we compare notes, collect clues, and share stories, trying to make *some* sense of things. And at some point, we come across the *Bible*. A book that *claims* to help us *remember* where we’re going, who we are, *Whose* we are, and where we belong. *But – it’s* a tricky trail of puzzling pictures! Just listen to how the “teacher” of Ecclesiastes “helps”:

[Remember your Creator!] before the *silver cord* is severed, or the *golden bowl* is broken; before the *pitcher* is shattered at the *spring*, or the *wheel* broken at the *well*, and the *dust* returns to the *ground* it came from, and the *spirit* returns to God. – Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 NIV

Great! Now I’m confused *and* anxious! *Something* sure sounds urgent, but *gold bowls and silver cords?* Not super *easy* to understand! So *why* would a *loving* God (who’s *not* a God of confusion) do that? **It’s like everything He wrote was designed to raise questions.** It’s *hard* to believe that:

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

But here’s secret #1: **Be Honest** ...when you don’t *get* it.

The Bible is *not* easy to understand! It’s easy to *read* – same letters and words as every other book – but no *one*, nowhere *completely* knows what the what every last little bit *means!* And that’s *okay!* Because **knowing that you don’t know, but you want to know, is how you start a treasure hunt.** You’re setting out to *find* what you *don’t* have! It’s only those who think they *have* it, that *don’t* go hunting.

“No need to look, the real treasure was friendship... “. “Really? We’re looking for like, gold and jewels and stuff!” Well, **the easiest way to miss the meaning in the Bible is believing you don’t need whatever you don’t already have!**

[But remember one of Paul’s principles:] If *anyone* thinks that he knows *anything*, he knows *nothing* yet as he ought to know. – 1 Corinthians 8:2 NKJ

Like Bruce likes to say, “Just load it in!” And **fight the urge to read into what you’re reading about.** In other words, don’t try to find the significance, symbolism, and supernatural *without knowing* the people, places, and plotlines. And looky there, it’s secret #2: **Be Open.**



We have to be willing to *adjust our approach* to the Bible. **Let go of the textbook and pick up the storybook.** The Bible was composed, *beginning to end*, as a book of about 215 stand-alone stories that build on each other – *like the ultimate TV or movie series*; individual episodes in a single story arc. It’s more *Marvel movies* than scientific *study*. **So don’t make mining for mystical meaning your focus, or you’ll miss the message!** That’s how things get hidden in plain sight, we look *past* them!

And because our busy brains are always trying to help sort things out, **we categorize information in two ways: Study and Story.**

And *generally*, we *avoid* the *study* category so we can squeeze in more time with the *story* category. “I finally finished my homework – my math book, my science book, my book report – now I can *relax* with a good book (or TV show or movie).” Why? **Study requires energy. Story restores energy.** And unfortunately, because we turn to the Bible for *answers*, our instinct is to take it on as a *study*. But **just because the Bible is solemn and sacred, doesn’t mean it’s strictly scholastic!** It’s *full* of images and emotion to draw *us into* a world we’ve never seen, to see *ourselves* through someone else’s eyes. And *that’s* what *stories* do... *if you read ‘em!*

Every page contains colorful images that connect to stories and pictures throughout the scriptures. And they’re *waiting* to be collected and considered, to open our eyes to *realize* we *can* remember what we’ve forgotten. Right Malachi?

Those who *feared* the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for *those* who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. – Malachi 3:16 NKJ

We can *know* the Way, *learn* the Truth and *find* our Life. And **you can have all the treasure you can carry ... in your heart.** So store it up! “I don’t want to look at the pictures. They’re *confusing, disturbing, boring.* I don’t relate to the culture or the people portrayed. **And, why do the images and symbols have to be so weird?”**

Because **it’s written to be remembered!** Remember five seconds ago? A book of *remembrance* for those who meditate on His *name?!* “You mean, like literally collect weird names and stuff?”

Hallelu YAH! [*betcha remember that one!*]... The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them [*as we do with stories*] ... He has made His wonderful works to be remembered. – Psalms 111:1-5 NKJ

And take it from *me*, nothing's more *memorable* than *weird*! You see, **God wrote to you in the precise way He wired you**, to speak to you in a profoundly powerful, and personal way.



Marvel puts “Easter eggs” in all their movies; hidden messages, images, or features that are purposed with exciting and enticing the viewer to make new connections and consider new context. Like in one movie, we catch a split-second of Thor’s weapon vault and see the infinity gauntlet. As a result, fans who *knew the stories*, *knew* to expect *Thanos*.



But imagine being *determined* to find these *enlightening* easter eggs but *not* knowing Thor, Thanos, or what an Infinity Gauntlet does. You’d *fail*! **Without the stories, all those deep, deliberate details will mean nothing to you.** And you can *feel* like you *really* looked hard – even though your basket’s *empty*.

Well, that’s what happens when you look past the Bible’s *stories* to try and *study* the stuff you know is hiding behind them. But you’re not alone, after He rose on Easter, *Jesus* still had to explain to two depressed disciples why *their* baskets were empty and how each episode in God’s Word was a part of the one *epic* story-arc.

Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets [*that’s seasons 1 and 3 of the OT*], He explained to them what was said in *all* the Scriptures concerning Himself. [*Later, their eyes were opened and they recognized Him*] They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened [*each Old Testament episode and Easter egg, in the one big story-arc of*] the Scriptures to us? – Luke 24:27, 32 NIV

Is *that* how it is when you read scripture? Or **is it still more Bible study than Bible story?** Not a walk in the park? Well, Your *perspective* determines whether you reflexively *avoid* it or *embrace* it. And what have we here? Why, it’s secret #3: **Be Humble**. Stop trying to be such a *grown-up*. Admit you need help and get back to basics. Listen to Jesus when He says that **true childhood isn’t something to grow out of, but into**. We need to see God as *our* Dad to hear *His* Word as *His* kid. Remember, *He’s* doing the heavy lifting and *we’re* doing the heavy listening...



To all who *received* Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to *become* children of God – John 1:11-12 NIV



And how do you *become* a child? You *work* at it. *Play* ain’t for the faint of heart! Ever play with kids?! *Easy*? Yes! *Enjoyable*? Yes! *Exhausting*? Absolutely! It’s: Go! Go! Go! Stop. Unconscious. But oh, what sleep it *is*! We *should* envy the rest of a pooped-out preschooler! **That’s the good rest comes from being good and tired after a day of play.** Much *different* from the unrest that comes from being *sick* and *tired* after a day of *work*.

And *Jesus* warns of *those* who push legalistic *study* over light-hearted *story*:

They tie up heavy loads and *put them* on men's shoulders ... – Matthew 23:4 NIV

So let's be perfectly clear: **IF GOD'S WORD IS A HEAVY BURDEN, YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG!**

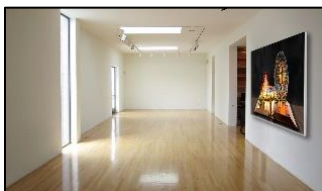
And it means that *somewhere* along the way, **you did more than loadin' it in if it's loadin' you down!** That's why, the *Son* of God, tries to teach us *that* when He offers His help on being a *child* of God:

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and *burdened*, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me ... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
[Because it's fun and exciting, but certainly *not* effortless] – Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

Kids *play* because they know to leave the *Dad* stuff to *Dad*! And they *don't* play *stressful* games like "*Get your taxes done before Tuesday*"! **They do what they're wired to do; enter and explore other worlds with their minds, using what they've heard!**

So let's check how close to kid *your approach* has been: Close your eyes and *listen*, "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." Look at the vibrant *colors your mind made*! The *setting*, the *characters*, and the *costumes*. Or: "Luke, I Am Your Father" Feel the *mood*, the *darkness*, the *fear*, the *shock*. What do you think *Luke's* thinking?

Okay, how about: "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son." Anything? *Hopefully!* You do see the cross, right? **Or are they still just words, listed in your mind's "doctrinal position"?**



Well, whether it's from the silver screen or God's Word, every *story* paints a *picture*, full of colorful and compelling characters in an expansive and engaging environment. And without *any* effort, we *hang* each picture in our mind, as a permanent placement in your *personal* gallery. And there they'll stay, a treasure trove, ready for you to jump in and play any day.



And that's why the *complex* plotline of *The Wizard of Oz* so much *easier* to remember than simple stories in the Bible. It's because, because, because, because, because; because of the mental im'a'ges!

Remember being disappointed if a book didn't have pictures? "Oh. It's just *words*." That's what the enemy wants for you and God's Word. **Jesus didn't say it's okay to become like a child.**

He said: "I tell you the *truth*, unless you *change* and *become* like little *children*, you will never enter the *kingdom of heaven*." – Matthew 18:3 NIV

So there you go, Bruce's big *secret* is that he's a big *kid*! And if you want to be one too, be prepared: be honest, be open, and be humble *before* you begin! And then be ready for Dad to open your mind if and when you open His book to pick up the trail to find some treasure!