

parent CONNECTION youth

pyc is a monthly electronic newsletter that spotlights various teenage issues, gives focus to spiritual formation, and also briefly highlights the upcoming activities in the life of the youth group at bloomingdale church

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www.storiesof.us/parentconnection

Our entire human history is filled with storytellers.

From Adam and Eve sharing their story of living in the Garden of Eden, to the story of the parting of the red sea, to ancient cave paintings depicting stories of hunting wild beasts, to the archeology digs of the ancient east discovering pre-printing press books, to the story of Christ's passion, to tales of Odysseus and gladiators, to King Arthur's fables, to stories of renaissance and reformation, to stories of the formation of our country, to stories told around the water cooler about Eli Manning shagging a fourth quarter sack and that incredible catch in the the Super Bowl...

We have participated in and told stories for all of our history.

We love stories. We are defined by stories past and present.

We are story tellers.

In this edition of *Parent Youth Connection* we will continue our discussion of the power of storytelling. Hopefully this conversation will spark new discoveries of how we can help our teenagers connect their story with God's Story.



God's Rescue Plan

The Bible is one big story of God moving again and again to save us from ourselves.

by Sam O'Neal (originally written for *Ignite Your Faith Magazine*)

I'll admit it: The Bible can seem confusing. We might think, It's just random stories about people who lived thousands of years ago. But when you really start to dig into it, the Bible becomes more than a bunch of stories with little relationship to each other. In fact, the Bible is one big, connected story about God's plan to be with us.

That plan started in the Garden of Eden. God designed it so he could live with us—actually walk and talk and be with us face-to-face. Of course, we know what happened next: Adam and Even blew it. They sinned. And because of that sin, they had to leave paradise and get real jobs. But God didn't abandon them, and he hasn't abandoned us. Starting that day, he launched a five-phase rescue mission designed to save us from our sin.

(more)

bloomingdale church :: high school+jr high youth

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Phase 1—God goes camping

The first step in that rescue mission was the tabernacle. When Moses and the Israelites escaped Egypt, God told them to build a big tent (the tabernacle) and carry it wherever they went. But this was no ordinary Coleman tent. This was basically where God “lived” on Earth. This is where God revealed himself in the form of a bright, glowing cloud. Exodus 40:34 says, “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

The cloud and the tabernacle were very comforting for the Israelites. For hundreds of years after Adam and Eve sinned, only a few people had been able to interact with God—people like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But now, all of the Israelites were able to see the cloud. It was God’s way of saying, “Hey, I’m still with you guys. Don’t worry.”

On the other hand, the tabernacle was a big reminder of what humanity had lost because of sin. There was a special room inside called the Holy of Holies. This was where God’s presence dwelled. But, because of sin, people couldn’t go in there. They were separated from God by a thick curtain. In fact, the only person who could ever go through that curtain was the High Priest—and he could only do that once a year after being purified with lots of sacrificial blood (Leviticus 16). Remember that bit about sacrificial blood because that’s very, very important to God’s big rescue plan.

Phase 2—God moves into a big house

Around 1000 B.C., an Israelite king named David started thinking, Hmmm, I sure have a really nice house. Maybe it’s time we upgraded God’s tent a little bit. So he spent his life planning out a really posh palace. His son Solomon, too, spent a lot of his life getting God’s temple built. Finally, it was finished.

Here’s what happened next: “When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord” (1 Kings 8:10, NIV). Sound familiar? It’s just like when God moved into the tabernacle, only this time his presence filled up a more permanent structure. It was like God was stepping deeper into our world, taking up a more permanent residence.

Unfortunately, the situation took a bad turn. Just like Adam and Eve, the Israelites messed up. They sinned. They stopped following God’s commands and began worshiping idols. As a result, God left the building: “Then the glory of the Lord rose from above the cherubim and ... departed from over the threshold of the temple” (Ezekiel 10:4, 18, TNIV).

It’s important to understand that God did not turn his back on human beings—we rejected him. And in response to that rejection, God initiated Phase 3 of his plan.



Phase 3—God gets his feet dirty

I don't know about you, but I have a hard time forgiving people who stab me in the back. And I think it would be just about impossible to hang out with someone who did it more than once. Amazingly, God doesn't think that way.

After we rejected him over and over, he came to us personally in the form of Jesus Christ. He stepped even deeper into the mess of sin and junk that was our world. He walked and talked and lived with us, just like back in the Garden of Eden. This time though he came on a mission to bring us back to paradise—not only by redeeming us but also showing us a way to bring a bit of God's Kingdom to Earth (see Matthew 6:9 and Luke 17:2).

However, if you've figured out the pattern, you know what happened next: We messed up. We sinned. We murdered God when he came to save us.

But he knew that was going to happen, and he was ready. The instant Jesus died on the cross, our relationship with God changed forever. Matthew 27:51 says, "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (NIV). If you remember the curtain from the tabernacle, you know what that means: Our sin didn't have to separate us from God anymore. Jesus' ultimate blood sacrifice let us all cross over the threshold.

Catch that? All those sacrifices in the Old Testament (all that blood spilled in Leviticus), kept pointing to Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice.

Phase 4—God lights a fire

Jesus didn't stay dead, of course. He rose from the grave and ascended into heaven. But it was still kind of a rough deal for the disciples. Sure, they knew Christ was God, but now he'd left them as just a group of guys hanging out in some cramped room in Jerusalem.

But then something big happened: "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit ..." (Acts 2:3–4, NIV).

After that, the disciples went throughout the city speaking a bunch of different languages "as the Spirit enabled them," and about 3,000 people became followers of Jesus in one day. After that, people began to see glimpses of God's heavenly Kingdom everywhere.

And this was the start of the church. You can read all about it in the book of Acts.

Now, I'll admit "tongues of fire" are kind of strange. But think back to the cloud covering the tabernacle, and then the temple. It was a visual sign of God's glory, remember? It was God's way of saying, "I'm still here." The same thing happened with the disciples and that fire, but there was one very important difference.

With the tabernacle and the temple, God's glory dwelt in buildings that were separated from human beings. Only the High Priest could approach it, and only after being purified with sacrificial blood. But when Jesus died, his sacrificial blood purified all human beings who would call him Lord and Savior. And when the little clouds of fire settled over each of the disciples, it was God's way of saying: "I'm with you, Matthew. I'm with you, Peter. I'm with you, John. ..." It was personal. God dwelled inside each of them.

And the same thing is true of us today. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, it says: "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you." So repeat after me: "I am a temple of God's glory. I am a part of God's plan." Pretty cool, huh?

Phase 5—Home sweet home

So what's the final phase of the plan?

Heaven, of course. While God's people—through his church—have sought to show bits of the heavenly Kingdom on Earth, those are only glimpses of the real thing. Revelation 21:3 says, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'" So heaven will be just like the Garden of Eden—we'll walk and talk with God face-to-face, only this time it'll be permanent.

Mission accomplished.

Now What?

∞ As you read Scripture, keep these five phases in mind. With each verse or Bible story think, How does this fit into God's Big Picture? What phase of the rescue is this about?

∞ Did you know that the Old Testament points to Jesus? Read about it in Luke 24:25-27.

∞ Think about how your own story of faith mirrors the Big Story of the Bible: 1) You were lost in your sin; 2) you were rescued; 3) you will dwell with God forever. Write out your testimony, using this three-part "outline."

[Thank you Sam for sharing this story with us. Sam and Daniel both recommend picking up a subscription to *Ignite Your Faith* magazine for your teenager. This is a great resource for helping students connect their story to God's story. Quoting Alex Maldonado: "I could not believe it (*Ignite Your Faith*) was a Christian magazine. It was really cool and actually trendy."]



We love stories, right? Our teenagers consume stories in gigantic quantities (movies, YouTube, Facebook, text messaging, music, video games, etc). So...

Let's connect their love for stories with new, creative mediums for connecting to God's story!

Exactly one year ago, I (Daniel) had the opportunity to go to a gathering of Christian media professionals (National Religious Broadcasters convention). Through various educational sessions and conversations with colleagues God kept reminding me of the incredible opportunity we have in our current culture to use media to connect people to the Lord. Specifically, I began to learn how media trends have changed: We no longer look to just a media professional to create content. Everyone and anyone can be the producer, the director, and actors in our own movies. (If you are not sure what I am talking about, just consider YouTube!)

I came back from that conference dreaming about what God wanted me to do with the information.

On February 15, 2008, www.storiesof.us went live. This is our student's (not Daniel's) community to share stories, dialogue on the blog, show off the movies they created, and discover the power of being a good story teller. (It is also updated weekly with both parent and student resources, missions spotlights, and upcoming activities in the life of the youth group).



jr high youth group spring 08

youth group: thursdays @ 7-8:30p

sunday school: sundays @ 9:45a
(meet in coffeehouse)

03.07: rave night (coffeehouse), 7:30-9:30p

03.21: experiencing the passion

04.11-13: disciple now

(info @ www.storiesof.us/experience/disciplenow)

high school youth group spring 08

sunday school > 9:45-10:45a. youth group > 6:30-8:15p

solid grounds coffeehouse > 7:30-11:30p

03.14: basketball tourney (sign up: www.storiesof.us/tourney)

03.20: experiencing the passion service project, 6:30p

03.21: experiencing the passion

04.06: missions trip training, 5p

04.25: dodgeball tourney

04.11-13: disciple now

(info @ www.storiesof.us/experience/disciplenow)

05:10: chicago one day serve experience



>> Discovering Your Story in God's Story

+April 11-13, 2008

>>permission slip & money is due Sunday, March 30th

>>www.storiesof.us/experience/disciplenow

+7th-12th grade students

+Experiencing Stories

We are on a journey together connecting our story to God's story. We believe the best method for doing this is to experience the story. Rather than be "taught" by one speaker we will instead be discovering our story in God's story through the following experiences:

- +The Tabernacle
- +Stations of the Cross
- +This is My Story
- +Wisdom Stories
- +The Need
- +Building a Team Story

