

Seven Words to Life
 God's Story: The Grand and Only Story
 Genesis 1:2 & 27

One important slogan of the 1960's and 1970's: "*Question Authority.*" It was a modernist thought to the core. In the 1990's the slogan changed to: "*Question Reality.*" That's postmodernism. It is saying, "*There is no true reality, not even your own.*"

Simply speaking, postmodernism is the view that says absolute truth cannot be discovered at all, so it is whatever you say it is. In one newspaper cartoon, Santa asks a boy, "*Have you been good this year?*" The boy replies, "*It depends on what good means.*" The little girl behind him hears the question and thinks, "*My friends say I'm good.*" Another girl in the line says, "*It's really a private matter between me and my family.*" That's the postmodern world. Is there really a definition of 'good' and if so, how good is good enough?

ILL - You should hope your surgeon or airline pilot doesn't practice postmodern medicine or flying. "*I can take out your heart instead of your gall bladder. It doesn't matter.*" "*I can land this airplane on its tail and we'll all be safe. It doesn't matter.*"

Genesis 1:1 - *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

Genesis 1:27 - *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

In this conclusion to *Seven Words to Life*, I want to demonstrate how the 7 words apply to your daily life.

- Act One: Creation and the "fill the earth with the knowledge of God" mandate
- Act Two: Fall and rebellion against God
- Act Three: Israel and their intended witness
- Act Four: Jesus: God's world in review and preview
- Act Five: Church: God's Word on Display
- Act Six: New Creation: God makes everything new

There is nothing more important in life than Knowing, loving and obeying God.

- God is the Alpha of everything. He knows how everything works best.
- God is the Omega of everything. He will judge everything correctly.

'Everything' means your mind, heart, body, all the roles you live in life, what you think, don't think, feel, don't feel, do and don't do as a person.

We exist to align ourselves to God's character and will. Only then do we become human. (Some people might challenge that statement, but the statement is based on God's creation of and His purpose for humanity. Seeing life from God's perspective and joining God's work in the world is what this series is all about.

I want to make 3 points:

- 1 – God's story is *the* Story of all Creation
- 2 – God's story is the only true story of who we are and why we exist

Genesis 1:1 & 1:27 is 'real' news. Anything that contradicts it or deviates from it is fake news.

ILL – If someone says, the bridge is safe, and you cross, it is good for you.

If someone says the bridge is safe, and it is not and you try to cross, it is not good for you.

God's story, as revealed in the Bible,
is the only story that is best for you.

3 - How you interpret those two statements determines how you will interpret everything else about the world and your life meaning how you live now and forever.

First: God's Story is *The* Story of Creation

Moses wrote Genesis during the Exodus to redefine who Israel was so that the nation could relate to God and align itself to His character and will

This is important because our whole lives are shaped by some story. By implication, the Genesis story claims that we cannot self-identify.

III – Slide 9- Bird and Fox. What is happening in this picture? It's impossible to tell.

- a) The bird is telling the fox a secret.
- b) The fox is hoping the bird will fall from the limb so it can eat the bird

Slide 10 - What is really happening? The fox is complementing the bird's singing so that the bird will sing and drop the morsel that is in its mouth.

How do I know that?

- a) I wrote the story
- b) The second slide reveals it

As finite creatures, we need something outside/beyond ourselves to define us and what is happening.

Every story has a shape: *Beginning, Theme, Tension, Resolution and End*

God's story claims to be

- a) Comprehensive – It provides an accurate account of all that exists

*... the whole point of Christianity is that it offers
a story which is the story of the whole world. It is public truth.
(N.T. Wright)*

- b) Normative – It claims to be uniquely true

There are only two stories: the Biblical Story and every other story. Why? Because only one is true.

These stories aren't just different, they are contradictory and incompatible.

We believe the Christian story is the story of the whole world and all that is in it. It not only tells us how things came to be but why everything exists, including us.

Slide 15 - The Biblical story begins with Creation, requires God's intervention and ends with the New Creation

Slide 16 - The Humanist story begins with a big bang and ends with a better world created by

Slide 16 - The Humanist story begins with a big bang and ends with a better world created by science/technology

III – Two illustrations from Nancy Pearcey’s book *Saving Leonardo*.

1-When the Iowa Supreme Court imposed same-sex marriage on that state in 2009, it claimed that the plaintiffs (the pro-homosexual side) “presented an abundance of evidence and research.” By contrast, the court said, the definition of marriage as a man and a woman was “unsupported by reliable scientific studies.” It was nothing but “stereotype and prejudice.”

2-Hank the Cowdog, which my own son loved when he was young. The story features a cattle ranch owned by a rancher and his wife, along with their little boy, and a bachelor cowboy who lives down the street. CBS turned the story into a video for Saturday morning cartoons. But in the process, they twisted it to fit the dictates of political correctness. In the CBS version, the rancher and his wife were no longer married. Instead the woman had been promoted to the ranch boss, while her husband was demoted to a ranch hand who worked for her. In fact, all three adults lived together in a kind of bunk house. And the little boy was nowhere to be seen. He had been erased from the story altogether. What was this all about? Clearly the story had been rewritten to convey a feminist agenda. Marriage? A trap for women. Family? An outmoded and oppressive social institution. Even the cattle ranch was apparently not environmentally correct enough and was changed to a chicken farm.

Slide 17 - We live at the crossroads between the Western story and the Biblical story. Which will you believe? Which will you live in?

Second, God’s story is the only true story of who we are and why we exist

The Bible claims that God made everything, including you and that only as creation, including you, rightly relates to him, will there be Shalom; health, wellbeing and flourishing.

“The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story. What is the real story of which my life story is a part?”
- Lesslie Newbigin

The Bible tells one unfolding story of redemption. God is reconciling all things to himself.

“As I read the Bible, I find in it a quite unique interpretation of universal history, and therefore, a unique understanding of the human person as a responsible actor in history. You Christian missionaries have talked of the Bible as if it were simply another book of religion.”
-Badrinath (Hindu scholar)

Scripture is the meta-narrative to which we are challenged, and we challenge others to conform all of life

If you believe this, you will do two things:

a) Repent of your own worldview

Repentance means a change of heart and mind

b) Faith

Faith means a change of allegiance and lifestyle

“Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus” (Acts 20:21) is a change of heart and mind that results in a change of allegiance and lifestyle

“... the Bible provides us with an overarching meta-narrative in which all other narratives [of Bible characters, us and even the unbelievers] are nested. The Bible is the story of God. The story of the world is first and foremost the story of God’s activity in creating, sustaining, and redeeming the world to fulfill God’s purposes for it.”

-C. Gerkin

1 – God’s story is *the* Story of all Creation

2 – God’s story is the only true story of who we are and why we exist

3 - How you interpret those two statements determines how you will interpret everything else about the world and your life meaning how you live now and forever.

This is *not* a minor matter of misinterpretation...but a serious matter of which story is shaping our lives!

ILL - During the last presidential campaign, a reporter for ABC News interviewed several teens at a Christian youth rally. Most of them were solidly biblical in their convictions on moral issues like drugs, sex, and abortion. In fact, some even ranked abortion as their number one political issue. But, strangely, many of the same teens also said they favored political candidates who supported abortion. To the reporter, this seemed like a contradiction, so he asked, “*Doesn’t that bother you?*”

One teen replied, “*Maybe a little bit, but it’s all personal preference.*”

That worldview says that moral convictions are relative and personal preference? What about adultery? Lying? Cheating? Stealing? Dishonoring people? No, the Moses wrote the Genesis and the rest of the Bible is written to teach us what Shalom looks like and how to enter it.

And more, the Bible claims the only way to enter it is through Jesus.

Slide 27 - Again, you daily enter a crossroads where you repent of any other view than God’s and choose to live in the biblical story or contrary to it. This is what we call sin; acting contrary to God’s

The Bible is a single, unfolding story. You can’t cut up the Bible to choose what you like and don’t like because it is one story and not parts. Here are two illustrations

Slide-29 a) The Blind Men and the Elephant

The men touch different parts, draw wrong conclusions about the whole and miss the bigger whole.

- *It was six men of Indostan, to learning much inclined,
who went to see the elephant (Though all of them were blind),
that each by observation, might satisfy his mind.*

*The first approached the elephant, and, happening to fall,
against his broad and sturdy side, at once began to bawl:
'God bless me! but the elephant, is nothing but a wall!'*

*The second feeling of the tusk, cried: 'Ho! what have we here,
so very round and smooth and sharp? To me tis mighty clear,*

this wonder of an elephant, is very like a spear!

*The third approached the animal, and, happening to take,
the squirming trunk within his hands, 'I see,' quoth he,
the elephant is very like a snake!*

*The fourth reached out his eager hand, and felt about the knee:
'What most this wondrous beast is like, is mighty plain,' quoth he;
'Tis clear enough the elephant is very like a tree.'*

*The fifth, who chanced to touch the ear, Said; 'E'en the blindest man
can tell what this resembles most; Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an elephant, is very like a fan!'*

*The sixth no sooner had begun, about the beast to grope,
than, seizing on the swinging tail, that fell within his scope,
'I see,' said he, 'the elephant is very like a rope!'*

*And so these men of Indostan, disputed loud and long,
each in his own opinion, exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right, and all were in the wrong!*

*So, oft in theologic wars, the disputants, I ween,
tread on in utter ignorance, of what each other mean,
and prate about the elephant, not one of them has seen!*

John Godfrey Saxe

If you try to break the Bible into parts – The Old without the New or the New without the Old, or if you try to live the Bible in parts, “I’ll take Mark but not Leviticus...” you miss the point.

Cathedral – In which every part makes up the whole and the whole would not exist without every part

This is important because all of life and all of every life is shaped by some story.

The Scriptural interpretation all that exists is this:

- Act One: Creation and the “Fill the earth with the knowledge of God” mandate
- Act Two: Fall and rebellion against God
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Conclusion:

The Bible is God’s story, the grand and only one story

- Reveals God’s purpose in creating everything
- Invites us to participate in his redemptive drama
- Warns us about rejecting God

Community Groups:

1 – Think about the time Peter told Jesus that Jesus could not go to the cross. How is that an example of Peter stepping out of the Christian story into the humanist story?

2 – Talk about how Christians fail to live faithfully in the Christian story in times of personal temptation.

3 – What social issues exist that cause Christians to try to live in two stories?

4 – What is postmodernism? **The belief that absolute truth does not exist.**

5 – How does postmodernism deny itself? **If postmodernism is true, (that there is no absolute truth), then postmodernism itself can't be true.**

6 – Name a few of the stories by which people's lives are shaped. **Evolution, atheism, Islam, etc.**

7 – How is it impossible for a finite creature to self-identify? (How can we understand a frame in the movie if we don't see the whole movie or what is meant by a word if we don't hear the whole conversation, or a page in a book if we don't read the whole book?)

8 – How does the Christian story and the Humanist story differ?

9 – Why is it important that we not believe the humanist story?

10 – Why is repentance vital to the Christian life? **Because you can't live a consistent life, a life of integrity (wholeness) if you try to live out of two differing stories/worldview**

11 – Why is faith in Jesus vital to the Christian life? **Because Christ is the only way into the Christian story. Christianity isn't simply a matter choosing to live by a new set of principles or rules or lifestyle but about "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).**

12 – Why can we not 'pick and choose' what we want to believe about the Bible?

