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Your Story Matters - Lesson 11 Notes Stewarding Stories: Embodying Jesus

“To tell the story of Jesus is to tell the story of a traumatic event. Jesus is betrayed by his closest friends. He is mocked, stripped, beaten, and publicly humiliated. He is falsely accused, wrongly condemned, and when he speaks truth no one believes him. His attackers spit on him, pull his hair, and call him names. He is alone, left in darkness, and abandoned even by his own father. Jesus knows the experience of trauma, the suffering of betrayal, violation, and violence. If anyone knows what it means to suffer, it is Jesus. He can relate. Christ isn’t washing suffering away. He is transforming it.” — Dave Dunham⁵

Story Time

How do we embody Jesus as we do story work?

We concluded our last instruction time with this quote:

“To tell the story of Jesus is to tell the story of a traumatic event. Jesus is betrayed by his closest friends. He is mocked, stripped, beaten, and publicly humiliated. He is falsely accused, wrongly condemned, and when he speaks truth no one believes him. His attackers spit on him, pull his hair, and call him names. He is alone, left in darkness, and abandoned even by his own father. Jesus knows the experience of trauma, the suffering of betrayal, violation, and violence. If anyone knows what it means to suffer, it is Jesus. He can relate. Christ isn’t washing suffering away. He is transforming it.” — Dave Dunham

As we wrap up our course, I want us to do so by centering ourselves around the Person and work of Jesus Christ. As Christians, our faith in Jesus is not only something we reference when having spiritual conversations, but it defines and describes how we have any conversation. I’ve offered you a framework for doing story work, taking into consideration the practices and resources we need as we walk with others who are living with the impacts of abuse and trauma. Today, I’d like to send us off with a deeper look at how we are called to give a visible representation of Jesus to those we share in story work with — do you believe that? I’m sure you do, but are we actively remembering and resting in that reality?

⁵ Dave Dunham, <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2017/08/09/trauma-and-the-significance-of-meaning/>



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How do we embody Jesus as we do story work?

Jesus adjusted his pace to fit the context (the story)

Each story unfolded at varying paces, perhaps it was one event, perhaps it was a series of events and circumstances over a long period of time. Stories demand slowness.

Jesus went slowly and cautiously with some — his pausing with children and women (more vulnerable in some ways); coming “late” to Lazarus’ family, but what if this was exactly what gave opportunity for him to grief with them?

Urgency of confronting the pharisees; called out their hypocrisy publicly and promptly.

Sometimes we want to rush past aspects of the story to get to what we believe is the most pivotal part, but what if what has most impacted someone is not the one thing *we* think would have? U-diagram from Adam Young — he “went down” into darkness for 3 days before being resurrected

Jesus engaged people in their senses.

Many who have been hurt and harmed have already come to us from a place where their body has experienced the impact of trauma. When we start drawing things out as we get to know them, we hear the ways their senses have been affected — smells, textures, tones of voices.

“God does not transform us without touching us.” (Wright, p. 105) We highlighted this briefly last week when we talked about the senses connected with our stories, which is often what we mean when we talk about being triggered by scents or particular spaces and when we experience bodily reactions such as struggling with unexplained fatigue, pain, or brain fog. Our engagement with them ought to reflect this, and rightly adjust as well as reorient their senses.

How did Jesus engage people in their senses?

Woman with the bleeding problem; healing of the demon-possessed (Mark 5 — “she sensed in her body that she had been healed!”) He touched them, drew their attention to their sense by breaking bread, meeting in outdoor spaces, entering into the smells of communities.



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Jesus honored what was sacred.

He didn't offer mere sentimentality or pity. His emotional response to those he interacted with was sincere. He was not a flatterer or a condemner. Sometimes he sent people home after they were healed, and didn't react by immediately drawing attention to their healing.

Jesus emphasized the holiness of personhood (as image bearers) by his use of imagination. He called people to imagine aspects of healing and wholeness via parables, narratives, and imagery. In doing so, he invited people to reimagine their stories, not as if they didn't happen or weren't real, but perhaps with a different color or texture or perspective. "He told me all that I ever did," (woman at the well in John 4); i.e., "I'm not as alone in this as I thought I was."

He also demonstrated empathy, a kind of mirroring. Joe's article (capacity/embodyed, cognitively, affectively as it involves our affections)

Jesus modeled humility.

Mark 9 — Jesus often asked questions that he knew the answers to already, and he listened as people answered, never interjecting but taking the opportunity to connect with them in drawing them to divine Love. He did this a lot by *bearing* people. He did not approach people with suspicion or skepticism. How did Jesus listen? "I already know where this is going" v. "Tell me more." He practiced curiosity even though he was the Knower of all things. Curiosity can often spark fear initially because the traumatized person may be bracing for condemnation or a pat Bible answer in the form of a "just do this" command. When we gently and consistently offer curiosity with people's stories, we meet those fears with compassion. Asking questions becomes one of *the* primary practices in the counseling process or as we do story work with someone. We ask, *How can I support you? Is there something you need that you are able/willing to share with me?*

Recommend Lore's book.

Ellie Wiesel said this: "Since God is, he is to be found in the questions as well as the answers."

Jesus prayed with and for the weary and wounded.

"There comes a point in sorrow where helplessness reigns." (S.A. Morrison) — Those who have been so deeply wounded by abuse and trauma have already known the weight of hopelessness. Even in recovery, as they seek healing and change, there is often the experience of helplessness. They try new approaches, incorporate practices or habits or relational boundaries; and yet, they feel helpless (and sometimes hopeless) that relief will ever come. This might be the time when we begin to feel helpless as well. PRAY! Jesus was not helpless, being God, and yet he willingly



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became helpless (in a sense) by laying aside his ability to change his circumstances. He practiced dependence on the Father, as he prepared for the cross. We can meet people here too, practicing dependence with them in prayer.

Lamenting, praying with our CE's
Lectio Divina
Breath prayers

Jesus offered presence (himself).

He did not postulate.

Peter on the stormy sea (Matthew 14).

And he offers himself for you as well.

Jesus received his humanity.

He took on flesh, he became REAL to us. That meant he welcomed, or received his humanity. He took time to retreat and rest to show us what we need too. He practiced his humanity so that we would know how to practice ours.

READ last slide quote

Q: How do you care for yourself as you minister to those with such hard stories?

PPW content (offer free video)