



# **The Rescue Project**

## **Chapter 1: Why Stories Are Important**

### **Themes: The Four Big Questions**

- Why is there something rather than nothing?
- Why is everything so messed up?
- What, if anything, has God done about it?
- And if He's done anything, how should I respond?

### **Questions to Consider**

- What is the story that gives me meaning, purpose, and guides my life?
- What is my image of God?
- Where did that image of God come from?

### **Goals**

- Identify “the lenses” through which we see reality.
- Realize how a Biblical view of existence might change those perceptions.

### **Deeper Questions**

- Have you, yourself, ever been overwhelmed by the message of the gospel?
- What are the most significant impediments to living a Christian life in our contemporary world?
- To what degree has your faith evolved over the course of your life?

## Video Notes

### Explosive News or Just Data?

Father John: Imagine that you and I are living in France, it's 1944 and our country was invaded by a tyrannical, megalomaniac, demonic dictator. Houses, cities and villages have been destroyed. We've lost loved ones. They've been imprisoned, been sent off to concentration camps, or they've been executed. And you and I have just gotten used to living in an occupied country with no hope. And that's our life. No one is strong enough to drive him out. And then one day I open the news and I'm reading this headline in massive font size and you ask me, "Hey, what happened yesterday? June 6th, 1944." And I say, "Well, not much actually. Looks like the allies landed." Do you think I'd read it like that? Would that just be data or would it be life changing, remarkable, liberating news, the news that brings hope into the lives of you and me. It'd be extraordinary news, right? It'd be explosive news of an event which just brought radical transformation to everybody who lived in Europe. It would change everything!

### The Problem – How We Present the Story

You walk into a church at Christmas season and you see this sentimental image of a little child lying in a manger surrounded by shepherds and all sorts of animals. And some men who are kneeling there with funny hats on their heads and a woman and an older man. And you ask, why is he there? I'm afraid we don't have as ready an answer to that question as we have to the allies landing on Normandy on June 6th, 1944. But we should.

### The Importance of Stories

Rod Dreher wrote *How Dante Can Save Your Life*. "Stories tell us how to think and what to do. They teach us what to love, what to hope for, and whom to trust. They tell us where we came from, where we stand, where we're going. They impose order on chaos. From grand cosmic myths to intimate family tales, it's in stories that we find meaning, purpose and the truths by which we live. Our choices often emerge from how we feel about the information we take in and how the stories we have accepted as truthful accounts of reality train our emotions to engage and interpret the world."

### The Lenses We Look Through

Many of us wear glasses. The lenses are like our worldview, our view of reality. So everybody sees reality in a particular way through our personal lenses. Rod Dreher: "If we don't understand ourselves as part of a greater story, we'll have no idea what we're supposed to do with our lives. And in our modern world, we have lost the story that for centuries gave people in our culture a way to make sense of their lives: the Biblical story."

## **The Lenses that Shape Reality: Past vs Now**

Most of the world for the better part of the last 1500 years has seen reality through the same set of glasses. They've understood reality through these lenses. It shaped education, entertainment, architecture, music, painting, government. Right now we're in a time where either the glasses have been broken, our prescriptions changed, or we've just gotten amnesia. "In our secular age, we no longer believe we're part of any universal story. We're free to choose our own narratives, which means we can follow our own hearts. If it feels good, do it. If it feels right, believe it. That might strike you as the only sensible guide to conduct." It's how many people think today.

Dreyer: "When you're the captain of your own soul though, and have cast aside all the maritime charts showing you the safe route through dark waters, navigating only by your own stars, it's easy to make a shipwreck of your life. You wake up one day and you wonder, where am I? How did I get here? And how do I get home?" Those could have been my words. Maybe they could be your words too.

## **Deaths of Despair**

Mitch Albom: "Why is living shorter and dying sooner a new trend?" In 2018, life expectancy in our country declined for three consecutive years. The last time that happened was 1918 – World War I and the Spanish flu which killed 50 million people. Why is it happening now? Suicide, cirrhosis of the liver, and opioid addiction. What's causing this? I argue it's happening because we've pushed God more and more off the stage. And when God gets pushed off the stage, the creature that's made in His image and likeness loses any sense of meaning. Where am I? How did I get here? How do I get home? Am I on my own? Is there a plan for my life? Is there any meaning to any of this?

## **What if There's Another Story?**

Movie Clip: "The Man in the High Castle". The storyline of this movie is that the U.S lost WWII and the world was being ruled by Nazi Germany and Japan. So Americans are now living under that tyrannical, demonic dictator who had invaded France. The people are fearful and living under oppression, systematic torture, slavery and mass executions. In the movie, a woman watches a reel of film that tells a different story. Watch as her face changes. She goes from a woman who's living in despair, living without hope, living in anxiety, to all of a sudden, she begins to cry and to smile. And she mouths the words, "Yes." And then her boyfriend walks in. He says, "What are you watching?" And then we see the unconditional surrender of Japan. We see the allies landing on D-Day. It shows us winning the war. "But we didn't win the war. That's what they told us." Did you hear what she said? "That's what they told us."

## **Are We Looking at the Wrong Reel?**

I suggest a lot of us are watching a reel like that woman. We're looking at life through a lense, we have a story which is shaping how we think which goes something like this. God is not real. Or if he's real, he's irrelevant. He's distant. He's not involved. Look what's happening. He's not interested. He doesn't act. Or he acts like a genie, just shows up every once in a while. But what if there's another story? What if there's something that we can know, that we can share with others, that can impact us and them the way that film impacted that woman? That's what the Rescue Project's all about. It's proposing another story. Another way to see reality. It's not a story that I made up or a set of lenses that I created. It's just the Biblical story. A way to make sense out of why things go wrong? And why it is that even when times are tough I don't have to be anxious and afraid or give in to depression or despair.

## **The Rescue Project – Framing Another Story: Four Questions, Four Words**

Why is there something rather than nothing?	Created
Why is everything so obviously messed up?	Captured
What, if anything, has God done about it?	Rescued
If He's done anything about it, how should I respond?	Response

Those four questions and words are a way to frame what's called the gospel. Gospel here is small g, which just means the good news. The allies landing on D-Day was explosive news! It was life changing, extraordinary, unbelievable news! It changed everything! The gospel's infinitely better than that. Because there's a tyrant worse than Hitler. And there's a good God who's better than the allies landing at Normandy. This is the gospel!

## **The Gospel is Power**

Romans 1: 16 St. Paul, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith." The gospel is power! The message itself is power! The proclamation and the announcement is power! If you and I get overwhelmed by this and we wanna share the gospel with other people, one of our temptations is – I don't know that I'm gonna be all that convincing. You don't have to worry about that. It has nothing to do with you or me. We are the mailman, we just deliver the mail. It's the mail that is so explosive, not us.

## **Changing Lenses**

Father relates the story of a woman who came to speak with him. She's wealthy, young, gorgeous – and on the verge of suicide. Father asks her if he can first take five minutes and tell her his worldview. She later says, "Father, that's not the God I knew growing up." She went from living in despair and suicidal, and left smiling, with tears of joy and feeling hope. Why? Because the gospel is power and there really is another story!