



“Story is the language of the heart. Story nourishes and feeds our souls.”
John Eldredge from the book ‘Epic’

We are captured by stories. Think about it. Movies, books, reality tv, sports, news, history....everything that grabs our attention is rooted in story. Bring 2 people together and before long they will be telling stories.

DISCUSS: Since you last met as a group you have lived a story. Share a ‘HIGH’ and ‘LOW’ from the past few weeks OR share something significant about your story that nobody else knows about.

DISCUSS: Briefly share what God’s word has been teaching you over the past few weeks by finishing the following phrase: “I’ve been reading _____ and God has been teaching me _____.”

Bittersweet.....

“Life is full of unwanted transitions. It is our response that will result in deep lasting growth or prove destructive to the soul.”
Jeff Manion from the book ‘The Land Between’

“The point of the story is not the end. It is about the transformation that happens in the middle. We can either get bitter or get better.”
Paraphrased thought from Donald Miller & his book ‘A Million Miles in a Thousand Years.’

Every story has both bitter moments and sweet moments. As we found out last session, this is part of the epic tale that we find ourselves in. It is not a matter of ‘IF’ a bitter moment will come our way but rather ‘WHEN’ a bitter moment will come our way. The bigger question is how we respond, how we fight, and how we celebrate the bitter and sweet moments that are a part of our stories.

DISCUSS:

Are you in a 'BITTER' or 'SWEET' chapter of life right now? Explain.
How would you describe your life to this point: More bitter or more sweet?

"Is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be HAPPY, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete."

James 1:2-4 (LB)

Trials, transitions, tests etc. give us one of two options: to become bitter and complain or to trust God no matter what. James promises us that if we choose to trust God we will grow and become complete. This is the point of every story....that the character will grow and transform to become everything God created him to be.

DISCUSS: Have you ever thought about the idea of how we respond to trials, temptations, and even blessings is an indicator of what we believe about God?

-What is your history with handling trials and transitions?

Sacrifice & Risk.....

"The more risk and the more sacrifice, the better the story."

"A great story doesn't always mean you win, a great story is all about sacrifice."

Donald Miller

DISCUSS: Reflect on the above comments. Agree or disagree?

- If we read a book or watch a movie about your story, is it one of risk & sacrifice?
- If your story does include risk and sacrifice, who is it for? Your glory or God's glory?
- If your story lacks risk and sacrifice, what are you waiting for? What is holding you back? Are you asking God to show you what He wants from you?

DID YOU KNOW?

-The most repeated command in the Bible is 'Do not fear.' Fear paralyzes a story. Trust God and let Him guide your way! A good character is one who moves forward and embraces the tension they are faced.

-Are you confident that you will have lots to talk about with God when you get to heaven and you look back on your earthly story? Do you believe He will say "Well done."?

Final Thoughts.....

"We live in a world where bad stories are told, stories that teach us life doesn't mean anything and that humanity has no great purpose. It's a good calling, then, to speak a better story. How brightly a better story shines. How easily the world looks to it in wonder. How grateful we are to hear these stories, and how happy it makes us to repeat them."

Donald Miller from 'A Million Miles in a Thousand Years.'

PRAY – Pray together about the things God is stirring in you about writing a better story with the one and only life he has given you.

Action Steps.....

1. Read Donald Miller's book '**A Million Miles in a Thousand Years.**'
2. If you are in a difficult time right now and struggling to find joy and trust God – Read '**The Land Between**' by Jeff Manion. This is an excellent book about finding God in difficult transitions.
3. Ask your group to hold you accountable to the things God has stirred in your heart. You must act to move forward!