

From Pain to Redemption in the Bible: Seeking Reconciliation with Our God

By Mary J. Ferrill Brown



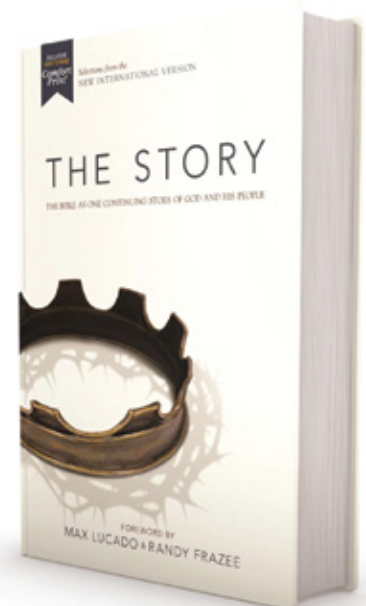
I belong to a weekly Bible study group that spent the better part of last year delving into a powerful program developed by Max Lucado and Randy Frazee entitled, *The Story: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People*. After reading the assigned chapter prior to a session, we watched a short video that highlighted the key elements of the chapter and offered helpful insights into its deeper meaning. We then engaged in group discussion relating to follow-up questions and personal viewpoints. Despite having read *The Story* on my own several years ago, I found that revisiting it as part of a study group was particularly rewarding.

The Story provides a unique perspective on the Bible that reconciles God's overarching plan for human civilization, which it refers to as the "upper story," with the ongoing struggles of mankind to live within God's design, termed the "lower story." It arranges parts of the Bible in chronological order and is written like a novel. It takes direct excerpts from the Bible (NIV) and places transitional commentary in between for context. While the lower story consists of individual accounts of both men and women in the Bible and their interaction with God, the upper story is God's omnipotent account of His divine purpose and redemptive plan that purposefully ties together all of the individual stories into one cohesive magnificent work of art. Thus, the story is one of both God and man, presented chronologically from Genesis through Revelation. It relates the integral role of sin and pain in the lower story to God's plan of redemption in the upper story.

The last chapter provided me with a new specific insight. In the video, Randy Frazee quoted Revelation 21:4 (NIV) – *"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* It reminded me that God's story in the Old Testament started with sin and pain. The first mention of pain is in Genesis 3:16a (NIV) – *"To the woman He said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.'"* The Hebrew word that is used in this instance is 'etsev, which has a broader meaning (depending on the context) to include sorrow, pain, toil, hardship and grief. It does not only refer to pain in childbirth, but all physical as well as emotional pain. All pain is part of the consequences of the original sin of Adam and Eve. This highlights the suffering that has afflicted all human life moving forward.

It is worthy to note that the first occurrence of pain in the Bible comes from Genesis 3:16, whereas the answer to pain and sin is found in John 3:16 (NIV) – *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."* Romans 10:9 (NIV) explains the concept further: *"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* And John 14:6 (NIV) makes it clear that Jesus is the only path to God: *"Jesus answered: 'I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"* The simple remedy for sin and pain that was introduced in the Garden of Eden is Jesus Christ, God's intended solution from the beginning of His upper story! We are to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and to baptize those who believe (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Acts 2:38). *"This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* Matthew 24:14 (CSB). This is our great challenge as characters within the lower story.

If you have not read *The Story*, I highly recommend it. It is a great way to see the Bible in a new light and to correlate the origins of pain and sin to God's redemptive plan through Jesus Christ. The ending describes a new heaven and



earth where there will be no more pain, for the old order of things will pass away.

The fact that we each continue to write our own contributions to the lower story is cause for great hope, in that we have an opportunity to bring our lives into greater alignment with God's upper story. We all have a role to play in the unfolding of God's story. What a wonderful hope we have in Jesus Christ that we should want to share that Good News with others. I heard it said that Charlie Kirk's passion was to make Heaven crowded. What a beautiful sentiment. I will do whatever I can to expand the number of believers who will be with us in paradise. Let's agree to help make heaven jam-packed!

I live near Disney World and love to visit the parks. During one of our trips to Hollywood Studios, as we were entering the park a Cast Member with a microphone announced: "This is the way!" (It's a famous catchphrase from the *Mandalorian* series). I answered back, "**Jesus is the only way!**" His response surprised me. He threw his hands in the air and yelled into his microphone: "**Yes, Hallelujah, Jesus is the way!**" In one short moment, we just witnessed to thousands. Praise the Lord!

Divinely Prescribed: Interprofessional Collaboration was Part of God's Design

By Mariette Sourial

Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) first published the IPEC Core Competencies in 2011. The competencies were updated in 2016 and again more recently in 2023. These competencies include Roles and Responsibilities, Communication, Values and Ethics, and Teams and Teamwork, and are the foundation for collaborative practice in healthcare.¹ Many health professional schools incorporated these competencies as part of their curriculum and are now part of most accreditation standards.

Before interprofessional education and collaborative practice became recognized concepts, God had already envisioned this model and woven collaboration intricately into our design. Each of us was meant to connect and collaborate; we are designed to work in relationship – both with Him and with one another. The IPEC Core Competencies share biblical underpinnings and principles of collaboration for Christian healthcare professionals. Drawing on God's Word and the IPEC Core Competencies, pharmacists and student pharmacists should view interprofessional collaboration not only as a professional requirement, but also as fulfilling our divine calling.

Roles and Responsibilities

Understanding one's role and the roles of other healthcare professionals involved in the provision of person-centered care allows us to function more effectively and to reduce harm. In God's design, the body has many parts that function together. Similarly, healthcare has many

disciplines with different functions. Each profession offers unique gifts and abilities which complement those of others. Pharmacists are the medication specialists on the healthcare team and provide that lens when caring for people. Although our independent contributions are greatly valued, we are all interdependent with other healthcare members. Together we can provide holistic care – caring for the physical, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of our patients. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes the Church as one body made up of many different parts:

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them... Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we