

INTRO

In a world where 280 characters often become "the story," in this Brewed Theology, we expand our understanding and awareness of stories. People use stories to dispossess, malign, empower, and humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity. And there's nothing that shapes our identities more than hearing, living, and sharing stories. In this Brewed Theology, we'll will explore the power and place of stories, and how God is present in the mix of our and others' stories.

This Brewed Theology follows the typical pattern of guided conversation, but hits the brakes early to slow down. Tables will get the opportunity to intentionally share with – and listen to – each other's stories.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

What was the best story you've ever heard? Who is the best storyteller you know? What is your favorite story to tell? Have you ever heard a story that transformed your life? Have you ever shared a story that changed someone else's life? Have you ever thought about what *defines* human beings – what really sets them apart from other creatures? What might stories – and storytelling – have to do with what it means to be human? What implications does that mean for God, when we as a created people are considered to be created in the image of God?

a Brewed Theology
conversation starter*

MY STORY YOUR STORY GOD'S STORY

CONFIDENCE IN TELLING
RESPECT IN LISTENING
EXPERIENCING GOD IN THE MIX

Importantly for this Brewed Theology: What are/were the most formative events in your life? How would you tell the story of your life in 10 minutes or less?

BIBLE BASICS

Read these parallel passages from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (the four Gospels that tell us about Jesus' life). We'll discuss them at Brewed Theology. Note the especially the details and differences between them.

- **Matthew 27:45-54** – Paul becomes all things to all people.
- **Mark 15:33-39** – In Christ there is a new creation.
- **Luke 23:4-48** – A vision of a new heaven and new Earth.
- **John 19:28-30** – A vision of a new heaven and new Earth.

ESSENTIAL READINGS and LISTENINGS

"Résumé | Indeed" (30s video)

The largest online job site in the world is a platform for storytelling. This 30-second commercial gets to the crux of the matter.

Storytelling is Us (~3 mins)

Joel Freidlander says that storytelling is how we “describe who we are and where we want to go, how we account for what we’ve become.” *Homo sapiens* could well be called *homo narrans*.

The Danger of a Single Story (~19 mins video, or ~9 minute read)

In this TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, she says the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Shifting to Stories (~7 min video, plus...)

What if churches – even youth programs – focused on not numbers, but on stories? Andy Root is a teacher at Luther Seminary. Watch his suggestion for how to move to story-centered ministry. (For BONUS content and context, see his [full 60-minute lecture at Yale](#) about the state of youth ministry, and the importance of identity and storytelling.)

Our Shared Story (just browse)

Frederich Buechner writes beautifully about stories and finding our shared humanity in them. Peruse this collection of his thoughts. Note especially this bit from his memoir, *Telling Secrets*:

*My story is important not because it is mine, God knows, but because if I tell it anything like right, the chances are you will recognize that in many ways it is also yours. Maybe nothing is more important than that we keep track, you and I, of these stories of who we are and where we have come from and the people we have met along the way [...].*¹

¹<https://www.frederickbuechner.com/our-shared-story>, citing *Telling Secrets* (1991).

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