

Write Your Story 3 – What decisions will your character make?

Write Your Story Bumper

Write Your Story Title

Welcome everyone in the room and everyone joining us online. This is Redemption Church and I am Chris Fluitt.

For you who can see me I want to make you aware that I have been diagnosed with Bell's Palsy and the right side of my face is paralyzed. Please be in prayer that God sees me through this. I am not in pain. I am not having a stroke. I am still very excited to share the Word of God with you today.

We are in the 3rd week of the Write Your Story sermon series. Quick review...

Make your life a story worth telling.

We believe that your life ought to be a great story. We challenge you to –
Make your life a story worth telling.

Great stories don't just happen. They don't just fall out of a pen onto the paper. Great stories are carefully crafted by an author. You must go to work on your story to make it great!

Great stories aren't written, but crafted

In week 1 we told you to begin with the end in mind. You have control over your story. So you need to know how you want your story to end.

Last week, in week 2 we asked you – Who are the characters in your story?

You, the one crafting your story, get to decide what characters appear in your story.

Today I want to ask you “What decisions will your character make?”

What decisions will your character make?

If you really want to craft your story, then you as the major character in your story, need to make good decisions.

Decisions

Really every story is about decisions. Think for a moment about your favorite stories. Something happened that caused the characters you care about to have to DECIDE TO DO SOMETHING. And it is the decisions that were made that made you care more for the character and to ultimately love the story.

There is no story without decisions. If there are no decisions, then nothing happens.

Decisions are important! We asked for your help on social media this week. We asked for you to give some of your favorite decisions made in your favorite stories.

There were moments of bravery and self-sacrifice...

In Lord of the Rings, Samwise Gamgee decided that he & Frodo had come too far to fail and took matters into his own hands... he carried Frodo and fought a giant spider.

In Les Miserables, Eponine jumps in front of a bullet meant for Marius.

In Star Wars, Luke Skywalker decides that he won't become like his father.

In Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen instead of killing people in the competition, she seeks to save people in the competition.

Decisions make the story. And they develop the character.

What decisions will your character make?

This sermon series was conceptualized about 6 years ago when I was counseling with someone who had a big decision to make. It was clear to me that they were likely to make a poor decision, and through God's help I was able to bring the idea of their life story to them.

I want to share with you what I shared with them today.

You are standing in front of a decision today, but I want you to imagine it is many years from now. You are sitting down at a computer to write your story. This is an autobiography. You are the author and this is your story.

As you write your story, there are chapters of your life that you that you are excited to write. You write about being brave enough to start your education, start a business, and to ask that pretty girl out for a first date.

You are amazed as you are writing, how easy it is to share your story. There are even some chapters where you talk about rough & stressful situations. You remember full well that those situations were not easy to live through,

but you actually enjoy sharing this part of your story... because you seem to shine in these dark times.

But then, your writing comes to a halt as you come to a part of your story that you are not proud of... this part of your story fills you with embarrassment, shame, guilt, & regret. You are tempted to not tell this part of your story. You are tempted to act like it never happened. You are tempted to push fast forward on your story and time jump 5 or 10 years.

Then I looked at the person in the present where I am counseling them on their decision, and I ask... "Will you be proud of this decision or when you write your story will you be tempted to omit it."

This is an exercise we all need. Are we making decisions that we ultimately don't want in our story?

People make decisions that they are so ashamed of that they spend the next 10 years in a bottle of alcoholism.

When people decide to get divorced they go through their house and through their social media profiles and remove ALL the pictures they had with their ex-spouse. From the inside they must feel like it is removing cancer... but from the outside it looks like they are chopping up years of life memories.

There are mothers who remember the birthdays of all their children, but they also carry the knowledge of with them that they never speak of. They had an abortion, but they know how old that child would be today. They may never speak of it, but they know and often wonder what that child would be doing today had they been born.

There are decisions that you will regret so much that you would like to later omit them from your story.

Secret sins, disloyalty, stealing, giving up, bad habits, laziness, walking away from relationships, walking away from God.... these will end up being bad decisions that will regret being in your story.

Before you make a decision ask yourself... "will this decision tell the story I want to tell?"

This is your story. You must craft this story by making the best decision.

A good decision

What is a good decision? Here is a simple way to think about a good decision.

1. it is virtuous.
2. it is brave.
3. it is wise.

Virtue

Virtue is a standard of morality. If your decision is moral the chances are great that it is a great decision.

Honesty, patience, love, kindness, humility... these are virtues that God's Word tells us to have over and over again.

Brave

Decisions done out of fear are usually not great. But a BRAVE decision is usually one to be proud of making.

Wise

Is the decision well informed? Is it a smart decision? Was this decision thought about? Did we seek wise advice before making this decision?

Virtue, bravery, and wisdom make for a great decision. You will want these decisions in your story.

A bad decision

1. No virtue.
2. Cowardly.
3. Foolish.

No Virtue

Lying, greed, anger, hate, pride... these always make for bad decisions.

Cowardly

God's word has rough things to say about cowardice. In Revelation 21:8 it says the cowardly will have their part in the lake of fire!

Cowardly decisions usually go the path of least resistance. Cowardly decisions usually try to themselves at the expense of others.

Foolish

Head scratching decisions that leave you saying... "What were they thinking? This was a dumb thing to do."

Ever make a non-virtuous, cowardly, or foolish decision? How proud of that decision are you? Are you glad that decision is in your story?

Non-virtuous, cowardly, and foolish decisions make for bad stories. As you craft your story you need to think about your decisions.

Right now, you have a choice in front of you. What decision will you make? Virtuous or non-virtuous? Brave or cowardly? Wise or foolish?

We all have choices in front of us. Some decisions are difficult and we may want to put them off and procrastinate. But this doesn't make for a great story either. You need to make a decision.

Make a decision

- Not making a decision will waste time.
- Not making a decision will frustrate and confuse everyone else around you.
- Not making a decision will keep you from the desired end of your story.
- Not making a decision will allow indecision to make your choice by default.

Great stories aren't created by default... they are defined. You need to make definite choices to craft your story.

Israel had a decision to make in 1 Kings 18. Would they follow God or would they follow the false God Baal.

1 Kings 18:21 (NIV2011) Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

They stood between 2 opinions... and when the prophet pressed them they said nothing. But making no decision was making a decision.

Remaining undecided on whether to follow God is no different from deciding to not follow God. There is no middle ground when it comes to God decisions.

Matthew 12:30 (NIV2011) "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

Have you been putting off your decision to follow God? Is God your God?

Maybe God is your God... but there are certain things that God wants you to do that you have not decided to do yet... Well how is that any different? “I want to follow God... except in the area of this sin... I don’t want to follow God in that area yet...”

How long will you halt between two opinions? Will we follow God or not?

Today I invite you to make a decision to REALLY FOLLOW GOD!

Make a decision

You must make a decision. You can’t be happy until you make a decision. There is no comfort while you sit on a picket fence. Make a decision today.

And then here is something that is essential for a happy life story.

Live the decision

Once you make the decision you must live the decision out. It is not enough to say the decision out loud... it is not enough to write it in your journal... it is not enough to post a facebook update about the decision... you have to live the decision out.

And this is key! LISTEN UP! You make a decision one time and then live out the decision for the rest of your life.

For example... Make the decision that you are going to marry this person. Make the decision for better or worse that you will love them and remain faithful to them.

You make that decision one time and then live out that decision. And that sounds simple. It is simple. Here is what is not simple...

Having to make a decision every moment of every day. That is exhausting.

Continuing with the marriage example...

I decided to be faithful to my wife, but that woman over there just winked at me.... What will I decide to do?

Someone just texted me a picture and wants to meet up... what will I decide?

My wife just said something that made me angry... what will I decide now?

It is exhausting to make a decision every moment of every day. Instead make a decision ONE TIME and then live that decision out. It makes a better story every time!

If you make a decision once and then live that decision out, you will never have to halt between 2 opinions! You already have decided to be faithful... when that person flirts with you, you have already decided. When that person texts you, you have already decided to be faithful. When you get into an argument, you have already decided! And now you just live out that decision.

It is so much simpler. And it leads you to the end of the story that you decided was best.

When you decided to believe and follow Jesus... that was such a good decision. LIVE THAT DECISION OUT.

Do you understand that God made a decision once and He has lived it out ever since?

- When you ask God to forgive you of your sin, He has already decided to forgive you!
- When you pray for God to be for you and not against you, God already decided he was going to be for you and not against you.

Sometimes we think we need to help God to decide to heal us, lift us up, or redeem us.... No no no. It is already decided by Him and He will always live out that decision. These are the ever true promises of God.

This ought to make you real happy! It is a happy truth, but it doesn't mean that Life is always easy.

Sometimes life sucks

Sometimes life sucks. It just does...

Sometimes you lose your job, or have a bad doctor's diagnosis... sometimes your kids have trouble in school... sometimes other people make decisions that negatively affect you...

Sometimes the tornado hits the house across the street... sometimes it hits your house.

Matthew 5:45 (NIV2011) that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Bad things happen in life. It rains on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Life happens to you.

What do you do when life happens to you? What do you do when things you would never choose, happen to you?

We face struggles. Sometimes your spouse files for divorce. Sometimes your car breaks down at the worst moment. Sometimes your house burns to the ground.

I have been struggling with Bell's palsy. It has been a struggle. Not being able to articulate a smile has been oddly emotional for me. It feels like a dumb problem... how can I not control the right side of my face. Early on I felt that I could get really depressed over this issue.

Questions like "why God?" of course came into my mind. Why is this happening to me? Why is life happening to me?

Some self-help books give you a pep talk... "when life happens to you, you happen to life. Just hit life right back..." I want to give you what I feel is better advise today.

When life happens to you, remember that life happens for you.

Life happens for you

God is working for you in all things. Even in the struggle he is working... sometimes His best work is done in struggle.

Romans 8:28 (NIV2011) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

God is working for you... IN ALL THINGS He is working for Good!

Romans 5:3-4 (NIV2011) ...but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Suffering can produce a greater story. Struggle can produce everything that makes you a better character in your story.

The struggle of suffering is actually an opportunity to continue your decision.

That decision I made when I was 8 years old that I would serve God... Does Bell's palsy strike that decision void? No.

The calling and anointing to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ... Can Bell's palsy defeat that call? No.

Suffering is an opportunity to produce greater things in us! It reveals that your decision and faith and God's calling is stronger than the struggle.

This is your story. You need to make a decision and then live that decision... But Satan thinks differently.

If you will allow me... I have a small sermon I want to preach directly to Satan. It is entitled...

Sometimes life sucks... But Satan, you always suck

Satan please turn with me to the first chapter of Job.

Job 1:6-7 (NIV2011) One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."

Job 1:8-9 (NIV2011) Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied.

Job 1:10-11 (NIV2011) "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

Satan believes that if Job loses the blessings of God that Job will SURELY curse God to His face. Satan believes that Job has NO CHOICE but to turn from serving God and turn to serving Satan.

Job 1:12 (NIV2011) The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

And in Job chapter 1, you, Satan proceed to attack the blessings of Job. He loses his wealth, his home, his children, and his marriage...

Sometimes life sucks... But Satan, you always suck

Satan, sometimes life sucks.... But Satan, you always suck.

Job 2:1-2 (NIV2011) On another day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. And the Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.”

Job 2:3 (NIV2011) Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.”

Job 2:4-5 (NIV2011) “Skin for skin!” Satan replied. “A man will give all he has for his own life. But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

Satan, you took away the blessings of Job, but Job did not do as you expected. You thought he would have NO CHOICE but to curse God and serve you. Satan, you were wrong... but you thought if you could take away Job's health he would have NO CHOICE but to curse God and serve you.

Job 2:6 (NIV2011) The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.”

Satan, you attacked Job's earthly blessings, and now you attacked Job's health. Job became sick and was covered with painful boils from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet.

Sometimes life sucks... But Satan, you always suck

You thought if you took away the blessings, that Job would have NO CHOICE...

You thought if you took away the health, that Job would have NO CHOICE...

After those 2 failures... there was only one more thing that you could possibly take away from Job... and that would be Job's life.

musician

But Satan... I have a verse for you. Satan if you like I can get this verse printed up on some nice stationary for you... because Satan I want you to know this verse.

Job, in the midst of pain, grief, and absolute theological confusion not understanding why any of this is happening declares this in Job 13.

Job 13:15 (NIV2011) Though *God* slay me, yet will I hope in him;

Satan, you thought Job had NO CHOICE... But Job says that you can take away his blessings, take away his health, you can even take his life... BUT HE WILL STILL CHOOSE GOD OVER YOU!

Satan you think you can put us in a position to have no choice... but you are wrong. God has given us the power to choose... And right now I choose God! Right now I choose worship! Right now I choose faith!

I may not understand what is going on, but I still choose God over you. Easy choice!

Sometimes life sucks... But Satan, you always suck

Satan I don't think you know how much you suck. You are the worst.

Satan I don't think you understand how good God is. He is the best.

I choose God! I choose Jesus! Right now and for the rest of my life!

(Satan you are the one with no choice)

Choose Jesus today

Jesus is the virtuous choice!

Jesus is the brave choice!

Jesus is the wise choice!

Jesus is the choice your story needs! Choose Him today. Make a decision for Him today.

Don't just stand in this altar today... Actively choose Him by worshipping... praying... hoping in... trusting in...