



Making Sense of Life Events

The article *How Does Scripture Change You?* By David Powlison got me thinking about how each life is a story woven together by a variety of experiences. These experiences, put through the rubric of the sovereignty of God, reveal how God is, has been, and is always working in the events and circumstances of our life. Our story, in my mind, is really about His story. The events are ultimately ordained or allowed in order to bring me to interact with Him. The thief on the cross, the religious zealot on his way to persecute Christians, or the 14-year-old Ken accepting an invitation to church, all of these separate and individual experiences, thank God landed the same place—to an interaction with Jesus that led to a transformational and eternal relationship with Him. This is God’s plan and love in action. He is commending His love toward sinners in the midst of their story (Rom. 5:12).

“These stories” Powlison says, “exhibit common features: (1) a challenging, troubling, disorienting situation, and a sense of personal struggle with sins, disturbing emotions, confusion; (2) God’s intervening voice and hand, via Scripture, often mediated through a godly person; and finally (3) the way all these come together, by the grace of God, in a qualitative change in the one who bears witness.” Wow! and a resounding “Spot on! I say, for even a cursory look back at pivotal moments in my life I can see how these three elements were indeed present and used by God to work together to bring about deep personal change in me. In the midst of my struggle with drug use and gang activities as a teenager, God sent Larry Ferguson to invite me to Baptist Bible Church, where I heard the Word preached by Reverend Howard Mills, and was convicted of my sin, resulting in my surrender to Christ. In another instance, at the height of my resentment when all I wanted was to divorce my wife, God once again used His word and a Godly person, in this case Judy, to lovingly confront me with my sin, resulting in my repentance and our renewal as a couple. Jesus was there in my crisis, drawing me to Himself—inviting me to surrender (Rev. 3:20).

What a thought...Jesus is in the midst of our life events drawing us to God (Heb. 7:25). Just like he was in the midst of the Creation story (John 1:3) And like He is in the midst of sustaining the world right now, as written in Colossians 1:15-17). Jesus really is present in my here and now. It is in this way my story and the stories of those I may counsel are similar, “Jesus infiltrates and rearranges every story, so that all of our stories are marked and shaped by his loving purposes” (Powlison). Jesus puts Himself in the midst of—and puts us through—the events of our lives in order to conform us to His will (Romans 5:3-5). He does this in order to move us from dependence on Self to dependence on Him. Alleluia! Jesus is in my here and now. Therein is the power of the Gospel—the lived out and re-told stories of the reorienting truth of Scripture and the trustworthy and

demonstrated love of the saints for others. This is the charge and privilege we have when we counsel others.

Powlison notes, “Almost, invariably, people tell stories.” We all do—tell our stories—in the hurts we recount, the offenses we hold onto, the injustice we encountered, the joys we celebrate, the victories we won and the love we gave, shared or lost. Since it is true, we all have stories to tell, it follows then, by listening closely to what a counselee tells us, we can get to know them as individuals. In this way, through the stories we hear, we can answer the following: Does this person acknowledge God at all? Do they profess to know Him personally? Are they presently walking in obedience to God? In this way, listening to the counselee’s story allows for two things: it provides an opportunity for the counselor to connect the events of a persons’ life to what the Bible teaches in regard to such human experiences as suffering, temptation, sin and sickness. Secondly, “God meets you where you are. That is a truism” Powlison writes. And it is; it is a reliable promise that is repeated often throughout Scripture. One such place is Isaiah 43:1-3 where we see God promises to be with His people in the most threatening, and devastating times of life. God is with us in the midst of our circumstances oftentimes through the love and care of one of His saints. Through listening to the stories, we have the opportunity to embody the love, compassion and mercy of our Savior Jesus Christ as we walk with others during the events of their lives.

In conclusion and in my opinion, contrary to the title, this article taught me more about how God uses the events of our lives for His glory more than it explained to me how Scripture changes our life.

On the other hand, the article, *“Is the Adonis Complex in Your Bible?”* gave me clear ideas, to use Powlison’s words, how Scripture intersects the lives of real people, across the centuries. He says Scripture provides, “the common themes threading through all of life. Wisdom. A feel for how life breaks, a skilled engagement.” In other words, Scripture equips us to take on and make sense of whatever events come up in life (2 Peter 1:3). Powlison suggests, that in the context of Scripture, “new and unusual problems are normal.” In fact, the Bible takes the variety and uniqueness of life’s problems head on in verses such as Romans 8:28, where God promises that ALL things work together for good, and 1 Corinthians 1:4, where the promise is that God comforts us in ALL our tribulations. It does not matter if the event happened hundreds of years ago, in the life of a deceitful murderous king sitting atop the mightiest army in the world at that time, or a present day long-term unfaithful and adulterous husband; both of these men (King David and present day Ken) having been confronted by a Godly person using the Word of God, can come to deep personal change. Powlison sums it up this way: “Scripture comes with the details, because ‘redemption’ is the timely speaking and working of God to fix the very things that most need fixing.” And there it is, God’s

timing. Deep personal change takes place in His time, through time spent in His Word, over time. It took a while before Nathan successfully confronted David with his sin. Then it took time for David to work through his guilt, remorse and repentance for his sin. But at the end of it all God's redemptive power resulted in a forgiven, obedient-to-His-Word-Saint in David and by His grace in me.