

Living the Counter-Story

Ephesians 3:8-11

In the movie, The Matrix, we see 2 different storylines developed throughout the movie. One involves the matrix, or what appears to be real. The other involves what is happening outside of the matrix, or what is actually real. In one of the opening scenes, we find Neo in a room with Morpheus. Neo has begun to discover the truth that there is more out there than what his experience has told him. Morpheus offers him the choice to go on believing whatever he wants to believe or to “take the red pill” and find out “how deep the rabbit hole goes.” Neo takes the red pill and Morpheus 2 familiar words: “Follow me.”

How is life made up of various storylines? How do we determine what storyline is real and which ones are false?

The Matrix is a movie based on an old parable of Plato where he describes people who live in a cave and they've lived there all their lives chained up, staring at the back wall. All they see are shadows and they think the shadows are what's real. But eventually someone comes from outside the cave who knows that it's really the sun that illuminates what is real and rescues them. But it's really painful to learn that everything you've believed isn't true. It takes a long time, Plato says, for your eyes to adjust to the light, to see a new reality.

How is responding to the Gospel much like this parable from Plato or like the movie The Matrix?

In Genesis, mankind makes the choice to begin to write a new story that runs in opposition to the story God originally designed. Immediately, we see that it causes brokenness and chaos. Adam and Eve removed from the Garden, Cain killing Abel, on and on. All through the Old Testament we see God calling people to a counter-story and humanity choosing many times to keep writing their own stories.

What kind of examples do we see in the OT of what happens when people refuse to live in God's counter-story? From the life of Abraham? Moses? Saul? David?

In Abraham we see the promise God gives in Genesis, that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, start to take shape. God calls Abraham into a new story that He will write through Abraham and his descendants. Abraham reminds God that he and Sarah are not exactly young and these descendants God is talking about don't seem to be happening. God basically tells Abraham, “I know. I know the story you've been lying. I know the plot and the tension and I am the resolution.” Abraham's story up to this point has been written by Abraham, but God has promised to write a brand new story through him, one that would transform the world.

Has there been a time in your life when you realized the story you had been living wasn't all that it was cracked up to be? What did you do?

The counter story that God begins to write in the life of Abraham comes full circle and the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the story that God has been writing all along. It is a reversal of all of the stories that have been written before or since. In Ephesians chapter 3, the apostle Paul refers to this as a mystery that has been hidden for ages. Jesus is the full embodiment of the counter-story, and we are called to be people of that counter-story.

In what ways do we see Jesus embodying this counter-story in his life, ministry, death and resurrection.

Living in the counter-story that God is writing can be difficult, especially when our own story or own own experiences have been and are still so familiar...or when we focus on how well someone else's story seems to be going. In 1 Samuel 8, the people of Israel began to look at the nations around them and longed to be like them, with a king to lead them. In spite of the fact that they have been living in God's counter-story up to this point, they decided that they wanted to look like the other nations. God granted their wish and gave them Saul as their first king. Saul would be a

striking example of what it looks like when someone refuses to live in God's counter-story and insists upon writing their own.

Like Israel, sometimes we want to try to combine our own ideas and bits of the story with the counter-story that God has called us to live. What are some of the ways this can happen in our lives?

God has called us to allow him to write his story through us, just like he did to Abraham. Part of determining whether or not we are letting him do that, is by asking ourselves what story we are currently living in a writing ourselves.

Are we living in God's counter-story? Or are we determined to write our own story and determine our own outcome?

If we have determined that we are letting God write his counter-story through us, then the next question we must ask ourselves is how free He is to write whatever he wants to through our lives.

Is there anything in my life that is standing in the way of God having freedom to write whatever he wants to in and through my life?

Lastly, we must ask God to show us who he has called us to be in his counter story and to let him do whatever it takes for us to get from who we are to who He has called us to be.

Do you know who God has called you to be in His counter-story and are you willing to do whatever it takes to get from who you are now to who He has called you to be?