

Write Your Story 2 – Who are the characters in your story?

Write Your Story Bumper

Write Your Story Title

Welcome Back to Redemption Church. My name is Chris Fluitt and I want to thank everyone for joining us. Everyone who gathered with us today in Plano Tx! Thank you! Everyone receiving the Word of God online... Thank you!

We are in the 2nd week of our sermon series – WRITE YOUR STORY!

We believe that your life ought to be a great story. In this WRITE YOUR STORY series we are challenging you to – Make your life a story worth telling.

Make your life a story worth telling.

In week 1 we asked you HOW WILL YOUR STORY END?

You get to decide how your story ends. We gave you that great habit from Stephen Covey to “Begin with the end in mind.” We also told you that God began with the end in mind and that you are a part of His great story.

Today I want to ask you “Who are the characters in your story?”

Who are the characters in your story?

When you think of your favorite stories you also think of your favorite characters. A story doesn't even exist without characters. If you are going to craft a great life story, then you need to include great characters.

This past week we asked you on facebook to share your favorite characters from your favorite stories. The answers were broad.

Some went with Mr Darcy from the Jane Austin novel Pride & Prejudice.

Others went with Tommy Pickles from Rugrats, the Nickelodian cartoon.

We got some vintage movie characters like Paul Newman's “cool hand Luke Jackson” and “the rebel without a cause” Jim Stark, played by Jimmy Stewart.

We had action oriented characters from books and film... Like Peeta Mellark from the Hunger Games and Aragon from the Lord of the Rings.

We had a Jedi from a galaxy far far away named Luke Skywalker, and a protagonist named Winston Smith, that seems alarmingly close to home in George Orwell's novel "1984." We have even had a playboy millionaire philanthropist named Tony Stark, but better known as Ironman.

Characters are fun!

We told you last week that great stories aren't written, but crafted.

Great stories aren't written, but crafted

When the author sits down to write their story, they spend a lot of time imagining the characters in their story. They don't just craft the plot, but they also craft the characters.

The author gets to decide what characters are in the story. The author has the right to decide who is a major character and who is a minor character. The author gets to decide the roles each character plays.

J.K. Rowling created a wizarding universe in her Harry Potter books. I realize some Christians don't like Harry Potter, but please hear me out with an open mind. In her book, Rowling created an amazing device that literally decided the roles a character would play. This device was called the sorting hat.

The Sorting Hat (picture please Alex)

When this magical hat was placed on the head of a young person entering their first year at Hogwarts, a school for people gifted in magic, the hat would sort them into groups. The hat would literally say out loud what faction of the school a student would be placed.

The sorting hat let us know who was going to tend to be power hungry and willing to act on the worst motivations, when the sorting hat placed a student into house Slytherin. You knew anyone that ended up in that house would likely play a role of villain to the main character – Harry Potter.

Likewise, anyone who ended up in house Gryffindor would always end up being an ally to truth & courage.

There is an interesting moment at the beginning of the series when the hat is placed upon the main character's head and you hear the inner dialogue of the sorting hat & Harry Potter. The hat says that Harry has

the talent to be great and powerful like those in Slytherin. If Harry wanted to grab power and lord it over people he could have done well to be placed in the power hungry house of Slytherin. Instead Harry loved to truth and courage more than power so he asked the sorting hat to place him in Gryffindor.

The whole story would have been different had the main character had a different motivation and been sorted among different supporting characters. J.K. Rowling gave us an interesting character sorting device in the sorting hat. We need our own sorting hat...

Life might be easier if we had a sorting hat we could place on people. Imagine how valuable a hat would be that could tell you if a person were a friend or foe. What if you could place a sorting hat on a person and it would reveal their motivation... what if it could reveal their skill, courage, and loyalty. Wouldn't that be valuable?

We don't have a magical hat but we do need to assign roles to the characters in our story.

Assign the roles of the characters in your story

It would be terrible if you as the good guy, main character, chose the most evil person to be your best friend in your story. Imagine if Luke Skywalker had tried to befriend the evil emperor. What if Harry Potter had entrusted his future to his best friend Voldemort? How would things have played out if Iron Man would have allied with Thanos?

You need to make sure you assign the role of friend to actual friends. This is essential for a successful life.

I'll always remember advice from my father, Clyde Fluitt. On more than one occasion I have heard him lament "If only I would have recognized who my real friends were." "Christopher," he would say, "learn to recognize who your true friends are. Not everyone is your friend."

You want to really mess up your story assign the role of friend to someone who is actually a foe.

Friend or Foe

As you look back your story you may see that you have done this. Perhaps you may realize today that you are currently doing this. And if you have done it in the past, and in the present, look out for the future.

Do you have “friends” who are encouraging you to do harmful and addictive drugs? Perhaps they are encouraging to lie to your parents... your spouse...? Maybe they are discouraging your faith in God and trying to get you to hang out with them instead of go to church... They might just be a negative voice in your life.

uh oh! Looks like we have a foe assigned as a friend in our story. There are many biblical stories about this, but perhaps none greater than Samson. Here is a quick overview of that story...

Samson was dedicated to God by his parents. Because of this dedication God gifted Samson with supernatural strength. His parents gifted Samson with something so wonderful... yet he disobeys his parents and leaves them. His parents never are given a major role in Samson’s story again. He treats his greatest friends as foes...

Samson instead goes and lives with his enemies, the Philistines. He treats his foes as if they were friends. Samson marries a Philistine girl, completely ignoring the plea of his parents. As soon as he marries this Philistine, she betrays him by divulging secret knowledge to Samson’s foes... and then Samson wife leaves him and shacks up with one of Samson’s “friends.” DOES NOT SOUND LIKE A FRIEND RIGHT? Samson assigned the role of friend to a foe... and assigned the role of foe to his actual friends. 100% backwards.

But the good thing is that Samson learned his lesson... NO HE DID NOT.

Samson continues hanging out with the Philistines until one day, he meets a prostitute named Delilah. He treats Delilah as a friend believing that she loved him... but she was not a friend but a foe. She was not to be trusted, but he trusted her. She was a prostitute and yet Samson chose to act as if she were his wife. She did not love Samson, but instead became his greatest downfall.

Delilah asked for the secret to Samson’s strength. Samson’s enemies, had offered to give Delilah great wealth in exchange for this knowledge. NOW GET READY BECAUSE THIS IS STUPID OF SAMSON.

3 times Delilah asked for the secret to Samson’s strength. 3 times Samson gave Delilah a false answer. 3 times Delilah used the fake answer on Samson and the Philistines attacked Samson only to find Samson had not been weakened. 3 times Delilah absolutely proved she was not a friend but a foe... yet the fourth time she asked Samson for the secret to his strength, Samson told her the truth.

Samson assigned the role of friend to his foes. It cost Samson dearly as his “friend” Delilah called in the philistine army and they took the

weakened Samson, burned out his eyes with a hot poker, and made him a chained slave until his dying day.

Do not assign the role of friend to foe. You need to know who your real friends are. You need to recognize a foe when you see one.

Guys, just because a girl takes an interest in you does not mean that she is a friend. Girls, just because a handsome guy gives you attention does not mean they are a friend. WE MUST RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FRIEND AND A FOE and we must assign them the right role in our life.

Do you recognize a friend when you see one?

Proverbs 17:17 (NIV2011) A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

A friend loves at all times. If they only love you when you are flush with cash, but not as much when you are low on the dough... they aren't your friend.

If they call themselves your brother or sister but won't answer your calls or texts when you need them in a time of adversity, then they aren't your brother or sister.

Do you have the wrong people assigned to the role of brother & friend?

2 Corinthians 6:14 (NIV2011) Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

If someone is going a different direction than you want to go, then you don't need to link yourself to them. This works in marriage, friendship, and even secular situations like business relationships.

Assign the roles of the characters in your story

Great stories are crafted. You must assign the role of the characters in your story.

You will also need to define the influence of the characters in your story.

Define the influence of the characters in your story

Not all characters are equal. Some characters impact your story more than others.

Some characters aren't even given speaking lines. Some characters are just in the background to help set the scene.

In movies they have a term called a "bit part." A bit part is a role in which there is direct interaction with the principal actors and no more than five lines of dialogue.

If you want to write a great story, you need to define the influence of the characters in your story.

Looking back at the story of Samson, he allowed the wrong characters to have influence on his story.

Samson allowed people who denied His God... Samson allowed people who wanted to eradicate the Jewish people... Samson allowed people who wanted to enslave, abuse, & ridicule him to carry the greatest influence in his story.

At best these should have been minor characters, but he made them major characters.

And then Samson limited the influence of the people who really cared for him. Samson, why didn't your story give more lines of dialogue to your mom & dad? They loved you... they wanted the best for your character... shouldn't they have more lines than Delilah in your story?

Do you want to craft your story? Then you need to figure out quickly who is going to be major & minor in your story.

Are you spending a lot of time and energy on people who will end being of minor influence in your life?

We do this. Do not think that you have no problem with this. Here is an example...

You remember a thing that someone said about you a long time ago... You still feel the sting of their criticism... They said you were worthless and belittled you... they did harmful things to you... And you are still allowing them to have influence on your story today. Every time you let their voice play in your head, you are allowing them to step out of the bit part category to a major starring role.

You don't have to do this. You are in charge of who influences your story.

Do not give dialogue to hateful people... negative people... evil people...

You can right now decide that the those people will no longer play a major role in your story. You can replace those negative characters with positive characters.

There are positive characters in this room right now. Give some of the positive people in Redemption Church more influence in your story.

If you are truly in control of your story, then you get to decide what characters will be in your story.

You decide what characters will appear in your story

Voldemort, the evil wizard who wants to kill Harry Potter.... does not have to appear in your story. This is your story. You don't need an evil wizard trying to kill you... so remove him from your story.

It is that simple!

Not just anyone who wanders up, gets to be in your story. It is an honor to be in your story.

Your story is a good story, and a lot of people will try to insert themselves into your story... But you get to ultimately decide who appears in your story.

Some people don't need to be in your story...

Drug dealers and gangs don't need to be in your story. That is not the story you want to write.

Prostitutes and unfaithful people do not need to be in your story. If you want to get in my pages you need to be faithful and loyal.

Back stabbers and liars don't need to be given dialogue in your story.

You are the only one who can decide who will appear in your story. SO DECIDE!

Young people listen. You probably really long for a girlfriend or a boyfriend... but you better be smart about who you allow to be you're your romantic friend. Samson made this mistake with Delilah...

They may have good looks, but good looks don't get you into my story...

If they don't love God, then they aren't good for your story...

If they aren't trustworthy, then they aren't good for your story...

If they aren't concerned with writing a good story themselves, then they aren't good for your story...

You have the power to select who appears in your story. And some people should never even appear in your story...

You want a great life story right? You need to craft this story. Let's review...

Assign the roles of the characters in your story

Are they a friend or a foe? What part could this person play in my story?

Define the influence of the characters in your story

Will they be a major or minor character? Will they be allowed to speak into the direction of your story?

You decide what characters will appear in your story

There are some characters that are just plain trouble, and your story would be better served without including them.

Now very quickly I want to apply these 3 points to Jesus.

Does Jesus have a role in your story?

You get to decide what characters appear in your story. So does Jesus appear in your story? Do you want Jesus in your story?

You actually need to decide this. We all need to tell Jesus today... Yes Jesus! I want you in my story.

Proverbs 17:17 (NIV2011) A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

Don't you believe Jesus ought to play the role of your friend?

Then you need to define the influence Jesus will play in your life.

Does Jesus play a bit part? Is he just a background character? Does he just show up on Sundays? Or will you allow Jesus to play a major influence in your story?

Do you allow Jesus to ever have scenes with the you? Does the Word of God ever have dialogue in your day?

musician

Will you allow Jesus to play such a big role in your story, that He helps you assign the roles of all the characters in your story?

We talked about that sorting hat that helped sort the characters in Harry Potter.

Jesus has something even better that He wants you to have. He wants to give you His Spirit!

Scripture tells us that God can place His Spirit in you and that His Spirit can tell what is true.

John 16:13 (NIV2011) But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth...

His Spirit can reveal to you what is true. His Spirit discerns other spirits.

His Spirit can warn you when people are lying... when people are an improper motive... when evil is around... or when good, true, blessed friends are around.

Do you have this Spirit in you? Are you listening to this Spirit?

Jesus will give you His Spirit... but He will not give His Spirit to people who only assign him bit parts.

You have to make Jesus the major character of your life.

Don't you think your story is better off with Jesus in it?