

Would you mind if I read a children's story to you? Of course not. We all love a good story.

It's called *YELLOW & PINK* by William Steig. Has anyone heard this story?

Two small figures made of wood were lying out in the sun one day, on an old newspaper. One was short, fat, and painted pink; the other was straight, thin, and painted yellow. It was hot and quiet, and they were both wondering.

After a while, the yellow one sat up and focused his gimlet eyes on the pink one. "Do I know you?" he asked.

"I don't think so," Pink answered.

"Do you happen to know what we're doing here?" asked Yellow.

"No," said Pink. "I don't even remember getting here."

"Me neither," said Yellow, looking all around. There were chickens busy pecking a little way off, and farther back in the field some dreamy cows. "I can't help

wondering," he went on, "how we got to be here. It all seems new and strange. Who are we?"

Pink looked Yellow over. He found Yellow's color, his well-chiseled head, his whole form, admirable. "Someone must have made us," he said.

"How could anyone make something like me, so intricate, so perfect?" Yellow asked. "Or, for that matter, like you. And wouldn't we know who made us, since we had to be there when we got made?"

"And why," Yellow added, "would he leave us like this – with no explanation. I say we're an accident, somehow or other we just happened."

Pink couldn't believe what he heard; he started laughing. "You mean these arms I can move this way and that, this head I can turn in any direction, this breathing nose, these walking feet, all of this just happened, by some kind of fluke? That's preposterous!"

"Don't laugh," said Yellow. "Just stop and reflect. With enough time, a thousand, a million, maybe two and a half million years, lots of unusual things could happen. Why not us?"

“Because it’s impossible! It’s absolutely out of the question! How could we just happen? Would you mind explaining?”

Yellow got up and began pacing. He kicked a pebble aside. “Well, it could be something like this, I’m not saying exactly.

Suppose a branch broke off a tree and fell on a sharp rock in just the right way, so that one end split open and made legs. So there you have legs.”

“Then winter came and this piece of wood froze and the ice split the mouth open. There’s your mouth. Then maybe one day a big hurricane took that piece of wood and sent it tumbling down a rocky hill with little bushes, and it got bumped and chipped and brushed and shaped this way and that. Sand blowing in the wind might have helped with the smoothing.”

“That piece of wood could have hung around at the bottom of that hill for eons, until one day – Zing! – lightning struck in such a way to make arms, fingers, toes.”

“All right,” Pink interrupted, “what about eyes! What about ears, what about nostrils?” Yellow sat down on a stone to do more thinking.

“Eyes,” he said, “could have been made by insects boring in, or by woodpeckers, maybe even by hailstones of exactly the right size hitting repeatedly in just the right places.”

“Hmm,” said Pink. He clasped his hands behind him. “How come we can see out of these holes the woodpeckers made? And hear?”

“Because that’s what eyes and ears are for, dummy. What else would you do with them? Those cows over there see with their big eyes. This ant sees with his teeny eyes. We see with ours.”

“Okay,” said Pink. “Let’s say you’re right, just for the sake of conversation. Do you mean to tell me all those odd things happened not only once but twice, so that there’s two of us?”

The branch fell off the tree, it hit the rock, it rolled down the hill, lightning struck, the woodpecker pecked, etc., etc.”

“Why not?” said Yellow, “In a million years – I didn’t say five seconds – the same thing could easily happen twice over. A million years takes a very long time. Branches do break, winds are always blowing, there’s always some lightning, and some hail, and so forth and so on.”

“But you and I are so different,” said Pink. “How come?”

“That only proves what I’m saying!” cried Yellow. “It’s all accidental! You’re probably a different kind of wood. You must have rolled down a different kind of hill, a soft, mushy one perhaps.”

Pink was not satisfied with these explanations. He suddenly gave Yellow a challenging look. “Explain this,” he said, “How come we’re painted the way we are?”

Yellow took a few circular turns pondering this question. “The paint,” he muttered, “the paint. Well, suppose when we rolled down those hills, or whatever it was we rolled down, we rolled through some paint someone had spilled. Pink for you ...”

“Yellow for me.”

“And it came out so neat and symmetrical?” Pink said. “With perfect edges, in just the right places? And there were three drops of white paint in a straight line for my buttons, and three black drops for yours? What about that, my yellow friend?”

Yellow was silent. He leaned against a tree stump, scratched his wooden head. "I can't answer all the questions," he said finally. "Some things will have to remain a mystery. Maybe forever. But why are we arguing on such a fine day?"

Just then a man who needed a haircut came shambling along, humming out of tune.

He picked up Pink and looked him over. Then he picked up Yellow and looked him over. "Nice and dry," he said.

He tucked them both under his arm and headed back where he'd come from.

"Who is this guy?" Yellow whispered in Pink's ear.

Pink didn't know.

I love that story, just like I love any good story.

One of the things that sets us apart from every other creature on the face of the earth is the fact that we all love a good story.

A good story provides an escape from reality, which as you know can be mundane at times and difficult at other times.

A good story also activates our imaginations and makes us wonder what's going to happen next. It holds us in suspense and promises to take us into something good and unexpected.

And, of course, a good story ends in a way that's satisfying. A satisfying ending might be a happy ending with all the conflicts resolved or it might be an ending that makes us see life in a new and deeper way. For all of those reasons and more, we humans are suckers for a good story.

Not only do we all love a good story, as humans we all live personal stories.

I hardly need to tell you that our lives are made up of a series of events: We're conceived and born. We grow up and go to school. We graduate and find a career. We get married and have families. We grow older and eventually we die. Obviously those aren't the events of everybody's life; but they are pretty typical for us North Americans.

When we look at our lives as nothing more than a series of events, life can seem pretty futile. Things happen and then you die. How depressing. But when we look at the events of our lives as part of a story,

those events, both the fortunate events and the unfortunate events, take on a sense of meaning.

A few years before my father passed away, I spent some time pondering the events of my his life. He was born in Berlin during the last year of WWI. His mother died when he was four; and he was raised in a foster family until his father married again.

At fourteen he left home to work on a farm in northern Germany, where he learned to farm with horse drawn equipment. He also married the farmer's daughter.

When he was nineteen WWII broke out; he was drafted into military service and became a gunman in a tank. He experienced the entire war only to be caught by Russians on his way home. They took him back to the Ukraine where he spent four years in a forced labour camp.

After he was released, he returned to Communist Germany. He took his wife and son, my brother Bernard, and fled to the West. There his wife died in childbirth and he married my mother. Together they had a pile of kids and immigrated to Canada, Prince George of all places.

In Prince George he worked in saw mills and on construction crews until he was able to buy his own farm in the Lower Mainland. For a period of fifteen years he lived his lifelong dream; he owned and operated his own farm. Needless to say, having eleven kids helped.

In 1979, he was forced to sell his farm because he couldn't keep up with the technology. Remember, he had been trained on horse drawn equipment; and now he had a computerized greenhouse operation. Fortunately, he had enough that he and my mother were able to enjoy the next fifteen years of their lives. Then they began to grow old; and eventually they died.

When I look at my dad's life as nothing more than a series of events, it looks tough; and it was. But, when I connect all of these events together and think of them as part of a larger personal story, I get inspired.

I think of what he overcame. I think of what he accomplished. I think of what he provided for me and my siblings. I think, wow, what an amazing life; and I'm inspired to think about my own life differently. My life is not just a series of fortunate and unfortunate events; it's a story, one that I trust is making a positive difference.

So, we all love a good story; we all live a personal story; and something we all need is a BIG story.

The events of my father's life make a good personal story, a story that I find inspiring. But having a good personal story isn't enough to keep us going when the going gets tough.

When the going gets tough, we need to know that our lives are part of something bigger than ourselves. We need to know how we got here, why we're here, how we're supposed to live and that our hardships are worth it. We need to know that our stories fit into what I call a BIG story.

The stick figures in the story we started with, Yellow & Pink, were searching for a BIG story that would make sense of their existence and give meaning to their experiences. Whether we are aware of it or not, each of us does the same thing. We all search for a BIG story that makes sense of our existence and experiences.

So, let me ask you: What's your BIG story? How do you make sense of your existence? Where do you find meaning for the events that make up your life?

One of the functions of society is to give us a BIG story in which to live our lives; and our society is doing that very effectively. Through its literature, through its

media, through its education system, our **society continually inundates us with a BIG story that can be describes as the Secular Story, or the God-less Story.**

The thing that sets the Secular Story apart from every other BIG story that's ever been told is that it tries to do what Yellow tried to do in William Steig's story. It tries to explain everything, including our existence and purpose, without a single reference to a Creator.

The promise is that it's a story that requires no faith or belief in unseen things; but the very first point of the story betrays that promise.

Here's how the Secular Story goes ...

- In the beginning, the Big Bang created the universe.

Now I believe in the Big Bang; I also believe that it was caused by God. For the Secular Story, though, the cause of the Big Bang is a conundrum. The favourite explanation these days is that there are an infinite number of universes out there; and that one of those universes gave birth to ours with a Big Bang.

If you think about it for more than a few second, you'll recognize that belief in an infinite number of universes requires no less faith than the existence of an

infinitely powerful Creator. So, the promise of no faith in unseen things is broken on the first point.

Let's carry on with the story ...

- After a very long time, the laws that govern the universe produced the earth all by themselves.
- After a few more eons, the inanimate stuff of the earth somehow created living organisms all by itself.

We have no idea how the non-living stuff of the earth turned into living organisms; but that's what we have to believe if we want to explain life without reference to God.

- Those living organisms kept evolving until they became aware of themselves and began thinking very complex thoughts. These beings call themselves human beings. That's us.

Again, we have no idea how mere matter became self-conscious and rational all by itself. So we just have to believe.

- Because we are the products of matter, time and chance, our existence has no purpose or meaning, other than the purpose and meaning

that we create for ourselves.

- To be fully human, then, is to let no one tell you why you're here or how you're supposed to live. You need to be the writer of your own story. Or in the words of Ernest Henley's famous poem, you need to be the master of your own fate, the captain of your own soul.
- Believe in yourself and get the most out of life. After all, Y-O-L-O. You only live once.

Once you become aware of it, you hear the Secular Story being told over and over and over again in our literature, in our education and in our media. It's told in every other song that you hear on the radio. It's told in virtually every movie that comes out of Hollywood. It's told in every show our kids watch on CBC Kids. It's told in virtually every video game that hits the market.

Hold it, you say. What does CBC Kids have in common with Grand Theft Auto?

Let me tell you. Without even getting into the topic of morality, the one thing the vast majority of media has in common, whether it's movies, kid shows or video games, is that they all portray people living life and getting along (or not) without reference to God.

Have you ever noticed that? If there is a reference to God, either he is portrayed in a naïve or negative light or he is mentioned in a very muted fashion, like doing the honors before the Thanksgiving meal or some vague reference at a funeral service.

Here's my point: If all we and our children ever watch is the stuff that society provides, it won't be long before we and they start living life and making love without reference to God. It won't be long before the Secular Story becomes our story and we as parents raise the next God-less generation.

I'm not saying that, as Christians, we need to isolate ourselves and stop watching movies and engaging other kinds of media. One reason our society has gone secular is because seventy-five or so years ago too many Christians did exactly that. They gave up on society, isolated themselves and thereby lost their right to speak. Now we're on the margins, either complaining about it or playing catch-up.

What I am saying is this: As followers of Jesus Christ, not only do we need to have our eyes wide open when it comes to the Secular Story that's being told; more importantly **we need to own the BIG story of our Lord and Leader, Jesus Christ;** and that's what we're going to do for the next few months.

The BIG story of Jesus Christ is the story told by the Bible. Throughout this series I'm going to be referring to this story as HIStory. First of all because it's rooted in real events of history; and secondly because it's his story.

The BIG story of the Bible is his story in at least three different ways. First of all, while he was here on earth, Jesus made the Bible's story the foundation of his own life. He made sense of his own experiences through the lenses of Scripture.

Luke 4 tells how Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert. The devil tried to trip him up with three distinct temptations. Rather than dealing with the devil on human terms, Jesus responded by quoting the Scripture. The Bible was his compass. The Bible was his story. He owned it for himself.

Another way the story of the Bible is Jesus' story is that he's its climax. Everything in the first part of the Bible looked forward to him. Everything in the second part of the Bible looks back at him.

Later in Luke 4, we find Jesus visiting the synagogue in his hometown. When he's given the scroll, he turns to Isaiah 61:1-2 and reads:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

After he finished reading, he said to the people, *“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”* In other words, I’m the one the prophet Isaiah was looking forward to. I’m the climax of the BIG story of the Bible.

One more reason the story of the Bible is Jesus’ story is because he’s the main actor. Listen to Colossians 1:15-20.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all

things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Often we tend to think of Jesus as a man who walked this earth 2000 years ago; and he was that; but these verses tell us that he was so much more. According to these verses, everything God has been doing in history has been done through him. He was and is the main actor of the BIG story of the Bible.

So, the story of the Bible is the story of Jesus Christ because he owned it for himself, because he is its climax, because he the main actor; and, if we consider ourselves his followers, it only makes sense that we make HIStory our story.

I'm going to wrap up by mentioning four ways to do that. The first way is to learn HIStory.

Over the next few months, we are going to have a number of opportunities to do that right here at WGC. The first opportunity will come every Sunday morning, right here in the Family Bible Hour. Starting next week, I'm going to be doing a series of sermons called *Making HIStory My Story*.

In this series we're going to look at the BIG story of the Bible; we're going to learn what on earth God has

been up to since the time of creation; and we're going to learn what it takes to be part of HIStory.

The second opportunity to learn HIStory will come on October 16 and November 27. On those two dates, we will be hosting Walk Thru the Bible seminars. The first one will be on the OT; the second will be on the NT.

How many of you have done a WTB seminar before? I have; and I had a lot of fun. WTB seminars are not boring lectures. The best way to describe them is as interactive journeys through the stories of the Bible.

We will be bringing in a guy named Bill Spangler from Red Deer. He will start the seminar during the Family Bible Hour. We will break for lunch. Then, after lunch, we will continue.

If you stay after lunch, the cost will be \$20 per person. If you can't afford it, don't be afraid to talk to me. I'll get you in. I'm hoping that our entire church family will stick around and participate. It's a hoot.

The third opportunity to learn HIStory will come in our home groups and Bible studies. In these groups and studies we're going to be doing something called Forty Days in the Word. It gets us reading the Bible for ourselves and listening for God's voice. You can sign

up for a home group or Bible Study and order your work book in the foyer after the service.

Maybe your Bible is a closed book to you; or maybe it's just a dusty book on the shelf. Our goal for the next few months is to turn your Bible into an open and dust free book. By doing that, our prayer is that you will begin making HIStory your story.

Something else we have to do to make that happen is to love HIStory.

Making HIStory my story take more than learning it. There are people in the world who know the Bible way better than I do. They read it fluently in Hebrew and Greek. They know it inside out; it's not their story because they don't love it. For them it's an object of analysis and examination. They don't believe its story; they don't trust its promises, they don't rely on its teaching.

When we study HIStory, one of the first things we learn is that the God created us out of love; but we have all turned our backs on him by sinning. Our sin didn't stop God from loving us. No, it compelled him to reach out to us time and time again.

HIStory recalls the times throughout history that God has reached out to humans in order to regain their

trust. The climax of HIStory happened two thousand years ago when God took on a human body and, in the person of Jesus, became one of us.

Jesus lived a perfect life, died an innocent death and then came back to life. His life shows us what it means to be a righteous and whole as a human. His death paid the penalty for our failure to be righteous. His resurrection guarantees both our wholeness forever.

In order to make that wholeness our own, we have to believe what the Bible says about us, that we have all sinned and fallen short of the righteousness God had in mind for us. We have to trust what the Bible says about Jesus, that on the cross he bore our sins. Now, when we confess our sins to him and invite his Spirit into our lives, he forgives us and puts us on the road to wholeness.

That's what it means to love HIStory. It means believing its claims, trusting its promises and relying on its instructions.

The third thing we need to do to make HIStory our story is to live it.

It's not good enough to get it into our heads and believe it in our hearts; we also need to act on it. In

everything we do here at the church, at home, at school, in the workplace we need to live out the things we learn from HIStory. It needs to be the foundation of our lives, just like it was for Jesus. It needs to be our compass. It needs to be the lenses through which we make sense of the things we experience.

One more way to make HIStory our story is by giving it away.

For me, God's story comes to life the most when I start sharing it with other people. The reason I do what I do is because God speaks most clearly to me through the Bible when I have to share or explain it to other people like you.

If you want to make HIStory your story then look for ways to give it away. You could start reading the Bible with your family. You could host or even lead a Bible study. You could get involved in a program here at the church. Listening to AWANA clubbers say their verses is a way to give. Helping out in SS is another way to give HIStory away.

Society is doing a great job of telling the Secular Story through media, through education, through literature. It's our job to tell God's story. That's why WGC exists. We are here to get HIStory out. Society is not going to

do it. If you and I don't do it, God will pass us by and raise someone else.

When we tell God's story, we aren't just helping people get on their feet and make a better life in the here and now. We're helping people find real meaning and purpose for this life and eternal life for the next.

So what's your BIG story?

Everybody's got one. If you've never thought about it and you're not sure what your BIG story is, then chances are you've absorbed society's BIG story. Society's story may give you a good life here and now; but it gives you little hope when the going gets tough; and it gives you no hope in the face of death. By contrast, the BIG story of the Bible leads you to abundant life now and forever. So, join us this Fall as we make HIStory our story.