

TRANSFORMING STORIES – A Small Group Journey to Transformation
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ISBN: 978-0-578-27144-6

Printed in the USA by 48 Hour Books (www.48HrBooks.com)



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TRUE Stories Ministries’ mission as defined by the acronym TRUE is to see God:

**Transform Lives by
Redeeming Stories and
Unleashing Purpose resulting in
Exponential Impact as those lives contagiously affect others**

What we have seen happen is that as people **learn** their story from Jesus' perspective, they begin to be able to **love** themselves, others and the Lord at a deeper level. As they see Him use the pain in their stories as a platform to birth purpose in their lives, they begin to **live** in their TRUE Story playing an important role in His Story!

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Meet the TRUE Team

We are a group of women from different church backgrounds with different stories and different spiritual gifts. But we all love the Lord Jesus and believe He is the perfect Son of God, born of the virgin Mary, living as fully God and fully man, dying on a cross to pay the penalty of our sins and resurrecting three days later to provide us redemption and salvation with eternal life. We believe in the Trinity, infallible truth of God's Word, and that Jesus will return for His bride!



Jill White is a curious, adventurous spirit who loves life! She thrives in deep conversations, laughter and hugs. She is a wife of 41+ years, mom of three grown children, and Grammi to five rambunctious and fun boys. She has been in ministry in a variety of capacities all her adult life, including serving overseas as missionary in Argentina for a number of years. Since her 20s, she has had a love for retreat ministry, that others know who God created them to be that they might live freely within that, and that they see Jesus interwoven into their very lives. Thus, her love for TRUE Stories is a given. She has spent the last few years using a brain retraining program to heal from a type of brain injury that debilitated her. This has deepened her passion for the truth in Scripture, and given her a deep desire to guide women to be free from thoughts and beliefs that are not life-giving. She is passionate that all see that God's favor surrounds us at all times! She loves to do house projects, spend time in nature, and make memories with those closest to her (including the TRUE Stories team). One of her many favorite verses in the Bible is Galatians 5:1, "*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*"



Melody Hill is a wife, mom, Grammy with 6 grands, and a retired school secretary/bookkeeper. She is actively involved with her church and Sozo prayer ministries. She teaches a weekly Bible study at John 3:16 Women's Ministries, a local ministry to homeless and displaced women. She loves reading, doing crafts, spending girl time with friends, vacationing with her sister, working in her yard, going to yard sales with her hubby, and watching old movies. She served for many years as a worship leader and she still loves to sing. She is gifted in making and maintaining lasting relationships as evidenced by a multitude of friendships, some even going back to childhood. "*A friend loves at all times.*" Proverbs. 17:17a (NASB). She loves doing life with her TRUE Stories sisters and has learned that God's way is always the best way! "*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.*" Isaiah 55:9 (NASB)



Ashley Grice has been a licensed facilitator of the Davis® programs for learning struggles and executive functioning since 2006. She is the owner of Creative Mind Learning Solutions, LLC (offering programs for learning problems) and Threadbare To Thriving (serving overwhelmed and stretched-thin women). She is an artist who enjoys painting, drawing, and paper art. She loves Jesus, hot tea, deep conversations, WWII history, board games, British film/TV (especially mysteries and period dramas), and has traveled to every continent of the world except Antarctica. She describes herself as a once shy and insecure girl who found her voice and is not afraid to tell her story. Ashley has a passion for helping women thrive, realize their value, and be equipped to live life to the fullest in any season. One of her favorite passages is Isaiah 61:1-3, which speaks to the healing and freedom we find in Christ as He brings beauty from ashes.



Holly Beitel is a wife of over twenty-five years to Rem and mom to young adult sons, Rem and Nate. Professionally, she is a business consultant, with over twenty-five years of business experience, and works with adults and college students to help them cast a vision for their calling through a program she developed with partners called *PurposeCast*. Holly loves all things sports and outdoors and has been accused of being fiercely competitive. She played basketball in college but now finds even greater joy watching her boys excel on the pitch and court. Holly also loves traveling, but she prefers the beach or the mountains to destination sightseeing. She will choose a good cup of coffee with a friend over a day of shopping every time! Her passion, born from Ephesians 2:10, is to help people discover their purpose and the "good works" the Lord has planned for them. She finds herself gravitating towards that role whether it be as a mom, a coach, or serving women through TRUE Stories.



Susan Grice is a mother to five really great adults, Nana to seven, and a retired missions assistant. She loves to study and talk about the things of God with others, especially women. She loves to hear the roar of the ocean waves, enjoys board games with her family and friends, loves traveling with her sister, worship nights with believers, and reading Christian apocalyptic fiction! She has learned the value of both the hard places and delightful experiences in her story and is happy to share what God has taught her with anybody who asks. Isaiah 43:18-19 (ESV) is her life-giving verse: *"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."*



Introduction

By Holly Beitel

Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story . . . Psalm 107:2 (NIV)

Psychologists have discovered that story is how we think, learn, and make meaning of life. The Bible isn't just a collection of random books, by random authors, to be interpreted however we like. It is God's Story to us and should be read and understood from that perspective. It is the greatest Story ever told.

What is your story? Have you wondered if your story matters? TRUE Stories Ministries believes YOUR STORY is of great value, and we know your story is part of a much bigger story.

What we have seen happen over and over is that as people learn their story from Jesus' perspective, they begin to be able to love themselves, others, and the Lord at a deeper level. As women see Him use the pain in their stories as a platform to birth purpose in their lives, they begin to live in their TRUE Story playing an important role in His Story!

Since 2013, TRUE Stories has been leading women's retreats literally across the world. We use a tool called a Story Rope to help women creatively construct a visual representation of their story. Through various activities and exercises, we learn to see our stories from Jesus' perspective, allow Him to tell us His version of our story, and discover our lovingly-crafted part in His bigger Story.

In 2020, the pandemic created challenges for us to gather in large groups for retreats together. However, more than ever, women need opportunities to connect and find freedom from the things that hinder them from walking fully in their calling. So, for the first time, we have adapted our retreat experience into a journey for small groups to take together. What is the purpose of this journey we are asking you to take? To put it simply, it is for your life to be transformed by the ongoing redemption of your story, for you to learn how to use your story as a tool for evangelism and discipleship, and as a result, see other lives transformed as their stories intersect with yours.

Why do we think story is such an important vehicle to use for transformation? Thanks to postmodern philosophy, our culture has embraced a belief that there is no overarching grand narrative, or metanarrative, upon which to derive meaning, purpose, or value. A metanarrative is a theory that tries to give a comprehensive account to various historical events, experiences, social and cultural phenomena based upon the appeal to universal truth or universal values. It is a larger story, encompassing and explaining other "little stories" within totalizing schemes.

The Church has been impacted by postmodernism as well. It has gradually stopped connecting people to the grand Story of God. Using story as a vehicle for discipleship enables us to see the potential of our story playing a part of a much larger story. Too often our approach to discipleship focuses on workbook materials where a participant is required to gather information from selected portions of Scripture to support a propositional

statement. Seeing scripture as God's Story to mankind provides much greater potential for long term-faith development. ¹Joel Green expresses the following concern, "It is a particular characteristic of the West that we so easily succumb to the temptation to confuse the amassing of facts with the learning. Surely, our prejudices tell us, the winner of the Bible trivia contest is self-evidently the most biblical person around." Yet there is so much more to discover when we embrace the overall message of the Bible and realize that we are a part of a bigger Story; one that envelops our whole being. So rather than reading scripture for mere practical purposes, we come to it as a life-shaping event.

There is one more thing you need to understand before we start. Your story has a villain. You have a very real enemy that is trying to keep you from playing your part in God's Story. John 10:10 says, "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly*" (NASB). So, from the time we are born, the villain of our story is out to wound, lie, and deceive us. It is out of a passion to see those places redeemed and used for His purposes that TRUE Stories Ministries was born, and ultimately, that this resource was created.

God can use your story, whatever it is, for the saving and redeeming of others' stories. We say that not even knowing what your story is, because the Bible is full of God using all kinds of people's stories to do just that. People hear about the Gospel from those who are living out the Gospel. They are redeemed when we point them to the Redeemer. They can be saved when those of us who are saved point to the Savior.

Here's the awesome thing: God is in the business of exponential results. As God works in your story, He is doing it for your benefit, for His glory, and for the benefit of others. Joseph said it best in Genesis 50:20, "*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to keep many people alive*" (NASB).

Here is a good illustration of what the results of transformation look like: Consider the story of this blind man... *As Jesus passed by, He saw a man who had been blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must carry out the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made mud from the saliva, and applied the mud to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he left and washed, and **came back seeing**. Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." The man himself kept saying, "I am the one." So they were saying to him, "**How then were your eyes opened?**" He answered, "**The man who is called Jesus made mud, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight.**" And they said to him, "**Where is He?**" John 9:1–12 (NASB), (emphasis added)*

¹ Joel B. Green and Michael Pasquarello, Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching: Reuniting New Testament Interpretation and Proclamation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003)

Do you see it? And yes, the pun is intended. When Jesus redeems your story, the world looks at you and wants to know what is different about you. What has changed? Why are you no longer “blind”? And when you tell them it was Jesus, their reply will be, “Where is He?” That is how you use your story for evangelism and discipleship. You play your part in God’s Story, and others want to journey with you, know your Author, and have their own stories transformed.

We can all think of an instance when someone sharing their difficult or painful story has impacted ours and helped us draw closer to the Lord. What if they never had shared their story? What if you never share yours? Going back to our opening verse, our challenge to you is, *“Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story . . .”* Psalm 107:2 (NIV).

So, where do we start? God’s Story. We can’t understand the plot, the villain, or the Hero of our own story if we don’t know the overarching Story into which we are written.

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