Stick Figures Save the World



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Stick Figures Save the World: *Drawing Simply to Share Jesus Well*
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1 Jesus People Tell Jesus Stories. That's What Jesus People Do.

OK, OK. It's true—telling Jesus stories is not *all* that Jesus people do. Jesus people do all sorts of things because of our love for Jesus. In fact, you might say that living life with Jesus is really *super* awesome. Most people, when they discover something as amazing as Jesus, talk about what they have found.

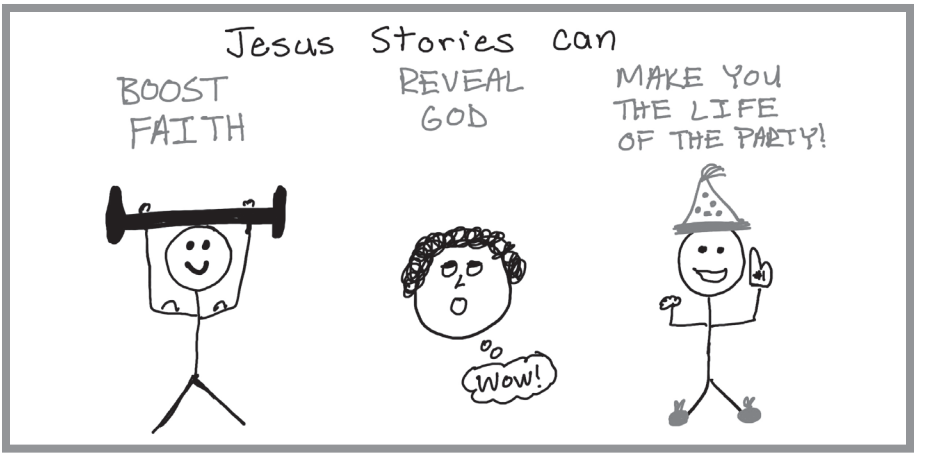
If we would think for about half a second (I know it's a really long time, but hang in there!) about how humans all over the world share good news, it would probably become clear that most folks don't talk about wonderful things with long, boring, droopy faces. So talking about Jesus should definitely be more exciting than talking about the local sports team X (which shall remain unnamed, for fear of making somebody mad) or the latest movie Y (which shall also remain nameless, in case you weren't thinking of *Star* ****). Jesus is also surely more interesting than talking about the latest life-saving vitamin or a local store's 50-percent-off sale. Jesus is way more breathtaking, spine-tingling, and life-changing than anything else. The way we talk about him should show that.

Revelation 12 recounts a massive war that broke out in heaven and then continued on the earth when the "ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, … was hurled to the earth" (v. 9). Verse 11 tells us that Jesus' faithful followers "triumphed over [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." Telling

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Jesus stories is equivalent to "the word of our testimony." It's simply our own personal Jesus stories. It basically means that we talk about what Jesus has done for us yesterday, the day before, last week, and last year.

Some of you might be looking forlorn and thinking, "Ah, shucks! My life is just too boring. There are no good Jesus adventures here." If we think that our own life seems a bit boring or weak on eyewitness accounts to the goodness of Jesus, there is relief for us: We can steal (i.e., borrow for a while) someone else's true tales with Jesus and tell those to other people! Then the next person will also have a new Jesus scoop to share with others. So you will have given that person several gifts: a boost to their faith, revelation of the nature of God, and the gift of interesting news to pass on (so they can be the life of the party later!).



When it comes to telling Jesus stories, we can tell how Jesus has shown up in the lives of our friends, neighbors, parents, or kids' lives. Imagine a courtroom and being a witness who gives testimony; it's simply telling other people something that we saw. So if people see God doing something really amazing for someone else, then that's one of the ways that people can give testimony. So if someone saw God heal, give care and comfort, or provide financially for someone else, then that is evidence of God moving in the world that can be passed on. Such true tales are one of the main ways people learn about God's work on earth. God's actions are not likely to be on the local newscast or in the newspaper, but God's moves are actually more significant news than what you'll normally see on TV or read in the newspaper. God invites us to be his reporters and eyewitnesses.

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Sometimes we also tell Jesus stories from the Bible, which are the true tales of people we have never met. Those stories are special. Interestingly, much of the world will not believe Bible news reports, even though there is lots (and lots and lots) of proof of their historical legitimacy. However, those same people who won't believe the biblical record will have a hard time denying your own personal Jesus dispatches. It's hard for someone to accuse you of being a liar if you are passing on an event you experienced yourself! So it's important to learn to tell biblical stories (a skill we will work on together in this book), but it's also crucial to have your own personal Jesus news items ready to be told.

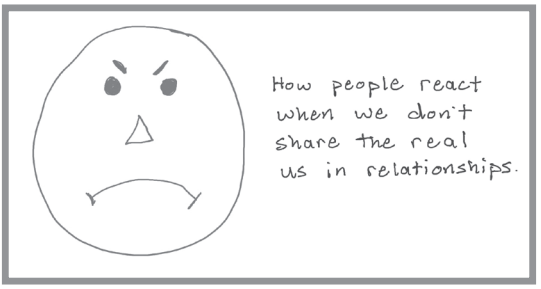
Quick review. Jesus stories are:

1. Real-life stuff we experienced ourselves
2. Real reports from people we know personally
3. Real reports that others shared with us
4. Events from the Bible
5. Any story anywhere on earth, since God is always present!

AUTHENTICITY

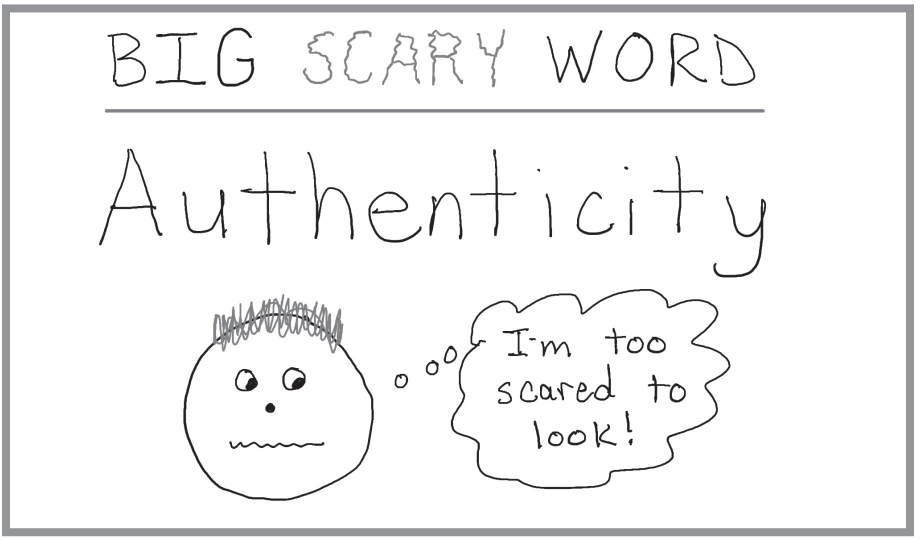
Christians are people who talk about Jesus, and not just at church. We might even talk about him *a lot*. Why? Because we want to be real about our love for him, which allows us to be real in our relationships with people. This does *not* mean trying to manipulate conversations so that we can mention Jesus every five seconds. All good things can be overdone!

Imagine that you are married or have kids or have a pet skunk or have some other super important part of your life. One day, you decide to make a new friend. Out of fear of rejection, you decide to hide that significant part of your life from your new buddy. Eight or nine months into the friendship you finally decide to reveal that very significant information to your friend. You end up saying something like, "I know this is a bit awkward, but … Surprise! I have a spouse and a set of twins and a pet skunk too!" How would the other person react? Probably something like this: 😠.



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Of course the other person would be angry. They would think that the two of you were never real friends at all. They would be shocked so much that it might jeopardize the entire relationship. They might never trust you again. Why? Because holding back that part of yourself from the relationship violated the Principle of Authenticity.



Authenticity is simply a big word that means "keeping it real." When we hide from other people the most important things in our lives, it means that we didn't engage in an honest relationship. Friendships in which we keep back the things most important to us aren't bona fide friendships, and everyone knows it. These relationships can feel slimy and yucky because they are manipulative and fake. If Jesus really is the main thing in our lives and we don't mention him, then that is a fraudulent relationship. Even people who don't follow Jesus know that.

Here's a shocker: Sometimes it's hard to be a good friend. We don't know on the front end if people will be good friends and love us back or reject us or do who-knows-what crazy thing. Jesus even talked about this problem (John 15:12–15). He says that we are supposed to love others in the same way that he loved us (v. 12). Then he spells out what he means by this: Lay down your life (v. 13) and confide in your friends (v. 15). Talking about Jesus means risking that people might not be nice and might even treat us meanly. So we put our lives on the line when we tell Jesus stories. It probably doesn't mean that we will literally get killed (but it might). Still, we risk being rejected or being embarrassed.

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Most people don't like looking or feeling foolish, so they avoid having conversations about hard topics. Instead, we stick to talking about the latest Oreos flavor or the latest superhero movie. Then we wonder why we live in a generation and a country where people are depressed, isolated, and lonely.

Having courageous conversations may be difficult, but they also lead to intimacy, deep relationships, and respect based on a person's being rather than their opinions. If conversations that never go deeper than talking about cookies are good enough, then we never need risk mentioning Jesus. (It does seem appropriate to point out here that conversations about cookies, such as peanut butter, chocolate chip, snickerdoodle, oatmeal, no-bake, raisin, butter, maple, frosted, sugar, etc., can be welcome and fun. But truthfully, they should not be *all* we ever talk about. Although cookies do make people happy … Well, you get the idea.) However, if we hope for something deeper, then we will have to take a chance and broach harder topics that are closer to people's hearts.



Most of us have learned to live in a society and world in which we accept people who radically disagree with some of our viewpoints and our worldview. Many of us live in places where secular people have learned to "love their neighbor" no matter how their neighbor lives or what they believe. They have confused love with "live and let live—any way of living is healthy as long as you like it." This definition of love has confused many Christians and let the secular world define love for us. We know we need to love our neighbor, but secular people with no standards seem better at it than we are. And they seem to accept everyone—except the Christian who speaks up to share true life stories of Jesus. It's a confusing time period to live in for many.

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