

HAPPILY EVER AFTER...

1st Corinthians 15:20-23 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

1st Corinthians 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

I. Opening

A. Book Love

1. I have a deep abiding love of books

a) *I am an avid reader*

(1) It's in my blood, my grandparents, my parents, I am, and now my daughter is too.

b) *Fiction, non-fiction, biographies, fantasy, science fiction, thrillers, mysteries, westerns, inspirational, self-help, newspapers, magazines, doesn't matter I'll read it.*

c) *I love a good story!*

d) *I want a story that captures my imagination and makes me care about what happens to the characters.*

B. Good endings

1. We are a story driven culture. From books, to television, movies, video games, music, we want hear stories.

I think we all can identify the great author F. Scott Fitzgerald who said, "Pull your chair up to the precipice and I will tell you a story."

2. We want to hear, watch, or experience stories. Our human psyche cries out to be involved in some kind of story.
3. Even more important we all like a good ending
4. Movies, books, and even video games that end on a good note are more popular and make more money than pessimistic or ambiguous movies.

a) We want to root for a hero, to overcome the problems and win the day.

b) Sure there can be problems and setbacks along the way as long as there is a good ending.

(1) We want Cinderella to put on the glass slipper and marry the prince

(2) We want Robin Hood to outwit the evil Sheriff

c) We want the villain to fail and get what's coming to him

d) He can win some battles, he can have a devious plan, he can even seem to be unbeatable, but in the end we want him to lose.

(1) We want to see the Ring Destroyed in Mordor and the power of Sauron broken forever – LORD OF THE RINGS REFERENCE

(2) We want Link to beat Gannon and save the princess Zelda

e) Most important is that the story have a good ending

(1) John Grisham's "The Partner" It was a great book! Up until the last page. It had a HORRIBLE ENDING! That ruined the rest of the book for me.

5. Your favorite story as a child probably had a happy ending.
- a) *Because we all like the happy endings*
 - b) *A happy ending reminds us that there ARE happy endings*
 - (1) Though we can't find our way out now.
 - (2) Though our own situation does not seem to have a solution.
 - (3) There ARE happy endings! We can live vicariously through these stories and get the satisfaction of a happy ending.

II. The Bible

A. The Bible is the ultimate story book

1. It is full of stories of heroes and villains.
 2. There are plots and schemes. There are terrible tragedies and there are incredible victories.
 - a) *There is a man that spends his days building a boat, which ultimately saves, himself, his family, and the very human race from destruction by a great flood.*
 - b) *There is an ugly unassuming shepherd boy that defeats a giant, marries the princess, and becomes the greatest king in the land.*
 - c) *There is a band of 300 warriors that destroys an army of thousands without lifting a sword*
 - d) *There is a man that loses all of his worldly possessions,*
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his family, his friends, his health, yet in the end because of his integrity, he receives more than he lost.

e) There is the story of the world's strongest man

f) There is a the story of the world's wisest king

g) There is a story about a man who was swallowed by a fish, only to come out of the fish, alive 3 days later.

(1) The Bible is the ultimate storybook.

B. Then there is the story of Jesus Christ

1. The history of Jesus Christ reads just like any great storybook.

Once upon a time there was a good king who lived in Heaven. One day He looked down and saw the suffering of His people on earth. So he decided to come to earth disguised as a tiny baby and was born to humble parents. At his birth angels sang and wise men travelled from the Far East to see this new little prince. But then a very wicked king decided that the little prince must be put to death. So he killed all of the baby boys in the city where the little prince was born. But the prince and his family escaped before the soldiers arrived and so He was spared. The little prince grew up to be a very great king, who was always kind to everyone that He met. He gathered people from all over the land to tell them about a better way to treat one another. He also told them about a great home that he was preparing for them in heaven. The people loved the good king and followed him as he travelled throughout the land. But the good king was betrayed by one of his own followers. The kiss that the follower gave to the good king identified him to the soldiers of the wicked king, who came and took the good king and cast him into prison. The soldiers were very cruel to the good king. They beat Him, and made fun of Him in prison. They even put a crown of thorns on the good king's head. Evil men told lies about the good king and caused the people to reject Him. Eventually the wicked king had the good king nailed to a cross in front of all the people. His poor mother cried when the soldiers put the nails in his hands and his feet. As the good king hung there on the cross, his blood began to spill out and onto the ground. Eventually the good king died on that

cross in view of all the people around. They all agreed that the good king was dead and they placed his body in a dank dark cave. Then the soldiers rolled a great stone in front of the entrance to the cave. The good king's friends and his mother cried and were very sad to see that the good king was dead. The man that had betrayed the good king went out and killed himself. All of the good king's followers were full of sorrow and cried from Friday until Sunday...

C. If the story stopped there it would be like so many other tales in life

1. The death of Jesus Christ let us know that some problems are just too great for man to overcome on his own.
2. The bank came and foreclosed on the home
3. The sickness came and claimed the life of the person
4. The problem was too great for any man to overcome.
5. It would destroy the hope that we so desperately need to survive

D. But the story of Jesus Christ does not stop there

All of the good king's followers were full of sorrow and cried from Friday until Sunday... Then Guess what??? On Sunday morning some of the good king's followers came to the cave where the wicked king had thrown the body of the good king. But the stone had been rolled away from the door. And when they looked into the cave, the good king's body was not there anymore. The good king had come back to life and now He was more powerful than ever. He was now able to destroy the control that the wicked king had on all the people. His friends and followers rejoiced at his appearance. He spent about forty days and forty nights with his followers. He taught them about what they must do. Then the Good King told his followers that He had to go away and that they must carry on His work. The good king told all the people that if they could come live with Him if they wanted to. He would have a place prepared for each of them in Heaven. Where they could all live HAPPILY EVER AFTER!!!

E. The story of Jesus Christ reminds us that there are happy endings

1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ lets us know that nothing is impossible to God.
2. The finances can be restored
3. The sickness can be healed.
4. The situation can have a solution
5. It provides the hope that we need to carry on in this life.

III. A Great Story

A. But I have read lots of books and lots of great stories.

1. I have read books that genuinely affected my emotions
2. But those stories did not alter my life or my soul
3. How can the story of Jesus affect us today?
4. It is only by applying the story of Jesus to our own lives that we can be changed by it.

B. Little Children

Matthew 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

1. Children have the ability to put themselves into the story
2. Children want to be Superman, Batman, Spiderman, or Wonder woman
3. They want to be Snow White, Cinderella, or Prince Charming
4. They want to be the princess, pirate, or space ranger.

a) *Then they reproduce what they have seen or read about the hero doing.*

- b) *They imitate the Spiderman swing in the living room*
- c) *They dress up in a bath towel and put a paper crown on their heads, imitating what the hero of their story did or wore.*

C. Except we become as little children

1. We have to apply the story of Jesus to our own lives
2. Just like a child we have to put ourselves in His story

a) *Jesus Died*

- (1) We must repent

b) *Jesus was buried*

- (1) We must be baptized in Jesus name

c) *Jesus rose again*

- (1) We must receive the Holy Ghost

d) *It is only then that we can experience the happy ending and be assured of going to Heaven to live with Jesus, Happily ever After*

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

D. Jesus puts it stronger. He said that we must be born again.

1. How do we become children in the natural? We are born

2. How can we become children in the spiritual? By being born again

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...

(1) What kind of ending are you writing for your life?

