

There's **ALWAYS** MORE TO THE STORY

Historians say it takes about 30 years to begin to untangle key parts of events and to consider approaches to grasp what truly happened. For example, an initial look at World War II would have examined the lives of Hitler and Churchill. Yet, there was more to the story, and, over time Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Anne Frank, and John Weidner, profiles of moral integrity, enriched our understanding.

Most people have a few stories that repeatedly echo in consciousness, clicking like stuck vinyl records and shaping reality by directing attention to certain facts that reinforce existing assumptions. For example, an “I live in the best country” story yields triumphalism that notices elements to support one’s celebrated space of special knowledge or position, or an “I do the most for this ungrateful family” storyline will generate a resentful narrative that spurs one to find evidence of continued slights and disrespect. We cannot pinpoint the precise implantation of these stories in our minds. Indeed, they are likely products of subconscious synthesis.

Cultural anthropologists know that groups also have stories that inform action and create reality. A vilified-other-narrative builds a case for exclusion and intensifies group cohesion by emphasizing elements of disgust that seemingly justify demonization of an outgroup.

Currently, we all seek to understand what narrative could drive Russia to initiate a violent war against Ukraine, its neighbor. Is this a case of vilification, or is it ruthless pragmatism for pure material gain? Could this war be driven by a redemption storyline that seeks to redeem Russia’s status as an expansionary entity worthy of utmost respect? Is Russian support for this war a form of religious zealotry that prioritizes reunification of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine with the Moscow Patriarchate? There is more to the story, and we will learn it as time goes by.

Adam Grant’s, “Think Again,” suggests that intelligence might be redefined as the ability to unthink

and to unlearn. We all have limitations but a consideration of the rest of the story brings one to an intelligent, more beneficial, space. I suppose my mother’s mantra to “rise above it” meant to refuse to be defined by one story.

Reflection on a different view and more aspects of a story are keys to development of an intelligent faith, and Spectrum contributes to this by highlighting stories and facts that are ignored by official church communication platforms. Stories nourish empathy and give tools to break out of one’s own favored narratives. A courageous Christianity with a radical love infrastructure, is based on the Sermon on the Mount with a Beatitudinal Constitution, and it has a path of blessing for unlikely people. Naturally, powerful folks, vested in reification of earthly stratification structures, perceive such religion as dangerous; this would be an untamed religion that worships a God, who like Narnia’s Aslan, is dangerous, but good.

Isaiah 56 describes a House of Prayer for all people. I envision this to be a sanctuary, a respite, for all, without respect to political party, ethnicity, or nationality. This House of Prayer Community includes those folks that hegemonic entities have deemed to be lesser: the doubters, the questioners, the orphans, the undocumented immigrants, and the trans people. I believe the goal for a House of Prayer would be to imitate Jesus. Could this include an invitation to welcome the lame, those who don’t walk the typical path, and to embrace the blind, those who don’t see the mainstream things? Maybe that would help us rise above our own stories. Maranatha.

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