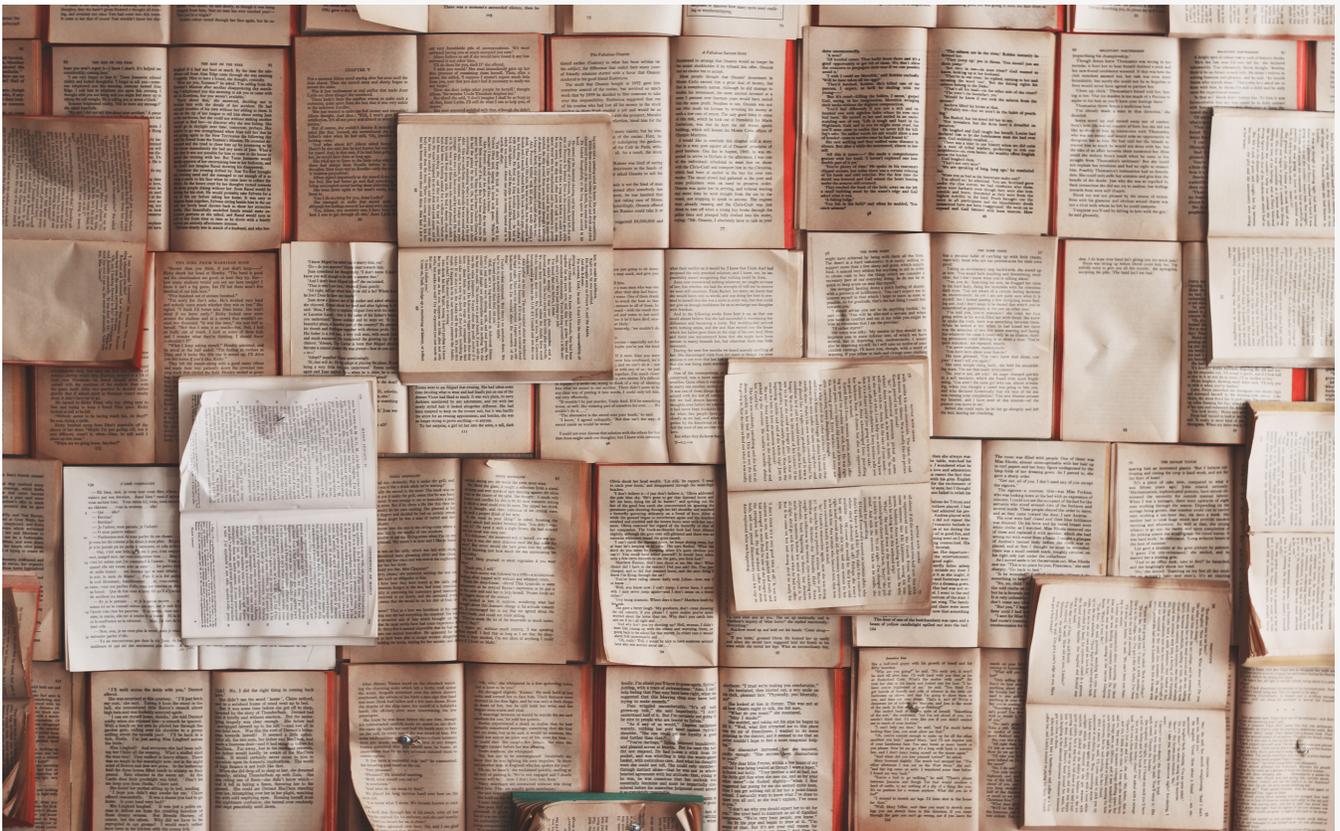


## THE STORYCHANGER

MATTHEW 28:18-20

# THE STORYTELLERS



**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

DAVID MURRAY  
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# INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular podcasts in the world is *The Moth*. It's dedicated to the art and craft of story-telling and also organizes various workshops and events to help people tell their stories live and without notes.

It's called *The Moth* because its founder wanted to re-create the sultry summer evenings in Georgia when his friends would gather to tell tales to one another under the porch light which also attracted moths. Now a worldwide organization, *The Moth* has presented over 30,000 stories to standing-room-only crowds worldwide and it currently produces more than 500 live shows each year. Its podcast is downloaded more than 50 million times a year, and *The Moth* Radio Hour is heard on over 480 radio stations worldwide.

Clearly, people love to tell and hear stories, especially true and transformational stories drawn from life experiences. People go to *The Moth* and listen to its broadcasts because they hope the stories of others can change their own stories. In a way, it's like a secular church in which secular stories are shared among secular people for secular change.

But, as we've been learning over the course of nine StoryChanger sermons, if we really want our lives changed, we need to hear Jesus's story. And it doesn't stop there, with change. We don't just hear the StoryChanger's story and we're not just changed by the StoryChanger's story. The StoryChanger also calls us to be storytellers, just as he did with his first disciples, as we'll see shortly. Which raises some questions: **What story are we to tell? Who do we tell it to? And how do we tell it?** Matthew 28:18-20 gives us the answers.

## BACKGROUND

A few weeks back we looked at the endorsements of Jesus as the StoryChanger, and celebrated multiple endorsements to the StoryChanger's life-changing power. However, while there's an important role for telling our personal stories about the StoryChanger, we must never let our story displace the Gospel Story. Our story has power, but Jesus's story has greater power. Therefore, even when we are telling our story, we must use it to tell Jesus's story.



How do we tell Jesus's story?  
By studying his story.



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# 1. WE STUDY THE GOSPEL STORY

## A student of Jesus

Matthew had been a disciple (meaning 'student' or 'follower') of Jesus since Jesus called him in Matthew 9:9-13. Matthew's Gospel is his capstone project, his final thesis upon graduation. He had lived, heard, and seen the Gospel story for three years and had been inspired by the Holy Spirit to record it and organize his notes into these twenty-eight beautiful chapters.

As he wrote about Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection, Matthew presented Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and the keeper of Old Testament promises. Jesus's story was the most important story in his life. Apart from Matthew's call in Matthew 9:9-13, we actually find out very little about Matthew. His focus was Christ alone.

## A student of sin

The Jesus story has no relevance, power, or connection to us, without understanding the story of our sin. We don't just study Jesus's story and, by some magical mystical process, our stories are changed for the better. No, it's changed by the direct connection of Jesus's salvation story with our sin story. We will never understand Jesus's Story or be changed by it for the better unless we read it through the lens of personal sin. I hope you've seen that as we went through the series

- Sermon 1: Sin messes up our lives into meaninglessness
- Sermon 2: Sin ruins God's perfect world and plan.
- Sermon 3: Sin and Satan are the villains of our story.
- Sermon 4: Sin turns life into a desert.
- Sermon 5: Sin dirtied us and damned us.
- Sermon 6: Sin mutates us into a big capital 'I'.
- Sermon 7: Every book of the Bible pointed us from sin to the Savior.
- Sermon 8: Sin damages us inside as well as outside.
- Sermon 9: Sin makes us withdraw from Christ's school.

Sin makes Jesus's story make sense, which is why Matthew studied sin as well as Jesus. He began his Gospel with the name of Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sin" (Matt. 1:21). In chapter two, he described how sin chased the infant Jesus around the Middle East. In chapter three, we hear the first Gospel sermon, preached by John Baptist, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (3:2). We also see the first Gospel event, Jesus's baptism depicting his mission to cleanse us from sin (3:13-17). In chapter four, Jesus triumphs over temptation to sin (4:1-11), describes his mission as light dawning in the darkness (12-16), and preaches his first Gospel sermon, using the same text as John (17). We could go on and on. At every point, Matthew is studying sin and the Savior, and the more he learns about the one the more he learns about the other.



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## CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

**Study the Jesus Story.** Because this is so important, we're going to start a new series next week going through the Gospel of John. It will be called, "Who is Jesus?" and I hope it will be a good opportunity for us not only to study the Jesus story ourselves but to invite others to hear Gospel messages about who Jesus is as we go through the Gospel story.

**Study your sin story.** Ask God to help you to see your sin more and more so you can see the Savior more and more. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help you in both of these studies, because his two main gifts are showing us our sin (John 16:8) and showing us Jesus (John 16:14). We understand Jesus's Story better when we understand our sin better (and vice versa).

SIN SHOWS US OUR SAVIOR  
AND OUR SAVIOR SHOWS US OUR SIN.



We've heard our sin story and the Savior's story.  
What do we do with it now?



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## 2. WE SPEAK THE GOSPEL STORY

Having studied under Jesus for three years, Jesus sent his disciples out to recruit more students. What they heard they were to tell. They heard Jesus's story, and they were to tell Jesus's story. But how am I to do that? Hearing the story is easy, telling the story is hard. That's why, Jesus's last lesson was some basic training on story-telling, which we can sum up in five words.

### Compulsory

***All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*** (18).

Gospel story-telling wasn't optional; it was a required subject. Jesus doesn't make a tentative suggestion here; he issues an authoritative command. He had earned the title of Supreme Sovereign of heaven and earth by his Gospel work, giving him a Gospel authority to commission his students to be storytellers.

### Comprehensive

***Go therefore and make disciples of all nations*** (19).

Christ's commission was not local and limited but international and unlimited. Jesus told them to make the world their classroom. Although they were only taught in Galilee, they were now to teach the globe. Christ calls us to come and learn of him (Matt. 11:28), but then go and live for him. There should be an element of going in every Christian life. 'Going' involves moving out of our comfort zone and into the discomfort zone. Although some will do it more than others, and some will do it better than others, every Christian does this to some degree.

### Community

***...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*** (19).

The mention of 'baptism' reminds us that the majority of the learning and teaching, is to be done under the auspices of the church. The local church is to be at the center of all evangelism – training of evangelists and doing evangelism.

We invite into a community of fellow disciples. But we also invite into the community of God. Baptizing in the name of the three persons of the Godhead means that students are invited into community with God himself in the fulness of his three persons.

### Consistent

***...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*** (20).

Jesus's instructions are simple. Tell the Story you heard. Teach the students what I taught you. It's to be Christ's curriculum, not anyone else's. God forbid that anyone of us becomes known as innovative in doctrine or novel in ethics (2 Tim. 2:2). This involves not just the Gospel but the law.



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## Confidence

*...and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (20).

First-time speakers at The Moth usually describe the incredible sense of loneliness when they stand on stage for the first time. There is a single spotlight and no one else in it but the storyteller. TED speakers say the same about the famous red circle being the loneliest place in the world. But when we tell Jesus's story, we're guaranteed that Jesus is with us in a unique way. We're never alone when we are telling his Story.

## CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

**Practice and pray.** Don't let the Gospel story be the greatest story never told. Practice the story and pray for story-telling opportunities in everyday life. Practice and pray, practice and pray. Tell the Gospel story to yourself in everyday life situations. Connect it to your own life and you'll be able to connect it to other people's lives.

**Complete confidence.** Tell the complete story with complete confidence. When David Livingstone was facing almost certain death at the hand of hostile tribes he wrote in his diary: 'January 14, 1856. Evening. Felt much turmoil of spirit in prospect of having all my plans for the welfare of this great region and this teeming population knocked on the head by savages tomorrow. But I read that Jesus said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'" It is the word of a gentleman of the most strict and sacred honour, so there's an end of it! Should such a man as I flee? I feel quite calm now, thank God!'

Later that year he received an honorary doctorate from Glasgow University. As he rose to receive his degree, a hush descended. African diseases had withered his body, his lion-savaged arm hung disabled by his side. The stunned crowd heard him announce his intention to return to Africa. 'But I return,' he says, 'without misgiving and with great gladness. For would you like me to tell you what supported me through all the years of exile among people whose language I could not understand, and whose attitude towards me was always uncertain and often hostile? It was this: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!" On those words I staked everything, and they never failed!'

STORY-TELLING IS  
STORY-CHANGING

Hear > Change > Tell



# CONCLUSION



**PRAYER:** StoryChanger, help me to tell the whole Gospel to the whole world with Christ-like clarity, consistency, and confidence. Amen.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways do you study Jesus's story? How could you become a better student?
2. How do we decide when to tell the Gospel story of Jesus and when to tell our story of Jesus?
3. How has studying sin helped you learn more about Jesus?
4. Which of the five words about story-telling challenge you most?
5. Practice explaining the Gospel Story to someone in one minute?
6. How can you become a better Storyteller?

First Byron Christian Reformed Church  
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315  
Phone: (616) 878-9768  
[www.firstbyroncrc.org](http://www.firstbyroncrc.org)

Pastor David Murray  
[www.HeadHeartHand.org](http://www.HeadHeartHand.org)  
[www.livingthebible.net](http://www.livingthebible.net)