



The Story of God, the Story of Us: Getting Lost and Found in the Bible
978-0-8308-3632-1, \$17,
248 pages, paperback

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Sean Gladding spent several years in Houston, Texas, where he was copastor of Mercy Street, an initiative by Chapelwood United Methodist Church for “church wounded” people, as well as people in drug and alcohol recovery. He now resides in Lexington, Kentucky, at Communality, a missional community that serves as one of the host “schools for conversion” for the New Monasticism.



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Telling the Old, Old Story

“Sean Gladding invites us to hear God’s story anew—to hear it as our own story—and to let it direct us toward the beloved community we’re made to be. Listen to him. Commit this story to memory. Tell it to your kids. Let it direct your life.”

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, author and new monastic

Ten years ago, Sean Gladding was asked to create a Bible study that gave the big picture of Scripture for people who had never read the Bible. Drawing on his Asbury Seminary experience and numerous scholars such as Walter Brueggemann, Joel B. Green and N. T. Wright, Sean dutifully developed an eight-week study. Over the years, Sean and his wife, Rebecca, expanded the Story to twelve weeks, but instead of just increasing the length of the study, they changed the format entirely.

“We brainstormed ways to be more creative with the study, which led to the idea of rewriting it as a narrative: instead of lecturing on the Story, simply tell it!” Gladding said.

Thus the content of the Hebrew Scriptures (a.k.a. the Old Testament) are spoken by an elder sharing stories of God with the Israelite exiles in sixth century B.C.E. Similarly, the content of the New Testament is told by a woman who has witnessed the events that happened in the first century C.E. Her student finishes with the chapter on the Revelation.

Working against the natural tendency of people to read the Bible in bits and chunks—and to often skip over the more troublesome passages—the Story is a full-on immersion experience. Whether it’s sitting around the fire during the time of the Babylonian exile or gathering together in the courtyard of a Jewish woman, readers or listeners can receive the Bible in episodes—weekly installments if you will—of an unfolding drama.

“Reading the Story aloud, with others, helps us overcome the temptation to find in the Bible what we are already looking for,” says Gladding. “It also curbs our tendency to interpret it in ways that allow us to continue living the way we currently are, rather than being open to the voice inviting us to be conformed to the likeness of the One whose Story this is.”

Sean and Rebecca have shared the Story with a wide variety of audiences, ranging from those with little biblical background to those with considerable Bible study experience.

“The Story has been told in homes, churches, coffee shops, pubs, laundromats, college campuses and, most recently, on the Appalachian Trail. Altogether it has been told on five continents,” Gladding explains.

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BOOK DETAILS

And now (at last), the Story is coming out in official book form, enabling individuals and groups everywhere to experience the overarching Story of Scripture in a brand new way.

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But Wait, There's More

A Christian multimedia production company called The Work of the People (henceforth TWOTP) is partnering with Sean and InterVarsity Press to create a series of six videos to accompany the book. When the book is released in October, the videos will be available for download from the TWOTP website and through InterVarsity Press. Individual videos will cost fifteen dollars, but the whole set can be purchased for thirty dollars.

While each video can stand alone, the series is intended to supplement the book, enabling people to delve further into the themes of the Story (and Scripture itself). Major themes such as creation, covenant, the exodus, the nature of bondage and freedom, the incarnation, and the trinitarian basis for communal life will all be covered.

“Sean invites us to find ourselves in Scripture. He points us back to the Story. It’s not a new story; in fact, it is as old as humanity itself. But it is still very much our story, showing us what we already know and feel: that we, like the Israelites, and like all of creation, are in exile, longing for redemption, in search of the promised land. Sean invites us to see that this Story, God’s Story, is our story,” says Travis Reed, founder of The Work of the People.



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