

Book of Love

Bringing His Story to Life

December 18, 2022



Today we're taking a little look at the role of Christmas in God's book. And to better see the glory in the story, we gotta go the long way around the barn and begin with *this*: **What's your story?** And by that, I mean, if we had to put *your* life on a shelf at Barnes and Noble, in which *section* would we find *you*? Drama? Fantasy? *Mystery*? What about *romance*?

Hold on to that thought... I want you to hear *this* story *first*.

Back in 1961, the cold war was getting heated as America, the “one nation under God” raced to get to space ahead of a communist Russia that insisted “the road is wider *without* God.” So, when Yuri Gagarin returned from the first *spaceflight*, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev mockingly announced not only did *they* make it to space first; but **there was no God up there either**. Here's one of the many condescending propaganda posters that they had printed to stick it to us! So, as America licked its wounds, a magazine in New York reached out to C.S. Lewis for a rebuttal. And he delivered one of my all-time favorite mic-drop moments, saying:

“Looking for God – *or Heaven* – by exploring *space* is like reading all Shakespeare's *plays* in the hope you will find *Shakespeare* as one of the *characters*...” [which you *wouldn't* – he's the *author*, not a character! Therefore, as Lewis goes on,] “If there were an *idiot* who thought plays exist on their *own*, *without* an author – *our belief* in Shakespeare would not be much *affected* by [this idiot] saying, quite truly, that he had studied all the plays and never found Shakespeare *in* them.”

Duh! **We shouldn't expect to find the author in their own book, it's part of them, they're not part of it!** So it's reasonable to assume that God *wouldn't* be *fully* contained or observed *in* His creation.

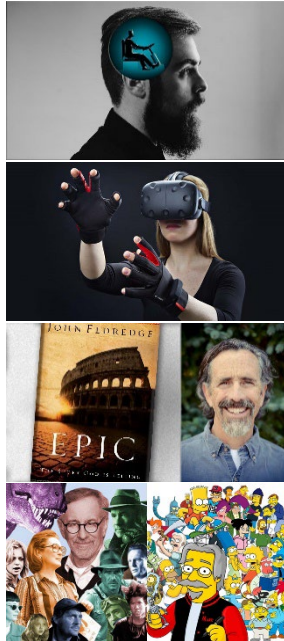
[And He, *Himself* says] As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are *My* ways higher than *your* ways and *My* thoughts than *your* thoughts. [He's *beyond* our books!] – Isaiah 55:9 NIV

Now *us* on the other hand, well, *we* fit neatly inside this universe with room to spare!

All the days ordained for *me* were written in [God's] book *before* one of them came to *be*. [We *existed* outside in God's *mind*, but *live* now *inside* creation.] – Psalms 139:16 NIV

And so, **we act out each of His carefully crafted characters in the greatest story ever told!** Cuz it's an epic choose-your-own-adventure where you're the star and reading your *lines* means *living* them *out!* And *that's* when *this* universe takes on a life of its *own*.

But, before you can really *cast* yourself *in* the story, we need to start with a simple *correction*, courtesy of George MacDonald: **You don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.** You were conceived in the mind of God *before* human history and then breathed *into* a body when God wrote your birth into *His* story. So **don't confuse yourself with your character or you'll lose yourself to this world.** Your human *life* is the character that you've been cast *as* – but the *true* you calls the shots and decides *how* to play the role!



I like how John Eldredge puts it in his book, *Epic*: “I’ve been dropped into the middle of an ongoing story, invited to embark on a journey, to be the hero in the part of the story when my character has been introduced.”

Perhaps that’s why Christian or *not*, we relate to Shakespeare when he said, **“All the world’s a stage and all the men and women merely players.”**

But wait – that’s a good *analogy* but bad *news!* Because if *true*, the *characters* are the ones *in* the story, while the *author* writes it from the *outside!* And that’s a big barrier! And Lewis realized this problem and wrestled with it in his book *Surprised By Joy*, **“I could no more ‘meet’ [God], than Hamlet could meet Shakespeare.”** God was out of *human* reach in the same way *authors* were beyond the characters *they* create. So, even *if* Hamlet suspected he was a character in a play and went looking for an author, as Lewis said in his Russian rebuttal, he wouldn’t find Shakespeare *anywhere* inside the story. And yet, it’s not *all* bad news, because in *another* sense, Hamlet would find Shakespeare *everywhere*.

Because **good authors pour themselves into their stories;** they express their heart in every inch they create as it becomes an extension of their very being. And **we connect through that work, to the creator behind it!** That’s why I’m pretty sure Matt Groening, Steven Spielberg, and I would be best friends! Because *Futurama*, *Back to the Future*, and all the rest of their work makes me feel like I really know who they are. Well, same goes for God and *His* works!

For since the creation of the *world* God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made - Romans 1:20 NIV



This world and everything in it – is God’s big production and by living it, you can come to know Him. In your life, you can learn joy and sorrow, patience and purpose, love and hate – all the while sorting the story into the good and bad that sheds light on the Author.

And *that’s* how C.S. Lewis came to understand God; by seeing how the *rest* of the universe only made perfect sense if there was a God who authored it. As he said:

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else.

And *that* makes sense cuz **humans discover things we *can't* see, by their effect on things we *can*.** We'd miss *gravity* without Newton's apple, we'd miss *viruses* without sickness, and we'd miss the *Creator* without creation. But **we've been given all of creation as an explicit and persistent clue to Who must be behind it.** We simply *can't* ignore God.

For every house is built by *someone*, but *God* is the builder of *everything*. - Hebrews 3:4 NIV



And **you can learn a lot about a builder by what they build – but then what?** Knowing *about* God is a huge step, but *that* raises *more* questions and concerns! So, *there's an Author?* Okay, *why* is He writing the story? What's He want with *me*? What am *I* supposed to do? And *why* should I? These are questions that we can only *speculate* about without hearing God's heart *personally*. And that's not up to *us*. **We need a real relationship**, and As Lewis notes, "**Hamlet could initiate nothing.**" For the character to meet *his* maker, "**it must be Shakespeare's doing.**" And for us to know God's heart, *our* Author would have to take the action.

You ever read Dorothy Sayers? She was one of the first women to graduate from Oxford University and wrote many acclaimed books including a series of novels about a fictional detective named Peter Wimsey. And as the series progressed, Peter's character develops into an unhappy, broken bachelor – until he meets and marries a new character named Harriet. And waddya know, *Harriet* was one of the first women to graduate from Oxford and just *happened* to write mystery novels.

Because as she wrote, Sayers looked into the world that she had created and fell in love with her character, *Peter!* And **because she had created him, only she knew what he needed to be completed** – so, *because* of her love, she wrote herself into her own story to save her soul mate.

SO DID GOD.

That's the *true* story. He looked into the world that He created and fell in love with *us*. And our Author knew what *we* needed to be completed; He knew **we're broken when we're apart from Him and healed when we're a part of Him.** Because it takes two to make true love *true*. So about 2000 years ago in the town of Bethlehem, **God wrote Himself into His book on the very first Christmas.** And in an instant, human life was no longer a *mystery*, it was a *love story*.

For *God* so *loved* the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to *condemn* the world, but to *save* the world through Him. – John 3:16-17 NIV

[Because *inside* His book] No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is Himself *God* and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made Him known. - John 1:18 NIV

[And as the Author *inside* His own story, only Jesus could say:] 'Here I am—it is written about *Me* in the scroll— I have come to do Your will, My God.' – Hebrews 10:7 NIV

I have made You known to *them*, and will *continue* to make You known in order that the love You have for Me may be in *them*. - John 17:26 NIV

The Father who sent Me commanded Me to say all that I have spoken. I know that His command leads to eternal life. [because I'm *from* that place!] So whatever I say is just what the Father has told Me to say. [This is *all* just God's story coming to life] – John 12:49-50 NIV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... Through Him all things were made ... In Him was [real] life [like the stuff *outside* this book], and that life was the light of all mankind. [Giving us a peek at the path that leads out!] - John 1:1-4 NIV

Whoever believes in Me does not believe in Me *only*, but in the One who sent Me. The one who looks at *Me* is seeing the One who *sent* Me [from the outside]. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness. – John 12:44-46 NIV

Look, you already know the setting of *your* book; this world is strange, surprising, and scary – but **God gave us His Son and His Word to light up and fight off the deep, daunting, dark of our way out.**

"Because the way was steep and long, and through a strange and lonely land, God placed upon my lips a song and put a lantern in my hand." Joyce Kilmer



And *that's* love! He gave us the rest of the story in a handbook to *handle* the confusion, *build* our confidence, and *lead* us to Jesus so we could be loved! Because **only His love can complete our character and take us to a happily everlasting afterlife.**

This is how God showed *His* love among *us*: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might *live* through Him. This is love: not that *we* loved God, but that *He* loved *us* and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [So, it's true that] No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. - 1 John 4:9-12 NIV

He wrote the book on us and **when we live and love like Him, we've played the role that we were born to play** – the role that begins and ends as a part of God and *lives on*, in Him, on the other side. **That's how our Author draws us out of our story and back into real life.**

So, if you want a part in the true meaning of Christmas as the moment *love* drove God into your story – don't sit at home and hog all the nog – **let love drive you into the stories of those around you!** Give them a glimpse of the same Christmas Spirit that gave *you* the gift of life. Get to know the Lord and then share the tale about the Author who so loved you, that He wrote the Christmas story into yours, to seek you out, sweep you off your feet, and save your life! After all,

You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. - 1 Corinthians 12:27 NIV

And **to play His part, take a page from His Book and follow His heart.** This Christmas, show your love by making your presence your presents! And bring real life to one of God's *characters* by writing *yourself* into someone else's story!