

The Value of the Story

- Narrator:** When the old priest was introduced to the kids in the detention centre, they responded just as the skeptics had thought they would.
- Youth 1:** Oh, look, they've sent us an old geezer. I guess they figure if we kill him we'll only be depriving him of a year or two of life anyway.
- Youth 2:** Hey, old man. What's the matter, wasn't there a bed for you in the retirement home?
- Youth 3:** Why don't you just go away and leave us alone. You're wasting your time with us. We're the scum of society. We may be young, but we've already been declared beyond hope. There's nothing you can do for us, so save us all a lot of misery and bug out.
- Priest:** Oh, there's something I can do for you. I can tell you stories.
- Youth 1:** Stories! What the heck do you think we want with stupid stories? Do you need a new hearing aid? We said we're criminals. You may think we're just kids, but we've done stuff that would make your nightmares look like a Walt Disney movie! Don't waste our time with namby-pamby stories. And don't waste your time with us!
- Youth 2:** Look, man, I know you're a priest and you believe in that salvation stuff. But let me tell you, we're beyond salvation. Take me, for example. I've ruined my family. I needed money, never mind what for, and robbing my family was a lot easier than robbing strangers. My sister cried for days when she lost her engagement ring. She still keeps hoping that it's going to turn up somewhere. And with what I stole from my folks, it's a wonder their house hasn't been repossessed. I know that God has no use for someone like me.
- Priest:** Ah, yes, I know a story of someone just like you, a story of a man who showed no consideration for his family. He took what he could get and gave nothing back. He robbed his older brother of his share of the family property. He also made a fool of his blind father by tricking the old man into giving him something precious that had been promised to his brother. He was always thinking of himself first. A guy just like you, just the kind of person God would have no use for, right? Wrong. That man was Jacob, also known as Israel, the one for whom God's chosen people were named. God knew the things that Jacob had done, but God never stopped believing in Jacob, and eventually Jacob learned to truly believe in God.

God didn't give up on Jacob; God hasn't given up on you.

The Value of the Story (cont'd)

Youth 3: So big deal, God won't give up on a guy just because he's not the family type; that doesn't prove God has any use for someone like me. I know I'm beyond hope. I'm the lowest kind of rat there is. I turned my back on my best friend when he needed me. When the police came to Joe's house looking for some stuff we both stole, I ran. Later, when they came to my house to question me, I said that Joe and I were no longer on speaking terms. Because I'm a coward, Joe took the rap for stuff he didn't even do.

Priest: Did you know that Peter, Jesus' best friend, denied Jesus on the night he was arrested? Peter had spent three years with Jesus, listening to his teaching and watching his miracles. Peter believed that Jesus was the Son of God, and yet when things got rough, Peter abandoned Jesus. But that wasn't enough to make Jesus abandon Peter. After his resurrection, Jesus commissioned Peter to care for the Church. Jesus chose the one who had denied him as the leader for the future.

If God didn't stop believing in Peter, God hasn't stopped believing in you.

Youth 1: All right, so maybe God can give fools a second chance. But I'm more than a fool. There's no hope for me. Because of me, another kid died. I didn't like the kid. He was a real loser. So I tricked him into going into a bad part of town at a time when I knew there was going to be trouble. It's nothing you could prove in court, but I know that it's my fault he died. I'm the type who goes straight to hell and there's no point in pretending otherwise.

Priest: Let me tell you the story of David. David had a very special relationship with God. He had been blessed by God in every way. God had helped him go from being a poor shepherd to being a great king. David had more than anyone else around, and yet he wanted still more. He wanted the wife of one of his soldiers. And so David sent this faithful soldier into a fierce battle where he was killed.

God was angry with David, but God didn't abandon David. God simply called him to repent. You see, while we may stop believing in ourselves, God never stops believing in us. For that reason, we are never beyond hope.

You say that you don't need stories. But the truth is you need stories more than you need anything else. You need the stories that will show you that God loves you, understands you and believes in you no matter what. You need the stories that will show you how to begin again, even from a place like this. You need the stories that can give you hope.