

CHOOSING A GOOD YEAR!

Scripture used: [II Corinthians 10:5 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

This week we are blessed to have one of Pastor Hurmon's good friends, Pastor René Schlaepfer from [Twin Lakes Church](#) in Santa Cruz, a church that we have previously partnered with in various ways. Pastor René knows that last year was tough for all of us, including his own community that is still recovering from the area's devastating fires. Unfortunately, we cannot expect everything to get better. 2022 will have many challenges, including ones we can't predict. So what should we do? Pastor René told us the story of Dr. Tania Luna, a psychologist who studies children. She found evidence that people process trauma differently when they focus on how they moved past the negative events. They don't deny the trauma; they reframe it, just like Paul does in [Philippians 1:12-13 \(NIV\)](#). Stories and embracing the assurance of our faith help us do this. We can move from the negativity of the crucifixion to the glory of the resurrection. To do that, we must take control of the stories and narratives that run our lives. We have three choices to make: what stories we hear; what stories we live; and what stories we tell.

KEY POINTS

- 1. Telling stories is part of being human.** The Bible tells us that we are made in the image and likeness of God. Theologically that is why humans are different from all other creatures. But science also tells us we are different. Some animals use language like us. Other animals use tools like us. But research has shown that we are the only storytelling animal. It appears to be an instinctual behavior we all share. Our experiences are like dots we collect. Our stories connect those dots.
- 2. Storytelling affects every part of our life.** Storytelling is not just for fun. We need stories to make sense of the world. Some stories help us. They build resilience, confidence, and hope. They tell us stories of redemption, which helps us get through whatever challenges we face. Other stories undermine our lives. They make us hateful, or afraid, or depressed. We need to be incredibly careful about the stories that we choose to accept.
- 3. Stories are now told to us by the media, not our elders.** Unfortunately, evidence suggests that our fellow Christians are especially prone to lies in the media. [19 of the top 20 Christian Facebook Groups were recently discovered to be run by internet trolls in the former Soviet Union!](#) These groups want to divide us. They serve up sex, violence, and threats to get us to click, read, and share. This is very different than before modern media, when our elders were the primary storytellers. They tried to guide and instruct us. Without these positive stories, we are easy prey.
- 4. The Bible's story is different from the world's story.** Saint Paul explained the Bible's story clearly. In [Romans 8:1 \(NIV\)](#) he told us that we were pardoned by God ("pardon for our past"). In [Romans 8:18 \(NLT\)](#) he told us about the glory waiting for us in God's Kingdom ("promise for the future"). And in [Romans 8:28 \(NLT\)](#) he told us about our purpose here, today, no matter what's going on ("purpose for the present").

DISCUSSION

- 1) HEAR** - One of the things that makes us uniquely human is our storytelling. We have an instinct to tell a story about the events in our lives. We must choose the stories that dominate our lives. That should start with God's story about us. Our story should focus on God's promises and purposes, not the brokenness of the world. What is the primary story that shapes your daily thinking right now?
- 2) UNDERSTAND** - We tell ourselves stories every day, connecting significant events from our lives. Some of these stories help us because they focus on redeeming the world. Other stories hurt us because they focus on what's wrong with the world. When you notice these negative feelings, ask yourself "What is the story I'm telling myself about this?" Then make that thought obedient to Christ by asking yourself "what happens to this narrative when I hold it up to the narrative of the Bible?"
- 3) DO** - We need to find practical ways to choose a better story. This means changing what we hear, how we live, and what we tell others. The starting point is changing the way we start the day. Instead of waking up and checking the news (what's often called "doom scrolling"), commit to going first to God's Word. Use Scripture to "hope scroll" instead!