

EXTRACT 1: The Bible as a grand story

Can you remember incidents or events where a misunderstanding occurred because people assumed “different stories” and so gained a different meaning? For instance, somebody handed you a present and you responded either with profuse thanks or embarrassment. Then you discovered that you failed to hear them say, “This is for x, could you hand it over to them for me”. Or maybe somebody made a comment in jest and you took it seriously.

Invite each person to write a key word or summary of their experience on a piece of paper. Then ask them to fold them over and collect them in. Each person chooses one of the folded pieces of paper. Then, in turns they read out the words, and the person who wrote them down explains the situation which lay behind them.

Ensure that people consider a) why we need the right story or context in order to fully understand the words or actions of others and b) how it feels - as well as practical consequences - when we relate things to the wrong story c) what factors prompted the real story to come out.

OR

What big stories are a) giving meaning to us b) influencing the society in which we live?


For a) you can consider (i) the Enlightenment/scientific view that everything can be explained by reason and that humans can completely understand and so control the natural world, or (ii) the belief in perpetual progress, that although there may be ups and downs things (and people) will on the whole get better, or (iii) that shopping more makes us happier.

For b) (i) that terrorism is such a threat that it justifies any behaviour or legal changes, or (ii) that it is money which makes the world go round and so is the ultimate criterion, or (iii) that violence is the ultimate source of salvation –

think about Iraq and the language that is used, or (iv) that people are essentially good.

Where do these agree with or get challenged by the big story of the Bible?

OR

Visit the Agora website, www.agoraspace.org  find out more about the way humans use stories and how we can gain insight from the scriptural story to help us.

To get started click either ***Beliefs, values and commitments***, then go to *More Information* and click *Bringing Bible to bear on trust* or *Bible Encounters* or ***Conversations*** and then *More Information* and click *The Power of Story*.