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Everybody loves a good story. We love the drama, the pain, and the final victory of a story. Without question, the best story, by far, is a true story. The fact that someone actually lived this out makes it all the more powerful.

Yes, we all love a good story! The greatest story every told was the story of Jesus Christ and how His presence on earth has made a greater impact than any other life here on earth.

His story has drama, murder, and violence. It has miracles and betrayal. It has real people making dumb choices and Jesus’s supernatural patience with them. It has sadness, brokenness, and the victory of love. Wow! What a story!

His story really changed HISTORY. Just look at BC to AD. Now that is making an impact!

You know the crazy thing and the most awesome thing about His story is that it is still being written.

I was recently talking to a former drug addict who was telling me how Jesus had touched her and set her free. His story still goes on.

I was talking to a couple whose marriage was broken and headed toward divorce. They told me they both got saved and Jesus restored their marriage. Their kids were smiling and joy was on their face. His story still goes on.

I know a lady that fell in love with Jesus at an early age. Through all the pain and trouble and hard times of life, she still loves Jesus and sings His praise. She has never wavered from the love of Christ. His story still goes on.

He is still making history. I wonder how He would alter your life if you let Him. He loves you and wants to change history through you.

Then YOU will be part of His story!
EVERYONE
has their own story. They come in all varieties, with all different twists and turns. We typically all want to share the latest and greatest things that have happened in our own lives, but rarely do we ever take the time to listen to the stories of those around us. This is quite unfortunate, for it is the stories that we have never heard before that make the biggest impact.

As many of you know, our church has a non-profit, community outreach organization called Manna Ministries that distributes food and clothing, has a free medical clinic for those who don’t have health insurance, and a dentist that comes once a month to aid those with minor dental problems. It is an amazing outreach that is growing bigger every day; however, something that many of us overlook is the number of people it takes to keep an outreach like this going. Today, I want to share with you the story of a couple that has made one of the biggest impacts on my life more than anyone else. Mr. Don and Mrs. Dixie Renault have been deeply rooted in Manna Ministries since its doors first opened over a decade ago. Although many of you may be able to see several familiar faces giving out groceries on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Manna’s distribution center, Mr. Don and Mrs. Dixie work diligently behind the scenes to ensure that EVERY need is met.

What happens when someone needs groceries, but is not physically able to go into Manna themselves? Mr. Don, now well into his sixties, taxis across Picayune, Nicholson, Carriere, McNeil, and even Poplarville in his own vehicle delivering groceries to those with special needs, elderly, disabled, shut-ins, and anyone else that is not able to make it into Manna. Not only that, but he goes out of his way to bring hot food to some of the recipients, who otherwise would not have anything else to eat. As a 7th grader, I began to go along with him to help hop out of the vehicle at each stop to deliver the groceries. He taught me how to be kingdom-minded and that people, aside from God, are the most important thing in life. For years I would go on “the route” with Uncle Donnie, and the whole time he would never cease to pray for people, speak life into dead places in people’s lives, and fill a need every time it was in his power to do so.

If that wasn’t enough, his wife, Dixie Renault, works as the project coordinator and grant writer for Manna Ministries. Once again, very few people are aware of not only how much physical work it takes to keep Manna operating, but also how much it costs. Mrs. Dixie works day in and day out to work with the state, city, and other organizations to ensure that Manna remains up and running, financially speaking. Without someone such as Mrs. Dixie, I’m not sure if an organization like Manna Ministries would even be possible. Even though she is in either an office or board room all day, she is giving her life away just as much as her husband, Mr. Don.

Two of the areas that they made the biggest impact were in my finances and servanthood. Mr. Don would always buy me breakfast every morning I came to help on the route, and one day I finally asked him why he did that, along with filling needs every time he came across one (financial needs in particular). He would simply smile, look at me, and say, “It’s not mine to keep.” This changed my entire perspective on giving. Every penny I thought I earned and that was mine really belonged to God, since all things come from Him. “It’s sad that so
Imagine with me: 8 people living and traveling in a 1970’s van down the entire east coast of Australia. The very thought is terrifying to some, I’m sure. There was a time when it would have terrified me too. But as exchange students in Australia for only one semester, my best friend Kyle and I were determined to see as much of Australia as we possibly could outside of Sydney where our exchange university was located. Our university gets off for 2 weeks for “mid-semester break”, which is when we knew would be the perfect time to take our legendary trip. We decided that traveling down the entire east coast from the top of Australia all the way back down to Sydney would be the best bang for our buck. That trail was littered with awesome things that Australia had to offer. We’d hit up the Great Barrier Reef, world-famous Airlie Beach, Fraser Island, Surfer’s Paradise, and Byron Bay. The only problem was that getting to and vacationing at all of these places requires transportation and money, and being college students living in a foreign country away from friends and family, we had neither. Our funds weren’t just limited; they were non-existent. However, still determined to make the most of our mid-semester break, I looked tirelessly through airline fares, hostel rates, and bus tickets, but the cost was still much too high for us to afford between transportation, accommodation, and food. I finally had a question come to me... “What if we lumped transportation and housing into one? We could rent a camper! Surely that will be cheaper!” My enthusiasm was quickly quieted as I saw the prices of some of the camper rentals, but this search led me to another website, wickedcampers.com. It was there that I found just what we needed, a van. The company would rent us a 1970’s model, graffitied, slide-door van for just $60AU per day. PERFECT. It was light-years away from the luxury of a hotel room or even a nice camper, but it was exactly the price we needed.

I spoke to a few other Americans we had befriended while there who also wanted to see the country, and they vouched that should I rent the van, they would definitely come on the trip. It was settled. I rented the van and 8 Americans...
booked a one-way flight from Sydney to Cairns to pick up the van that we would travel, sleep, and eat in for 16 days. We had already the problem that the van was only designed to sleep 4 people, yet we had 8. However, there was another problem looming... None of us had ever driven on the left side of the road... and the driver’s seat is on the opposite side... and the 1970's van is a standard... The challenge is quite clear, but since it was my credit card on file, I decided that it would be best for me to bear that responsibility in the event that an accident should happen. The very thought of being responsible for 8 people in a van that: A) Was only designed for 4 people; B) Required me to drive on the opposite side of the road; and C) Required me to shift with my left hand, was nothing less than terrifying. Yet, I resolved to make it work. We all did.

Our plane landed in Cairns (pronounced cans), and we booked a hostel for the first night so we could enjoy the quaint little beach community before making our venture out to the Great Barrier Reef the next day. I scheduled the van to be picked up after. The next day we boarded a charter boat that would take us on our first big adventure: scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reef. It was one of the most amazing experiences I’ve ever had. I saw an underwater world that I couldn’t even imagine existed. We saw a plethora of plant and animal life. One of the highlights for me was riding the back of a sea turtle for a brief moment. GNARLY!!! We all returned to shore with many stories to tell and individual tasks to complete. My task was to pick up the van.

I arrived at the Wicked Camper Depot with half our group, and that’s where we met our van for the first time: our transportation, our temporary home, our faithful companion. I was so astonished that the clerk handed over the keys so easily to an American who had no prior driving experience in the country. Nothing but a simple, “she’ll be a breeze, no worries mate.” I can’t even describe how nervous I became sitting in the driver’s seat with all our gear loaded up and ready to pull out of the depot parking lot for the first time. The man in me finally rose up and I fumbled it into gear and got out on the road. With the Great Barrier Reef already behind us, our real journey had just begun.

We set out from Cairns and stopped at every place that we said we would and many more along the way. Airlie Beach, Whitsunday Islands, Fraser Island, Surfer’s Paradise, Byron Bay, we did it all, yet it was the van and the time spent with the people in the van that means the most to me. We slept and ate for the most part in the van. It had a mini-kitchen in the back that allowed us to keep supplies for pb&j’s and milk for cereal in the mornings. The very thing that caused fear in my life because it was so different from what I was used to and what I thought I needed became an indescribable source of joy and the glue that bonded 8 strangers into a family. I’ve never lived more simply in my life, yet it was the best trip I’ve ever been on. It was through that trip that I learned the beauty of simplicity in life and that people and not relationships are what’s really important, not nice houses, cars, clothes, etc. You want to learn what’s important in life and have the best time of your life while doing it?

Take a trip in a van for 2 weeks with 7 friends. You can thank me later.
A masterpiece.
A beautiful work of art.
A reflection of one’s heart.

As an artist creates his masterpiece;
He uses bright, beautiful colors and he must use some dark hues, too.
But sometimes, it’s the darkest of hues that make the bright colors shine so radiantly.

In life, we see those bright, beautiful colors as times of joy and happiness.
Times when we feel so loved and blessed.
The dark hues resemble the pain we’ve felt.
Our hurt and loss.
Those dark hues resemble the tears we’ve cried.

There is One that is creating a masterpiece.
This masterpiece is called You.
And as He is creating His masterpiece, He steps back to take another look.
He sees a canvas full of dark hues. And He says “Enough!”
The Artist sees so much hurt and pain and grief.
But, He doesn’t just see it.
He feels it, too.
He feels the brokenness and sorrow.
He feels the rejection and unacceptance.
He has cried every tear with you.
He mourns over you.
And He holds your every tear right in the palm of His hands.
The Artist has looked at His masterpiece and said, “It’s time. It’s time for some bright, beautiful colors.”
But as the paint on His palette becomes dry and hardens,
He uses your very tears to refresh and soften the paint.
He will use every tear, not one will be wasted.
And now the Artist begins to pour His very self out over you,
His masterpiece.
He pours out from the depths of His heart.
This masterpiece is of great worth and love.
This masterpiece is a reflection of God’s very own heart.
And He has created you to shine ever so radiantly for Him, for His glory.
And now He says, “It’s time to shine!”
Has the crazy notion that college saving for a child should be less complicated than raising one.

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BEHIND
every photo, video, movie, commercial, song, newspaper article, blog, book, tweet, or Facebook post— you name the medium, behind it all— is a storyline. There is a story that drives every relationship and every life. They, whoever “they” are, say that a picture is worth a thousand words. However, I believe that behind every picture is a story that not everybody knows. A story that could change a life, a story that could bring hope, life, love, peace, and much more to a lonely, dark, and hurting world.

National Geographic, Time, Life, Newsweek, and other magazines and organizations such as these understand the power of a picture. Some of the most amazing, stunning, and thought-provoking pictures have graced the cover of these magazines. But the pictures don’t mean as much without knowing the story behind them. Don’t believe me? Go to one of your friends’ houses and get out their family picture albums and start looking through them. What do the pictures of aunts, uncles, grandparents, brothers, sisters, or any family member mean to you? Not much! Why? Because, you don’t really know them. But let your friend start telling you stories behind all the pictures and what happened, then what? You begin to feel like you know them. The stories bring the pictures to life. You begin to have a connection with them even though you have never talked to them or even met them. The story, the story, the story. It’s all about the story.

Walt Disney knew this. His ability to tell a story through animation, video, images, or whatever the mode was at the time, was unparalleled. He knew that the video, image, or whatever media he could use was good, but to tell a story and use those things as part of the storyline could and would change the viewer or, at the very least, move them emotionally or intellectually. Hollywood knows this. News Media outlets such as CNN, MSNBC, or Fox News know this. YouTube was founded on this idea. This is why everybody looks for the latest and greatest story. Why? Because they know that a great story connects with people and connects people to people. Some use this to their advantage and manipulate and embellish a story just so they can attract more viewers and make more money. But, nevertheless, it’s still about the story. And stories always include people and their relationships.

God has a story and our life is the subplot! The story of God absolutely includes you and me. It is not solely about us, but we are central to the storyline. God has always had a plan for our life. He has always wanted us to live our lives fully and to live with no regrets as we follow Him. What is your storyline or subplot to the story? You may say, “I don’t have one.” I say, “Yes, you do!” God created you on purpose and for a purpose. Life’s collective of ebb and flow, its ups and downs, highs and lows, and even the plateaus of life, is your storyline. Though our past does not define us, it does, however, let us know where we have been and can help us with where we are headed. The past can either direct us toward the purposes God has for us or help us to avoid those dark and scary roads that only bring pain and hurt. Yes, I know we can’t avoid all pain in life and I’m not advocating that we do; but I am saying we are to live our lives with such divine purpose and intentionality that when
we do look at our past we have no regrets. God’s story is a story of love, relationship, and intimacy. He wants so much to have a relationship with us that He was willing to do anything and everything to ensure that we could. Why? Because God needs us? No, because He knows that we need Him. God and man’s story is the greatest love story ever written. Romance novelist Nicholas Sparks (The Notebook, Safe Haven, A Walk to Remember) doesn’t hold a candle to God’s ability to write a love story.

What do your pictures say about your life? What’s the story behind your pictures? Are you living your life so that your family and friends will one day be able to tell your story and your story would challenge, motivate, or inspire someone else to live theirs with passion, hope and/or love? I have always been a person who didn’t like to have their picture taken, but as I have grown older I see that the pictures aren’t about me but about the story of God at work in my life and how that life affects those around me. I look at pictures of my girls and me when they were small and see how we would laugh and play, my wife looking on with a big smile. I have pictures of a few friend’s first child being born and I can see the excitement, fear, and wonder in their eyes. I treasure pictures of my grandmother at her 100th birthday party. I have pictures of my dad’s first wife whom he married in France during World War II. I met her for the first time at my grandmother’s birthday party a few years ago. If you are like I was and don’t like having your picture taken, remember it’s not about you but about the story behind the picture, your life, and how it is interconnected with those taking the picture.

Because a picture is truly worth a thousand words, we are going to have our very first and very own RLM Media Photography Showcase at the beginning of 2014. You will be able to submit your photos and the stories behind the photos. This will be open to the public to participate in and the showcase will be open to the public as well. The top 10 photographers will have the opportunity to showcase their work from the stage with a slideshow and tell the story behind their photos. To sign up and submit your work along with the story behind the photos, you can visit www.rlministry.org/photo14.html. There is a limit of 5 photos per person. The showcase date will be forthcoming. Why do something like this? The story is worth it. People are worth it. It honors the person and the storyline of God throughout our lives.

God never wanted us just to “coast” through life, to just get by and live a mundane existence with no purpose and destiny. He has always had a storyline in mind for us. We simply have to connect with Him, stop long enough from “living”, listen to His voice, and then act on what He tells us. Bishop Saint Irenaeus (AD 202) of what is now modern day France once said that the “glory of God is man fully alive.” People that are fully alive live lives worth other people telling. What’s your story going to be about?

What about the picture above? Really doesn’t mean a thing unless you read the story about how Bob Goff became the Consulate for the African nation, Uganda. Check it out in his book Love Does from publisher Thomas Nelson.
Bob Goff is an enigma.

On the surface, Goff is a widely successful lawyer who is a part of the leadership team at Goff & DeWalt, a Washington-based law firm specializing in construction defect.

But Bob is not your ordinary lawyer. With offices in Gig Harbor, WA; Seattle, WA; and San Diego, CA; Bob opts to make his office at a small picnic table on Tom Sawyer Island at Disneyland. “I do all of my best thinking on Tom Sawyer Island.” Bob explains, “There’s a picnic table at the end of a little pier right across from the pirate ship…but it’s not just a prop to me; it’s my office.”

That should give you a little glimpse into the man who author Donald Miller describes as “the most clear-thinking crazy man on the planet.”

Bob has a contagious appetite for adventure. Upon meeting him, you cannot help but love him. He radiates life and can inexplicably make you excited about your own existence, regardless of how plain or mundane it may appear to be.

“You may think I’m such a wimp, but I’m afraid of balloons popping,” Bob says with his familiar chuckle, “so, I am always tempted to blow up balloons super small and call it ‘good’. Some of us are doing that with our faith, with our life, with our stuff because we’re afraid. We’re afraid that (if we dream too big) people will think we’re nuts, and you know what? We are! We are because we’re the ones doing stuff! So I know now that I can go big with my faith. I can go big with my life. We don’t have to settle for the little version; we can go big!”

This newfound revelation has made Bob one of the most interesting people on planet earth today. He is a sought-after speaker at universities, business conferences, and occasionally churches where he inspires current and future influencers to get to the “do” part of life. In addition, he is an adjunct professor at Pepperdine Law School where he teaches nonprofit law and Point Loma Nazarene University where he teaches business law.

“I spent a lot of time doing stuff I was able to do and what I ended up deciding is that I was going to figure out what I was made to do and do a lot of that,” says Goff, “I literally have a post-it note at my house right now and it just says three things: Love God, love people, and do stuff!”

And Bob Goff has done a lot of “stuff.”

It started when he went to Uganda and bought the entire Ugandan law library (all two books) and began representing children who were unjustly thrown in prison. Bob explains that children in Uganda can be thrown in prison the same day they are accused (oftentimes falsely) of feeble offenses such as “defilement” where they can remain for years without ever stepping foot in a court of law to plead their case. Believing that everyone deserves the right to a fair trial, Bob began trying cases and was able to help 98 of the 100 kids be released with all charges dissolved.

While in Uganda, Bob learned about the dark culture of witchdoctors. In Africa, witchdoctors kidnap children, remove their organs, and use them for sacrificial purposes. Some reports show that as many as 3,000 children are abducted each year and very few live to tell about it.

That’s when Bob met Charlie.

Charlie had been kidnapped, mutilated, and left for dead in the bush by a local witchdoctor. But, somehow, Charlie survived and managed to walk home to safety, albeit in intense pain.

The Ugandan culture firmly believes you should not interfere, mess-with, or accuse a witchdoctor. But, Bob did all three when he asked the Ugandan government for permission to try one of the country’s most-feared witchdoctors in a court of law. The subsequent trial resulted in the first-ever conviction of a witchdoctor in the country’s history. For his crime, the “doctor” received 50-years in prison for the atrocity he inflicted on young Charlie.

Recently, Bob organized a luncheon for all the local witchdoctors in Uganda. He relayed one simple message to them all: “If you continue to murder children, I will put you in jail forever!”

Bob Goff’s memoir, the New York Times bestseller, “Love Does” (Thomas Nelson Publishers) is available in the RLM bookstore. In his book, which is highly recommended by Todd Goodwin and me, you will read about how Bob “spent 16 days in the Pacific Ocean with five guys and a crate of canned meat; how, as a father, he took his kids on a world tour to eat ice cream with heads of state; and how his grades weren’t good enough to get into law school, so he sat on a bench outside the Dean’s office for seven days until they finally let him enroll.” You will also read the incredible story of how Bob became the Honorary Consul for the Republic of Uganda… purely by accident.

“Love Does” is the perfect book for dreamers and skeptics alike.
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RLM Auditorium
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Submissions are open to the public.
For registration, submission and guidelines visit
www.rlministry.org/photo14.html

Top 5 Photographers will be featured in the spring editions of
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I'm THANKFUL...
list 5 things you are thankful for below:

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_________________________
_________________________
_________________________

SNOWMAN JOKES

Q. What do snowmen eat for breakfast?
A. Frosted Flakes.

Q. What does a snowman take when he gets sick?
A. A chill pill!

Q. Where do Frosty and his wife go to dance?
A. Snowballs!
many Christians talk about how they can’t afford to tithe. The reality of it is, they can’t afford not to!” When he said this phrase it completely changed how I viewed tithing, especially when I would hear story after story of the Lord’s provision in his and Mrs. Dixie’s life together.

The way they both give until they have nothing left to give always inspired me to go out of my way, LOOKING for ways to give my life away. You would think that most people their age would be wrapping up life and finding the best way to retire, but they’re doing just the opposite. It’s almost as if you can’t stop them from giving. Mr. Don travels to the New Orleans airport and back whenever we have speakers and missionaries fly in from out of town, and Mrs. Dixie teaches a class on how to budget your finances for those in need. As incredible as it is to hear all that they do, the most incredible and encouraging thing about it is the fact that they tell nobody unless asked. They are truly living out Matthew 6:1-4, serving in the secret and keeping no glory for themselves, giving all the glory to God. It’s easy to live a lifestyle of servitude when you have everyone watching you and receiving all of the encouragement and compliments, but it’s an entirely different case when nobody knows what you do. Their story is so remarkable; no matter what was going on in their lives, they never ceased to let anything stand in the way of them giving their lives away.

It’s remarkable how just one couple gives as much as they do—such a deep servant’s heart, the very same that Jesus had. I could write a book about all that they have done, and still might, but it’s nothing like hearing it from them personally. Sometimes the Lord will put people in your path so that you are not only able to learn from them, but also to straighten your vision for life whenever it gets fogged up with “everyday life”. For me, Mr. Don and Mrs. Dixie will always be those spiritual mentors that I need to keep my vision and purpose clear. I can only pray that one day I will be as devoted and passionate about serving others and seeing their needs filled as much as Mr. Don and Mrs. Dixie.
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Current Trends, Culture and more

ASIAN GIANT HORNETS: THE WORST THING IN THE WORLD

Well, here’s something awful. What you are seeing below are four Chinese wasps and from now on, you will see them in your nightmares, because that’s where they belong. Sadly, they also belong in the waking world, and they’re becoming a very serious problem. Scientists think that global warming may be contributing to their increased numbers, which wouldn’t be so bad if these things weren’t actually deadly. The Guardian reports that at least 28 people have died and many more injured by waves of these terror creatures, which can fly about 25 miles an hour. Their venom wreaks havoc on your kidneys and can send you into anaphylactic shock.

Oh, and they’ve been spotted in Illinois. Sleep tight ...

WEIRD MAMMALS UNDER THREAT OF EXTINCTION

British scientists have compiled a list of 100 evolutionarily distinct and globally endangered mammals after identifying those with the fewest living relatives, making them profoundly valuable for the world’s biodiversity.

Slender loris – has extremely thin arms and legs. Its face is dominated by huge round eyes which give it excellent night vision and enable it to hunt for insects in the dark. Populations of this small primate are declining because their forest habitats are being destroyed for logging, agriculture and development. http://www.theguardian.com for more info.

Fueling this further in 2013 will be the growth of web-enabled Smart TVs and the launch of a number of new, smaller web-enabled devices. Google Glass will launch to developers this year; the Pebble smart watch will finally ship; and so will Muse, the brainwave-sensing headband that allows you to control your devices.

THE DISSAPPEARING INTERNET

As the Internet is integrated into more products, 2013 will see a tipping point in the web becoming invisible. We’ll no longer be aware of “going online” to do all the things we do, and the idea of “digital” technology will become increasingly redundant.

Americans feel less connected to “the Internet.” In 2012, 47 percent agreed, “I would feel disconnected without the Internet,” down from 54 percent in 2010, according to GfK. However, time spent online has increased from an average 155 minutes per day in 2010 to 173 minutes in 2012, according to eMarketer.

What’s going on here? As the web is increasingly integrated into our devices, we’re less aware of “going onto the Internet” to access sites like Facebook. We’re just using Facebook. The web is disappearing.

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WEBINERD FESTIVALS & CELEBRATIONS

Burning the Clocks, Brighton, East Sussex, England
People gather to make clock lanterns and time-themed figures of paper and willow then make their way through the town to the beach where the sculptures are set on fire amid a massive firework display
• 21 December, burningtheclocks.co.uk

World Championship Snail Racing, Congham, Norfolk
The hallowed centre court, as it were, of snail racing is a damp circle of cloth at Grimston cricket field in Congham. The tiny competitors race from an inner circle to an outer circle, and the winner gets a pewter tankard filled with the best Norfolk lettuce. There’s also a fete and a barbecue
• 21 July, snailracing.net

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Resurrection Life presents

A Christmas to Remember

Shallow Creek special guest

SUNDAY DECEMBER 8TH
7:00 PM | RLM AUDITORIUM

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