

# LIVING *Life2Life*

Re-imagining church through the power of relationships. Volume 1 | Issue 13

Evangelism is like reading a good novel. Good novels absorb us in their plots, characters, and action. Major and minor themes unravel as we turn each page. Scenes build on top of each other. We resist the temptation to skip to the end because we don't want to miss the thrill of the adventure.

Our lives read like a mystery novel. Each day, a portion of the plot slowly unfolds. Major characters mark us in special ways while minor figures soon disappear. Multiple story lines compete for our attention. One of these story lines is a God-theme.

Everyone has a God-theme woven into his or her life. For some, this faith story is hidden away, almost obscured by life's details. For others, it's the overwhelming plot of his or her life. Insiders know how to skillfully read the God-themes of their neighbors, relatives, or co-workers.

A shared lunch gave me a chance to discover Rob's God-theme. "Rob, I think our lives are like a novel. Major and minor characters, significant and insignificant events shape our lives. I believe we all have a God-theme in our life's novel. How would you describe the God-theme in your life's story?"

"Wow! No one's ever asked me that before," was his response. Rob proceeded to open up his life and told me how his father's death sparked a spiritual crisis. The grief over his loss led Rob back to church and to faith. Rob decided to set aside his goals of success and turned to a life of service. "I've never told anyone about this," was how he concluded his story. A simple question turned the pages of the novel of Rob's life.

The Bible is brimming with life stories. Starting with Genesis, the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph unfold before our eyes. We're thrilled by their faith, saddened by their poor decisions, and rejoice when they're vindicated. These narratives explore the work of God in a person's life.

Too often, our evangelism training urges us to jump to the end of the novel to discover how it ends. In our haste for someone "to make a decision," we push the story in a way that violates the Author's pace. We end up watering when we should be planting, reaping when we should be sowing (1 Corinthians 3:7-8).

What happens if we picture evangelism like reading a novel?

- We would ask more questions in order to catch the nuances of a life. Nuances reveal what people really think and value.
- We would listen more than talk. When we listen, we discover where people are in their journeys. We meet them in each chapter rather than skipping to the end.
- We would savor the journey rather than being fixated on the closing. People know when they're truly being listened to and cared for. If we jump to the end too soon, we turn off our friends.

Test-drive this question with someone you're an insider to. "I think our lives are like a novel. Major and minor characters, significant and insignificant events have shaped our lives. I believe we all have a God-theme. How would you describe the God-theme in your life's story?" **Have fun reading!**

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