

Message Series: **'Six Words: This is My Story'**  
Message Title: **'Your Story: Trash or Treasure?'**  
Scripture Source: **1Timothy 1:12-17**  
Date: April 12, 2015  
Speaker: John Garner

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### **The Power of a Story**

There are some stories that deeply affect us. Illustrate: Liz Murray core story. What did you feel? Think? Wonder about? The plot lines, characters, twists and turns rivet our attention and draw us deeply into the story. It can be a work of fiction or a true story. It can be a classic story that has stood the test of time or it can be something you read in yesterday's news paper.

A story well told, with clarity and honesty can have a powerful effect on the listener or reader.

We are immersed in a story telling culture, mediated through various forms...movies, books, live theater, music, oral readings, art, and for some, the Bible... and the list goes on. Think of the stories you treasure. Some from childhood, some recently stumbled upon. There are some stories we genuinely treasure and passionately recommend to others. Illustrate: Les Miserables, The Giving Tree, Bible stories. What about you? What stories do you go back to on a regular basis...and why?

Some stories have the ability to work their way into our heart, mind and soul at a deep level and in so doing, inspire us to be and do better and instruct us about who and what really matters. Illustrate: 'I was in every sense a lost cause': Liz Murray's story. The preciousness of a single human life was driven home to me again in reading and rereading the core of her story in a Globe and Mail article of almost 5 years ago. I am so grateful for the countless stories I have thought deeply about and allowed myself to be stirred emotionally over. And to be instructed by. To be educated, warned, comforted, and spurred on to higher levels of maturity...relationally, emotionally and spiritually.

A story can be a precious gift to us. I think we would all agree on that statement...how do you feel about your life story, so far?

### **Your Unique Story**

Do you see your story as a treasure to be highly valued? Do you see understanding accurately your story as a personal responsibility to cultivate? Do you believe that your story, shared thoughtfully and with 'appropriate vulnerability' can be of great value to God and others, starting with those closest to you? Can you track down the evidences of God's wise involvement and passionate engagement in your 'still-being-written' story? Can you share your story honestly, humbly, and thoughtfully in a way that 'instructs and inspires' others?

Now, I know that as I speak, many of us are discounting the value and significance of our life stories. You may be thinking, 'my story is too messed up, too many broken pieces, too much failure and regret...I am ashamed of my story. It is far more 'trash' than 'treasure.'

If that is where you are in your thinking, to some degree, we want to help you think differently.

I am unashamed in saying that I want to help change your mind about how you regard your story if you tend to downplay at a minimum or dismiss at worst its profound value!

### **Saul to Paul and one Turning Point Moment: 1 Timothy 1:12-17 Read and Comment**

Paul shares the essence of his story with his leadership protégé Timothy.

The 'before and after' shots are gripping and powerfully instructive...if we let them be! Let's go back to some of Paul's pre-Jesus following days. It's not a pretty picture. Acts 8:1-3, 9:1-2. This is how Saul was. This is integral to his story. And then a 'road trip' and everything changes. Acts 9:3-6. 'The rest of the story' is amazing...summarise it. Total conversion to Jesus, an avid follower and servant, powerfully used of God in countless lives, often with much uncertainty and suffering along the way, yet with incredible consequences. Acts 9:31

What changed the plot line in Paul's story? 1 Timothy 1:13-16. Note the words, the experiences Paul had with God..."mercy...grace...poured out on me abundantly...faith and love that are in Christ Jesus...I was shown mercy..." Mercy: "refraining from harming or punishing offenders...kindness in excess of what may be expected...compassion...readiness to forgive."

**What Can We Learn from Paul's Story?**

- God is deeply interested in people and yearns to engage with them, setting them free from self-destructiveness and damaging others. He purposes to give us a life with purpose, direction and power. John 10:10
- God can actually change and re-route a life...if we are willing and cooperative.
- In each story of transformation, there is a 'crucible' experience, a 'Damascus road' that must be travelled. It may or may not be as dramatic as Saul's but the consequences are as transformative. Can you identify and name your 'Damascus road crucible'? Sometimes we will take a few trips down 'Damascus road.'
- Our story can inspire and instruct others when we see God's hand in our story and share wisely and appropriately. Cf. Psalm 40:1-3
- Are you currently on a difficult 'Damascus road'? Pay attention to God. Respond to Christ's call to follow Him, starting today.

**Six Words**

How do you choose your 6 words? Think about your life, so far...naming 'defining moments', 'turning points' that deeply impacted your thinking, behaving or perspective. Positive and negative moments along the way. These moments can revolve around specific people/circumstances. The beauty of the 6 words exercise is that you and I are challenged to clarify life shaping experiences and encounters in just a few words. I think you will find that a 'Damascus road' experience or 'crucible' is integral to our personal journey.

**Mercy Central**

God yearns to extend mercy and grace to people like you and me. Will we admit our need and ask for mercy? Will we 'taste' mercy and grace on an ongoing basis? Hebrews 4: 16

"Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy And find grace to help us in our time of need."

When the mercy of Christ is 'tasted' our story can take on a whole new direction and purpose, for the glory of God, the benefit of others and our own well-being and fulfillment. So, can you see some 'treasure' in the pages of your story?

**Your Story: Trash or Treasure?**

- Six Words: This is My Story

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- Naming my 'Damascus Road' experience (Acts 9:1-6):

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- *'Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.'* Hebrews 4:16

Is it time for a trip to 'Mercy Central'?