



Sound Bites Don't Tell the Whole Story Look at the Big Picture

In today's culture we prefer to gain information in small bits and pieces. The 140 character limit of Twitter is a prime example. The news media is a second example. As a Chamber of Commerce director I have been interviewed by the media for 5-10 minutes only to have what I said boiled down to just a few seconds or just a sentence or two. Sometimes what I said is edited out and the one or two sentences broadcast related to the media's agenda.

We often look at what the Bible says in a similar way. We look for a brief passage on a topic to prove a point. When taken out of context the verse can be interpreted incorrectly. We need to keep in mind that biblical writers were talking to a specific audience at a particular time and for a particular purpose. When we understand that, we can come to realize that the Bible is not "about us," but is written "for us. It gives us a glimpse into God's handiwork for the people of that time. We can then apply his message to us as it is God's way of speaking to us, as we may have similar issues now. So, resist the temptation to only seek a biblical phrase to prove your point, but seek what God wants us to know.

Let's take an even broader perspective to understand the Bible's Big Picture. This "40,000 foot" overview simplifies the Bible into six major storylines. When we understand that, we can understand and better apply its message to us now.

- **Creation:** God spoke His creation into being. If that doesn't show God's power, nothing will. And, God existed before His creation.
- **The Fall** is mankind's attempt to be in control, to "play God." Mankind rebelled against God's instructions as Adam and Eve wanted things their own way and on their terms. We still do.
- **Ordinary people - The nation of Israel:** God chose ordinary people to display His love, forgiveness and way of life. He still works through ordinary people – including you and me.
- **Jesus:** God sent His son, Jesus, to rescue and redeem us, and through His resurrection, to prove He is Lord. Jesus is our example of how to live our lives, and because of His victory over death, we, too can have eternal life.
- **The church:** The church is one way God empowered His followers to introduce Jesus Christ to our broken world. We, too, are called to spread the Good News.
- **New creation:** Jesus will return to rescue us, so there will be no more sadness, crying, pain or death. And no more sin. Because of that we do not need to fear death and we can be assured of seeing loved ones of the faith in Heaven.

As we understand a Big Picture overview we can see that God created the world, allowing us the freedom to make choices. Some of those choices contributed to messing up the world. But, because of His love for us, God offers relief from the havoc we created. The overriding Big Picture theme is love, through the creation, and the entire history of mankind. We should treat others in love, too.

So why is this important to us today? We need to acknowledge that God is the creator of all we have. It is His creation – His world -- He entrusted to us. God gave us the opportunity to choose a righteous way of life. Unfortunately, we continually fall short. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)*. So, He sent His son to show us how to live and to be the supreme sacrifice. Through the church He helped us be prepared to share the truth with other ordinary people like us. God encourages us to strive to be an example of living the faith. He desires for us to encourage and love others. If we put our faith in God rather than the world, we will be rewarded with the hope of eternal life, where there is no pain or suffering.

You can't fully understand the magnitude of this by only hearing snippets of sound bites, while ignoring the opportunity to turn your life over to Him, and the resulting eternal life.

Scripture: *So give yourselves completely to God. Stand against the devil, and the devil will run from you (James 4:7).*

The major themes of the Bible are taken from the book, Answering the Toughest Questions About God and the Bible," by Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz. I highly recommend this book to help you better understand the context of the Bible.