

## Stories of life and death

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As I reflected on the [value of stories last week](#), I realized it's also important which stories we tell.

It's too easy, especially in church/denominational settings, to *only* tell the stories of "success" (e.g. conversions, new church plants, healing, etc...). These are important stories, no doubt. They bring encouragement and inspiration to many. But listening to the stories of the recent convention, I heard other stories as well.

Two types of stories were predominant - stories of "success." But also stories of "failure." I heard over and over again, following Jesus involves death and life.

Following Jesus involves death of some sort. "Take up your cross" is no mere slogan ([Mk. 8:34](#)). Often death is what characterizes life as the people of God - the church.

- Interpersonal conflict leads to the death of a relationship.
- A church hesitantly engages in a lawsuit - a death, however necessary, of certain ideals.
- A young church member dies unexpectedly halfway around the world from her family.

Death all around us. We are left wondering, "How long Oh Lord?" ([Ps. 13](#)).

But stories of death are accompanied by and reinterpreted through stories of life. Following Jesus brings life. Resurrection (Jesus bringing life out of death) was not a one-time affair.

- A pastor observes an agnostic individual wrestle through questions of faith with friends. One of her friends finds new life and decides to follow Jesus through the testimony of this agnostic.
- An adopted orphan finds deep friendship in a foreign country - love and acceptance begin to redefine her difficult life.

- In the midst of tragedy, a family encounters the tangible love of God through the care and support of a local church.

Life is also all around us. Rather than spiral into a cycle of despair, where “meaningless” ([Eccl. 1:2](#)) seems to be the only interpretation of reality, stories of life remind us we follow a God of life - death is overcome with resurrection.

Whether you’re part of an independent church or large denomination, we need both sides of the gospel story in order to make sense of complex beauty of this journey we are one as Jesus-followers. We follow Jesus to the cross and live in the light of the resurrection ([Mk. 8:35](#))

I’ve said it before, let’s [tell all the stories](#).

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