

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Once Upon a Time (The elements of style)

I remember buying a book for a writing class years ago. The book was titled *The Elements of Style*. One of the contemporary versions of this book is now in its 4th edition. I haven't opened this book in years and I'm not sure if I could find it.

The Elements of Style was originally written by William Strunk Jr. in 1918. It has been published in a number of editions using the original content that is in the public domain, updating the language and adding content. This book has been a best seller and used in classrooms all over the U.S. In 2011 Time named *The Elements of Style* as one of the 100 best and most influential books written in English since 1923.



In this this article I reference this book more for the title than for its content since this article is focused more on telling our story verbally than through writing. But both are important. In fact, any form of telling our story, depending on our circumstances, can work. The point of this article is to tell our story with style. I want us all to learn how to become better storytellers.

We began our series. *Tell your story*, with a question

that Jesus once asked His followers, "What are the crowds saying about me?" Of course, the more important question for each of us is the followup question that Jesus asks them and us, "Who do you say I am?" This is the place where our story intersects with the story of our origin and what has happened since. So the question is whether I realize that my life is intricately intertwined with the life of Jesus Christ?

Both authenticity and how a story ends are critical elements of style in telling our story. A story that simply leaves us in suspense is not very interesting. Unless the story ends in a "cliff hanger"

Page 2

Back to the Future (Who do you say He is?)

The movie, *Back to the Future*, is about a 17 year old, Marty McFly, who experiences time travel in his friend's invention. Marty's trip illustrates a paradox. What if he does something that alters the future? In the movie's storyline, Marty has to find a way to make sure that his future parents get

together. Otherwise, Marty never existed in the future.



Have you ever wished that you could go back in

time and actually change what happened? A sort of "do-over" that erases a choice or an outcome that you regret? Of course, humankind, at this point, can only dream of time travel. Those of us who are hoping to experience time travel are hopeful that not all of the DeLorean cars

Page 2

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Special points of interest:

>>> **Worship Design will meet on Monday, September 9th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.**

>>> **Leadership Team will meet on Monday, September 16th at 6pm in Asbury Library.**

EVERYONE HAVE A SAFE AND WONDERFUL LABOR DAY!

Inside this issue:

Once upon a time	1
Back to the Future	1
In Our Prayers/Coming up this Week	3
Asbury Worship Series-Back to Future	4
Pastor's Book Club	4
Leadership in Worship & Service	4
Asbury Worship Series	5
Once upon a time	6
Asbury Farm to Table	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
Back to the Future	9
Once upon a time	10

Back to the Future (Who do you say He is)...cont. from page 1

disappear before a real scientist discovers how to turn it into a plutonium-powered, time machine.

What is missing in our daydreaming about going back in time to change the future is the life-giving opportunity to share our story as it really happened. But what happened in the past is not necessarily what will happen in the future. But there is a vast difference. The future hasn't happened yet.

As we come to the end of our worship series, *Tell your story*, our focus turns to the point of our series, We are each called to tell our story so that others can make a more informed decision today, about what their future could become. This makes our story potentially life-giving.

Over the past few weeks, we talked about the power that stories have as a result of how our body is constructed so that we become emotionally invest-

ed. We were created to tell and hear each other's stories. We can't change the past. But we can definitely the future. And we can do this by just telling our story.

One of the stories found in the Gospel of Luke tells about a time when Jesus returned to Nazareth and attended the church where He grew up. Imagine that you are attending a high school reunion or some other event where you will spend time with people who knew you before you were an adult. Many knew about the capers you pulled. A few told your parents when they saw you in places where you didn't belong. They knew the "former" you.

Now you have an opportunity to be seen and heard by this hometown crowd. Maybe you are planning to run for public office. Perhaps you are starting a new business. You speak to

the people who saw you at your worst and at your best in the past. What will they be thinking when you talk about the future? Will your history be a good predictor of the future that you are hoping will unfold for you?

Jesus is given one of the sacred scrolls. It is the scroll that contains the Book of Isaiah. It is a book of prophecy. Isaiah is the name given to at least a couple of prophets who lived a long time ago. Jesus reads the prophecy about a future Messiah. *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people."*

Page 9

Once upon a time (The elements of style) cont. from page 1

" with the intention of a continuation we are left feeling unsatisfied. It is not that all stories end with "happily ever after," but we at least expect the loose ends to be brought together in a way that leaves us with a sense of completeness. And stories with happy endings are generally our favorites.

Last week we talked about what happens when we hear a story that captivates us. The suspense causes dopamine to be released into our body which sharpens our focus. We want to know what happens next. We become emotionally invested.

In chapter 13 of Luke, Jesus encounters a woman who is bent over physically.

The woman has been unable to straighten up for 18 years. Suppose this woman was telling you her story. Imagine that her story begins with promise. A young teenager finding her passion, meeting her life-mate and charging into life with energy and promise. One day she is struck by an affliction. Perhaps it happened over many years and slowly reached the point of where she was when you met her.

Is this the end of her story? This is a sad story and one that leaves us in suspense. The dopamine levels will soon subside but not in a way that we hoped for. But is there more to her story. She continues.

One day this woman went to the Synagogue. It was the Sabbath as was her custom. Perhaps she faithfully went by herself week after week praying for relief from her affliction. The suspense continues to build.

One Sabbath day something was different. She couldn't really see much of what was going on but there was this man who came that day that they call Jesus. He was a rabbi and some say a prophet. The woman had heard stories.

Page 6



In our Prayers

Curtis Young	Shirley Craig
Rachel Bastine	Christopher Lewis
Norma Buzzard	Sarah Tanner
Virginia Bigger	Elizabeth Wright
Barbara McIvor	Judy Tanner
Austin & Mary Suffle	Mary Lyons

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Mary Nations	Mary Russell
Elaine Lamoreaux	



Coming up this week



Sept 2	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
Sept 3	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
Sept 4	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6:00pm	Youth Group
Sept 5	Thu	4:30-6pm	Gaming as Education
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Sept 6	Fri	10am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		6:00pm	Asbury Youth Group
Sept 7	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
Sept 8	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship



SUNDAY, August 25th

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Attendance 38 Offering \$ 841

Asbury Worship Series Back to the Future “Pilgrim’s Progress”

We invited our community to watch the newly released movie, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, on August 29 in our newly equipped Asbury Empowerment Arts Center. The film was a big hit with both adults and children. Our next worship series will use the story from this movie as a backdrop.



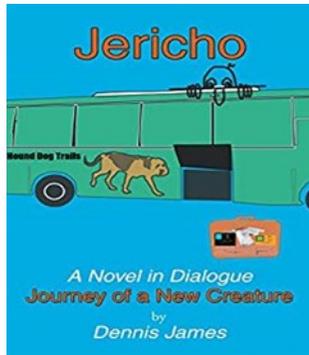
Back to the future, the title of another popular movie, is the headline that I chose for our new worship series be-

cause it offers an interesting paradox. How can we go back to a time that hasn’t happened yet? The answer in the movie is time travel, which is the invention that the movie asks us to imagine possible. Many of us have wondered what it would be like to be able to travel through time. Going back in time to experience what it was like back then and visiting the future to see how things unfold later.

Page 5

Book Club News

After reading and discussing the book *Shame-less* written by Nadia Bolz-Weber our group is taking a short break. On July 10 we hosted our youth who are working with us for the



summer and a youth choir from Omaha, Nebraska. A week after that we watched a video from the Nooma series by Rob Bell titled *Sunday*. A great discussion followed the video on why we go to church. We concluded that we don’t get together out of a sense of duty, although these feelings are often felt. Ultimately, we go because we encounter God in our worship and in our time together.

Our next book was written by Dennis Sykes. Most of you have seen Dennis around Asbury at one point or another. Perhaps you would better recognize Dennis as the Roman Governor, Pilate, whom Dennis played in our Easter musical. Perhaps you remember Dennis in one of our concerts. He sings with our community gospel choirs. Dennis is a member of Ebenezer Ministries located a short distance from Asbury.

Our current book is titled *Jericho*. The book follows a man by the name of Jaymes Devans. As the novel begins, James is leaving Chicago, Illinois. He is going South to make a better life for the family he loves. However, Jaymes finds out that his plans and God’s plans are not the same. He becomes caught up in a world of murder, drug smuggling, crooked businessmen, politicians, secret agents, and a God with a plan.

Jericho will challenge our own knowledge of scripture as the people Jaymes meets challenges him to continue reading and studying God’s Word. Jaymes is amazed by how much people around him had changed for the better after coming to know Jesus Christ for themselves. And a long bus ride was just what Jaymes needed to spend some solid reading time.

Since this novel is hot off the shelves and since we want to support Dennis in his first book publishing we ordered ten copies at just under \$20 each. A few of us have purchased our books directly from Dennis but it helps him even more when we buy his books from retailers. Dennis is with our group each week to answer questions and autograph books.

I encourage you to come to our Wednesday gatherings. Our small group is a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion. We meet each Wednesday at Noon. Come join us for a light lunch, fellowship and discussion. Our food selections have been fantastic and we always have plenty to share. And we are always on the lookout for our next book, video lesson or topic. Your participation and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

* Dennis James (Dennis Sykes). *Jericho: a Novel in Dialogue: Journey of a New Creature*. Xlibris, 2018.

Pastor Tommy

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team	Tony, Mirium
Ushers	Anthony, Jim
Production Team	Jonathon
Children	Patrice & Mirium
Worship Leaders	Cyndi
Café	Christine & Norma

Sylvia Pittman	Worship Arts
Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Farm to Table
Israel Unger	Business Operations

Asbury Café

Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday before worship for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for worship.

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary

Asbury Worship Series—Back to the Future (Pilgrim’s Progress) ... Cont. from page 4

During our next worship series, I hope that you will be willing to do some time travel with me. It won't be that hard. We actually do it all the time. We read or hear about something that happened in the past when a person shares their story. A story, by its very nature, already happened. Unless, of course, the story is about the future. Unless the story is about what could happen.

The Pilgrim's progress from this world, to that which is to come, was initially written as a book. The book was written by John Bunyan in 1678. According to the information I found on Wikipedia, this book may have been the very first novel to be written in the English language. It has since been translated into 200 languages and is among the most influential books ever written. The book was written while the author was in prison for holding a church service outside of the Church of England. This is an extremely important connection for our Asbury community that will become clear during our worship series.

We have loads of expressions that reference the connections between what has happened and what will happen. We sometimes call this a trend when the past becomes a predictor of the future. We ate fruit loops for breakfast five days in a row. What are the chances that we will eat fruit loops tomorrow?

The answer in this case is that the only connection between tomorrow and yesterday is that we have fruit loops on the brain. Otherwise, if we are looking for things that happened in the past that could predict the future, then we are looking for “dependent” variables. Let me explain using an illustration.

I flip a coin and it comes up heads. I flip the coin a hundred times and I keep track of how many times it comes up heads and how often tails show up. My count show that heads came up 75 times. What are the odds that tails will come up on my next flip? The answer is fifty percent. The same odds that were present on my first flip of the coin. Each flip of the coin is independent of the one before. There are lots of examples where the past is not a reliable predictor of the future because there is no connection whatsoever.

Yet we have heard it said that if we ignore the past we are prone to repeat it. There are some things that can be predictors of the future. But there are no guarantees. The future hasn't happened yet. It might rain. It might not rain. And if rain is independent of the subject that we are trying to predict, it doesn't matter one way or another.

The Bible contains loads of stories about the past. The Bible also has a lot to say about predicting the future based on the past. The stories about the past can help us avoid some of the pitfalls that others have fallen into. They can help us recognize trends that are worth paying attention to and somethings that didn't work very well.

During this series I hope to draw a connection between some trends that are taking shape and the likely triggers that could give us a clue as to what to do to stop a particular trend that suggests a future we would rather not visit.

As our story moves from “Once upon a time” to the answer to the question of who we have found Christ to be in our own life, our story becomes a story of a faith journey. A story about a belief in something that we cannot see. Yet we know that our faith is itself a gift. And in our choosing life we can help others to choose life simply by sharing our story.

The Lord said to Abrams, “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s home , and go to a land that I am going to show you.”

Genesis 12:1

I pray that you will join us for our new worship series called *Back to the future*. I hope to see you each Sunday for worship at 10:30 am. Remember Bible study in the Asbury Café is before worship at 9:30 am.

Pastor Tommy

Open Upon a Time (The elements of style)...cont from page 2

What she did not know was that Jesus noticed her. He was behind her but she didn't know this. Some of the onlookers were curious what this man with a reputation for stirring up trouble might be up to. But not today, they reckoned. Today is the Sabbath when everyone puts aside their work and their affections and take the day off.

When Jesus saw her, he called out to her, "Women, you are free from your sickness?" He placed his hands out on her, and at once she straightened herself up and praised God.

Luke 13:12-13

Jesus calls out to the woman, "You are free from your sickness." Jesus then places his hands on her shoulders and she slowly stands up straight. It is a miracle. After 18 years of being stooped over this woman can now see the eyes of the person in front of her rather than just feet. And what the woman sees is Jesus.

What do you do after such an encounter? What can you do? You have been touched by God. Yes you. A person who had reached the depths of despair and hopelessness. But everything has changed now. Who is this Jesus? For the woman whose affliction was removed on that day Jesus is her salvation.

We read that the woman's reaction was to praise God. We don't know if she was able to piece the parts together and realize that God was right in front of her.

She had looked into the eyes of God. She had felt the touch of God on her broken body.

She had felt the healing energy of her savior bringing salvation throughout her broken body. She would no longer be the stooped over woman. She was and still is, as Jesus said, a descendant of Abraham. But she is even more.

In last week's message I made a claim that our story is our superpower. But not just some story that we make up in order to try to convince others to like us. I contend that authenticity is the key to a good story. In order for a story to be authentic it has to be our story. Our "real" story and not a "made for public consumption" version.

As the authenticity of a story creates a connection between us and the person sharing their story, another hormone, oxytocin is released, creating empathy. We become emotionally invested as listeners. We can place ourselves in the synagogue that day. We can recall a similar experience where our affliction was lifted. Perhaps we didn't feel God's touch or look into the eyes of Christ but we somehow understand the connection because something similar has happened to us.

But what about the person who hasn't yet been healed? What about the person who doesn't realize that they are stooped over? They are physically standing straight. They feel as though they can do it all on their own. They barely need friends much less some rabbi who lived two Thousand years ago. Why will they care about my story?

The elements of style that make your story interesting and will emotionally connect with the listener will

connect even with the person who has not met Jesus or has decided to deny or to hide from Him. Perhaps the ending doesn't relate as well to the listener when they hear it. It might be years later when they realize that they too are bent over. When they realize that they too are afflicted. And they recall hearing a story about a person who was once afflicted but now they are free after meeting Jesus Christ. "This could be my story," they think to themselves.

Can I sell a story that denies that Christ is who He claimed to be? Certainly. But while the story may advertise satisfaction your delivery will fall short of your promise. My satisfaction in hearing your story will be shallow. Just as your story will be shallow. Your story will lack substance because so much of your story will be based on untruth. You are who you are because of Christ. Denying the role of God in your life rips away the authenticity that makes a story worth hearing.

Page 10

Asbury Farm to Table



While turning blight into beautiful and productive landscape is good on its own, transforming a food desert into abundance is life giving. But Asbury wants to make sure that produce is available on the tables of our residents. Our culinary arts and nutritional education programs offer residents the know how just as our farms offers nature's bounty. In addition, the Asbury Café is a culinary experience accessible to our neighbors and anyone with an appetite. Our "pay what you can" approach means that no one is turned away. Those who can help either on the farm or in the café are offered special MyFlintStones tokens that can be used either in the Asbury Café or in exchange for produce to prepare at home.

We proudly accept MyFlintStones

**The Asbury Café is open
Fridays 10am to 2pm &
Sundays 10 am to 12 Noon**



ASBURY CAFÉ MENU

Open Fridays 10am to 2pm

Pay what you can

DELI SUBS

Lettuce, onions, tomato plus choice of ham, turkey or beef

STIR FRY

Local grown garden vegetables sautéed with love and herbs

GARDEN SALAD

Local grown greens & vegetables. Ham, turkey or beef upon request

WRAPS

Lettuce, onions, tomato plus choice of ham, turkey or beef

MUFFINS

Chef Kevin's special recipe with fruit, love and other delights baked in.

SMOOTHIE

Assorted flavors of the day

COFFEE

Regular or decaf

Life Group Questions & Notes

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people

Luke 4:18-19 GNT

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Luke 4:18-19. Jesus is rejected by the people who knew Him growing up. Why might this happen? Can You identify with what happened to Jesus when He returned home and shared His mission? Can You identify with the rejection that Jesus may have felt?
2. Read this week’s article titled *Back to the future*. In what ways does your story intersect with the mission that was claimed in the prophecy of Isaiah (Luke 4:18-19)? What “good news” can be heard when you tell your story?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you to be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God?

Jesus is not the first person to read this text. It has been read dozens of times in this very church in Nazareth. This text articulates the hopes of the people for a time when God will anoint a savior of the people. A person who will release the burdens of the people. Surely, this person, this messiah, will chase out the Roman soldiers and restore their country.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news...

Luke 4:18

Jesus reads the prophecy and hands the scroll back to the person who gave it to Him to read. The crowd's attention is on Jesus. Good job. You must have done well in school. You are all grown now, Jesus. We are glad You came back to visit. Jesus read well. The people are pleased.

But Jesus doesn't thank the crowds and take His seat. Jesus tells the crowd that this prophecy that the people have waited for centuries to come true is here now. Standing right in front of them. It is Jesus. He has come to bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty and give sight to the blind. He has the Spirit of the Lord within Him.

Can you imagine the reaction? "Isn't this Joseph's boy? How is His mother, Mary, handling this announcement?" The people, His people, try to throw Jesus off a cliff.

I don't really know how Jesus felt that day. I know that I would feel humiliated. I can't imagine myself making a claim on the scale that Jesus made, but I can definitely imagine being shut down by people who knew me when the earlier parts of my story were unfolding when I claim that my future is nothing like my past. Can't you?

Isn't this one of the reasons that so many of us are unwilling to share our story? Either we think that on one wants to hear our story, or worse, people will listen to our story and reject us. Rejection stings to the core. Rejection returns us to the shame that we felt when we came to realize that we didn't do the things we should have done or done things that we shouldn't have done.

But our stories are too important to be kept silent. Our voices are too essential to be kept silent. Because Jesus claimed His identity, accepted His destiny as God's son, and took on the burdens of all people, we are free to claim our identity. Not who others may think we are, however. We can claim the identity that God had in mind for us while we were still in our mother's womb.

Our past only informs our future. Our history doesn't create our future. While we cannot erase our past, we can choose to follow the One who can shape our future into a beautiful work of art that reflects our Creator.

On September 8th, we will begin our next series that we will also call Back to the future. Our series is based on the movie that was shown in the Asbury Empowerment Arts Center this past Thursday evening. Read the article on What's Coming up in Worship to learn more.

While we cannot erase our past we can choose to follow the One who can shape our future into a beautiful work of art that reflects our Creator.

Meanwhile, come join us as we accept a future designed by a loving God. Come and share your story and hear the stories of others. We worship each Sunday at 10:30AM. Come learn why it is important to tell your story and how to do so. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30am. You will find more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

Welcome to the Asbury Community

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Neighborhood Connection



We envision a community in love with God, each other, and our neighbors evidenced by the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood. We are a center for worship & spiritual growth, a center for connections and a center for health & wellness.

Our goal is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into citizens who contribute to building and maintaining a vibrant neighborhood, and all residents are able to enjoy safety, good health, a culture that fosters life long learning and satisfying lives.

We believe that such an ambitious goal can never be attained without God's grace and abundance and Christ calls each of us to be disciples willing to share our witness through words and acts.

Once upon a time (The elements of style) ...cont. from page 6

In week two of our series we took a step back, or to the side, to talk about a health trend called loneliness. An increasing number of us are experiencing loneliness and this is negatively affecting our health. The cure for loneliness is connection. The path to connection is storytelling. We are connected by our stories. After all, we have a common origin. We have the same Creator. Yet our uniqueness makes our stories unique.

This week our focus is on putting our story together. At least one chapter. Our inspiration comes from this story about an unnamed, afflicted woman whose life changed forever after meeting Jesus Christ.

Once upon a time I did not know Jesus Christ. But now I do and this changes everything.

An important element of style in storytelling is authenticity. Be who you are. Which is another way of saying

be who God created you to be. Recognize that your gifts are just that — gifts. Your ability to reason, to speak, to sing, to create, and to tell a story is a gift that comes from a loving, Creator God. If your story reflects the humility that comes from a recognition that you are not your own creator, your story is more credible.

Another style point is to tell our story with the humility that comes from recognizing that we are not our own creator, and that we are gifted by the God who continues to be with us. An additional style is to recognize the humor that our mishaps offer us and be willing to laugh at our own mistakes. But the most important style point of all is that our stories must answer the question, "Who do we say that Christ is?"

These are the stories that give hope. These are the stories that give life. These are the stories that connect us. Each of us was created for divine purpose. A purpose that can bring joy and healing to others. But each of us

wanders away from time to time. Sometimes we are persuaded by others or by our own greed or ego. Sometimes we simply make a mistake.

As our story moves from "Once upon a time" to the answer to the question of who we have found Christ to be in our own life, our story becomes a story of a faith journey. A story about a belief in something that we cannot see. Yet we know that our faith is itself a gift. And in our choosing life we can help others to choose life simply by sharing our story.

Once upon a time I did not know Jesus Christ. But now I do and this changes everything. This is our story.

Learn to use the elements of style in telling your story. Come join us. We worship each Sunday at 10:30 am. Come learn why it is important to tell your story and how to do so. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30 am. You can find more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.
Pastor Tommy