

My friend the Story Teller is actually also a story gatherer (as a part of his ministry), going from village to village, collecting accounts of the mankind's best efforts to mimic the Spirit of God. Naturally he was most interested in accounts where someone sacrificed themselves in some manner because they truly loved others.

Paul, who was another story teller and collector, was called a seed picker¹ by people who thought he was picking his ideas from various pagan philosophies. The story collector was doing something similar with stories of those people who to some extent had become one with God and His Goodness. He was like a sponge, gathering (or absorbing) stories that had glimmers of a reflection of God. Though they were minute sparks of Good², they are significant to God.

I found my friend one day sitting by the well near a small village. I saw that his eyes were filled with tears, so I asked him why he was upset. He took some time to speak; he tried to tell me a story, but he haltingly got only a few words out as he kept getting choked up. The story he tried to tell me was so powerful that he was held in the grip of emotion, and he was not able to talk.

I thought it ironic that he was a story teller but he could not tell these stories. He eventually told me, once he could talk normally, that he totally submerged himself in the stories he collected and his heart became hooked into them. When he told stories that spoke of life's lessons, he could speak with no problem, but when he told stories that show man's attempt to embrace the very heart of God (and the Great Goodness) he became very emotional. It was something like collecting tears in a bottle³, only these were tears of joy.

So, he found that it was better to write down the stories, as I did as a part of my own mission. He told me that he was putting together a book which did not concentrate on heroes of the faith⁴ so much as regular men and women who had fully integrated God's purpose into their own⁵.

Heroes in one sense, are very mission-oriented, but the activities of those who were becoming (growing) more like God are more purpose-oriented or purpose-based. Consider some of the truly great moments recorded in the Scriptures where men rose above their limited human nature and performed God-like actions. For instance, Joseph himself wept when Judah offered himself to save his younger brother Benjamin⁶. And David was so moved when his three men risked their lives to bring him a drink of water that he couldn't even drink it⁷.

Even though these acts were tiny, brief flashes of Good, they indicated a higher accountable value⁸. The story collector's book was a not the Book of Life⁹, but a Book of "Fuller" Life¹⁰. Many wonderful stories have been recorded in the Scriptures, but this book concerned so many others that developed among God's people as time moved on.

Did the story teller have any real authority for this? No, it was must the mission he took on. But he pictured God as enjoying the stories in this book, somewhat like King Xerxes when he wanted to read the archives of his Kingdom¹¹.

He believed, as I did, that God was emotionally involved with each of people involved in these stories. God shows great pleasure in even our weak attempts for be like Him. Think of those who God mentioned particularly as faithful servants, such as Job¹², and those indicated by Jesus in the terms, "well done, my good and faithful servant⁸." Most especially we know that God considered David "a man after God's own heart¹³". I can imagine His heart swelling with joy (perhaps with God-type tears) at these people whose hearts He saw were merging with His own.

Jesus, the human embodiment of God, physically demonstrated His feelings. We know that He wept for Lazarus but He also showed joy at seeing Good works that flowed from a God-like heart. And when Jesus spoke about the widow giving her all (two mites)¹⁴, the records I have seen do not mention how He paused a moment to recover His voice as He spoke of her sacrifice. I can also imagine Him pause as Peter, after denying Him, struggled to answer the question about whether he loved Him¹⁵.

The story teller worked to fill his book with instances of hearts filled with God to the point of overflowing. Of course, it doesn't compare¹⁶ to the over-arching story of God's gift of Grace in the Greatest Story Ever Told¹⁷. But it is a Book of Response that will be well worth reading.

1. Acts 17:18
2. see story "Flashes in the Night"
3. Psalm 56:8; "You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle (or wineskin); Are they not in Your book?" (instead of wanderings, the latest version of the NIV speaks of misery)
4. see Hebrews 11
5. consider highlights of various lives: Abraham offering Isaac (Genesis 22); Moses offering himself for the people (Exodus 32:31-32); David humbling himself (2 Samuel 12:16 and Psalm 51) and offering himself (2 Samuel 24:17 and 1 Chronicles 21:16); the woman who prepared a room for Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-11); the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:37ff); the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); Thomas, offering to die with Jesus (John 11:16); Dorcas, spoken of highly by her friends for her good works (Acts 9:36)
6. Genesis 45:1-2
7. 2 Samuel 23:13-17 (David seems emotional about this)
8. Matthew 25:21, Matthew 25:23, and Luke 19:17
9. There is the Book of Life, with evil ones blotted out (are we all in it to begin with?) - Exodus 32:32, Psalm 69:28, and Revelation 3:5; and with those who remain being saved - Daniel 12:1, Philippians 4:3, and Revelation 21:27.
10. John 10:10
11. Esther 6:1-2
12. Job 1:8 and 2:3
13. Acts 13:22
14. Luke 21:1-4
15. John 21:15-25
16. 1 John 4:10
17. John 21:25