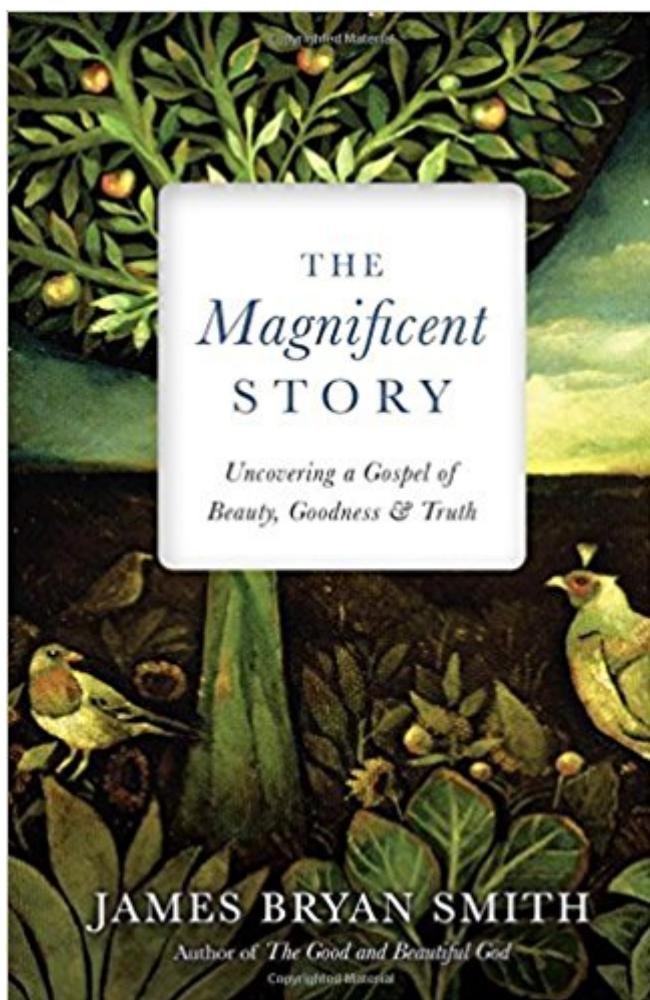


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The Magnificent Story: Uncovering A Gospel Of Beauty, Goodness, And Truth (Apprentice Resources)



Synopsis

We are story-making people. We love reading stories and we love hearing the personal stories of others. We need stories, or narratives, to make sense of our world. And those stories shape our lives. What is the story you have been told about the gospel? About God? About the Christian life? About Jesus? About the cross? About yourself? About heaven? Your answers to these questions will form a story that will determine how your life will go. The answers reveal your ability to trust, to love, to hope and even your capacity for joy. Any story worth giving the power to shape our lives must pass a simple test: is it beautiful, good, and true? If it is, then it is a Magnificent Story and that is where transformation takes place. From James Bryan Smith, author of the bestselling book *Good and Beautiful God*, comes this spiritual formation resource meant to help both individuals and groups understand the Magnificent Story of Christ in their lives. Soon to be followed by *The Magnificent Journey: Living Deep in the Kingdom* (Fall 2018) and *The Magnificent Mission: Called and Sent by the Storyteller* (Fall 2019), the field-tested material within includes spiritual practices at the end of each chapter and a group discussion guide. Uncover the true story of beauty, goodness, and truth that will satisfy the ultimate longings of your heart.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The distinctive contribution of *The Magnificent Story* is its attentiveness to the power of stories to destroy us, diminish us, and deprive us, or to free us, redeem us, and empower us. Spiritual formation teachers have rarely known the power of story, but none has it so central as James Bryan

Smith. I consider The Magnificent Story to be a long leap into the deep graces of spiritual formation, not just for individuals but for small groups and churches." (Scot McKnight, Julius R. Mantey Professor of New Testament, Northern Seminary)

James Bryan Smith (MDiv, Yale University Divinity School, DMin, Fuller Seminary) is a theology professor at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, and a writer and speaker in the area of Christian spiritual formation. He also serves as the director of the Apprentice Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation at Friends University. A founding member of Richard J. Foster's spiritual renewal ministry, *RenovarÃƒÂ©*, Smith is an ordained United Methodist Church minister and has served in various capacities in local churches. Smith is also the editor of *A Spiritual Formation Workbook*, *Devotional Classics* (with Richard Foster), *Embracing the Love of God*, Rich Mullins: An Arrow Pointing to Heaven and *Room of Marvels*.

After my wife and I took over 80 people through the Good and Beautiful series by Jim Smith I have eagerly awaited his next endeavor. I am not disappointed. Jim has continued to encourage a spiritual discipline at the end of each chapter for participants to practice between classes. This practice really facilitates the learner's ability to think more deeply about the message and also helps table discussions. All of this drives home that the God we love is always approachable and desiring honest fellowship with each of us as He dwells within. This is not a hard read at all but it is not a light read. It is an approachable read that clearly helps us to think by providing tangible stories that each of us will be able to relate to, such as the dialogue with Rich Mullins. Jim provides an interesting analogy on how we are made in the image and likeness of God pointing out that our sinfulness never mars the image in which we are made but our sinfulness distorts the likeness of God in which we are made. Great food for thought and I like to ponder such things. There are many tidbits to nibble on in this Magnificent Story. Jim artfully brings the mystical union of the Trinity into focus by clearly presenting the uniqueness of the Godhead. His discussion questions at the end of the chapter will lead participants to a clearer understanding of a subject rarely encountered. The Magnificent Story is one you don't want to miss.

I don't often post reviews, but I feel compelled to for The Magnificent Story. Basically, if Christian faith as you practice it now scares the crap out of you, and leaves you feeling like lead as you tolerate a deep internal thrumming of fear rather than the peace Jesus promised, you need to read this book. The Magnificent Story resonated deeply. It confirmed some lines of learning that

I've been tracing with Jesus over the past several years. A while back I got really sick of being constantly terrified by this faith that was supposed to be bringing peace to my heart. Jesus tells us not to fear, so clearly something was out of whack. I was terrified of God--or at least by the narrative with which most Christians in the western world have grown up (Jim calls this the "scary story"--nothing beautiful about it). I was terrified of "the scary ending." I was tired and stressed out and confused by leaders and lay people who were passing off the "scary story" as the only *legit* God narrative. Without using the language of the transcendentals (but I think very much guided in part by these things), I eventually decided that if what I was reading or hearing (particularly in the realm of theology and so on) was producing fear instead of peace, bringing out my worst instead of my best, guilt instead of conviction, if it left me bereft of joy and of the deep, interior freedom that is a hallmark of Christ's work, I would give myself permission to pass it by. The "fruit" of the "scary story" was a rotted out shell, and I was tired of trying to sell something I, myself, wasn't buying. I appreciated the way Jim showed how goodness, beauty, and truth can help act as filters while we search out what things are of God and what we need to just be rid of once and for all. This book points to the profound beauty of the Gospel of Jesus, a God-narrative that produces the fruit of joy, peace, quietness, freedom, and goodness. With the final letting go of the "scary story" narrative of God, I don't have to try to conjure up peace and freedom--they are a natural byproduct of being caught up in this magnificent story. Jim invites us to see and celebrate beauty for what it is: a sacrament, an icon that moves us to look through it to the utterly beautiful God who made it all possible in the first place. The Magnificent Story inspires me to live beautifully, to celebrate and savor every good and beautiful thing in this life all while giving thanks to God. -->
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"In an age when truth and goodness are met with so much resistance, perhaps only beauty can break through these barriers and reach into our hungry hearts." Not to mention the sound bite. Bullet point, scan happy minds of the digital smartphone age|how do we overcome the practicality of modern evangelicalism and reclaim the fullness of joy in the magnificence of the story God has brought us into? James Bryan Smith reintroduces us to the transcendentals of beauty, goodness, and truth as the proofs in telling the missing fullness of The Magnificent Story of the Gospel. His premise is that our contemporary storytelling is flawed in its presentation of the beauty, goodness and truth of God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as well as our approaching life in this story through the lens of the transcendentals. Herein we have a needed philosophical approach

intended to bring us back to the joy of first glimpsing the grandeur of God in all His eminence, what little we can truly comprehend and understand in the enormity of such a an overwhelming concept as Him. Smith's approach is straightforward to confront a present and pervasive view with biblical and historical proof that may challenge the reader about their long held beliefs and traditions. It did me - so much so, as an early reviewer, I emailed him for clarification (and he responded personally!). I encourage anyone feeling the same to persevere - by working through the presentation; your concern will be rewarded as his premise unfolds. For example, the Roman Road of witnessing is used as an example of how the beauty, goodness and truth of God is not communicated to new believers. This well trod path makes sense to the mature believer who has the map but suffers "trinitarian deficit disorder", and a disjointed presentation of the true nature of God and role of Christ in the Roman Road script. It is not the type of concept that can be unpacked in a straight-line presentation. Smith uses the "shaming gospel" as well as his personal story of a daughter born with tragic challenges and experiences with the late Rich Mullins to unfold his premise: the practical apologetic format has overwhelmed the transcendent story that turned the world upside down. Smith provides an on-going activity to take the reader along with each topic, along with a study guide at the end. I do not see it as a 'one and done' read but a working experience, a learning progression, training one's eyes, heart and mind to recognize beauty, good and truth in all aspects of life and faith, for they are one and the same. As the first volume in a series, The Magnificent Story promises to begin a larger conversation about how we see ourselves in God's Kingdom, relate that experience to fellow believers, and share it with seekers and new converts. Philosophical, requiring a theological background, and willingness to accept challenges to tradition and past interpretation, this book is short but thought provoking. Much like the "precept principle promise" approach, it is now hard NOT to seek the beauty, goodness, and truth in all things and even more joyful to see God where I had not before!

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