

The Healing Power of Stories

by Daniel Taylor

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III. RELIGIOUS STORIES

The great majority of people in the world have grown up with some degree of religious influence. The church, the synagogue, the mosque, the shrine, and the temple tell the most powerful stories of all: stories of first things and last things, of transcendent and eternal things, of innermost and secret things, of things mysterious and things profound. They also tell us what to do when our pet frog dies.

Adapt these questions to your particular religious experience.

1. What are the earliest stories from church that you remember?
2. What was your childhood response to stories of the miraculous and supernatural?
3. What were your favorite stories from the Bible (or other sacred scripture) at various times in your life? Why do you think you liked these best?
4. What were your favorite characters from the Bible? Why were they favorites? Did you identify with them? Find them very different from you? What acts did they perform or values did they embody that attracted you?
5. How has your attitude toward these stories and characters changed over time?
6. What was your early image of God? What stories—from the Bible, church, or family—contributed to that image?
7. What is your present image of God? What stories—from any source—have contributed to the change?
8. What stories of your religious upbringing do you still value? Why these? How are they currently evident in your life? How could they be more so?
9. What stories of personal religious experience were told in your family? To what effect in your own life?
10. What are some of your own stories of religious experience? How have these experiences and stories shaped your life? What is your present attitude toward them?
11. As with school, your own experience in church and at home creates stories. Look at questions 12–16 under the school section and ask the same about church or about the religious experience in the home.