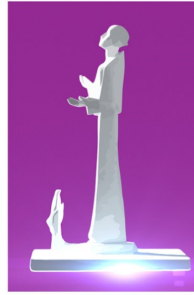


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Theme 5: The Bible's Big Themes

Question 5a. What is your favourite Bible story?

1. What appeals to you about hearing others tell about their favourite Bible story? What do you notice about the way they tell their story?
2. Identify a story or character from the Bible that made an impact on you. What was it about the story that made such an impact?
3. In what ways might you explore that story further? Consider exploring the context out of which the story was written, finding other versions of the story or just reading it several times over to revisit the characters and message.

Gillian Moses

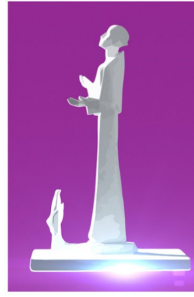
That's a really tricky question and I had to think long and hard about it. In the end I came down on the Samaritan woman at the well, which I think is just a beautiful story. It's often presented as really moralistic and we read a lot of things into it. If you can get past all of that, at its heart it's about a woman being accepted and known by Jesus who then treats her as an equal, who is interested in who she is and what she thinks and gives her an opening into a completely different life that she hadn't imagined before. So what's not to like about that story?

Peter Kline

So my favourite Bible story, or one of them, is the story of Jonah in the Old Testament. And there are a few reasons why I like the Jonah story. The first is just the sort of fantastic nature of the narrative, it's a very fun

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story with lots of interesting and kind of adventuresome elements to it. You've got this prophet who's told to go to this city and he doesn't really want to go to that city so he gets on a boat and tries to flee, and then God causes a storm and then the sailors on the boat want to throw Jonah overboard because he's causing the storm. He does and he gets swallowed by this big sea creature, fish (that somehow we think of as a whale sometimes, but it's not really, it's a big fish), and then he gets vomited up and eventually goes and preaches to Nineveh. So it's a sort of whacky story and that's what I like I like about it.

I also like, the broader theological point that I take it that the story of Jonah is presenting, which you might say is that God's mercy is always bigger than we imagine. That God's readiness to engage people that we might not want to be engaged with always goes ahead of us, is always bigger than our plans.

Also that prophets always don't do everything perfectly. I like that it presents a fallible character. But then also the sort of broadness of God's mercy. Those are the sort of things I like about the narrative.

Jeremy Greaves

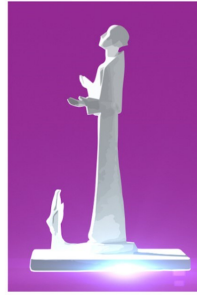
I've got lots of favourite Bible stories, but I think, favourites for me are the parables and particularly two of the parables on lost things: the lost coin and the lost sheep. They're favourites for me for two reasons.

One is that we can read them without getting caught up in arguments about "Was there actually a woman who lost a coin? Or was there actually a sheep that got lost?" but we can spend time instead thinking about what they might mean. And so, the parables are a great gift in that space.

Those particular parables speak to me because while we're often told they are about repentance it seems to me they're more about the love

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of this God who searches us out even before we repent. A coin can't repent, seems to me the sheep doesn't repent. But the woman and the shepherd goes and searches for those things regardless.

For me that's a wonderful thing to imagine.