

The Challenge today - a different metanarrative

“This book is about engaging the deepest aspirations of our secular friends and asking them to consider how the story of the gospel, as strange as may seem to them at first, just may lead them to what their heart has been looking for all along.” Telling a Better Story (p. 7)

The importance of learning another person’s story or metanarrative is that it “helps us understand why two intelligent people using the same basic logic and looking at the same question can come to drastically different positions. It is not because one is dumb and the other is smart. IQ has little to do with it. Rather, their foundational frameworks for rationality are different, which leads to distinct conclusions on life’s biggest questions.” Telling a Better Story (p. 20).

“This observation should have a profound impact on our approach to our unbelieving neighbor because it means we can’t assume that people, if given the right “facts” and logic, will agree with us on rational grounds. This is simply not the world we live in, and it’s time we respond well by practicing patience, learning how to have productive conversations, and interacting with our unbelieving friends’ underlying metanarratives.” Chatraw, Telling a Better Story (p. 20).

Meta-stories can’t be absolutely proven, but they can be compared. We can ask, Which story is most coherent on its own terms? Which story is able to incorporate the insights from other stories in a way that makes sense? Which story is most livable? Which story corresponds with our observations, experiences, and history?

- Oxford professor C. S. Lewis to write, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” But not everyone is in the same place as Lewis was when he made this statement, so this raises the question: How do we address people’s imagination deficit problems? How do we help people see how Christianity illuminates everything?

“What’s your worldview?” can sound like you’re looking for a fight, while “What’s your story?” communicates you actually care and that you want to have a conversation.

The Christian Story How would you begin to tell the story of God?

The Christian story is centered around a triune God. As an outpouring of his love, God created everything in the universe good. story.) As God’s creatures, we have been created with inherent value, meaning, and purpose. As his image bearers, humans are made for a relationship with God, to love others, and to care for creation. And yet something has gone deeply wrong. Our problem is that we, quite absurdly, used our God given abilities to run from God. The result is a disordered world where we love things in the wrong order—we worship ourselves and the world around us rather than the Creator. We have become self-absorbed and fail to love others as ourselves. Having turned in on ourselves and away from God, we have become ill-equipped to live for what we were made. Chatraw page 61

Inside out apologetics

“Inside out” begins by entering a person’s social imagination and engaging their ideas from within it. By beginning within their own story—listening for hints of the larger and smaller narratives that inform their life, paying attention to what they look to in order to fulfill the inescapable features of personhood—we are positioned to identify commonalities, listen so we can discuss points of disagreement, challenge their view on its own terms, and show how the prevailing cultural narratives fail to live up to their deepest aspirations

What can we affirm, and what do we need to challenge? • Where does the story or stories they’ve embraced lead, and how is their view of the world unlivable and inconsistent? What Can We Affirm, and What Do We Need to Challenge? We see Paul take this “yes and no” approach in Athens, where he finds commonalities with the pagan culture but also challenges their perspectives (Acts 17).

From this point we’re inviting them to try on the biblical story to see how it fits with their experiences, observations, and history.

Inside: Ask yourself:

- What can I affirm, and what will I need to challenge?
- Where does this story lead, and is it internally consistent and livable?

Outside: Ask yourself:

- Where do competing views borrow from the Christian story?
- How does the Christian narrative better address our experiences, observations, and history?
- What verses in the Bible speak to these issues?