

Sharing Your Faith

Prepared to Answer – Telling the Greatest Story Ever Told, by Mark A. Paustian
(Northwestern Publishing House, 222 pp., \$14.99)
Reviewed by Alan Todd

Just when I thought I'd read about pretty much every "method" to sharing my faith with unbelievers, along comes a book that presents a unique approach. Story telling.

Paustian points out that for virtually every objection to Christianity (or even to a belief in God) that unbelievers may promulgate, there is a Bible story that provides an answer. And, let's face it, we all love, and get caught up in, a great story. Especially when it promises to speak to our hearts. How much more so the "greatest story ever told". In fact, Paustian reminds his readers that Jesus rarely said anything to the crowds following him without using a parable – a story – that taught about what forgiveness, wisdom, faith, and love was all about.

And, wow, are there a lot of stories to tell! In this book, Paustian relates over 30 stories. Each is in response to some of the usual (and some unusual) questions of the doubters and unbelievers. What are some examples? "But I am pro-choice"; "There are no moral absolutes"; "With so many interpretations and denominations, who can say who is right"?; "I want to feel good about myself"; "How do I know I am Christian"?; and my favorite: "Christians have to look more saved if I am to believe in their Savior".

The stories are written in a narrative format as if Paustian is actually talking one on one to an unbeliever. I found it initially difficult to identify with this "unbeliever"; i.e., to put myself in his or her place and so really understand why Paustian took this or that twist or turn in the story he was relating (couldn't he just come out and say it? Short answer: No). In addition, Paustian often uses a stream of consciousness technique when relating to his audience (the unbeliever) to provide some insight into what is going on in his own (Paustian's) mind while he is telling the story. At first this seemed quirky, but after a while (I read this book over a two month period using each of the stories as an evening devotion), I felt as if I really understood where Paustian was coming from on a very personal level. A very satisfying experience.

Paustian is obviously very well read. He provides quotes from Luther (of course), C.S. Lewis, Josh McDowell, Paul Little, G. K. Chesterton, and Larry Crabb (well known Christian psychologist who provides, among many others, this insight: "Life itself is not about a plan to follow, that is a plan to fix whatever is wrong here. It's about a person to trust."). Readers get the benefit of these and other insights sprinkled throughout the stories that Paustian tells.

This is the first book of a two book series, the second of which is entitled: "*More Prepared to Answer – Telling the Greatest Story Ever Told*". More on that in a later review. Allow yourself to get caught up in these stories. Your faith will be strengthened and you will be more confident when sharing that faith with others.

#####