

Day 1: My Life Story, Your Glory

Ever since humans began using the written word, they have been working to find a way to cover up their mistakes. Did you know that once upon a time people actually used moist bread to erase their writing errors? I don't know about you, but I can't imagine wasting something as delicious as a Panera bagel or an Olive Garden breadstick just to hide a misspelled word. Fortunately for all the bread lovers of the world, Edward Nairne developed and marketed the very first rubber eraser in 1770.

Nearly two hundred years later (in 1956), an American typist named Bette Nesmith Graham invented a correction fluid that we know today as Wite-Out. (As a music fan, I feel compelled to tell you she was also the mother of Mike Nesmith, one of the members of the 1960s pop band The Monkees!) Bette helped save the jobs of countless receptionists and made a ton of money doing it. As computers came along, the good old delete key provided us with a super easy way to get rid of our mistakes. Of course, if you use an Apple product now, you can even "unsend" messages on your iPhone and computer. This compulsion to erase what we have written extends into our lives too.

I know what many of you are thinking: *If only it were that easy to erase the unwanted sentences, paragraphs, and chapters of our own lives.* Unfortunately, no moist bread, eraser, Wite-Out, or delete key can undo the parts of our own story we don't like. We've all said and done things we wish we could undo. I have a few examples of my own, and by the time you read this I will have a few more. It is just part of being human.

But have you ever considered that maybe when we are tempted to hide those parts of our life, to white them out so that no one can see them—that isn't part of God's plan? What if instead of trying to *erase*, we simply handed our story over to God and trusted Him to *reclaim* and *redeem* our story by rewriting it in His own handwriting?

When we read about the apostle Paul's life and ministry, we find that he was not concerned at all about "whiting out" the parts of his past that he most regretted.

He didn't shy away from the bad parts of his story. Saul had terrorized and imprisoned the early Christians. He understood that God's grace is not some "magic eraser in the sky." God stepped into his life, changed his name, and began to retell his story. After his conversion, Paul was not only transparent about the mistakes of his past but was also honest about continuing to struggle with sin (Romans 7). God reframes our stories with words of love and retells our lives in the nurturing light of His redemptive plan.

God takes broken sentences and uses them to rewrite your life into something beautiful. I think that's why Paul acknowledged freely (and to all who would listen to him) that he was the *worst* of sinners. He was free to share the redemptive truth of his entire story—not just the shiny and glossy parts—because he understood that God was using every line to bring others closer to the truth of His love.

Today I want to challenge you to embrace the truth that God is aware of every line, every sentence, every paragraph, yes, every chapter of your story and He isn't scared off by any of it. God knows every detail, and He *still* loves you. In fact, He wants to step into the darkest and most broken parts and use that very material to build something beautiful. God doesn't even bother with a delete key—He is too busy rewriting.

CONNECT TO HIS STORY

Read the following passages and consider how they apply to your life:

ACTS 8:1–3 *“And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.”*

ROMANS 7:22–23 *“For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.”*

1 TIMOTHY 1:15–16 *“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.”*

How do you think the early Christians felt about Saul/Paul and his conversion?

How does Paul use his past as a testimony to God’s grace? What are some of the ways that God rewrites Paul’s story “line by line and word by word”?

What area of your life do you think God wants to use as a testimony to His redeeming love and grace?

CRAFT YOUR STORY

In your journal, take some time to document a part of your story that you have resisted handing over to God. Maybe it is a difficult season of your life or a time when you struggled spiritually or hurt others. Maybe it is that sentence you wish you wouldn't have spoken. Consider if you have hidden or tried to white it out rather than handing it over to Him. How might God want to rewrite that area of your life?

SHARE YOUR STORY

Write the names of three people who need to hear how God is rewriting your story. Maybe you know of some- one hurt by that unwanted part of your story or someone struggling in a similar way who would be encouraged by God’s work in your life. Plan to spend some time with these people in the next few weeks and share your testimony.

LIVE YOUR STORY

Find a quiet place today to spend some time in prayer and ask God to provide you with new words for that part of your story you are struggling with the most. Think about how God used Paul, the “worst of sinners,” to bring others closer to Him. He wants to rewrite your life, line by line.

Write down three words that come to mind as you pray and read Scripture, then post those words someplace where you can see them every day as a reminder that the Author of all things is always adding His own words to your story.