

Story-shaped theology

By [Joanna Harader](#)

November 8, 2013

Recently I came across this beautiful question in [a sermon from Randy Newswanger](#):

Are my understandings of God, my understandings of healing and redemption, my understandings of community and celebration large enough to hold the specific details of your story?

I think this question is at the heart of church. We base our shared life around the Story of scripture, but there are so many more stories that we hear and live together. And each story grows and shapes and sometimes even transforms the way we understand how God works in the world. At least it should.

I worry sometimes that this whole internet thing allows us to be too selective about the stories we let ourselves hear. That the cable TV craziness means we only have to watch TV shows that validate our already-held ideas. That the church-shopping syndrome lets us ease into worship communities where we only have to listen to stories that mirror our own.

But we don't have to be imprisoned in our comfort zones. Stories from around the world are just a mouse click away. Or a library trip. Or maybe even a walk to the corner coffee shop.

Are my understandings of God, my understandings of healing and redemption, my understandings of community and celebration large enough to hold the specific details of your story?

I want to hold this question in my heart today. I want to listen closely to people's stories, to listen deeply. Then, tomorrow, I want to try to do it again. If enough of us can manage enough energy and enough grace to do this more days than we don't, I believe the church—and the world—will be transformed.

Originally posted at [Spacious Faith](#)