

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

The Grand Narrative Worldview: A Narrative Inquiry into the Impact of Biblical
Metanarrative Teaching in Liberty University's School of Divinity
Global Studies Program

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
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By

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THE GRAND NARRATIVE WORLDVIEW: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE
IMPACT OF BIBLICAL METANARRATIVE TEACHING IN LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF DIVINITY GLOBAL STUDIES PROGRAM

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There is limited research and literature on the effectiveness of narrative-centered academic learning environments that utilize biblical metanarrative as a tool for teaching. Literature exists showing that story is an effective tool within education, within discipleship, and within training for cross-cultural effectiveness. This narrative inquiry research study focused on Liberty University's Global Studies Program, a program that overlaps these distinct areas into one platform. Global Studies uses the power of story through the Grand Narrative of Scripture to teach students academic content, equip them as messengers of God's Story, and help them assess and understand their own narratives within a larger context. This study explored how interns at Liberty University perceived the Global Studies program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative.

Through a narrative inquiry study, research showed the Global Studies program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative has impacted the lives and personal narratives of Global Studies interns at Liberty University in ways that go far beyond the academic endeavors of the program. Grand Narrative teaching deepened students' understanding of Scripture, gave them an understanding of the story in which they play a part, gave them a framework for placing other learning, and strengthened the Global Studies program as a community. This metanarrative worldview contributed to Global Studies being not only a knowledge-based learning environment, but also a transformational discipleship environment. On this basis, it is recommended that Global Studies continue to use and promote biblical metanarrative teaching and that other programs and schools consider utilizing the approach as well.

Key Words: Narrative, Narrative-centered learning, Metanarrative, Biblical Higher Education, Transformational Learning, Grand Narrative, Global Studies

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A twenty-year-old American girl sits in the airport in West Africa preparing to board her plane back to the United States. For four months she has been teaching English in a community center as part of an academic internship for her Global Studies degree from Liberty University. The Bible in her carry-on holds the stories she used to teach her students, and she smiles as she remembers their questions and excitement. As she looks out the window at the plane she will soon board, she wonders how she will ever describe the experiences of the last four months to her family, professors, and friends back home. She has many stories to tell; but as she runs through each one in her mind, she is overwhelmed by the daunting task of what it will be like to try to describe the entire experience, and not just separate memories. She has felt how each memory has been strung together to make up the story of her time. And she is expectant to see how all of them connect to the continuing story of her life and experiences back in the United States.

She grieves many goodbyes, but she is happy she will be returning to a community of people who will listen to her stories and have their own stories to tell. More importantly, she is comforted by the fact that all of their stories belong to the greater story God has been writing in the world since the beginning of time. It is this story she learned in her classes before going and it is this story she has shared with her friends in West Africa. It is the God of this story that has comforted her in her joys and her struggles. And it is this story that gives her, and all of her classmates, a place to understand their experiences and find a place of belonging upon their return.

The Liberty University Global Studies Context

Every spring semester, juniors in Liberty University's Global Studies program complete academic internships serving with various organizations in an array of countries around the world. These students are part of a program that aims at training them to be effective followers and communicators of Christ cross-culturally. Redeveloped from an older degree under a different name, Global Studies' first class of students began in the 2012-2013 school year. According to the school catalog,

The Global Studies program is designed to produce Christ-centered leaders with the values, knowledge, and intercultural skills required to excel as individuals in their communities, lead as professionals in their fields and serve as followers of Christ in the global context of the 21st century.¹

In 2013 during a season of functional redevelopment, I was hired to direct the internship program and was tasked with designing the process and training for Global Studies students as they pursued their required academic international internships taking place the spring semester of their junior year. Under the leadership and in partnership with the chair and faculty of the department, the use of biblical metanarrative quickly became an important component of the training and ethos of the Global Studies program.

Beginning with the foundation of the program, the professors begin to discuss God's heart and purpose as being something that is unchanging from the Old through the New Testaments of Scripture. As students learn about cultures and geography in Global Studies 200: Introduction to Global Studies, they also learn God has had a heart for all nations since Genesis and part of His purpose has always been for all nations to know Him. In Global Studies 220: Intercultural Communication and Engagement, part of the

¹ "BS in Global Studies," Liberty University, accessed November 10, 2018, <https://www.liberty.edu/divinity/index.cfm?PID=28339>.

curriculum involves defining and telling the Gospel. This is partially done in story format, with a large portion of the semester set aside for teaching on how the Gospel story does not just begin in the New Testament but is the plotline for all of Scripture.

In Global Studies 220, students are officially introduced to the concept of biblical narrative in a three-hour lecture on the metanarrative of the Bible. The presentation begins by first defining story and identifying the important parts of a story, then goes on to incorporate the metanarrative of Scripture into that understanding. The teaching, in some ways, reflects that of a literary approach to reading Scripture, an approach many recognize as valuable or even “crucial.”² The point, however, is not that the Bible is literature, but instead, that it is a story everyone is a part of. Emphasis is placed on the difference between main plots versus subplots and major characters versus minor characters. The discussion allows students to be given the perspective that God’s story of redemption is the main plot of the world while individual stories are subplots. In the same way, God is the main character with everyone else filling the role of minor characters. This clarification about story continues to play an important role in the entire Global Studies program as students begin to understand minor characters and subplots are always meant to point toward the main plot and major character.³ For them, this realization means they are meant to find value by being a part of God’s greater narrative.

Once story or narrative is introduced and overviewed, a structure for the Bible is presented that follows the theme of God’s presence from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation, and gives students a foundational structure that continues to be used

² Robert Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1981), 1.

³ David Howard, *How to Build a Great Screenplay: A Master Class in Storytelling for Film* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 2006), 298.

throughout the program. While the theme of presence was, in part, chosen because of a personal preference to present the narrative in that format, the way it is presented has been developed with the help of many resources included in the literature section of this thesis, with much personal study and insight. The theme of God's presence was chosen because it is a central aspect or truth of the Christian faith that can be followed clearly through the narrative of the Bible and lends itself to helping students understand the continuity of its storyline and their placement within it.⁴ It is a plotline through Scripture, such as presence, that directly connects to what the students are being tasked with in Global Studies as those sent out with the Holy Spirit to share the story of God.⁵ Their understanding of the indwelling presence of God empowers them to live their place in His story with boldness.⁶ The presence of God as a core theme of the narrative of Scripture is what equips students to live out their faith cross-culturally as well as what gives the Global Studies curriculum and internship a root that tethers different aspects of the program to the larger narrative of this world. Furthermore, it gives a foundation for the structure that is then extended out in further teaching to include other story threads and themes that can be seen in the story and applied to the lives of the students.

As students progress through the program and specifically through the process of their cross-cultural internships, the Grand Narrative lecture in Global Studies 220 sits as a foundation for many conversations and trainings. The biblical structure introduced in that

⁴ Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1978), xxvii.

⁵ G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 122.

⁶ M. Barrett Fisher, "Incarnation and Missiology: A Biblical Theological Assessment of Selected Incarnational Models of Cross-Cultural Ministry" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 133.

lecture becomes the framework for discipleship within the program and for the wider story in which students set their own experiences and share with those around them. The metanarrative is the lens by which they interpret personal purpose and meaning throughout the entirety of the program, specifically during the three semesters where the students prepare for their internships, go on them, and return from them. This helps to solidify biblical narrative as a foundational worldview for how these students walk their daily lives and pursue purpose, holiness, and calling. It allows them to consider their own narratives and the transforming sanctifying work of God who authors their stories. In other words, the biblical metanarrative interacts with multiple levels and areas of learning the Global Studies program pursues. Global Studies is an academic program that uses the power of story and narrative to teach the academic content of the program, disciple the students for life transformation in their faith, equip the students to engage cross-culturally, and help them assess their experience upon their return. See Appendix B for more information on how biblical metanarrative and the individual biblical stories are used in the Global Studies internship process.

The Value of Narrative and Biblical Metanarrative

As mentioned above, the Global Studies program uses narrative to engage students with multiple areas of learning. There are many wise, hard-working scientists, educators, researchers, pastors, cross-cultural workers, and laymen beyond Global Studies who have seen the value of story and narrative within their own lives and disciplines. Below some are mentioned; and their work and writing will be further discussed in the literature review.

Haven, a scientist turned storyteller, has used his love of science and story, through research, to show human brains are hardwired to better understand information that is delivered through narrative means. His work has made way for an “emerging field of neural story science,” where he has led the way in developing “a set of powerful, practical, and tested tools that provide the key to effective engagement, empathy, influence and communication.”⁷ He is convinced, and works to convince others, that narratives should be used in business and other more commonly literate cultural systems to better communicate important concepts and values. Other scientists have engaged with his perspective as well and have seen the value of narrative within their own research and work. Some have gone as far as suggesting that narrative should be used to teach science in the classroom. In 2009 Avraamidou and Osborne argued for narrative-based learning that would engage students with scientific knowledge in a way that would help students see beyond factual scientific information and see the application of it in their lives.⁸

Beyond the scientific classroom, multiple educators have argued for the use of narrative in education so students can connect more deeply to the subject matter they are learning and become co-constructors of their experience.⁹ While much of this research is focused on the learning of children, it is not just children who learn effectively through these narrative-centered learning environments. Clark, an associate professor of adult education, says story-based learning fosters learning that is transformational and should

⁷ “Applying the Science of Story to the Art of Communication,” Kendall Haven, accessed September 4, 2019, <http://www.kendallhaven.com>.

⁸ Lucy Avraamidou and Jonathan Osborne, “The Role of Narrative in Communicating Science,” *International Journal of Science Education* 31, no.12 (June 30, 2009): 1683-1707.

⁹ Bradford W. Mott et al., “Towards Narrative-Centered Learning Environments” (paper presented at the 1999 AAAI Fall Symposium on Narrative Intelligence, Menlo Park, CA, 1999), <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~michaelm/nidocs/MottCallawayEtAl.pdf>, 4.

be used in education geared towards all ages.¹⁰ Researchers Lawrence and Paige, agree and argue that storytelling in adult education is a needed strategy for engaging with and teaching adult populations of students as it allows the students to be able to connect with the curriculum more personally.¹¹ There are multiple educators within academia who are seeing and presenting storytelling and narrative as an appropriate and effective tool in education because of how it allows the learner to connect with what they are learning at a much deeper level. Rossiter and Clark explain that this deep level learning happens through narrative because it connects learning to experience.¹²

Deep-level learning through story/narrative is something pastors and leaders in the church and para-church ministries are engaging as well. Sharpe, a preaching minister, wrote in 2016 about a program developed at his church that sought to disciple members by means of the metanarrative of the Bible. An article about that process was published in *Discernment: Theology and the Practice of Ministry* as a resource for other ministers and disciple-makers. Sharpe found that “a discipleship program that combines a missional/narrative reading of scripture with spiritual disciplines has been shown to help participants grow in spiritual formation and join the mission of God in the world.”¹³ Approaches like this have also been used in parachurch organizations. In CRU ministry at

¹⁰ M. Carolyn Clark, “Narrative Learning: Its Contours and Its Possibilities,” *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 126 (2016): 5.

¹¹ Randee Lipson Lawrence and Dennis Swiftdeer Paige, “What Our Ancestors Knew: Teaching and Learning through Storytelling,” *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* no. 149 (Spring 2016): 68.

¹² Marsha Rossiter and M. Carolyn Clark, *Narrative and the Practice of Adult Education* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2007), 10.

¹³ Travis Sharpe, “A Narrative, Missional Approach to Discipleship and Spiritual Growth,” *Discernment: Theology and the Practice of Ministry* 2, no. 1 (2016): 17.

the University of Central Florida, ministers saw a difference in how the students engaged with discussion of spiritual concepts when approached through narrative means.¹⁴ Byrd, a Baptist collegiate minister, also wrote about the power of narratives in deeper learning for the Christian faith, though, he focuses on the narratives of the individuals as “faith biographies.”¹⁵ He found that through people sharing the stories of their faith journeys, connections were made that developed a community that fostered transformation learning.¹⁶ Global Studies engages with both of these types of narrative learning within a Christian community.

Beyond the above disciplines, the power of narrative and story have also found their way into discussions on how to best engage Christian learning in academia. Multiple articles in the *Christian Education Journal* have engaged with this approach and encourage its use in adult religious education. Corcoran, in “Biblical Narratives and Life Transformation: An Apology for the Narrative Teaching of Bible Stories” contends biblical narrative is not simply a good approach for teaching Scripture, it is a powerful way to help students integrate their experiences into a larger story that then builds community with each other.¹⁷ Other articles like Short’s “Formed By Story: The Metanarrative of the Bible As Doctrine” argue narrative should be the lens used to teach

¹⁴ Dawn Herzog Jewell, “Orality at Home: The Language of Postmodernism,” *Christianity Today* 50, no. 3 (March 2006): 58, accessed October 1, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/march/31.58.html>.

¹⁵ Nathan C. Byrd, “Narrative Discipleship: Guiding Emerging Adults to ‘Connect the Dots’ of Life and Faith,” *Christian Education Journal* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 244.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Henry A. Corcoran, “Biblical Narratives and Life Transformation: An Apology for the Narrative Teaching of Bible Stories,” *Christian Education Journal* 4, no. 1 (2017): 40-41.

the doctrines of the faith.¹⁸ These are just a few examples of the conversations taking place in the consideration of story and narrative in higher learning.

An interesting thing to note is that while some of these approaches and conversations may seem new within western context, they have been used by followers of Christ living cross-culturally in illiterate and oral cultures as an evangelism and discipleship method for more than thirty years.¹⁹ In the late 1980s, an organization called New Tribes Mission (now Ethnos 360) began developing a form of evangelism that utilized sharing stories from the Bible chronologically.²⁰ They called this Chronological Bible Teaching (CBT). As other organizations and cross-cultural workers began seeing the effectiveness of this approach, they began developing this even further. In the 1990s, the International Mission Board (IMB) “under the direction of Jim Slack and J.O. Terry, developed CBS (Chronological Bible Storying) and began using the term “storying” to refer to the approach that was developed.²¹ They used stories from Scripture that spanned the entirety of the story of the Bible that could be told over a long period of time but also developed “Creation 2 Christ (C2C), a brief evangelism tool” that could be used for storying Scripture in a shorter time span.²² This, along with other tools like *Firm Foundations*, a longer version of Creation to Christ and created well before that resource,

¹⁸ Sharon Warkentin Short, “Formed by Story: The Metanarrative of the Bible as Doctrine,” *Christian Education Journal* 9 (Spring 2012): S 115.

¹⁹ Gary D. Myers, “Bible Storying: Not Just for the Mission Field,” Baptist Press, April 8, 2011, <http://www.bpnews.net/35018/bible-storying-not-just-for-the-mission-field>.

²⁰ One Story, “History of Storying,” accessed September 11, 2019, <https://onestory.org/what-is-storying/history-of-storying/>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Tom Steffen, “Tracking the Orality Movement,” *Lausanne Global Analysis* 3, no. 2 (March 2014), <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2014-03/tracking-the-orality-movement-some-implications-for-21st-century-missions>.

with forty eight lessons teaching through the Bible, began to become more widely used around the world as global workers sought to share the Gospel.²³

These tools however, though effective, are not perfect. Wu points out approaches like C2C might simplify the Bible too much and may not equip the hearers to interpret Scripture accurately.²⁴ He also points out “C2C is shaped more by systematic theology than biblical theology.”²⁵ In other words, the narrative told through C2C can follow the storyline of specific theological categories instead of the main progression of the actual story. While C2C might tell the story of the Bible, it could miss some very important components and does not “give proper balance to the whole story.”²⁶ Wu is not saying the approach is bad, just that it does not actually teach a “balanced presentation of the grand narrative.”²⁷ He agrees it is a powerful tool for evangelism but believes it is “too narrow to be a sufficient framework for biblical theology and thus makes it more difficult for people to accurately interpret the Bible.”²⁸ Regardless, global workers have used these tools to present the Gospel for many years and have seen powerful response by those who have heard it. The initial tools and training have been further developed by the IMB,

²³ CMC: Commissioned to Mature and Multiply Churches, “Firm Foundations: Creation to Christ,” accessed October 21, 2019, <https://www.cmcrosedale.org/ministries/discipleship-resources/firm-foundations-creation-to-christ/>.

²⁴ Jackson Wu, “Taking the Context Out of the Bible?” *Patheos*, April 9, 2013, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2013/04/09/taking-the-context-out-of-the-bible-contextualization-among-oral-peoples-series/>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Jackson Wu, “Critiquing Creation to Christ (C2C),” *Patheos*, April 13, 2013. <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2013/04/11/critiquing-creation-to-christ-c2c/>

²⁸ *Ibid.*

other followers of Christ, and sending organizations as more and more people joined what became a “modern-day movement” to engage the world through story.²⁹

In 2005 the International Orality Network (ION) was formed in order to bring together a network of organizations that would focus on oral storying to communicate the truth of God’s Word.³⁰ As orality and storying have become more recognized terms in cross-cultural engagement, leading voices in those networks have sought to bring the effectiveness of the approach back into a Western context. Avery Willis, who once served as the Senior Vice President for Overseas Operations for the IMB, wrote, “Little did I realize that addressing the challenge of discipling oral learners cross-culturally would solve a close-to-home problem . . . of how to make disciples in America.”³¹ A story approach has begun to be seen in churches and discipleship programs more frequently and has even made its way into Christian educational institutions like Biola University and Fuller Theological Seminary.³² As educators are engaging with a narrative approach to learning, they are realizing stories interact with the classroom in a way that fosters what are “considered to be the best practices of adult learning.”³³ This depth of learning is even more potent when the subject matter is Scripture and the faith. While

²⁹ Steffen, “Tracking the Orality Movement,” 2014.

³⁰ ION: International Orality Network, “About Ion,” accessed September 11, 2019, <https://orality.net/about/>.

³¹ Avery T. Willis and Mark Snowden, *Truth that Sticks: How to Communicate Velcro Truth in a Teflon World* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 22.

³² Steffen, “Tracking the Orality Movement,” 2014.

³³ Jennifer Jagerson, “Harnessing the Power of Narrative in Christian Education,” *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 2 (2014): 266.

story teaching is finding its way slowly into research and literature, it is very limited on the use of narrative in the way Global Studies uses it.

Statement of the Problem

Literature exists on the power of story for communication, the use and effectiveness of narrative in higher education, the use of biblical narrative in discipleship, biblical metanarrative as a tool for equipping cross-cultural workers, and narrative as a way of understanding experience. However, limited research and literature exists on the effectiveness of narrative in a context where these realities overlap, such as using a biblical metanarrative for discipling and equipping students in biblical higher education. But little is known regarding how interns at Liberty University perceive the Global Studies program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this narrative inquiry qualitative research study is to explore how interns at Liberty University perceive the Global Studies program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative.

Research Questions

The primary question explored during this research was as follows:
How do interns at Liberty University perceive the Global Studies program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative? The related sub-research questions were as follows:

1. How do participants describe their experience with the use of the Grand Narrative method in GLST?

2. How has the teaching of Grand Narrative within the Global Studies program impacted participants' understanding of Scripture?
3. How has participants' understanding of the narrative of Scripture affected their understanding of their identity and purpose?
4. How has participants' understanding of the narrative of Scripture affected them as disciples of Christ and disciple-makers?
5. How do participants think the teaching of Grand Narrative has impacted the Global Studies program and community?
6. How has participants' understanding of the narrative of Scripture affected their experience with their internship through the entire process of preparing, going, and returning?
7. How has participants' understanding of the narrative of Scripture affected them negatively?
8. What recommendations do participants have for how to improve the Grand Narrative teaching used in Global Studies?

Statement of Importance of the Problem

As the Global Studies program continues to develop and grow, it is important appropriate assessment takes place. While yearly academic assessment does include opportunities for students to provide feedback, no directed research concerning the use of biblical narrative within the program had been conducted up until this point. As the approach to biblical narrative is a continuing thread throughout the entire program, a more direct consideration of that specific thread is beneficial in that it can help leadership better consider the effectiveness of what is being done. This would then improve the

students' learning and the teachers' teaching. Furthermore, as higher education programs (especially ones in the areas of Christian faith and international sending for Gospel witness) continue to assess the best approach for transformational learning that equips graduates to be effective Christ-followers and Christ-communicators, research is needed to show the effectiveness of biblical metanarrative as a model for these types of programs.

These research findings should provide useful feedback as the program continues to be developed and as other educators in different contexts consider how to best approach equipping their students. Furthermore, they will show how approaching the Bible as one story can impact a program and its students.

I am qualified to address this problem for many reasons. First, understanding biblical narrative has vastly impacted my own life and narrative. This allows me to recognize similar insight and growth in other people. Second, I am one of the primary professors within the Global Studies department who both teaches biblical metanarrative and then uses that narrative in further training and development of students. Third, due to my unique role within the department, I have a relationship with the students that has allowed me to have direct access to them and know them in a narrative way. In other words, I have walked a unique story with them as they prepare for, go, and return from their internships. During this time, I lead trainings and track with the students through their internship process. Part of that process includes specifically reading weekly journals of their own personal narratives and how God is interacting with them.

Definitions

The following definitions are used in this study:

- *Biblical metanarrative* refers to the overarching plot of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. While the Bible does have many smaller stories within its pages, the larger plot follows the protagonist, God, and His plan to redeem a fallen world to Himself through the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ. Every page of Scripture somehow supports this main plotline.³⁴ In this paper when any of the following terms are used, they are referring to *biblical metanarrative* as defined above: *the story, the narrative, God's story, the Grand Narrative*.
- *A student's narrative* is a way to refer to a student's life or internship experience in a way that uses comparable terms. This terminology is used with students in order to continually place before them the reality that their internship and lives should be understood within the larger narrative of the Bible.
- *Global Studies*, as already explained, is an academic program under Liberty University's School of Divinity that is designed "to produce Christ-centered leaders . . . in the global context of the 21st century."³⁵ This study will focus primarily on Global Studies majors who complete a semester-long international academic internship during the Spring of their junior year.
- *GLST* is the catalogue code for Global Studies courses and is often used as an abbreviated way to discuss the Global Studies program and department.

³⁴ Bill Jackson, *The Biblical Metanarrative: One God / One Plan / One Story* (Corona, CA: Radical Middle Press, 2014), 16.

³⁵ "BS in Global Studies," Liberty University, accessed November 10, 2018, <https://www.liberty.edu/divinity/index.cfm?PID=28339>.

- *Internship*, in this study, will refer to the entire Global Studies internship process which includes the training and debriefing components and lasts from the semester before to the semester after the students physically move overseas for their internships.
- *Gospel*, while oftentimes referring to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and what that means for the salvation of humanity, will be expanded beyond that definition. In Global Studies, and in this thesis, Gospel will refer to the entire redemptive work of God from Genesis to Revelation. While the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ stands as central to Gospel understanding, the larger story of God's redemptive work is included.

Scope

This thesis is not meant to be an exhaustive assessment of the use of narrative or metanarrative within all academic literature or even within all academic programs purposed to equip students to interact effectively cross-culturally. Instead, it examines the narratives of twelve students from the Global Studies Spring 2018 internship class at Liberty University.

Limitations

Since this research focuses on a narrow group, the research cannot be generalized to a larger population, and cannot generalize about the wider impact of narrative. The largest limitation comes from the fact that I come into the research having already interacted with the students and their learning process. This means that unchecked, I might bring my own bias and knowledge into the research. In order to avoid this, I have regularly reflected on myself and have sought to set aside any biases I bring to the

process. I approached interviews and research having bracketed any previous experience or assumptions I might have about the students and their stories. I pursued peer feedback and accountability in order to maintain honest and unbiased research. These devices kept limitations in check.

In the research method chosen (narrative inquiry), research is enhanced by the social interactions and relationships between the researcher and participants. In some ways, the researcher is meant to infuse his/her own story into the narrative of the participants.³⁶ Because I have already been interacting with the students through their process of learning and living out their understanding of the biblical metanarrative, there was a trusted relationship already in place for the research. Furthermore, appropriate measures were taken to ensure that students did not feel pressured into taking part in the study. These are explained more fully in the data collection section below.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this introduction has described the Liberty University Global Studies context as an academic program that utilizes the metanarrative of Scripture as a foundational approach to teaching content and application within the program with the internship experience being the opportunity to specifically live out that content and application in various overseas contexts. It has introduced the discussion of the value of narrative and biblical metanarrative as approaches to various aspects of the program's teaching and has introduced the need for assessment, both for Global Studies specifically and for the general use of narrative in academia and other disciplines. Though limited in

³⁶ D. J. Clandinin and J. Huber, "Narrative Inquiry," *International Encyclopedia of Education*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Elsevier, 2010), 3.

scope of what the research will provide, a clear need for the research has been communicated.

Chapter 2

Precedent Research

Teaching people the narrative of the Bible is not a new idea, however, it does continue to be a valuable one. Because the Bible is not written entirely in a narrative format, resources are helpful for followers of Christ who want to better understand its story. Each portion of Scripture does fit within a storyline and therefore “contributes to or illuminates in some way this one story.”³⁷ Unfortunately, many followers of Christ have a fragmented knowledge of the Bible, even those who have specifically studied it in theological education.³⁸ Thankfully, a recognition of the need for an unfragmented understanding of the story of the Bible is growing.

Books are being written and strategic approaches are being developed to teach people the storyline of the Bible all over the world and the intended audience runs anywhere from children in the early stages of communication to mature scholars who have spent years studying the Scriptures. That is one of the beauties of the narrative of Scripture. It can be understood and valued across a wide spectrum of culture, age, and understanding. Before I discuss scholarly literature, I think it is important to acknowledge other resources that have been developed for understanding narrative. The following are books and other teachings on narrative that have impacted the approach taken in Global

³⁷ Richard Bauckham, “Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 38.

³⁸ David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 224-225.

Studies and are oftentimes used as an additional resource when engaging students in the program.

Introductory Literature on Biblical Metanarrative

While most scholarly papers would not introduce the literature associated with a certain topic through children's literature, I am doing so in this paper for a number of reasons. First, in Global Studies, children's literature concerning biblical metanarrative is often used in order to give students a creative and simple introduction to the Bible as narrative. Second, one of the values of a metanarrative approach to Scripture is that it is something that can both be very simple, while also explaining many detailed and complicated theological realities. Children's Grand Narrative books are a very good example of this. In Global Studies, they have been an effective resource for helping students take the stories that they have oftentimes considered as children's stories and find the theological weight of those stories through the inclusion of them in a simple, yet theologically accurate, retelling of the Bible. The ones included below approach telling the story of the Bible simply, yet with deep theological truth.

One does not have to look very far to find there are many children's books available that are purposed to communicate the Bible as one story for younger ages. *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Lloyd-Jones, probably one of the more well-known ones, begins by introducing children to a simple message that God loves them and that His love is the message that follows the entire story of the Bible.³⁹ She goes on to acknowledge to young readers that while the Bible does contain rules and is filled with heroes, it is not

³⁹ Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* (Grand Rapids, MI.: ZonderKidz, 2007), 12.

primarily about those rules and heroes but is instead an adventure that takes the whole Bible to tell.⁴⁰ With that introduction, the book is then set up in a way that lends itself to a collection of bedtime stories. Lloyd-Jones follows these stories throughout the Bible and continually reminds young readers that each story is about the bigger story's message. Filled with beautiful colorful illustrations by Jago that draw a child's imagination into the page and story, the book gives a foundational understanding of Scripture valued by children and adults alike. This book is listed as a Grand Narrative resource for Global Studies students and some have utilized it during their internships to help them learn or teach language.

Perhaps a step up in age and understanding from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* is an equally colorful and beautiful book called *The Biggest Story* by Kevin DeYoung and illustrated by Don Clark. While still separated into stories or chapters, this book only has ten sections instead of the forty-four found in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. DeYoung follows the promise given for a snake-crusher through the storyline of the Bible as He follows the theme from the initial garden to the redeemed one. He does an incredible job of summarizing large portions of Scripture into seamless stories that allow the reader the ability to understand how stories that they have possibly already heard actually connect into one storyline and how they lead to the ultimate snake-crusher, Jesus Christ. One example of this is in his approach to explaining the family tree of Abraham. Listing the names in the lineage, he makes the point that these men were not perfect but that "the Snake Crusher would still come from the gnarled branches" of their family tree.⁴¹ This

⁴⁰ Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, 14-17.

⁴¹ Kevin DeYoung, *The Biggest Story: How the Snake Crusher Brings Us Back to the Garden* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 53.

book is also available in different versions and format. There is an ABC board book version for younger children.⁴² There is also a video version which Global Studies students watch in Global Studies 220: Intercultural Communication and Engagement as an example of how the narrative of the Bible can be told.⁴³

Another children's book worth mentioning is *The Garden the Curtain and the Cross* by Laferton and illustrated by Echeverri. His approach is unique in that he chooses one theme, or thread, and focuses on telling the narrative magnified by that theme. Laferton tells the metanarrative of the Bible through the different wonderful places that God provided for His people to live with Him. From the garden, to the temple, to an eternity living with God, Laferton shows how Jesus' death allows people to enter in to God's wonderful place.⁴⁴ This book is mentioned as a resource for Global Studies students to understand how to tell the Grand Narrative of the Bible through one focused theme.

Beyond children's literature, there are many more wonderful resources that present the metanarrative of the Bible. The Bible Project, an animation studio that produces resources "that explore the Bible's unified story," encourages younger generations "to explore the Bible through the mediums in which they have been raised, visual storytelling and technology."⁴⁵ Videos that look like moving comics cover

⁴² Kevin DeYoung, *The Biggest Story ABC*, Boardbook ed. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017), 1.

⁴³ Kevin DeYoung, "The Biggest Story: The Animated Short Film (Chapter 1)," Vimeo Video. Posted 2016. 3:14, August 31, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/166870719>.

⁴⁴ Carl Laferton, *The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross* (India: The Good Book Company, 2016), 1-30.

⁴⁵ *The Bible Project*, "About the Bible Project," accessed November 15, 2018, <https://thebibleproject.com/about/>.

everything from the entire story of the Bible, to different books, to different literary genres within Scripture. Available to view online for free or to be purchased in book or comic poster format, these present the story of Scripture in a way that uniquely connects with a younger generation. As Global Studies students are forming their own understanding of how different pieces of the biblical narrative fit together, this resource is often given for them to utilize in their own study.

Narrative devotionals and Bible studies have also increased in accessibility over the past few years. *Seamless*, a Bible study published by Lifeway Press and directed primarily toward women, separates the narrative of the Bible into seven sections.⁴⁶ Accompanied by a DVD and workbook, the study can be done either as an individual or in a group and has increased in popularity since 2015, when it was published. Similarly, *The Story of Scripture: The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* by Castleman is another study released in 2008.⁴⁷ Though not specifically used in the Global Studies program, students often ask about and look to these devotionals as a way to further their understanding of the Grand Narrative.

A possibly lesser known resource for understanding the narrative of the Bible is that of spoken word or song. Global Studies utilizes one of these as another format for overviewing narrative. “The Story of God” by Matt Papa, is a spoken word accompanied by music that tells the story of the Bible in ten minutes. Available on YouTube, students every year are introduced to this video as a supplement to other metanarrative teaching.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Angie Smith, *Seamless* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Press, 2015), 1.

⁴⁷ Robbie F. Castleman, *The Story of Scripture: The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Connect, 2008), 1.

⁴⁸ Matt Papa. “The Story of God.” December 3, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4cL-Zcxa9M>.

Scholarly Literature on the Structure of Biblical Metanarrative

Beyond children's literature and media resources for narrative there are also many books by theologians and scholars purposed to teach the metanarrative of the Bible. Some of these are aimed at more scholarly audiences, while some have been written to overview the metanarrative for the layman. The following books help to frame an understanding of and approach to the biblical metanarrative and are often suggested as valuable resources for students in the Global Studies program.

Perhaps the first book I ever read that so obviously and distinctly taught on the overarching narrative of Scripture was *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* by Bartholomew and Goheen. Bartholomew and Goheen approach the story of the Bible by comparing Scripture's structure to that of a play. Originally written as a textbook for an introductory course on biblical theology, the book is written both simply and with great depth.⁴⁹ By separating the metanarrative into six acts, they give their readers a simple structure that can continue to be a starting point for increased knowledge and understanding of the storyline of Scripture. Approaching the story as "a unified, coherent narrative of God's ongoing work within his kingdom" allows the reader to see how all six acts connect to each other and must be understood as such.⁵⁰ Believing that people live their lives somehow charting a course through some type of basic story, Goheen and Bartholomew present the Bible as that basic story and encourage the readers to chart their course accordingly.⁵¹ This approach of utilizing a six act structure is also

⁴⁹ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 11.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

used in the Global Studies program, though the titles and themes of the acts are slightly different.

Another book that has brought much value to the study of narrative in Global Studies is *Telling God's Story: The Biblical Narrative from Beginning to End* by Vang and Carter. This book can be used as a great supplement to knowledge gained in *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, as it is more detailed and informative. Journeying through fourteen episodes, and multiple acts within those episodes, Vang and Carter spend much more time explaining the details of different events and people within Scripture. This lends itself to the book reading more like a textbook than an actual story. However, with the information gleaned from the resource, one can fill the simple six-act structure from *The Drama of Scripture* to even more fullness. The authors cover the history, cultural context, literary genre and background of the different events and people within the biblical metanarrative. Additionally, the authors explain how different readers' worldviews might impact their interpretation of the narrative of Scripture.⁵² Though perhaps not the best book for an introduction to the Bible as one story, it is a valuable resource for someone who is looking to fill information into an already formed basic understanding. Oftentimes Global Studies students who are interested in understanding how the details and smaller stories within the Bible fit into the larger grand narrative framework are pointed towards this book as a valuable resource.

The Biblical Metanarrative: One God / One Plan / One Story by Bill Jackson is also very valuable for informing understanding of details and their connections throughout the story of Scripture. Using a similar, but lessened to five, structure of acts as

⁵² Preben Vang and Terry G. Carter, *Telling God's Story: The Biblical Narrative from Beginning to End*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013), 19.

used by Bartholomew and Goheen, Jackson weaves the story of the Bible in a way that helps the reader see how commonly recognized stories in the Bible fit within the greater storyline from Genesis to Revelation. Jackson believes good exegesis and hermeneutics of Scripture must first start with understanding the biblical narrative.⁵³ He separates the story into three levels of narrative: 1) the big picture which follows the storyline of the redemption that God brings, 2) the strategic picture which “refers to the how of God’s plan” and follows the story of the people of Israel, and 3) the detailed picture which includes all of the stories in the Bible that support and flush out the upper levels.⁵⁴

Among the works that follow the story of the Bible through a specific theme, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* by Beale and Kim is a unique approach to narrative that connects temple theology to the church’s mandate and mission. Beale and Kim present the story and purpose of the temple in a way that instructs readers with deep theological awareness through a story easy to understand and read. They do have a more in-depth theological version that is more academic in nature and called *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*. Their approach brings meaning and insight to both the story of the Bible and the lives of followers of Christ today simply by following the dwelling place of God through the narrative.

In Genesis 1-2, Eden is the dwelling place of God, and God commissions Adam and Eve to expand the boundaries of that dwelling place to fill the earth (Gen 1:28). While God’s original call seemed to be thwarted by sin in Genesis 3, God continues to establish his dwelling place among the patriarchs until the construction of the tabernacle and temple. After the destruction of Solomon’s temple, the prophets anticipate the coming of a new and expanding temple, and these prophecies begin to be fulfilled in Jesus and the church. The church as the

⁵³ Jackson, *The Biblical Metanarrative*, 8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

dwelling place of God must expand until one day it fills the entire heaven and earth; the entire cosmos becomes the dwelling place of God. Mission does not begin with the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, but mission is God's heartbeat from Genesis 1 until the new heaven and earth become the dwelling place of the Lord God Almighty in Revelation 21-22. This ultimate picture of the whole earth filled with God's presence fulfills God's original intention from the sanctuary of Eden.⁵⁵

This approach to narrative directly engages Global Studies students during a unique season of life when they are considering what it means to be effective Christ followers as they interact with the different places and people on their international internships.

There are some other books worth mentioning as important resources in the Global Studies program. *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* by Roberts gives an overview of the Grand Narrative by following the theme of Kingdom.⁵⁶ *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* by Hamilton spends time showing the work of the Holy Spirit through the storyline of the Old and New Testaments.⁵⁷

Additionally, there are versions of the Bible released in recent years, perhaps not considered their own translations, that have been edited and repackaged more like a novel or story. *God's Love Story* gathers selected sections of the Bible without verse or chapter, places them in chronological order, and adds some statements in italics to bridge the sections and explain them a little further so readers are able to walk through the story as they would a novel.⁵⁸ *The Story*, forwarded by Max Lucado and Randy Frazee, takes the

⁵⁵ Beale and Kim, *God Dwells Among Us*, 16.

⁵⁶ Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003), 24.

⁵⁷ James M. Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 1.

⁵⁸ *God's Love Story* (Camp Hill, PA: 21st Century Christian, 2016), 1.

same approach as *God's Love Story*.⁵⁹ Though simple, they are helpful for those wanting to just read the story without much explanation.

Many of these books and biblical metanarrative resources have vastly impacted the Global Studies program either directly or indirectly as they have influenced those who teach narrative to the students. Because they take different approaches in how they structure and summarize the storyline of the Bible, each has aided in helping professors and students see the many ways it can be presented. While all of these resources are valuable tools for helping someone understand the overarching story of the Bible, one area they do not really explore in depth is how narrative can be helpful in the daily sanctification and discipleship of an individual. They do speak to how it is applicable for seeing how the Church fits into the storyline of Scripture and history; but they do not simultaneously show how the stories and knowledge gained within the larger story apply to the daily lives of believers. This is an area where the approach taken by Global Studies differs.

Not only does the Global Studies teaching lay out the foundation of the biblical metanarrative for students, it also aims to extend that teaching into the functional day-to-day obedience a follower of Christ pursues. The teaching is meant to be both a model for structurally understanding Scripture and in the discipleship of how to live out personal faith. Moreover, it does this as students are interacting with a challenging and unique season of life, so they have the opportunity to solidify and put to practice setting themselves within God's larger story and considering how it is applicable to their lives.

⁵⁹ *The Story: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

Their internship process, with its specific Grand Narrative components, is meant to give them opportunity to let the narrative of the Bible impact their own internship narratives and lives. Yet to this point, no studies have been done to understand the impact of narrative on the students in Global Studies. While there is no literature that speaks to all of these areas in a context like Global Studies, and very limited qualitative or quantitative research assessing similar approaches in other contexts, the following literature speaks to narrative in these different areas separately with minimal overlap.

Literature on Biblical Narrative and Metanarrative from East to West

As has already been discussed, cross-cultural workers in oral cultures have been using the Grand Narrative in evangelism, training, and discipleship for a long time. Steffen has written extensively on the effectiveness of sharing Scriptural truth through narrative mediums in oral cultures around the world. He writes in “My Journey from Propositional to Narrative Evangelism” that his journey with narrative began in an effort to reach tribal contexts. Since then, he has become convinced that its effectiveness extends “far beyond tribals to include postmoderns.”⁶⁰ He shares about his own journey to understanding the effectiveness of storying as having started in working with the Ifugao tribe. In working with them, he began to consider why it was so many Christians “tend to teach doctrines as abstract ideas rather than through the lives of concrete characters.”⁶¹ He began to consider what it would be like to use narrative, both of Scripture and of individual lives, in areas other than tribal work. The conclusion he draws

⁶⁰ Tom Steffen, “My Journey from Propositional to Narrative Evangelism,” *The Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (Apr 2005): 200.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

through his experience is to see narrative as: “a great pedagogical tool; the dominant genre of Scripture; the foundation of worldview; showing God as the greatest Storyteller; playing a role in developing deep relationships; having power through faith stories and being able to identify a congregation’s character.”⁶² He ends with an acknowledgement that narrative has its limitations and is not meant to be used on its own but instead partnered with propositions. It is with both that people will be better equipped.

Steffen, in another article entitled “Reaching ‘Resistant’ People Through Intentional Narrative,” speaks to the importance of narrative training for those being sent to work internationally for the sake of the Gospel. He points out trainers have long seen the need for biblical narrative training but most Bible schools historically spent more time training their students to exegete Scripture over exegeting culture and storying into it. He emphasizes the importance of keeping the story of Scripture at the forefront of any evangelistic efforts saying, “when the narrative nature of Scripture is lost, for whatever reason, ministry often takes on a form that camouflages, rather than clarifies, God’s sacred Storybook.”⁶³ In order for the Gospel to be easily understood by diverse people around the world, and in order for it to be easily communicated, Steffen claims narrative should be included in biblical training and ministry.⁶⁴ He concludes with a redefining of discipleship as “providing opportunity for God’s authoritative, holistic metanarrative to challenge and to correct rival individual and community narratives.”⁶⁵ He pleads for

⁶² Steffen, “My Journey from Propositional,” 203.

⁶³ Tom A. Steffen, “Reaching ‘Resistant’ People through Intentional Narrative,” *Missiology: An International Review* 26, no. 4 (October 2000): 474.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 479.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 483.

Christians to go beyond the “preference for linear, logical modes of communication” and include story as part of how they understand and communicate the Gospel.⁶⁶

Steffen is not the only cross-cultural worker who has written on the impact of narrative in teaching the Bible and equipping cross-cultural workers. In his dissertation, Fisher goes beyond narrative as a communication medium and explores narrative as a framework for understanding the doctrine of the incarnation. Approached through an assessment of four incarnational models used regularly by missiologists, Fisher’s dissertation claims an understanding of the incarnation taught through following the presence of God through the narrative of Scripture leads to more effective cross-cultural living and ministry.⁶⁷ He lays out a biblical theology of the incarnation and highlights eight theological themes that impact an individual’s ability to be effective cross-culturally.⁶⁸ A cross-cultural worker himself, Fisher’s approach is not to assess the effectiveness of his model but instead to present it. Because the presence of God and His promise to dwell among His people is a theme that can be followed through Scripture and found presently in followers of Christ in the church, it is important those being sent out understand where it is they are placed in the story in relation to the presence of God. According to Fisher, “the incarnation and its relevance for the Church’s mission in general and cross-cultural” work should focus on, and be about “the divine presence of God dwelling among his people.”⁶⁹ He argues that a narrative approach to equipping

⁶⁶ Steffen, “Reaching 'Resistant' People,” 483.

⁶⁷ Fisher, “Incarnation and Missiology,” 259.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

cross-cultural workers effectively puts “primary emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the indwelling and empowering presence within the life” of anyone seeking to be an effective minister of the Gospel cross-culturally.⁷⁰

Jagerson, in “Harnessing the Power of Narrative in Christian Education,” states those engaged in Christian education in the West, particularly those educating future global workers, should consider some of the strategies used among oral cultures, specifically that of storying the narrative of the Bible. Rooting her argument in earlier research, literature on narrative, and in her own experience of using an oral culture strategy to disciple someone in the West, Jagerson argues for the use of narrative in the Western context.⁷¹ She presents research to show there is a “deficit in overall strategy” concerning evangelism and discipleship and how people are being trained in those areas.⁷² The methods used in engaging oral cultures through storying “honor what are often considered to be the best practices of adult learning in the field of education.”⁷³ Furthermore, because literate cultures oftentimes are full of secondary oral learners, people who prefer learning by oral means, education that uses story can engage students like this in a way that reaches them uniquely.⁷⁴ She goes on to show through research that it may be that these types of learners in the west have grown into a larger percentage due to shifting learning patterns caused by “the heightened engagement of the next generation

⁷⁰ Fisher, “Incarnation and Missiology,” 259.

⁷¹ Jennifer Jagerson, “Harnessing the Power of Narrative in Christian Education,” *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 2 (2014): 269.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 260.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 269.

with technology.”⁷⁵ As technology continues to grow and people are impacted by the digital age of their time, information must be packaged differently in order to reach them where they are. Furthermore, in a culture that has lost its “overarching cultural storyline,” providing a metanarrative storyline to invite them to be a part of will bring purpose and meaning to a generation that is looking for that.⁷⁶ The reality is the younger generations need to be engaged differently in order to learn well and story provides that different avenue of learning and meaning.

Narrative is not simply effective for teaching future global workers. Literature also exists that speaks to biblical metanarrative as an approach for teaching foundational doctrine and understanding of the Christian faith. In “Formed by Story: The Metanarrative of the Bible as Doctrine,” Short argues “Scripture as a whole constitutes the doctrine by which believers are called to live” and therefore doctrine must be taught through a metanarrative lens.⁷⁷ This article is primarily an overview of her position on how to best teach doctrine through metanarrative and though it does acknowledge other research and her own experience, it is not a study assessing this approach, simply an overview of the approach and why she argues for it. Short begins by considering how stories from the Bible are taught many times through a three step process that 1) considers a story from the Bible, 2) pulls out a “general principal, concept, or proposition,” then 3) transfers this concept to a present-day situation.⁷⁸ While she is not

⁷⁵ Jagerson, “Harnessing the Power,” 269.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 271.

⁷⁷ Short, “Formed by Story,” S110.

⁷⁸ Ibid., S110.

saying there is no value in teaching Scripture this way, she brings up some very tangible challenges that oftentimes present themselves through this approach of teaching stories from the Bible, one being that there can be the tendency to lose sight of the big story when teaching this way.⁷⁹ Instead, she proposes teaching Christ-followers to “live according to a story” instead of a list of doctrine and fact.⁸⁰ The metanarrative of Scripture holistically engages with the past (justification), present (sanctification), and future (glorification) of Christ followers and helps ground their understanding.⁸¹ She suggests “every episode from Scripture that is explored in a lesson or sermon must be situated within the greater story. Listeners and readers must understand how each incident contributes to the larger narrative and why it matters for the flow of the story as a whole.”⁸² It is this commitment to teaching the Word in this way that will keep communicators of the Bible from misreading the stories from the Bible and allow them to “function appropriately as doctrine for our lives.”⁸³ As Christ followers continue to consider how to best communicate the Scripture, we must continue to ask ourselves if what we present is consistent with the whole story of God.

Goheen also speaks to the need for metanarrative teaching for faith understanding. He argues for the recovery of “the Bible as the one true story of the world” so that followers of Christ can appropriately understand their identity “as God’s people as

⁷⁹ Short, “Formed by Story,” S113.

⁸⁰ Ibid., S115.

⁸¹ Ibid., S116.

⁸² Ibid., S121.

⁸³ Ibid., S122.

missional” and stand up against other world narratives that “compete for allegiance.”⁸⁴ In a world full of competing stories, namely “the Muslim story, the liberal capitalist story, and (somewhat surprisingly) the Marxist story,” Christians need to understand the story they are called to in order to live out their narrative well.⁸⁵ According to Goheen, the Bible is not simply a well-told story, “the story it tells claims universal validity.”⁸⁶ And for followers of Christ, it is of utmost importance and urgency to be understood as such for at least three reasons that Goheen points out: First, he says “since this is what the Bible is by its very nature, we can understand its authority only if we receive it as an all-embracing story.”⁸⁷ Second, he says reading the Bible as one story “enables us to understand our identity” within the story as God’s people.⁸⁸ And third, Goheen argues that only by understanding our identity within the Biblical metanarrative will followers of Christ understand what it means to be faithful to God’s story and not conformed to this world.⁸⁹

According to Goheen, “the question is not whether the whole of our lives will be shaped by some grand story. The only question is which grand story will shape our lives.”⁹⁰ The story of the Bible holds an invitation by Jesus to be a part of a metanarrative story that gives identity. Goheen ends his article with a simple yet profound statement:

⁸⁴ Michael W. Goheen, “The Urgency of Reading the Bible as One Story.” *Theology Today* 64 (2008): 469.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 469.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 471.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 473.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 475.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 477-478.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 482.

“the church needs pastors and leaders, and the academy needs scholars and teachers, who are in the grip of this story and who discharge their task in a way that calls church members and students to find their place in the true story of the world.”⁹¹

In another article by Steffen, “Discoveries Made while Reconnecting God’s Story to Scripture and Service,” he uses his own experience and earlier literature to classify story in three tiers (common stories, anchor stories, and master stories) and evaluates the role of narrative and metanarrative.⁹² He postures that story is superior to propositions and the most basic natural approach to communication.⁹³ He then discusses the tragedy of how the Bible is viewed and taught by many: in a fragmented manner.⁹⁴ This fragmenting of the story of Scripture and ultimately of our world makes it very difficult for individuals to understand how they are connected to it. “Knowing how one fits into God’s story experientially is based on knowing His Story.”⁹⁵ He argues that the Bible as the metanarrative of our world is an important recognition as a “metanarrative succinctly summarizes a specific culture’s anchor and master stories, thereby informally validating how life should be lived.”⁹⁶ He encourages Christian teachers to “maximize clarity” by teaching Scripture through metanarrative in order to facilitate “transformation that

⁹¹ Goheen, “The Urgency of Reading the Bible as One Story.” 483.

⁹² Tom Steffen, “Discoveries Made while Reconnecting God’s Story to Scripture and Service,” *Christian Education Journal* 14, no. 1 (May 2017): 172.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

impacts not only the students, but society as well, as they find themselves in God's story."⁹⁷

While Steffen's writing is an encouragement to utilize biblical metanarrative strategically for communication of the Gospel in both eastern and western contexts, literature also exists that proves, both qualitatively and quantitatively, that the approach is effective. Sharpe, in "A Narrative, Missional Approach to Discipleship and Spiritual Growth," writes about a mixed methods study that integrated both qualitative and quantitative research done on a twenty-six week discipleship program within a local church context that takes a biblical metanarrative approach to spiritual formation.⁹⁸ Recognizing spiritual formation is difficult to measure and "encompasses multiple dimensions of one's life," Sharpe's program sought to provide both biblical knowledge and opportunity for experience by developing a program that focuses on "a missional/narrative reading of Scripture with an emphasis on spiritual disciplines."⁹⁹ Using a similar six-act structure to the one Global Studies uses, Sharpe took members from his congregation through the metanarrative of Scripture in a focused classroom context and then partnered that with focused application directed through discussion on specific spiritual disciplines. What Sharpe discovered as he conducted his research is that this approach to discipleship within his church lead to growth that "could be measured in both quantitative and qualitative ways."¹⁰⁰ He concluded the following:

⁹⁷ Steffen, "Discoveries Made while Reconnecting," 180.

⁹⁸ Sharpe, "A Narrative, Missional Approach," 24.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 28.

A discipleship program that combines a missional/narrative reading of scripture with spiritual disciplines has been shown to help participants grow in spiritual formation and join the mission of God in the world. By combining a curriculum that helps members understand the grand story of the world, from creation to new creation, and how God is writing them into the story to enable them to join God's mission of reconciliation (while also encouraging spiritual disciplines), the church empowers participants to combine both the head and heart in order to experience the Spirit's transformation.¹⁰¹

While Sharpe's context is different than that of Global Studies, his findings are very applicable as many of his goals are similar to that of the Liberty University Global Studies program.

Corcoran is another researcher who writes on the effectiveness of teaching through metanarrative in a local church context. He argues Christ followers who are teaching Scripture in an effort to see life transformation should do so through "purposeful teaching of biblical narratives."¹⁰² He sets himself alongside many psychologists, educators, and theologians who "advocate a narrative approach to the study of lives" and how one experiences life.¹⁰³ He overviews how some have "used biblical narrative materials to re-story their lives" and describes the effectiveness of this approach focusing heavily on this as an approach to teaching college students.¹⁰⁴ Citing multiple qualitative and quantitative studies done by other researchers, Corcoran seeks to ground his theories in proven research in order to show the importance of narrative in faith and life formation. Because he recognizes people naturally attach themselves to a narrative, Corcoran argues that the biblical metanarrative must be taught well in order for people to

¹⁰¹ Sharpe, "A Narrative, Missional Approach," 17.

¹⁰² Corcoran, "Biblical Narratives and Life Transformation," 34.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

better understand they are part of it. He describes four constructive functions of core narratives from the work of Campbell:

Core narratives serve a religious or metaphysical-mystical function of orienting residents of the socio-cultural world to ultimate reality. They also provide a cosmological function by showing from whence it all comes (genesis or origins) and to hence it goes (*telios* or end). The third constructive function of these narratives is the moral-social function. The structuring stories establish governmental forms, foster the development of certain virtues and curtail certain vices, and encourage obedience to specific mores, laws, and rules. Core narratives, finally, tend to a psychological function.¹⁰⁵

This psychological function, according to Corcoran, is incredibly significant in an individual's life as an integral part of developing a morality and identity and is a very effective approach during seasons of transition and development like are experienced in college.¹⁰⁶ He contends that individuals in transition periods need community to help them integrate "into a new story."¹⁰⁷ His argument is that the "Christ core-narrative forms and re-forms the Christian community. The re-formed community [then] tells and retells the biblical narratives."¹⁰⁸ It is this transformation of lives Corcoran sees as so important and it is this approach to teaching he sets before the reader.

This transformation of lives within narrative makes sense when one considers humans are naturally narrative beings. Matthews' dissertation speaks to this. He discusses how biblical metanarrative impacts how reality is interpreted and draws two primary conclusions: "1) current approaches to solving the problem of meaning are deficient, in part, because they fail to embrace an approach that adequately examines and incorporates

¹⁰⁵ Corcoran, "Biblical Narratives and Life Transformation," 37.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

the concept of metanarrative in the exegetical and eisegetical processes; and 2) metanarrative holds a place of considerable influence and sequential priority in the interpretive process.”¹⁰⁹ He approached his dissertation from an assumption that all people are “narrative creatures” living their lives in the context of a larger story, and uses literature to research how metanarrative, philosophical hermeneutics, and biblical hermeneutics interact.¹¹⁰ Through theoretical analysis, Matthews considers different metanarrative approaches to interpretation and overviews how different scholars and researchers have described the narrative of the Bible.

One interesting discussion he has is on the perspective of Marsh, who ascertains that “there can only be room in the universe for one true ultimate metanarrative,” which he renames an “ultranarrative.”¹¹¹ According to him, all other stories in this world “are ultimately subservient,” and seek to place themselves in positions of authority they do not deserve.¹¹² According to Matthews, only the Bible’s narrative deserves this title of *ultranarrative*. He continues in this discussion of the biblical *ultranarrative* and connects it to worldview as a product of metanarrative.¹¹³ Matthews clarifies that “metanarrative is the running story that comes into being over the course of time while worldview is a stop

¹⁰⁹ Michael Vern Matthews, “Is There a Reader in this Text?: The Place of Metanarrative in the Problem of Meaning” (PhD diss., Trinity Theological Seminary, 2013), ii.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 83.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 102.

in the story—a stop that has the quantities yet tacit bundle of assumptions produced by the running story.”¹¹⁴

For a people, metanarrative affects identity, community, taxonomy, cosmology, epistemology, authority, functionality, destiny, temporality, locality, and unity which then affects how that people interprets meaning.¹¹⁵ It stands to reason, then, that humanity struggles with these things because they struggle to discover in which narrative they belong. Matthews puts it this way:

Mankind’s problem of meaning is a metanarrative problem—the problem is man’s metanarrative, his opinion of reality, his perception of the story in which he lives. This is also a theological problem—theological in the sense that it falls into the study of the nature of God and religious truth. Ever since Adam and Eve’s first sin, mankind has inherited a way of seeing and being in the world that rivals God’s story. Apart from the grace of the Creator, mankind continually lives in the spiritual darkness of some rival story—in a man-derived metanarrative that skews meaning. Man, as a sinner, needs a new heart; man, as a living being, needs a new story. He needs a heart transplant and he needs to be transplanted into the only true metanarrative—God’s ultranarrative.¹¹⁶

He goes on to say that a portion of the metanarrative will not fix the problem. The episodes must be understood together in order for man to understand their ultranarrative.¹¹⁷ This then affects a person’s way of living, including the way they evangelize and make disciples. Sharing the Gospel then becomes sharing the ultranarrative and inviting others to take part in it.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Matthews, “Is There a Reader,” 102.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 115.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 214.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 217.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Literature on Narrative for Transformation in Secular Contexts

It should not be surprising that many Christ followers have discovered the power of communicating through narrative. There is ample research stating that communicating through story is one of the most effective means of communication. Haven's book, *Story Proof: The Science Behind the Startling Power of Story*, uses scientific evidence to argue narrative is the best way to communicate anything of importance. By first writing on the science behind the brain and how it works, Haven is able to explain why story is the most effective way for information to be processed, learned, and retained. He discusses findings gathered from "over 350 books and qualitative and quantitative studies as well as over 70 articles" that point to the power of story.¹¹⁹ His argument is that for any type of information to be remembered well, it needs to be attached to "meaning, context, relevance, and empathy."¹²⁰ Stories provide these things and turn information into something that has emotional depth and meaning.¹²¹ Through scientific evidence and stories that show examples of his research being used in multiple contexts, readers are given data that invites them into understanding the power of story as effective communication.

This effective communication medium has begun to be considered in various non-faith contexts where researchers, scientists, and educators are seeking to implement narrative strategies into their specific areas of expertise. A journal article entitled "The Role of Narrative in Communicating Science" published in *International Journal of*

¹¹⁹ Haven, *Story Proof*, 7.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

Science Education in 2009 “presents a case for the use of narrative (i.e. fictional written text) in science education as a way of making science meaningful, relevant, and accessible to the public.”¹²² Avraamidou and Osborne present this theoretical paper based on the research and strategy of earlier researchers and literature that speaks to the “value of narrative in supporting learning” and infuse it into their discipline of science education. Recognizing the need for students to not be disconnected from the learning that is happening in the classroom, they propose story is the way to make the subject matter applicable to the lives of the students instead of just dogmas for them to learn.¹²³ When dogma is taught, they claim “students are positioned outside the theories; they are like spectators, looking in,” and end up feeling alienated from what they are learning.¹²⁴ They claim narrative, while it does not fix all the challenges in science education, answers many of them.

Another paper considering the use of narrative for learning was presented by Mott, Callaway, Zetlemoyer, Lee, and Lester at the 1999 Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI) Fall Symposium on Narrative Intelligence, where they argued for narrative-centered learning environments so learners can “benefit from the active role” of being “co-constructors” of their experiences.¹²⁵ Recognizing that “narrative plays such a central role in cognition and culture” their research came from their hypothesis that “narrative-centered learning environments can promote the deep, connection building meaning-making activities that define

¹²² Avraamidou and Osborne, “The Role of Narrative in Communicating Science,” 1683.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Mott et al., “Towards Narrative-Centered Learning Environments,” 4.

constructivist learning.”¹²⁶ Building on the foundations they had seen in “psychology, cognitive models of reading comprehension, and film theory” they presented a model for literacy education that utilized the power of story.¹²⁷ But their promotion of narrative-centered learning environments extends far beyond their model for literacy education.

In mathematics, narrative could shift the focus from mechanical, algorithmic problem solving, e.g., arithmetic, to a more analytical approach to real-world problems that emphasizes analyses. In the sciences, an inquiry-based curriculum featuring dynamic narratives of the highly nonlinear process of scientific discovery could foster an in-depth understanding of how real-world science plays out. In social studies, biographies could shift the focus from rote memorization of facts and dates to an analysis of compelling historical figures, their motivations, and the geographical contexts in which they live.¹²⁸

The authors concluded that students in these disciplines and others would benefit in their learning by how narrative enables them to actively participate in creating the narrative, explore how “characters’ intentions affect their actions in the evolving narrative,” and then analyze the experience through reflection and analysis.¹²⁹ Although their medium for these narrative-centered learning environments is that of computer-based story systems, primarily one they call “STORYTELLER,” their foundational research on the value of narrative applies directly to how story is used in the Global Studies program as a medium for learning that invites students into a story experience.¹³⁰

Narrative is not simply an effective approach for teaching content. It cultivates learning that is also transformational. Clark, a professor of adult education, argues in her

¹²⁶ Mott et al., “Towards Narrative-Centered Learning Environments,” 1.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Matthews, “Is There a Reader,” 4.

positional seminal text on narrative learning for storying experience as a more effective approach for transformational learning in adult education.¹³¹ She claims “a narrative theory of learning, one that connects experiential learning and the notion of narrative as a sense-making medium” makes for the learning to be transformational, not just knowledge based.¹³² According to her, there are three levels of narrative learning: 1) hearing stories, 2) telling stories, and 3) “recognizing the narratives from which we are positioned.”¹³³ Her theorized conclusions are that this type of learning is a more effective lens for educators to teach through and that through narrative students will better make sense of what they are learning and furthermore be transformed by it. She ends by inviting other educators into this exploration and development of narrative adult learning theory.¹³⁴

Storytelling, as described by Lawrence and Paige, has served as a teaching medium throughout history and has “made its way into formal and informal adult education today.”¹³⁵ They trace the way narrative and storytelling has been used throughout history to entertain, to impart knowledge, and to build community. Partnering the history of storytelling with recent articles and research on the subject, they consider the role of storytelling in adult education moving forward and pose the questions: “What is the future of storytelling in adult education? Can it survive our fast-paced global society, with its explosion of knowledge and increasing reliance on technology?”¹³⁶

¹³¹ Clark, “Narrative Learning: Its Contours and Its Possibilities,” 5.

¹³² Ibid., 5.

¹³³ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹³⁵ Lawrence and Paige, “What Our Ancestors Knew,” 70.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 70.

According to them, there are many benefits gained from storytelling but one of the primary ones is the understanding that stories bring to experiences, which then bring understanding of self and others.¹³⁷ They argue storytelling should be a natural and organic part of adult education “as it taps into the experience of the learners” and allows them to become “active agents in the learning process” instead of “passive receivers.”¹³⁸ Furthermore, it allows the classroom to become an experiential learning classroom by connecting new knowledge with earlier experience; telling stories naturally makes these connections and turns abstract thinking into concrete thought.¹³⁹ They conclude that the art of storytelling in education must not be lost because “it is a critical link to a sustainable society” and the primary way learning takes place.¹⁴⁰ Though they recognize there are challenges in purposeful storytelling within modern formal education, they make suggestions as to how to foster an environment that is welcoming of stories. They end their article reiterating the importance of narrative in adult education by stating simply that “storytelling preserves the best of adult education.”¹⁴¹

While literature is limited in a context that mirrors the Global Studies program, as has been discussed, there is available literature that speaks to different aspects of the Grand Narrative approach. Narrative-centered learning environments in education have been seen to be effective for adult learners and more educators are seeking to integrate story into their classrooms. Churches, para-church ministries, and other platforms for

¹³⁷ Lawrence and Paige, “What Our Ancestors Knew,” 63.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

discipleship are seeking to utilize biblical metanarrative in helping their communities understand the story of the Bible and their placement within it. They are seeing discipleship is more transformative when individuals understand their own narrative within the narrative of God. Cross-cultural workers tasked with sharing the Gospel have, for years, argued for a story-based approach after having seen its effectiveness with those they are living among and working with. All of these areas meet within the Global Studies program and impact the narrative of the student. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show how the literature in this paper supports areas of GLST Grand Narrative teaching.

Table 2.1: Key Terms for Table 2.2

BD	The Use of Biblical Metanarrative in Discipleship
BE	Biblical Metanarrative as a Tool for Equipping Cross-Cultural Workers
BM	The Bible as Metanarrative
EB	Evangelism Through Biblical Metanarrative
NC	Narrative as Community Formation
NE	The Use of Narrative in Education
NI	Narrative as Identity Formation
NT	Narrative as Transformation
NU	Narrative as a Way of Understanding Experience and Meaning
PS	Power of Story for Communication
QU	Strong in Qualitative Research

Table 2.2: How Literature Supports Areas of GLST Grand Narrative Teaching¹⁴²

	BD	BE	BM	EB	NC	NE	NI	NT	NU	PS	QU
<i>Alter, The Art of Biblical</i>			X								
<i>Avraamidou & Osborne, "The Role of Narrative"</i>						X				X	X
Bauckham, "Reading Scripture as"			X								
<i>Beale & Kim, God Dwells Among Us</i>			X	X							

¹⁴² Sources included within table. See Bibliography.

	BD	BE	BM	EB	NC	NE	NI	NT	NU	PS	QU
Byrd, "Narrative Discipleship"	X		X				X	X	X		
Castleman, <i>The Story of Scripture</i>			X								
Clark, "Narrative Learning"						X	X	X	X	X	
Corcoran, "Biblical Narratives"			X		X		X		X		X
Evans, "Matters of the Heart"	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Fisher, "Incarnation & Missiology"		X	X				X				
Goheen, <i>A Light to the Nations</i>			X				X				
Goheen, "The Urgency"			X	X			X				
Goheen & Bartholomew, <i>The True Story</i>			X	X							
Goldsworthy, <i>According to Plan</i>			X								
Haven, <i>Story Proof</i>									X	X	X
Jageron, "Harnessing the Power"		X	X	X		X				X	
Lawrence & Paige, "What our Ancestors"						X	X		X	X	
Matthews, "Is There a Reader?"	X		X		X		X		X		
McNicol, <i>The Persistence of God's</i>			X								
Mott et al., "Towards Narrative-Centered"						X			X	X	
Myers, "Bible Storying: Not Just"	X			X						X	
Pawson, <i>Unlocking the Bible</i>			X								
Roberts, <i>God's Big Picture</i>			X								
Rossiter, <i>Narrative and the Practice</i>						X	X	X	X		X
Sharpe, "A Narrative Missional"	X		X				X				X
Short, "Formed by Story"	X		X				X				
Steffen, "Reaching 'Resistant'"	X	X	X	X							
Steffen, "My Journey"			X	X	X		X			X	

	BD	BE	BM	EB	NC	NE	NI	NT	NU	PS	QU
Steffen, “Discoveries Made”			X			X	X				
Vang & Carter, <i>Telling God’s Story</i>			X								
Willis & Snowden, <i>Truth That Sticks</i>	X									X	
Wright, <i>The Mission of God</i>			X								

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have overviewed the pertinent literature associated with this research. Beginning with introductory literature that teaches children how to understand the story of the Bible then moving into more scholarly literature that explains structure and the theological depth within the metanarrative of Scripture, resources that have affected the Global Studies program and are offered as resources to the students are introduced and described. Once the discussion on biblical metanarrative literature is discussed, I move into a discussion of scholarly literature associated with different avenues of research concerning the power of story, narrative approaches in academia, biblical metanarrative discipleship approaches in churches and para-church ministries, and story approaches used in cross-cultural work. While literature is scarce that shows a metanarrative approach in a way that directly mirrors that of Global Studies, the literature in this chapter overlaps with the different areas of learning where metanarrative is used.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

The purpose of this narrative inquiry qualitative research study is to explore how the Global Studies program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative has impacted the lives and personal narratives of Global Studies interns at Liberty University. After considering different forms of research and which kind would lend itself best to examining the nature of how the biblical metanarrative has impacted the Global Studies program and its students, qualitative research emerged as the best approach. Of the different types of qualitative research, that of narrative inquiry was utilized for this thesis.

Method: Qualitative Research and Narrative Inquiry

Qualitative research was chosen for this study because the question being asked is not one that can be measured by numbers but is instead an inquiry into the beliefs, values, feelings, and motivations that Global Studies students have in relation to their understanding of the biblical metanarrative and how it impacts their lives. As their depth of understanding and experiences are different, qualitative research lent itself better to exploring these experiences with metanarrative. A standardized approach like the kind used in quantitative research would have limited the information being gleaned in interaction with the students, while qualitative research left room for the students and their experiences to direct the nature of the study and its outcomes.

The specific type of qualitative research utilized in narrative inquiry is a "study of experience understood narratively."¹⁴³ In narrative inquiry, research begins by first

¹⁴³ Clandinin and Huber, "Narrative Inquiry," 1.

inquiring into the story of someone's experience either through living the story alongside them or listening as they retell it.¹⁴⁴ The researcher assigns value to the expressed experiences and interprets them in order to consider how their experiences can be enriched in the future. This is explained further below.

Narrative inquiry begins and ends with a respect for ordinary lived experience . . . the focus of narrative inquiry is not only valorizing individuals' experience, but it is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. Understood in this way, narrative inquiries begin and end in the storied lives of the people involved. Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, and writing and interpreting texts. Through the inquiry, we seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others.¹⁴⁵

These experiences, in narrative inquiry, go beyond just the personal stories of an individual and can also interact with and include stories of culture, family, and institution.¹⁴⁶ The research can then be used to continue to shape the context for where these stories are lived out. In the case of this research, the experiences storied were those of the interns' interactions with the knowledge of biblical narrative through their internship experience. The context, or institution, is that of Liberty University's Global Studies program and how it teaches the Grand Narrative. The stories told and lived out were in relationship to each other and to me as their professor, and as someone whose life is also being impacted by the biblical metanarrative.

¹⁴⁴ D. Jean Clandinin, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 34.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

Because narrative inquiry is “situated in relationships and in community,” unlike many forms of research, researchers approaching their research through narrative inquiry are more intimately connected to their subjects as their research oftentimes is carried out, in part, through relational and participatory ways.¹⁴⁷ This means that not only is the experience of the subjects being considered in order to be enriched, so is that of the researcher.

Narrative inquirers see their research as relational research. . . . In narrative inquiry, we are, as narrative inquirers, also under study, over time. As a narrative inquiry progresses, we, as narrative inquirers, are also making and remaking our lives. We, too, are in the midst. What this means is that as we tell our stories and listen to participants tell their stories in the inquiry, we, as inquirers need to pay closer attention to who we are in the inquiry and to understand that we, ourselves, are part of the stories landscape we are studying. Thus, as narrative inquirers we are part of present landscapes and past landscapes, and we acknowledge that we helped make the world in which we find ourselves.¹⁴⁸

This experience of being part of the story landscape brought forth much self-reflection for me as the researcher. As I followed the storylines of the students from initial training to debriefing and saw a narrative of growth occur in their understanding of the biblical metanarrative and its effects on their lives, I also saw how the same was occurring for me. Storying the experiences of the Global Studies seniors caused me, in a sense, to story my own.

Data Collection

In January of 2019, Global Studies seniors who completed their international internships in the Spring of 2018 and continued debriefing in the Fall of 2018 were asked if they would like to volunteer to participate in this study. Through an initial email sent

¹⁴⁷ Clandinin, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*, 13.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

by the Chair of the Global Studies Department on my behalf, students were told about the study and given the opportunity to take part. As agreed upon by the chair of the Global Studies department, students were offered twenty-five participation points in any Global Studies class for participating. As there are multiple opportunities throughout every semester for a student to gain participation points, this encouraged students to participate but did not pressure them to do so in a way that unfairly influenced their grades. This initial email was partnered with a message posted on a Facebook page for that group of Global Studies Interns and with one follow-up email inviting students to participate. Students were told to email me if interested in taking part in the study.

Interviews were scheduled with the students who expressed interest in participating. Because “the intent in qualitative research is not to generalize the information, (except in some forms of case study research), but to elucidate the particular,” the sampling size does not need be as large as in the case of quantitative research.¹⁴⁹ This is especially true in narrative inquiry, and in some cases the sampling size in this mode of inquiry can be as low as one or two individuals.¹⁵⁰ Instead of focusing on gaining a larger number of individual participants, more focus was put on gaining more extensive details about the individuals interviewed.¹⁵¹ While it is sometimes difficult to assess how many interviews are needed in this type of research, I was hopeful to get at least ten and was happy to receive responses from twelve students who wanted to participate. Five of these students were male. Seven were female.

¹⁴⁹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 126.

¹⁵⁰ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 13.

¹⁵¹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 126.

Interviews I led took place in a private office through the months of February and March of 2019 and were recorded. Interviews followed a simple structure. I began by explaining the interview process and overviewing the list of open-ended research questions. During the interviews I asked the IRB approved research questions and as ideas were introduced by the students, I would often ask for clarification or for them to continue to explain some of their initial answers. I also ended the interview time by asking them if there were any concluding thoughts or remarks they wanted to communicate. All interviews were about an hour long. Table 3.1 shows the participant information along with the date their interviews took place.

Table 3.1: Research Participant Information

PSEUDONYM	MALE / FEMALE	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Anna	Female	February 28, 2019
Bethany	Female	February 15, 2019
Carrie	Female	February 8, 2019
Daniel	Male	February 27, 2019
Evie	Female	February 19, 2019
Greg	Male	February 26, 2019
Hannah	Female	February 19, 2019
Isaac	Male	February 15, 2019
James	Male	February 11, 2019
Kacy	Female	February 12, 2019
Laura	Female	March 8, 2019
Mark	Male	February 8, 2019

Positionality

While I do personally know the students who were interviewed, this was not a problem for the research because in narrative inquiry, researchers “intentionally come into relation with participants” and conduct their research where their “lives meet.”¹⁵²

¹⁵² Clandinin, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*, 23.

This strengthens the research and information gained because it is meant to take place within relationship, as has already been noted in this paper.¹⁵³ This relationship does not minimize the importance of privacy, though, and appropriate measures were taken in order to ensure privacy was maintained.

Data Analysis

Narrative researchers interpret meaning through analysis of plotlines, themes, and categories and do so through every stage of their research and as they interact both with the research subjects and the information gathered. This also means “narrative inquirers do not stand outside in a neutral, objective position, merely presenting or analyzing” the information gathered. Rather, they infuse themselves into the narratives of their research and research subjects.¹⁵⁴ They are not focused as much on finding one answer through their research but are instead seeking to communicate many truths and narratives.¹⁵⁵ Below I describe how I sought to do this well.

Once the interviews were complete, they were transcribed using an automated transcribing software called Sonix. I then checked each transcription against the recorded audio and manually made appropriate edits. This also served as an initial time for me to listen to all of the interviews before I began to try to code any of the information. Once I was satisfied the transcriptions were accurate, I read each interview slowly and made notes about any sections of the interviews that held potential importance for the research.

¹⁵³ Clandinin, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*, 12.

¹⁵⁴ Jeong-Hee Kim, *Understanding Narrative Inquiry* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2016), 190.

¹⁵⁵ Sally V. Hunter, “Analyzing and Representing Narrative Data: The Long and Winding Road,” *Current Narratives* 1, no. 2 (2010): 44.

I then went back through the interviews and read each one again and highlighted key themes in different colors. I kept a list of themes that began to emerge and partnered smaller themes into categories of larger themes. I also made a list of themes that seemed to bridge to other themes. This helped me later consider whether or not some themed learning was layered on top of other foundational learning. I preferred to do my coding by hand, as opposed to using software for this process. As I coded, I began to recognize connected themes and categories through similar words or connected thoughts that the students were expressing. I then took these themes and categories and organized them into an Excel document. This allowed me to see the connected phrases, thoughts, and ideas that spanned the twelve interviews in one place. Upon further consideration of these themes and categories, the narratives of the students' experience became clearer as they explained how the narrative of the Bible had affected different stages of their academic and personal experiences. These themes and student narratives will be communicated in the data presentation chapter of the paper.

Validation/Trustworthiness

In order to accurately assess the data in a manner that honors the true narratives of the students, careful consideration and strategy for the validation and trustworthiness of the study was taken. Three primary validation strategies utilized in this study were triangulation, audit trail, and rich, thick description.

Triangulation was used to strengthen the study and provide validity to the findings. Narrative resources from differing methods, researchers, investigators, and theories have provided supporting evidence for the effectiveness of a narrative approach. These research studies and resources, though very different, all agree on the effectiveness

of narrative within their own contexts and provide overlapping support to what Global Studies is doing and what this study concludes. This triangulation of data helps provide validity to the study.¹⁵⁶

An audit trail is provided throughout the research in order to allow the reader to see that the findings of the research are grounded in participant responses and not in any of my own preconceived ideas or biases as the researcher. I sought to transparently describe the process of how I collected and analyzed the data to show how themes emerged through what the participants said.

The findings are communicated through rich, thick descriptions as part of bringing validity to the study. Detailed descriptions of the intern experience alongside large quotations from the participants are provided in order to allow the reader to consider the data being presented and whether or not the findings bring out themes or conclusions that the reader can apply in other areas.¹⁵⁷

Ethical Considerations

This procedure for obtaining consent was in accordance with the guidelines and approval of Liberty University's Institutional Review Board. Their approval letter, case number 3634.012419, can be found in Appendix A.

I took appropriate measures to protect the privacy of the research subjects and their experiences. Participants were told they would never be asked to share their opinions and answers publicly. Interviews were conducted in an office with a closed door for privacy. The records of this study were and will continue to be kept private with any

¹⁵⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 208.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 209.

sort of report using pseudonyms and not including any identifying information. Participant records were and will continue to be stored securely, and only myself has access to the records. During the research, audio files of interviews and connected transcripts were stored on a flash drive in a locked drawer in my office and in data files on my password protected computer. Backup files were stored on a password protected Dropbox account. Graduate Assistants for Global Studies courses that participants were enrolled in received confirmation of a student's participation in order to be able to award them the twenty-five participation points, but they were never privy to the interview audio files or transcripts. Data may be used in future studies and presentations, primarily as aggregate data. If individual data is highlighted, pseudonyms will continue to be used and all identifiers will be removed to ensure participant identities remain confidential. The pseudonyms chosen for this group of students is as follows: Anna, Bethany, Carrie, Daniel, Evie, Greg, Hannah, Isaac, James, Kacy, Laura, and Mark. Because the Global Studies community is quite small and I want to protect the privacy of the students, I have not provided any further identifying information such as age or location of internship.

In order to respectfully interact with this research process and the subjects, I treated all individuals and information with respect and care. To represent and interpret "another's voice is not a simple task and needs to be done with respect and humility."¹⁵⁸ Participants were told they had the freedom to leave the research study at any time and were never pressured into taking part or giving specific answers. As this research is purposed to understand the full narratives of experience for these students, they were encouraged to be honest about both negative and positive experiences during their

¹⁵⁸ Hunter, "Analyzing and Representing Narrative Data," 50.

internship processes and were assured the information they shared would have no impact on the relationship they have with me, the Global Studies department, or Liberty University as a whole. As outlined in the data collection section, all information gathered was and will continue to be protected for privacy throughout the entire process.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has identified the methodology chosen for this research - qualitative research and narrative inquiry. I have explained what narrative inquiry is and how it is distinct from other research methods, specifically that because it takes place relationally within community and that the researcher plays a unique role in integrating himself or herself into the research. Having explained narrative inquiry, I described the research group and the steps I have taken to collect and analyze the data. I have concluded by highlighting the care taken in order to respect the privacy of those participating in the research and to uphold the integrity of the research.

Chapter 4

Findings

Any teaching on Scripture hopefully brings about growth in perspective and new understanding of the things of God. The desire of Global Studies faculty is that the Grand Narrative teaching would have impact far beyond factual knowledge and a high test grade. The research within this narrative inquiry was designed to give students the opportunity to describe how the program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative impacted their lives and personal narratives. The primary question explored during this research was, "How do interns at Liberty University perceive the Global Studies program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative?"

As students told their stories in exploration of the central research question, it became increasingly clear the Grand Narrative teaching impacted the program and students in greater ways than I may have initially surmised. This section will be organized around the findings that emerged from the study and in answer to the research sub-questions: Participant Experience Related to Grand Narrative Teaching, Grand Narrative Impact on Scriptural Understanding, Grand Narrative Impact on Identity and Purpose, Grand Narrative Impact on Discipleship, Grand Narrative Impact on GLST Program and Community, Grand Narrative Impact on Internship Experience, Negative Impact of Grand Narrative Teaching, and Recommendations for Grand Narrative Teaching.

Participant Experience Related to Grand Narrative Teaching

Before delving into the results of how the students expressed the Grand Narrative teaching has affected the Global Studies program and community, I think it is important

we consider how the students, themselves, defined the Grand Narrative and their experience with its role within Global Studies. It is not enough to say that the Grand Narrative is the knowledge that the Bible is one story from Genesis to Revelation because that limits the acknowledgement of effect on the lives of those who learn it. As students responded to how they had seen the Grand Narrative teaching affect the Global Studies program and community, they did so by describing how they explain what the Grand Narrative is to those who are outside of Global Studies.

Many of the students struggled to explain it at first. They needed to consider and form their words. But once they thought about it for a minute, their answers showed how important the perspective of that teaching has been for them. Evie gave a simple, yet foundational, explanation when she called the Grand Narrative “a good framework to know God’s story and communicate it.” And it is this framework that Anna explained became a “lens” or “glasses” for seeing and understanding the Bible. In some ways, calling it a lens or pair of glasses is incredibly insightful. I have physically seen students, as they hear the Grand Narrative teaching, express that change of lens even in simple facial expressions as the story of the Bible is taught. It is almost like they are putting on a pair of glasses and suddenly find new clarity to something they have been looking at for a long time. For many of them, Bethany explained, it brought a “paradigm shift” that speaks to a perspective on the Bible that acknowledges it must be understood as a whole, that “even though we may zoom in and study one piece [of Scripture] at a time, we study one piece at a time to get the big picture.”

Some students used terminology that is common in cross-cultural conversations to describe the Grand Narrative. Carrie likened it to a “worldview” or a “filter that our

stories come from but then also what we place our stories back into.” Laura compared learning the Grand Narrative approach of Scripture to learning a new language:

The only way I can think to describe it is, you know, how as you learn different languages, the way you think changes, right? Like there are different words. Things just get lost in translation and you need the context to have that all make sense. Languages don't make sense without the context that they're learned in. I literally feel like as I learn a language, the way I think changes. There's this shift. So, I guess that's kind of how I feel. . . . Learning the Grand Narrative is like learning the language to read the Bible. And the context of all of that has changed the way I perceive any of it. Things get lost in translation without the context of the language.

This language, new for many of our students, became a “restructured mindset of God’s plan” throughout Scripture according to Mark. It did not happen quickly, but instead took time to develop within the students because, for many of them, it involved a change in how they viewed the Bible and according to Carrie, “[It] takes some reprogramming . . . you’re going to have to spend some time thinking through it and changing how you think about Scripture.” And this, of course, affects how you view life around you. Daniel explained that it “establishes a way of being where you’re just mindful in every moment” to remember that “there is an end goal for which there is a common purpose within the body of Christ.”

Specifically, for the program, every student interviewed saw the Grand Narrative teaching as very central. While the Grand Narrative is purposefully taught throughout the entirety of the program, much of that has developed organically as those of us teaching have become more passionate about narrative and have infused it into various stages of the internship process. I was personally surprised by the perspective the students seemed to have that the program had, in part, been developed on the foundations of the metanarrative perspective. Laura called it the “backbone of the program and from that all

other things can function.” James said it was the “centerpiece of the program,” with most important pieces and concepts “stemmed off” or “connected to it at some point.” And yet Anna said it was “weaved throughout the curriculum” of the program. Hannah’s description seemed to sum up the centrality of the Grand Narrative that all twelve students communicated.

I think the Grand Narrative plays the role in Global Studies of, ironically, the thread that goes throughout almost every single class. And the different points in the process that a student is at within the program is connected to all the other points by when they learn different aspects of the Grand Narrative. . . . So yeah, I think the grand narrative plays that role in Global Studies. The thread from first to last.

Of all the descriptions, though, Greg’s was, in my opinion, the most creative and insightful. He compared his experience with the teaching of the Grand Narrative to a chemical reaction:

It feels dynamic to think about [the role of the Grand Narrative in Global Studies] because it's like the prompting for you to go. And it's also the goal for whenever you get where you're going. . . . I think about it like it's a chemical reaction. It's the catalyst that starts everything. It's the reaction as it's going on and it's the product after. Does that make sense? And that's the Grand Narrative.

This explains the importance the Grand Narrative has had in the process of learning that students go through in the Global Studies program.

Explanation has already been given for how students would define the role of the Grand Narrative within the Global Studies program. Their explanations spoke to the centrality they felt the Grand Narrative played within the academics of the program and gave insight to the impact it has on Global Studies. Because Grand Narrative teaching plays such a large role within the Global Studies program and the students interviewed have never experienced Global Studies teaching apart from it, students found it difficult to assess how biblical metanarrative teaching has actually affected the program and

community. As students tried to consider what the program might be like without that narrative perspective, their musings acknowledged keeping the biblical metanarrative central has been very important in their growth. Greg said that it continued to place before them “the real reason why you even have any kind of profession. . . . It keeps God at the focus” and throughout their studies the metanarrative helped “refocus students on the actual purpose for getting a degree.”

All of the students interviewed expressed they did believe the Grand Narrative had impacted the program and community of Global Studies for the better. Two of the students specifically said they believed it, in part, keeps the academics centered appropriately on the main goal. What most of the students clearly saw, though, was how the community was affected by a worldview lens focused on the Bible as a story. Seven out of twelve students said they believe the Grand Narrative’s placement within the program helped to keep the community focused on God and His Word. Two students said Grand Narrative teaching provided a shared framework for studying Scripture together. Eight students said their understanding that they are all part of a grand story helped them understand they are all on the same team with one purpose within that story. Four students clarified this helped them support and love one another better. Two students specifically said they had learned better, through Grand Narrative teaching, to deal with the natural tendency of comparison. And lastly, three students talked about how the same story mindset makes it easier for the Global Studies community to disperse upon graduation because they know they will still be a part of the same team living out their unique lives within the same story. These observations speak to a program and community that has been greatly affected by Grand Narrative teaching.

Grand Narrative Impact on Scriptural Understanding

Of the twelve students participating in the research, seven of the twelve participants specifically said that before hearing the Grand Narrative of Scripture taught in Global Studies, they did not understand the Bible was one continuing story from Genesis to Revelation. Of those seven students, four expressed shock they had never heard this perspective taught before. “That was my first taste of the narrative,” Isaac related, “and it was so transformative because I'd grown up in church. How do you miss this?” This new understanding, as Bethany acknowledged, made Scripture suddenly make more sense to her. Carrie described her first time hearing the Grand Narrative like this:

I remember the first time we talked about narrative and leaving and being, one, super overwhelmed by it, but two, like really mad that no one had taught me the Bible that way before, because it makes so much more sense. I feel like in the American church a lot of times we talk about Genesis and why God did all of these things and it was awesome. These are fun stories to tell. And then we skip half the Bible and jump right into Jesus coming to earth, Jesus's birth. And that was kind of what I knew of the Bible before because I feel like growing up, I wasn't taught that huge section of the Bible. So, I didn't know what to do with it. I read it and it didn't make sense. And I was like, I don't know where this is or where this goes.

Of the five remaining students, only James said he felt like he did have “a decent idea of taking the Bible as a whole before learning the Grand Narrative in Global Studies,” but the approach impacted his understanding of Scripture by giving him a simple structure and teaching him how to better follow the different theological themes throughout Scripture. Each student interviewed shared the Grand Narrative teaching offered an approach to understanding the Bible that gave them either a new perspective, or a more mature perspective on Scripture. They noted four primary areas of growth in their understanding regarding Scripture: 1) growth in understanding the Old and New Testament as connected parts of a larger story, 2) growth in understanding the Old

Testament, 3) growth in understanding the New Testament, and, 4) growth in understanding the Old Testament as Gospel foundation.

The Old and New Testament as Connected Parts of a Larger Story

All of the students interviewed acknowledged the importance of connecting the Old and New Testaments as part of the story of God; furthermore, all twelve students expressed the ability to now be able to describe how the Old and New Testaments are connected to a larger story, in part, to the Grand Narrative teaching. This will be seen below through the specific responses of the students. It is an important clarification and distinction to make that they expressed an ability to connect all parts of Scripture because while some of the students might have acknowledged the Old and New Testaments were connected, many could not have told you how. In her interview, Bethany initially said she acknowledged the Bible was “one big story” before coming into the program; however, she quickly changed her mind and said, “No, I wouldn't have said that. I would have said we have the Old Testament and New Testament; and I couldn't have told you how they fit together.” For her and other students, it was an important part of their learning to see that “this is a whole story. This is not just a bunch of books pieced together.” Each book and each story, as Anna said, “is all connecting.”

Hannah's memory of a specific lecture in Global Studies 220 highlights a turning point in her, and many students', understanding regarding Scripture:

I think that I grew up reading and learning from other people specific stories in Scripture, especially from the Old Testament. And they might occasionally explain the context surrounding it. And I might not read just one chapter, but several, or over the course of time the whole book. It was never explained to me fully that this is all one big story. And then getting into Global Studies two hundred and seeing the theme of God's heart for the nations throughout all of Scripture, it sort of dawned on me, yeah, that's a theme throughout Scripture but

it's not the only one. So, for me it just really changed how I read the Bible as a whole.

That foundational theme of God being a global God is something four of the twelve students specifically shared as a concept that had helped them understand the Bible as one continuing story. Anna's experience is a very common one shared among our student body: "I had never even heard that was something that was God's plan from the beginning. In my head that was a very New Testament idea." For these students who already have an interest in global work, it is significant for the Grand Narrative to further develop their understanding of God's heart for the nations. Isaac said it "awaken[ed] . . . understanding of how global the Lord is" and "how He wants all nations to worship his name." That idea is most commonly connected to the Great Commission passage of Matthew 28, but Kacy explained she and her peers learned "that's not just the Great Commission. That's God's story."

Evie described her time in GLST 220 and the way the Grand Narrative lecture impacted her understanding of Scripture like this:

You know, I grew up in a Christian setting, kind of, and so growing up I read my Bible; but I would say that I really started to grow in reading Scripture my freshman year. In context, I had Global Studies 220 the fall semester of my sophomore year. So, between freshman and sophomore year I read through the entire New Testament that summer. And so, I was fresh up on the New Testament and just learning all these new things from my new experience at Liberty and growing in love for Scripture, but still very much thinking New Testament. And so then Fall semester I had 220 where we really start talking about the Grand Narrative. And that was when I was first like, "Oh these aren't two different testaments, like two different stories. It's not one God of the Old Testament, one God of the New Testament. This is one story that ties completely together." . . . Basically, it just kind of has helped me to understand God's story as a narrative, as one story. That the God in Genesis one is the same as the God in Revelation and that there are themes that continue, that the story of the Israelites continues through the whole narrative. So, I think that's just helped me tie everything together and understand this as one story.

The one-story understanding is a distinctive in how Global Studies students view the Bible and it was very interesting to listen to how different students tried to describe the mindset. Bethany likened it to a “television show that flows together” with “different seasons” and episodes. Mark took a different approach and compared the story of God’s plan throughout Scripture to a “string that’s tied around all these key points. And then you just pull. It opens up like a box and then you dive in and you just see God.” Overall, each of these students expressed understanding the Bible this way is important. Surprisingly, even those who had grown up with what they thought was a good foundation of biblical understanding expressed the Grand Narrative teaching approach was something they had never heard before.

For many of them, it was not the specific way it was taught in Global Studies but instead what that teaching allowed them to do and understand. Bethany expressed it allowed them to see “how God’s story progressed through time.” Many of them come into the program already knowing about different parts of Scripture but they have not been trained to understand these parts as connected and each part as purposeful. Sitting under the teaching, Carrie clarified, made them able to “see God’s Word come together” which in turn helped them understand and tell it better. James said it enables someone to “fill in gaps. . . . It’s easy to get a disconnect if you haven’t studied the Word a lot between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Trying to tie those two things together is really important.” Being able to tie the Old and New Testaments together is an important part of understanding the entire narrative of the Bible. For many students, this in part happened because they began to understand the Old Testament better through the Grand Narrative teaching.

Better Understanding of the Old Testament

Eight out of the twelve students attributed a deeper love and understanding of the Old Testament to Grand Narrative teaching, with four of those students specifically saying that they would not have read the Old Testament on their own beforehand. As I listened to the students, I heard them explaining their experience with the Old Testament as it being taught primarily as children's stories which then trained them not to see value in this part of Scripture as an adult. Because of that, the Grand Narrative teaching was one of the first times many of them heard the Old Testament taught as applicable to adult learning and, therefore, was an important part of how the students even defined the Grand Narrative. Isaac used it almost as a synonym when he talked about how he describes what he learned in Global Studies to his friends.

People ask about the Global Studies Department and what you learn. It's like, in that moment how do you say, "You know, let me tell you about the Old Testament. Let me tell you about this Grand Narrative."

This is a similar mindset to other students as they expressed that they now naturally assume the Old Testament is an important part of the story of God, even if that is not necessarily what they grew up knowing.

Many students expressed their growth of learning the Old Testament beyond their simple understanding of the stories they learned as children. Bethany called this a "Sunday School understanding" and described how this approach to teaching the Old Testament helped her know some of the different stories separately and disconnected. Other students did not even acknowledge knowing most of these stories. Carrie described her experience:

I feel like in the American church a lot of times we like talk about Genesis and why God did all of these things and it was awesome. These are fun stories to tell. And then we skip half the Bible and jump right into Jesus coming to earth, like Jesus's birth. And that was kind of what I knew of the Bible before. I feel like growing up I wasn't taught that huge section of the Bible, so I didn't know what to do with it. Like I read it and it didn't make sense. And I was like, I don't know where this is or where this goes. So, it was cool to get to see beginning to now, you know, getting to see all of it and how creation and all of the stories in Genesis were super purposeful. And of course, sending Jesus to Earth was super purposeful. But there's so much more purpose in between there too. . . . There's so much more to learn and to see, and it makes it all come, literally come together. . . . It's completely changed how I look at parts of the Bible and how I interact with different stories that by themselves, I'm like, "What is this, God?" It's just so random. But how they fit into the Grand Narrative of that story.

That word *interact* is a perfect word to use in how these students described their understanding and approach to the Old Testament because they now find new value in it.

Evie explained the Grand Narrative teaching directly impacted her understanding of Scripture by showing her that the Old Testament has value:

[I now give] value to the Old Testament, a lot of value. I think before I really started learning about Grand Narrative, I was so invested in the New Testament and New Covenant. But the Old Testament is so foundational and important. And to trace all these acts throughout the whole metanarrative, I've really understood the value and the foundation of the Old Testament. And so now, how that impacts me is that I read the Old Testament. Yeah. I read both the Old Testament and New Testament and find the themes that continue throughout both. I trace the themes throughout the whole biblical narrative where I wasn't maybe doing that before.

Throughout the interviews this same acknowledgement was expressed in that students actually interacted with Old Testament stories and teaching in how they answered many of the questions. Three of them used Old Testament stories to explain things happening in life. Two of them were currently reading the Old Testament. And three of them specifically talked about how they use the Old Testament, beyond Genesis one through four, in their discipleship. Their answers expressed that they now see value in that part of Scripture more than they used to.

That value was experienced as the students learned to not just run to New Testament Scripture for help in their daily living, but to understand that Old Testament stories are, in Bethany's words, "so applicable to our lives today." Part of the ability for them to be able to do that came with their first understanding how those stories fit into a bigger picture. That simple understanding gave them courage to study areas of Scripture many people do not naturally run to. James explained it gave him courage to "actually pull stuff from that more than just here's a verse that applies to" an individual's life. Carrie's growing love of the Old Testament was evident in her description of how she now interacts with it:

One thing is that I love the Old Testament now because before I was like, "The Old Testament is weird and there are all these laws and these things that don't make sense and they're kind of random and I don't understand the purpose of them being in the Bible." . . . It was harder for me to read. So, I can read the Old Testament. And I still obviously don't understand everything, but I like being able to take . . . those stories and to place them into the bigger purpose and bigger story. And just not being afraid to dive into those Old Testament books and I'm more prone to talk about the Old Testament and to share things I've learned from the Old Testament which is not normal for a lot of college students. I feel like they don't just open up and read Exodus in the morning, you know. But the lessons that come out of those are really incredible. And being able to share those with other students or with the girls I disciple at church. Yeah, it's really cool to know, to be able to read those books and understand more because I can place them into the bigger story.

Part of their excitement and love for these Old Testament stories came not just because the stories are good stories, but because they learned how these stories lead to the Gospel and therefore bring more Gospel understanding.

Understanding the Old Testament as Gospel Foundation

Eight of the students specifically referred to the Old Testament as part of the Gospel story or as foundational to Gospel understanding. This might be the most

pertinent number in showing the value these students now attribute to the Old Testament. It is important to note the remaining three students did not say it was not important, they just did not state specifically that it was. In other areas of their interviews, participants spoke about the importance of the whole story of the Bible. It is also important to note these eight students' acknowledgement of the value of Old Testament understanding for the Gospel was not just in understanding Genesis 1-4, but in actually understanding Genesis through Malachi as foundational for understanding why Jesus came. They learned to, in some ways, redefine what the term "Gospel" actually encompasses within Scripture. Anna now defines Gospel as "being from the very beginning to the very end" because God was working out a redemptive plan that whole time. This plan, for Mark, now comes with an understanding that "Jesus is proclaimed [in] verses pages after the fall of mankind" with the promise of the snake's head being crushed and that actually happening "right there the moment Jesus died and rose from the grave." The later parts of the Gospel message, according to the students, make more sense because they have learned the first and middle part.

Knowing these earlier parts helps them understand the part of the story that is about Jesus. They expressed that they better understand the things Jesus said and did in His life but more importantly, what He was accomplishing through His sacrifice. The storyline of sacrifice, taught in the Grand Narrative, helped students like Greg understand "there has to be a reason for a payment. Someone's got to pay it. . . . That's Christ's blood taking care of that." This history of sacrifice and payment throughout the Old Testament then leads to a firmer understanding of their identity in Christ. Evie explained it like this:

As a believer my identity is in Christ, but I wouldn't understand the fullness of that had I not understood what comes before. There is such a deep history of the Israelites sacrificing and being forgiven because of the blood that was shed, like for the sacrifices. Then understanding that Christ is the permanent sacrifice. I no longer have these temporary sacrifices. We have [a] permanent solid rock that I can build my foundation and my identity upon.

The foundation of understanding for sacrifice, temple, kingdom, and many other threads running through Old Testament Scripture became a natural part of understanding for the students that they then easily take into the New Testament as part of the continuing story. Isaac's understanding of the thread of kingdom through the narrative is described below as he connected it to a better understanding of Jesus and what He accomplished.

I think the whole Grand Narrative, as my understanding has developed, I've begun to understand God more through the Old Testament than I would have just as a believer in Christ. I see Christ and I see God now through the lens of the Old Testament in a way he has had this plan all along. For instance, the kingdom and how Jesus came with the kingdom and he came by humble means. And then also with the temple and how temple was something that was . . . holy. And in the Old Testament we couldn't reach a temple without a priest, without Him sacrificing. And how the Lamb of God, you see how Jesus completes the Old Testament. And when you see that as a believer, it almost makes you understand Jesus more personally.

To hear a student say, "Jesus completes the Old Testament," though a simple phrase, reflected understanding for complicated things because it showed he or she understands how the death and resurrection of Jesus fulfills the redemption God started in the Old Testament.

Better Understanding of the New Testament

The New Testament is a part of Scripture with which most people seem to be more comfortable because it is more known and studied. But the students interviewed expressed that in order to really understand and know the New Testament, you must understand the Old; that is what the Grand Narrative helped them do. We have already

discussed this specifically related to the work of Jesus Christ and how that is better understood in light of the whole story, but it does not stop with the Gospels. Seeing how the students were able to extend the storyline and apply it beyond the life of Jesus into the books that come after is even more proof that their mindset of how to approach Scripture has become that of story. Carrie gave an example of this in her interview when she talked about her time studying Hebrews.

Lots of things in the New Testament are so much more meaningful when you understand parts of the Old Testament and the references. . . . Like right now, I'm reading Hebrews and the references are Hebrews and the high priest; and all those things make so much more sense when you can go back and read the Old Testament. . . . I love cross-referencing things in my Bible and being able to flip back and forth and see God's Word come together.

In another part of her interview, she talked about how excited she gets when she realizes how “this book that’s close to the end of the New Testament can connect to this book in the Old Testament. The whole story makes more sense. It’s more exciting. It’s super cool.” This Grand Narrative lens became a part of how students interpret New Testament passages they have read and been taught many times. They began to even use Grand Narrative terminology to explain what they are reading. Mark did this when he explained Paul’s teaching in Romans one and two.

I think Paul does a really good job of explaining and unwrapping for us the Grand Narrative. You know in Romans one and two. What is he doing? He's unpacking everything that's happened. . . . This is what happened. It was created. Then they had a relationship with God. Then they chose to reject God and they started to worship things that they could see, like animals and the stars and the sun and stuff and condemn them even more. And even then, they knew the righteousness of God. They choose to be unrighteous and . . . is that not the Grand Narrative explained simply for us?

Writers of the New Testament would have been very familiar with the writings of the Old so for these students to read with that background of knowledge means they better understand what the writers are intending to get at in the first place.

However, understanding Scripture in the context of a bigger story is not simply about finding more understanding in the better-known parts of Scripture. The New Testament has its areas mainstream Christians are not quite as comfortable with, just like the Old Testament does. Students partially attributed their acknowledgement that all of Scripture is beneficial to their understanding of the Grand Narrative. They communicated that because every part of God's Word is part of His Story, it should therefore be read and applied to life. Daniel's perspective on the need to read both the New and Old Testament is below:

I've heard how . . . some people, they've only ever read the New Testament and I'm like, "That doesn't make sense" or they refuse to read Revelation. I'm like, there is an end to this, and God told us what that is. It may be a bit mysterious to us now because that's not our part in the story but that is what was given to us so that we might have hope. And realizing that each part of the metanarrative is there to help us in our everyday lives. So, Genesis is to help us know where we came from. Revelation is to help give us hope in spite of how things might be going right now. And then other aspects of the story . . . guide us along the way.

These students understand these aspects of the story are found in each book of the Bible and these books are, as Carrie said, there "for a reason so why would we not try to understand all of them?" They reported that this wholeness of Scripture allows them to understand both the Old and New Testament as valuable, not as separate entities but as different parts of a continuing story. Below is Kacy's explanation of this:

It's really made scripture more of a whole I guess . . . learning about the Grand Narrative has really expanded my understanding of how it is all one continuous story. Yes, there is Jesus coming in the New Covenant that we're under, but he also came to fulfill the Old Covenant, so he fulfilled that and then created the new. But he was so present all throughout as well. And it wasn't just about Israel

and all the crazy things that they went through, and now it's the church and just focused on mostly Gentiles. . . . It's still God's full story and his full plan for the world as a whole. He's had this plan the whole time and it didn't just drastically change from the Old to the New Testament. In my mind they're unified more to see how God was working through all of it and then how he's continuing to work along that same story line. . . . It's all continuous. He started in Genesis with a plan and even when we screwed it up, He still fixed it because it's still His plan. He still has his story that he's working out through Him and how he uses humanity to do that as well. It's just a much more cohesive story and it all makes so much more sense to look at it that way than to break it up. . . . It just makes more sense that way and it gives you a very clear, more unified understanding of God's plan throughout human history.

The students interviewed clearly expressed sitting under the Grand Narrative teaching in Global Studies gave them a deeper, more cohesive understanding of the different portions of Scripture that make up the story of God; this then affected many other areas of understanding as followers of Christ.

Grand Narrative Impact on Identity and Purpose

The third sub-research question focused on two important areas of understanding that followers of Christ pursue in their growth: identity and purpose. In exploring the students' narratives, Greg went so far as to say, "It has let me know that I have an identity and purpose." While such a bold statement was not given by every student interviewed, eleven of the twelve students stated that understanding the Grand Narrative of Scripture had greatly affected their understanding of their identity by helping them know themselves as a small yet significant part in a bigger story. Ten of the twelve students extended that understanding of identity into finding their purpose within the story and making it known. Laura explained the metanarrative provided deeper rooting for understanding purpose and identity and this was the expressed viewpoint of all the students interviewed.

It was clear in listening to the students that the primary aspect that seemed to affect them in regard to identity was the idea that they are a part of a bigger story that God is writing. Though most of these students have been taught about having an identity in Christ, placing their identity in the biblical metanarrative gave them a story in which to participate. Mark's explanation of this was very simple, yet very insightful, when he said "it restructures the framework of my identity because if God has this story and God has this plan throughout his Word, then my identity should be a part of that plan and should be anchored in His Word." For some of the students, this was a completely new idea and many of them talked about how it was overwhelming at first to realize how small they are. Greg called it a "sobering reminder" to "feel small" because you "realize that his plan is big and it spans years and generations and it has been something that's been in the process for so many years." It is an understanding that Laura said, "really shrinks you and puts you in the right perspective to be inserted in" the Grand Narrative "properly." While some might think this shrinking would be a negative thing, these students explained it helped them understand their right placement and purpose in relation to God, which actually helped them better know their significance.

Better understanding of their placement in the Grand Narrative humbled students to help them focus more on Christ and His work instead of themselves and their work. Greg admitted, "It's hurt my ego because I have to be more humble whenever I deal with Him and His Story." The humbling reality of their placement in God's story, three of the students stated, actually took off the pressure to be more important than they are meant to be. Bethany explained how this humbling perspective was actually very empowering.

It humbled me a lot because I think I definitely . . . want[ed] my life to be this huge thing that does all this stuff for God. And seeing the Grand Narrative helped

me understand that my life is just one little part, maybe one little episode, of God's story. And so, it put me into a perspective of it [that] took a lot of weight off my shoulders. I don't feel like I need to change the world or do anything like that. I need to be obedient because I can look back and see other people's stories throughout Scripture and how when they listen to God, great things happen. Or when they listen to God maybe big huge things didn't happen, but the little things did happen, and it helped me to see that it's not all a pressure on me. It gave me a perspective of I'm not living for my life. I'm living for the whole of the Grand Narrative. . . . And so, it just was very humbling but also empowering because it took a lot of the pressure off. I don't have to be the world changer and my story doesn't have to be the great grand big thing. My story can be a part of the great grand big thing that's going on in life.

This empowering perspective allowed students to walk in the identity and purpose they were created for as players in God's story instead of authors of their own.

This concept is taught in Global Studies, Hannah explained, in a way that shows the story is not only authored by God, but that He is "center of the story." Perhaps this seems like a small distinction, but in a world that is constantly telling people to be the hero of their own stories, this truth is very countercultural. Even for the students, like Isaac, who might have already conceptually understood this to a certain degree, the further knowledge of narrative helped solidify it:

The Grand Narrative probably refines my understanding of identity. I mean, I've always understood what it means to follow Jesus and what it means to be a part of God's story. But I think having the perspective that was taught in the early classes that this is not your story, this is about God's story, has also affected the way I view my own identity. I understand that God is the main character in my life and He's the main story writer. And so, you know, though this is through my life, everything I should do is to Christ and to God. And so that is a small part, but it's affected the way I view myself. . . . It's the same with purpose. My whole purpose is to honor God's plan and His will and so that includes doing my part in His story and sharing about Jesus.

As Isaac communicated in the above quote, the understanding of identity and purpose are connected within the Grand Narrative; growth in one area affects growth in another. Or as Laura put it, understanding one area "slips right into" understanding the other. She said

the Grand Narrative “sharpened” her understanding of her identity which let her “be in the right shape and form to have a purpose.” In a world full of people looking for value, purpose is an important thing to attain.

Purpose was a common subject of conversation as people seek to figure out what they are meant to do in life. This is especially prevalent in college as students pursue degrees and try and figure out their callings. Global Studies students are uniquely learning they have already been given foundational purpose through the story and plan of God. This releases a lot of pressure, as Daniel explained:

It has helped me get rid of any feelings of, I need to find meaning, or establish meaning on my own terms. A lot of people are looking for purpose in life, but God has already given me purpose by just having me get involved in His plans. So, it's helped me learn to just trust God more, understanding that I'm just one of many characters and however big or small my part in the story of life might be, it is not less or more significant.

Students interviewed were able to experience other parts of their relationship with God more fully when they began to understand their purpose and identity are not found in making a big difference on their own but instead by being a part of God’s story and being loved by Him.

Five of the twelve students specifically identified the Grand Narrative allowed them to feel more loved, significant, and known. The other seven students communicated this same reality throughout their interview though they did not specifically identify it. It would not be a stretch, however, to say all of the students interviewed communicated the Grand Narrative had influenced this area of their identity in Christ. Daniel said the Grand Narrative helped them understand that “no one person’s purpose is more or less significant than another” so it frees them to focus on their significance in relation to God instead of other people. This came, in part, from better knowing God from an appropriate

perspective of the role they play in His story. But it is not just in relation to their role in the story that the students were able to grow in understanding role and identity within the metanarrative; it was also in how the Grand Narrative teaching had helped them better learn how to read the Bible and gain more context to the New Testament teaching on these two subjects.

Many Christians know their identity and purpose should be rooted in God and His Word but when individuals see how there is a larger narrative context to the specific verses they have studied regarding identity and purpose, they gain a fuller understanding of what that means. James was the one student who said the Grand Narrative teaching did not vastly change his understanding of His identity; however, he did explain how it had provided a “larger backing” in regard to “scriptural backing” that helped him understand it at a deeper level. He explained how learning to trace different theological themes through the narrative of Scripture helped him understand better what New Testament teaching means when it says things like he is an heir to Christ. This concept of tracing themes is a big part of Grand Narrative teaching in Global Studies. Evie described how being able to trace themes gave her a fuller understanding of what it means to have an identity and purpose found in Christ.

I would say that tracing themes throughout the whole narrative has been foundational in identity. So, an example of that, we did trace the theme of temple at the Global Studies Retreat and it says in Second Corinthians four, six, and seven that we are temples . . . we’re temples of God because of the Holy Spirit. But it refers back to God and how He came to dwell among us. If you just had . . . read Second Corinthians, what does that truly mean? But to trace temple and God's presence dwelling among us from the very beginning, that establishes identity . . . as a believer my identity is in Christ, but I wouldn't understand the fullness of that had I not understood what comes before.

This fullness rooted the students' understanding deeper and in a way that allowed more growth. Laura explained it by comparing it to the difference in a flower that has been picked to a flower that is rooted in soil.

The surface level things you can pick and feel good and smell good for a while, but without it being deeply rooted. The flowers aren't going to keep blossoming and it only smells good for a while and it's not going to keep growing. . . . [The Grand Narrative] takes all of the context and it roots it where it belongs. And then if you have that understanding, you're not just taking [things] randomly. You're getting it from that understanding of where it is. And that is what adds all of the meaning and depth behind it, is where it's deeply rooted. So, I always get sad when people don't have that, and you think you feel good, but you could feel so much better. I have a whole lot more purpose and your identity could be so much more deeply rooted and grounded if you got it from there in the Grand Narrative.

With a firmer rooting of identity and purpose in the story of what God has done throughout time, students said they were better able to experience other parts of a relationship with God like excitement, love, worship, freedom, faithfulness, trust, less pressure, and obedience to make disciples.

Grand Narrative Impact on Discipleship

When exploring the data for how understanding the Grand Narrative affected the participants' ability to be disciples, many of the students returned to the conversation about being a part of the story of God and how that had affected their understanding of what it means to follow Him. As was stated earlier, eleven of the twelve students said this was an understanding they associated with the Grand Narrative teaching in Global Studies. Four of the students specifically talked about obedience as being easier due to a better understanding of identity and purpose that came from Grand Narrative teaching. In other words, they learned to be better disciples of Christ. According to them, this then had enabled them to in turn make better disciples of Christ.

Students expressed that because Grand Narrative teaching made the students better readers of God's Word, which better made them understand the character of God, they were better able to be in a relationship with and obey Him. Evie explained that even though she had grown up reading the Bible, her "love for Scripture has increased" through understanding the Grand Narrative, which has better rooted her in the Word. She said she has learned "to understand and appreciate and enjoy all of Scripture" which has enabled her to know truth and benefit her as a disciple. It is not just the truth of facts but the truth of God's character and who He is that has made an impact on her. Without understanding the character of God, one cannot follow Him fully. Anna said this was an important thing the Grand Narrative had done in affecting her ability to be a disciple:

[When I think of] a disciple of Christ, I think of someone who follows him, and it's better helped me do that because you can't follow Him unless you know what His desire is and what He wants. The Grand Narrative is teaching you to learn God's desires and who God is because you're seeing Him throughout all of history . . . And so, I think as you study the Grand Narrative, you learn to know God more like that Grand View, and then you're able to apply that to individual aspects of your life because you know who He is. And so, then you're able to follow Him. You're able to be His disciple.

This "greater understanding of God's character" has been pivotal in many of the students' growth in their ability to be disciples. It reportedly fostered a deeper trust in Him, which had grown the relationship they have with Him. In turn, the decisions they made then become more than just mindless acts of obedience and, instead, were faithful acts of loving service to someone they know. This has been especially important for Daniel who, before the Grand Narrative understanding, struggled to understand relationship with God because he was primarily focused on knowledge and doctrine of God.

I guess as a disciple of Christ I'm learning to let go of what is not rooted in Christ. And I guess there is a lot of misunderstandings on my part of what is a disciple of Christ. So, like sometimes there were times when I was very focused on doctrine

and because I was so focused on doctrine, I wasn't as focused on relationships. . . . Yeah, I think that's the big thing is understanding that I'm interacting with a person and like, the Bible is the means to understanding a person, as opposed to a set of stories.

This better understanding of relationship then helped the students disciple others into relationship instead of into just knowledge. It helped them walk in obedience and disciple others into obedience.

As students learn more and more about the intricacies of the story of God and see how purposeful and sovereign He is throughout time, they reported better understanding what they were called to do and be. Laura said she understands her call as a “surrender of the ownership” of her story to Jesus. She described it like the surrendering of a pen as if to say to God, “You’re the author. You write what I do.” She explained why she is willing to do this.

Hearing the Grand Narrative and . . . seeing again my identity and my purpose within that, for me obedience just cannot be denied. I think just the key thing for me is perspective of my size. That's really the biggest thing. Because I remember talking to my family and . . . it was literally a conversation of how can I say no. You don't say no to this God and that understanding was from the Grand Narrative. Who God is, not just from one snippet of the story, but from all of it. And you just don't deny that. You would be an idiot both on the big things and the little things. And I think it's easier for me to try to deny the little things, obedience in the little things. But again, if I see my perspective in that way of the Grand Narrative, . . . I was almost speechless. There's just nothing you can do but obey whenever you get the context of it all. That's it. You just do.

This obedience, Bethany said, “comes from the recognition of [knowing] whose story it really is” and where an individual is placed in the narrative. All of the students interviewed confirmed their understanding of the Grand Narrative had affected their understanding of their identity and purpose positively.

While many people feel pressure to prove their worth in this life or do big things to change the world, the students interviewed seemed to understand it is not about the

greatness of what they do, but instead about the obedience of what they do. While most of the students alluded to this during their interviews, three of the students specifically identified this as an important piece of understanding that had affected their ability to be a better disciple. Carrie said understanding that she fit into the bigger story helped them understand their “small little part doesn’t have to be crazy and extravagant.” It had also helped them understand that sometimes obedience to play the part God has for them might not be their dream job or dream role. Hannah spoke about her growth in this perspective:

As a disciple, I think it's made me more willing to play different roles than I may have imagined. Because my role in the story is not the point, I should be willing for that role to be anything, even if I don't feel like I'm good at it or even if I don't feel like that's my preference.

This willingness to play whatever role God has for them does not mean they feel unloved or unvalued but, instead, comes because they are able to more personally relate to God because of their greater understanding of Him.

Part of being a disciple of Christ is making disciples of Christ. In exploring the data, every student interviewed affirmed teaching on the Grand Narrative had better equipped them to make disciples. Six of them said they now put emphasis on making sure those they are discipling understand the entire narrative of the Bible with four of those emphasizing the importance of using the Old Testament. Two students additionally talked about how they make sure to teach that everyone is a part of the story of the Bible. While the Global Studies program does not teach a specific Grand Narrative method for discipleship, what the students expressed was they naturally want to pass on what they learned and understand its seriousness and importance.

This passing on of the Grand Narrative is something the students expressed they are very motivated to do in all stages and forms of discipleship and with all types of people. Anna shared it was almost immediate that she was passing on her new knowledge to her friends and roommates because she wanted to make sure they knew what she now knew. For many of them, Kacy explained, it becomes one of the early things they want to make sure those they are investing in understand—that “God was working through every bit of the Bible and continuing to do so.” This might be for those they are in long-standing relationships with; but it is also for the person they might only get to share the Gospel with once. They understand, Greg said, the importance of sharing the “whole Bible from creation to the fall, to God’s plan for redemption” whether that means doing it in a “thirty second presentation, your two-minute presentation, your two- hour presentation” or even in long-term discipleship. James explained it influenced him to “really approach the Bible in a holistic way in the disciple-making process” and showed him the value of “walking somebody from the beginning to the end as opposed to just jumping into the Gospel and then filling in the gaps.” The students have been affected by this holistic approach and want to affect others with it.

Part of approaching discipleship through a holistic perspective means these students gave more value to the Old Testament for discipleship than they would have otherwise; utilizing more of Scripture now gives them the ability to walk through a much wider span of knowledge with those they are discipling and equip them for a much wider span of experience. Instead of discipleship methods that focus narrowly on single areas of Scripture, approaching discipleship conversations through a Grand Narrative lens, Daniel said, “gives you more flexibility” to meet the individual where they are no matter their

culture or background knowledge of Scripture. Many of the students interviewed admitted that before their understanding of the Grand Narrative, they did not spend time in the Old Testament with those they were investing in. Mark said “without that narrative,” he stayed “in the comfort zone” of the New Testament in the discipling process; but now with understanding better what the whole Bible is saying, he is able to “wade into the deeper waters of the Bible and to do so confidently.” Carrie also acknowledged that fear kept her from teaching the Old Testament.

[The Grand Narrative has affected how I disciple by] just not being afraid to dive into those Old Testament books. I’m more prone to talk about the Old Testament and to share things I’ve learned from the Old Testament which is not normal for a lot of college students. I feel like they don’t just open up and read Exodus in the morning. . . . But the lessons that come out of those [Old Testament stories] are really incredible. And being able to share those with other students or with the girls I disciple at church, it’s really cool.

Walking with those they are discipling through Old Testament books and stories helps train them how to study beyond that discipleship relationship. Isaac said “starting in the Old Narrative” together allows them to come to a place where the disciple begins to understand Scripture on his/her own “because Scripture will begin to teach them as they read it. . . . The Holy Spirit will teach them what” they need to know. Old Testament teaching gives a very important Biblical foundational within discipleship, just as the rest of Scripture does, and the students explained that discipling someone in that part of Scripture better helps them understand what part they will then play.

Some interviewees said beyond making sure someone understood the salvation Gospel, they spent very little discipleship time in any other parts of Scripture prior to their understanding the Grand Narrative. This means they were not discipling others in their role within the story of God very well. Grand Narrative discipleship has spurred

these students on into teaching through the Word and helping others find their place in it. Evie found it “a little cringe-worthy” to now realize what she called discipleship was mainly just meeting people for coffee and hearing about their week. Now she spends ample time walking someone through Scripture and this process has vastly changed those relationships. Being “rooted in Scripture and in Truth” provided “much more of an intimate, personal, [and] deep relationship and [has also provided] more life change and vulnerability.”

Other students talked about how they now spend time teaching through the storylines behind the different subjects of discipleship people might identify. Isaac referred to this process as being able to “guide points” as he shared the narratives of kingdom, temple, and sacrifice in order to show them how Jesus completed those concepts. These concept narratives help those they are discipling understand, as they now do, what role they, themselves, play in the story of the Bible. Hannah explained that as she disciples, she wants people to understand their worth within the story as valuable but not as the central figure. She explained discipleship partly as “walking with people, helping them grow in their faith enough to where they, as a disciple, are also willing to play a role.” The excitement these students expressed to be able to do this was very encouraging to witness as the researcher.

This excitement does not come without a proper acknowledgement of the seriousness of the task of making disciples. In fact, for these students, it has helped give them a perspective that fosters excitement and joy for the story of God but also showed them the importance of what they are tasked with. For Greg, the whole story “brings about an urgency and understanding . . . a context for the urgency” because “people are

dying and going to hell” if no one tells them why Jesus came and died for them. This urgency, in turn, layers a seriousness on top of their excitement to share what they have learned through the Grand Narrative. Isaac described below this balance of excitement with the awareness that it needs to be taken seriously below.

As a disciple maker, it is something that you want to pass on. When I think about all of the metanarrative of Scripture and everything I've learned, I wish I could just take what I knew and just give it to those on the sideline just because there's so much. But it takes time to teach the whole metanarrative. So, for me it's exciting because you have a chance to show others something they probably haven't really realized when they read Scripture. It's exciting; but also . . . it's so hard too. . . . It's taken a couple of years in this program for us and we're still learning the metanarrative and we're going to probably be doing this our whole lives. . . . So, you know I just wish that as a disciple maker it was something that I could easily pass on, but I know it needs patience and it needs time and prayer. And so, something that I look forward to in my discipling is not starting in the New Testament with Jesus and Paul and how to act as Christian, but starting in the Old Testament and looking at how this story is ultimately The Story . . . like this is the beginning of the story and this is how its lessons are seen throughout time.

These different aspects all partner to make a fuller motivation and conviction for sharing the story of God and the students' own fuller understanding of the narrative of God's story equips them to disciple within that more effectively. As Global Studies is purposed, in part, to do this, this fuller understanding greatly impacts the program and community of Global Studies.

Grand Narrative Impact on GLST Program and Community

Exploring the data for answers to sub-research question five brought forth an important consideration of whether or not the Grand Narrative teaching had made an impact on the GLST program and community. Very quickly in interviews it became clear that an area that had been greatly impacted by the teaching of Grand Narrative was that of the Global Studies community's focus on God and His Word. Laura, who earlier

compared learning the Grand Narrative to learning a new language, once again brought that analogy into her explanation as she explained the value of having a common language within a community of people. For Global Studies, she said, it drew them closer to God which then drew them closer to each other. Bethany said this is, in part, because the teaching gave “the community common ground for how to study Scripture together” and then understand themselves within that. Ultimately, what was happening is these students were being disciplined together. Isaac described it like this:

I feel like the Grand Narrative in the Global Studies Department has kind of ushered the community that we have because . . . we all experience being poured into and disciplined from the early classes on to the end, and we're disciplined in the way of Scripture and the way we understand the Bible. And so that kind of creates a commonality of experience and knowledge of the narrative. And with those two things [in] the Global Studies department, we all grow closer because we know the Scriptures together like that.

Disciplining the students in this way, Anna explained, makes the “community’s first focus” God and His Word which then “unites the community under one purpose.” This then affects the way they are able to think about one another and support one another.

As has already been discussed, one of the primary take-aways from the Grand Narrative teaching for the individual students was the fact they are all part of a bigger story; it was not surprising, then, when the students identified this as one of the main things that had affected them as a community. James stated there “definitely is a culture in Global Studies . . . [where] we are part of one mission and we are all [in] one story” which, for him, can at least be “partially attributed” to teaching on the Grand Narrative. While James said he did not necessarily attribute this entirely to Grand Narrative teaching, he did see how it had been affected by that.

Seven of the students, on the other hand, directly linked this culture of being a part of one story as a community to a perspective they had gained from sitting under the Grand Narrative teaching. This perspective united the students, Mark said, and showed them how to see each other as “coworkers in God’s plan” and support each other appropriately. According to Daniel, it “help[ed] establish a way of being” where students were able to be “mindful in every moment . . . that there [was] an end goal for which there is a common purpose” that they could “strive both individually and collectively towards.” They better understand they are on the same team and this, in turn, helped them love and support each other better. Hannah described this approach to the community as being very freeing:

For the community, because everyone is learning “I’m not the center of the story and we all have a spot in God’s story,” I think it frees us to love one another well and to not walk in the Global Studies circle as if it’s all about each of us. Because if we’re all focusing on God, we’re all identifying Him as the center of the story. Then if we’re doing it well, then there’s less tension of comparison between each of us and competition between each of us. I know for me, if I had felt like any of us, or myself, were the main character, it would have been a lot harder for me to interact with everybody because I would have been seeking out my own goals and I would have known that so-and-so would have been seeking out theirs. But knowing that . . . we were all on the same team . . . builds community knowing that we’re all part of the same story.

This less tension of comparison Hannah talked about was a key component many students talked about as part of how they were able to love one another better. In a culture that is very individualistic, where people are constantly seeking to be better than those around them, this unique collectivist approach enabled the community to function differently. This will be considered further in an upcoming section on how the internship process was impacted by metanarrative teaching. But, for now, it is enough to acknowledge the students learned God purposes different people for different roles; they

communicated they understand that their stories will be different as well and must be valued as such.

These different stories were on three of the students' minds as they considered upcoming graduations and the fact that they would all be leaving and disbanding physically as a community. For Daniel, as he prepared to say goodbye at the end of his time at Liberty, he kept in mind that even though they "might end up in different walks of life," that did not change the fact that they are "all a team that are involved in the same story." He said that it would make the goodbyes easier to know their common purpose was not going to change upon graduation. Carrie talked about how this perspective influenced her thoughts that her class was about to "leave and scatter." She said it would not change the fact that they would all "still have the same purpose and . . . fit into the same body" and that it "makes the disbursement a little easier.

All of these things are ways the students saw how Grand Narrative teaching had impacted them as they progressed through the classes and built community with one another. While there are probably more extensions of how this has impacted the community, these are the primary ways the students identified. Evie summarized it well when she said, "It boils down to . . . a more Christ-centered community and environment which then overflows into loving one another, and loving being together, and taking care of each other's needs." This type of community developed as students progressed through the program and experienced an exponential amount of growth through the internship process.

Grand Narrative Impact on Internship Experience

The internship process is considered, by the Global Studies Department, to begin about one year before the actual international internship and continues through the students' experiences overseas and their reentry to the United States. During this time, the students are trained to not only walk faithfully through their experiences, but also to reflect and process them in light of a biblical worldview that considers a Grand Narrative perspective. All twelve of the students interviewed explained their Grand Narrative understanding impacted their internship experiences. There were various ways identified that this happened. Eight students talked about how understanding their internships as part of a bigger story helped them place the experience more appropriately in their lives. Five students identified a Grand Narrative approach in helping them during struggles and challenges. Five students specifically talked about how understanding the biblical metanarrative helped them better connect to Scripture during their time overseas. Six students discussed how their awareness of the Grand Narrative helped them during their reentry process and the transition back to the United States. While the students were affected within these general categories, the specific ways they expressed having been affected were unique and personal.

Connecting Internships to God's Narrative

As has been discussed previously, a primary Grand Narrative teaching these Global Studies students experienced involves the understanding they are not the main character of their lives and their different stories fit into a bigger story God is writing in the world; this greatly affected their experience serving and living overseas for a semester. Foundationally, the simple understanding that their internship is not the most

important part of their lives, for many of them, was a very big deal. Many of these students have dreamed of living overseas for a long time. Once they enter into the Global Studies program, the internship starts being placed before them as their opportunity to live out everything they have learned in the classroom. Because of this, the tendency to place that internship higher than it should be in their lives is very tempting.

Understanding their internship, though important, is just a part of the story of their lives, which is also a part of God's story for the world, balanced the temptation to place it higher than it should be. Eight of the students interviewed identified this as being very helpful in order to have a right perspective on their experience overseas. Bethany said that viewing her internship as "another episode in the story" was helpful encouragement to place her internship in a bigger context. Hannah explained it by saying it helped her realize her internship was "an important season in" her life but not the "last season" and certainly not the most "important season in the whole story of the universe itself." While most students would never say the internship is the most important thing in the universe, sometimes they act like it. Because they spent so much time preparing for and thinking about their internship, it was often difficult for students to remember it was not the end goal. Anna clarified what many of the students alluded to in their interviews when she said "the Grand Narrative teaches you to focus on the big picture in light of truth" so it helped her and other students continually place their own internships in a larger narrative and holding on to that narrative during the entire process helped them remember "this is a small piece." This helped them place both victories and failures into a better perspective.

Responding to Struggles

Living overseas and learning how to interact effectively in a cross-cultural setting has many ups and downs; so it can be very easy for someone to assess their internship experience, and sometimes themselves, by the highs and lows of their days. Five of the students interviewed said that understanding the Grand Narrative helped them not to respond to struggles with the mentality they were somehow failing their internship and messing things up. Bethany discussed how this approach to her daily experiences helped give her “a lot of peace and calm” and helped her know she did not “have to freak out at everything” she did not have control over. She said it helped her understand that her internship did not have to be “the highlight” of her life. This was really important for many students as they navigated the unmet expectations of what they thought their internships would look like and realized that, for many of them, it was part of a bigger plan of learning and obedience to the Lord. Hannah discussed how this affected her below:

I think the Grand Narrative and keeping it in my mind during [the internship], took some weight off of the semester of the internship. . . . So, the semester before I was trying to be diligent in preparing for it but also keeping in mind that it was not the end all, be all, of my life or God's plan for me. And then . . . my internship did not go the way I was expecting it to. There were a lot of good and bad things, but it just wasn't what I expected. And that was hard, but not as hard as it would have been if I didn't know that it was part of a bigger picture. And if I was banking my whole story on one semester's internship then it would have been way harder for that internships to not be what I had planned.

The internship not being what the student expected or planned is a common reality, thus an important thing to note.

Beyond the internships not always being what they had planned, sometimes the students themselves did not do as well as they thought they would. Sometimes this was

due to unforeseen circumstances or unrealistic expectations they had of themselves in different areas; but sometimes it was because, like any growing Christian, they failed to be faithful every day. Many students talked about how a Grand Narrative approach allowed them to take comfort during their failures. Mark shared how it allowed him to not let the enemy tell him his whole internship experience was a failure due to some of his own shortcomings; instead, he was able to remind himself how he had and could still play a part in God's story. Bethany talked about this perspective as well in allowing her to respond to her failures by seeking to be faithful moving forward instead of feeling like her failures made things "come crashing down." This perspective and connected response to personal failure allowed these students to endure beyond the hard days and continue on in recognition that God was still working and giving purpose. It helped them navigate the disappointments of where they were, and even of who they were, differently.

Another potential disappointment, aside from personal failure, often comes from students realizing the role they are asked to play on their internship is not as important, enjoyable, or glamorous as they thought it would be. Three students talked about how the Grand Narrative helped them navigate the disappointing realities they experienced and embrace the roles they were given no matter how small or seemingly unimportant they were. Laura's internship was not always easy, but she was able to see how the Grand Narrative perspective gave her the ability to still see value in the difficulties.

Obviously, there are a lot of disappointments which [are] everywhere in life. And so, there were so many times . . . where we [would] have to sit down and be like, Yeah, we are having a hard time feeling purpose in this, but we have to understand. We have to get that picture again of . . . the Grand Narrative and how God has a purpose for us within it. It's not like we're constantly waiting and waiting and waiting to have that purpose. Where we are right now always is our purpose. He has us right now in this story and his exact point of the story and that's purpose. So, whenever we were sitting there cleaning bleachers at the

school or shredding papers for the office and I'm like, "This is not what I flew across the world to do. I want to be out in the jungle with coconuts. I'll work there." . . . That month was so hard. But because of the purpose and the identity of what God gives us in the Grand Narrative, it helped me keep in check and [reminded me] how to function and how to love Jesus more in those moments.

This ability to find purpose even in small things comes, in part, because the students realized that instead of the work belonging to them, it belonged to God. Greg spoke to how this helped him "maintain humility" during his internship to take on whatever responsibility and role he was given. But it was not just humility that allowed this to happen; it was also, according to Hannah, the "worth that comes in recognizing you are playing a role in something so big, even if it is a small role." It is easier to navigate the disappointments of self when self is not the main focus, and that is part of the perspective one has when experiences are assessed connected to the larger scope of Scripture.

Scripture plays a large role in the experiences of our interns and five of the students interviewed discussed how they were able to stay more grounded in the Word and connect their experiences personally to Scripture due to their understanding of it as a story. This is, in part, because instead of just seeking to connect their specific internship experiences to individual verses or passages of Scripture, they had learned to make connections to storylines and lives already lived out in the biblical metanarrative. So instead of just being able to find commonality of experience with other interns, they were able to find it within Scripture. Daniel said this helped him know he was not alone, even when he was no longer in direct contact to his fellow interns.

The metanarrative just helped me realize that I was not alone in my experience. Like I and the other Global Studies students were . . . not only taking these classes together, we were also listening to the stories of past people who were also part of the metanarrative of the Bible. . . . They had to go through these different processes in their own lives and [it was encouraging] just seeing how God used

them based on their faith, or lack thereof, and just where he could lead us if we were faithful.

Having the stories of these people who had gone before them in Scripture gave them encouragement as they lived out what they had been learning in classes and been sent out to do. It was, in some ways, their opportunity to see if what they learned academically and Scripturally was really going to affect how they lived their lives outside what many of them refer to as the “Liberty bubble.”

At Liberty University, participants were surrounded by familiar accountability so, for many of them, their internship was also a time of independence and learning to live faithfully without the spiritual crutches they were used to. Isaac said he really wondered how he was going to do during his internship, and he found that the internship context allowed much of his knowledge of the Grand Narrative and of Scripture to become more active in his life. Though he said it affected him “daily before the internship,” during the internship “it came to life” as he saw how it affected so much of his experience. Being “separated from comfort” showed him all he needed to lean on with the Lord was “Scripture and some community and [his] understanding of the narrative.” Having personal experiences that connect them so deeply to experiences in Scripture was very powerful for many of the GLST interns interviewed. As Evie put it, it was partially how they learned that “His Word ties into our lives.” This ability to connect their narratives more personally to the narratives within Scripture proved invaluable for many of them.

Providing Purpose on Reentry

Participants’ ability to see how the narrative of the Bible applied to their lives continued as they returned to the United States and went through the reentry and debriefing process. In discussing how their Grand Narrative understanding had affected

their internships, six of the twelve students interviewed specifically talked about it in light of their reentry. Because they understood they were stepping into new seasons of their story with purpose and that these seasons would still be connected, in lesson and growth, to their internships, they were able to deal with some of the common stresses of reentry in a healthier manner. All six of these students said it helped them not struggle with feelings of purposelessness as much as many people in cross-cultural reentry do. They, instead, were able to understand their reentry as a continued and continuing story, just as their internship had been. Hannah said it made it “easier to step into a new season” while some other interns “who forgot that their internship was just part of a bigger story struggled more with bitterness about how their internship went and feeling like they weren't doing anything when they got back.” Often, if not bitterness, there can be a tendency for an intern to suddenly feel like they no longer have importance in God’s work. James noticed that upon his return he never struggled with wondering what he was supposed to be doing to have purpose, which he said “could partially be attributed” to constantly remembering his internship and reentry was always “a part of a grander story.” The same mentality was communicated by four of the students as they sought to find their new place of ministry and purpose during reentry.

Additionally, although this paper has already discussed how the story perspective affects the Global Studies community by helping students not compare themselves to one another as much, two of the students specifically talked about this lack of comparison in light of their reentry. Global Studies students take a class upon their return to campus that allows them to debrief their experiences together and share stories of what happened while they were gone. While it is enjoyable to hear each other’s stories, it can also be

difficult for some students who might feel like their internship was not as good or exciting as someone else's. For Carrie, remembering all of their lives have the same destination and goal helped her hear other stories in the debriefing class and not think her own were invalid to share. She said it "can be easy to come back from the field and compare your internship to everyone else's" but remembering all of her intern classmates "were going out and doing different things" that still fit within "God's story" released pressure of comparison and allowed her to simply enjoy their stories. Though some students still struggled with comparison, many of them were able to quell that much earlier than they might have otherwise. Hannah said she was able to do this by reminding herself that "God has a role for everyone in His story, and that role isn't going to be the same for everybody." Learning not to compare internship stories and internship roles allowed the debriefing process to be community building and gave the students more freedom to share openly with their peers as they debriefed.

Providing Direction during the Debriefing Process

Debriefing is not always easy, though, and some students do not naturally see the value of reflecting on their experience; this is also an area that a Grand Narrative perspective can help with. Greg admitted that his tendency when one season of life is over, is to simply move on to the next without reflection. He said he "would have forgotten" about his internship if he had not learned through the Grand Narrative teaching about how "past experiences and past things . . . affect the future." Global Studies Grand Narrative teaching had helped him understand that nothing is disconnected from the story of God and "everything He's been working on leads up to right now." Because of that, he understood the importance of reflecting on his experience in order to be better prepared

for the next seasons of his life and in order to remember “the potential for a continuing work” in him and in the place from which he had recently come.

The continuing work was also something Kacy talked about in how her Grand Narrative understanding helped her in her reentry. The process of leaving your internship in a healthier way is easier to do when you understand your own story, and the story of that place, are not finished.

When it was time for me to come home, I was really upset about it. I really, I really wanted to stay. I loved the life that I had built there, and I never had experienced so much . . . but it was, I knew and actually had to wrestle a little bit with, God’s story. And that story, in this place, doesn't stop with me leaving. It's not like it started and stopped when I got there. Clearly it had already been going before I got there. It is definitely still going to continue when I come back to the States, which my pride had to wrestle with a little bit. But it was also encouraging knowing that God is still at work there.

This perspective allowed Kacy to release her hold on a place and work that had come to mean so much to her and embrace the new season of reentry with the same excitement she had taken with her into her internship. It was clear, from speaking with all twelve of the students, that their lives and internship experiences, including reentry, had been impacted positively by a greater biblical metanarrative perspective. This perspective became a framework for an understanding these students took into their different internship experiences and applied appropriately. Their own different narratives were impacted by the bigger shared narrative of the Bible.

Negative Impact of Grand Narrative Teaching

Though positive impact of Grand Narrative teaching was communicated multiple times throughout the interviews, I wanted to make sure to also give students the opportunity to express any negative effect they experienced. Each student was given the

opportunity to express how the Grand Narrative teaching might have negatively impacted them. Eight students answered simply that there had been no negative impact experienced on their part from the Grand Narrative teaching in Global Studies. Kacy's response verbally processed why she had no negative experiences:

I mean it's given me such a clear understanding of the point of all of it and everything that we do and in reading the scriptures it's helped me to understand God on a much deeper level and understand how he wants to use me and how I kind of fit in with his plan and how to do that to best glorify Him. So, I don't think that there's been any negative consequences from learning about it.

Four other students did not assign negative impact to the teaching but did acknowledge certain challenges they had experienced as a result of a wider span of knowledge that then affected them in other ways.

The challenges associated with learning the Grand Narrative primarily came from the challenge of time it took to learn it well and then learning to partner it with other approaches to Scripture. For Carrie, she said that while there had not been anything she would say is "necessarily negative," she thinks it is an approach that "takes time to understand . . . and can be really overwhelming at first." It fosters a shift in mindset that students then have to figure out how to interact with in other contexts. James said he briefly experienced some challenges in some of his upper-level theology courses as he figured out how to partner his Grand Narrative perspective with what professors in non-Global Studies classes were asking of him.

It might have made it more difficult for me in my upper level theology courses to really break down one verse. And while, yes, we're still supposed to take it in context, they're looking for a lot more specifics than the Grand Narrative as an approach would dictate. And so, I think it was a little jarring at first, but I wouldn't say it was detrimental to my grades or to what I got from those classes. It just might have taken a few extra weeks to figure it out.

James went on to explain he had to learn how to reconcile the Grand Narrative approach with other approaches and in the end felt like it was “definitely better than having one or the other.”

Lastly, Laura said the only negative thing she could think of for her was that she could have the tendency for the Grand Narrative structure used by Global Studies to become “oversimplified” in her mind as if it is the only way to approach understanding the Bible. She admitted this made her “critical of other people” who did not have this same approach to the Word of God and acknowledged that this sense of superiority was a “sin problem” that the Lord was working on in her. In considering these responses, it is important to note the students did not acknowledge any negative impact directly associated with a Grand Narrative understanding of the Bible: the negative ramifications they identified, instead, came from some of the challenges of trying to learn it and then trying to direct that understanding in healthy ways towards other people and areas of life.

Participant Recommendations for Grand Narrative Teaching

Of the nine students who made suggestions for further development of the Grand Narrative teaching, five of those students expressed a desire for more time to be given to the teaching. Laura made the point that for her, it took “having it poured” over her “again and again and again” for her to really understand so the more time that can be taken to focus on the Grand Narrative and its implications, the better the students will understand it. Throughout the interviews, something that became clear was that the reach of the teaching in the students’ lives was something that did not happen automatically and quickly. While students did learn a great deal through initial teaching, their deeper understanding came from it being woven throughout the program and the opportunities

they were given for studying it on their own. Because of this, many of the students interviewed made suggestions for more time to be given to the teaching earlier on in the program with more opportunities for the students to study and apply it on their own.

Presently, the Global Studies program primarily focuses on teaching a foundational structure for the Grand Narrative in a lower-level class with more opportunity for personal application of study during the internship process and return. Students interviewed expressed they felt there was room for this to grow. It is the application of the teaching that the students interviewed want their classmates to get to sooner, and they recognized that in order for this to happen the teaching would need to happen more frequently and consistently throughout all the classes. Hannah and James suggested more time could be given earlier on in the program so that students learn earlier how to apply it on their own. Four of the twelve students made suggestions that would integrate Grand Narrative teaching more strategically in each course throughout the entire program. Laura suggested each professor telling the story of the Bible simply within their respective courses following a theme that would apply to their teaching. This is an important distinction because the suggestions were not for professors to take time away from what they are already teaching in order to teach further on the Grand Narrative, but instead for them to be more strategic about placing their subject matter within the Grand Narrative structure already being used. According to James, “It could easily be integrated into everything” and help students, as it did him, “connect what [they] were learning to how it would look in real-world situations” and prepare them more effectively. Students wanted more opportunity to understand the Grand Narrative well in order to utilize it more effectively.

Students suggested one way they could be given more opportunity to understand the Grand Narrative would be through academic assignments and activities that would encourage students to apply the teaching on their own. Hannah, Kacy, and Carrie suggested students being assigned a theological theme or lens they would then have to follow through the story of the Bible; Kacy said this would help “expand on [the Grand Narrative] a little bit more and look at it in different ways.” Greg said it could be helpful for students to have to write a paper about how the Grand Narrative, or a part of it could specifically apply to a people group, culture, or individual’s life. Daniel expressed a desire to be given the opportunity to better see “how we are reading into the metanarrative of our cultural context.” At the heart of each suggestion was the student’s desire to be given more opportunity to move their understanding of the narrative from being a lecture they sit under to a mindset they can study with and tell. While this is encouraged, and even done in some later Global Studies elective courses, students seemed to desire further integration of that into core Global Studies courses. They were, simply put, asking for opportunities to think critically on their own regarding the Grand Narrative while still having professors who can guide them in this from class to class.

It was not just a little more time in each class that some students suggested as a way to improve Grand Narrative teaching, two students suggested an entire Global Studies class be developed and implemented that would be available to anyone who wants to spend time studying the topic further. For Carrie, she simply wanted more time to understand something she and many of her classmates had become so passionate about. Greg, however, suggested the course as something that would be beneficial for any student in any discipline.

The Grand Narrative helps offer a perspective on life and on professions that makes them alive, instead of being a stagnant means to an end, to have a career and to have a job that brings into perspective the fact that we've been created to play a part in God's plan. So, I think that by having a course, or a month or longer, dedicated to just learning about the Grand Narrative, that's going to bring [that perspective] . . . It's so easy to compartmentalize, kind of put God to the side but . . . instead of having God as a part of our life, we're a part of God's plan. . . . We're supposed to fit with Him and not the other way around. I think that would help every professional go about their field of study and their field of professional work with a different perspective and a different attitude that I think can change a lot.

Though Greg was the only one to specifically talk about an entire Grand Narrative course being applicable to any student from any discipline, he was not the only one who spoke to the value Grand Narrative teaching had for non-Global Studies students.

In the final moments of each conversation, I asked students if there was any additional feedback they wanted to give me, the Global Studies Department, Liberty University's School of Divinity, or anyone else who might read this research.

Overwhelmingly, the students concluded their interviews emphasizing the value of Grand Narrative teaching. Evie spent the time in answering that question "reiterating that it's been so important," and making a plea for it to be taught beyond Global Studies. Carrie concluded "everyone should understand the Grand Narrative," especially those going into ministry. James also directly spoke to the value Grand Narrative teaching could have for those preparing for ministry. He said there would be value for it "being taught on a broader level" and would "be useful in Divinity classes" as a whole. Hannah agreed it would be an important understanding for everyone and that the value would not only be found in their areas of study but even in how they interact with their college experience.

Students, not just in Global Studies but other degree programs, would benefit a lot from being able to see God's story in the big picture and how their role fits into that. And I think for college especially, as they're going through so many changes so rapidly, it would be really beneficial for more of them to understand that even

though there's a lot of changes going on, it doesn't have to be terrifying. God stays who he says he is through it all.

The students communicated the value that they had gained through the teaching and expressed a desire to see that value made available for more students. Laura made the point that if something has been discovered “that helps you get to know [God] more, in a way that is grounded so that you can keep [studying and growing] on your own,” then you should “keep it” and use it “more.” Ten students’ final statements reiterated the importance of the teaching and seven students specifically said the teaching needs to go beyond Global Studies and made available to more students across Liberty’s School of Divinity.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have presented the collected data by following the eight primary interview research sub-questions and sharing the responses given by the students. These responses spoke to the main research question of how the program’s teaching of the biblical metanarrative impacted the lives and personal narratives of Global Studies interns at Liberty University.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Results

The narrative of the typical Global Studies student at Liberty University begins in a metanarrative story classroom but ends in a lived-out metanarrative worldview. Keeping in mind the limitations of a narrow research group, the research exposed the participants' experience of this metanarrative teaching within the Global Studies program and provided a narrative of learning worth considering for values it might find in other places and academic contexts. The program infuses biblical metanarrative into a progression of learning that allows the student to journey from knowledge to transformation. It is this journey of narrative that became clear as I conducted this research. And it is this journey of narrative where clear themes and connected results of learning began to emerge in the experiences of the students being interviewed.

As students shared their answers to the research questions, I began hearing similar threads of thought across multiple answers and interviews. Upon categorizing those similarities and comparing and contrasting them, some additional insights regarding their narratives of learning began to emerge. As I listened to the narratives of the students, what became clear to me is initially the teaching of the Grand Narrative produced increased knowledge about the story and structure of the Bible, but that as they continued to learn the Grand Narrative in the different stages of the Global Studies program, their experience with the metanarrative engaged with a deeper understanding of Scripture and God. Many of the themes and categories that rose to the forefront were areas that I was not surprised to hear. I was hopeful the teaching of the Grand Narrative within Global Studies had affected our students; however, I admit I was unaware to what degree this

impact had occurred. Within the narratives of the students emerged three overarching themes: 1) that the progression of Grand Narrative teaching allowed the Biblical story to become a core narrative and Global Studies worldview through which the students viewed their lives, 2) that it fostered a unique applied knowledge in the lives of the students, and 3) that it ultimately enabled students to know God better and love God deeper.

The Grand Narrative as Core Narrative and Worldview

For many students, the metanarrative story begins in their first Global Studies class, GLST 200. It is there that they hear their professor lecture on God's heart for the nations being a continuing thread throughout Scripture. While the term "Grand Narrative" is not specifically used in that lecture, it is the foundational first teaching of the continuing story of the Bible within Global Studies and when many students are first introduced to the concept of a continuing plan from Genesis to Revelation. This thread is then further developed and expanded in GLST 220 in a story lecture that spans multiple class periods where multiple threads of the biblical metanarrative are woven together as a story they are invited to be a part of.

In Wu's critique of initial tools developed to communicate the Biblical story by those engaging oral cultures for Gospel witness, he argued that oftentimes the methods used for Bible storying can make it difficult for individuals to continue to develop their understanding and then take part in further study and interpretation.¹⁵⁹ He proposed that to communicate the biblical metanarrative in a way that is more helpful, it should be

¹⁵⁹ Jackson Wu, "Tell the Whole Story Out of Order Using Layers," *Patheos*, April 16, 2013, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2013/04/16/tell-the-whole-story-out-of-order-using-layers-contextualization-among-oral-peoples-series/>.

taught first “in a few broad but very comprehensive strokes, followed by multiple layers of the story narrated in a balanced fashion that evenly ties together the few major points given in the first layer.”¹⁶⁰ The lecture in GLST 220 is that initial broad stroke of narrative that serves to lay the foundation for the continuing layers that later narrative teaching builds on. It “provides a context into which everything else will be filed into the mind.”¹⁶¹

At this point in the program, the Grand Narrative is the content told through the medium of story. Students expressed this lecture is where many of them started to view the Bible as one story. And for many of them, it is where they more clearly gained a knowledge of how they fit into that story. Many students expressed it was shocking to know they had grown up in the church without this understanding. Carrie verbalized that at first, she felt angry no one had ever taught the Bible this way. The Grand Narrative helped her and other students make sense of the Bible, which, in turn, caused them to become more passionate to read it. This story content laid a foundation which they then continued to build on as they progressed through their classes and learned more what it means for the biblical metanarrative to be the core narrative of the world. As they built on that story content, it became the context for their discipleship as they prepared for their internships.

This progression within the Global Studies program uniquely integrates three different areas of earlier effective research: 1) story as an effective tool within education, 2) story as an effective tool within discipleship, and 3) story as an effective training tool

¹⁶⁰ Wu, “Tell the Whole Story.”

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

for cross-cultural effectiveness for followers of Jesus. It is the overlapping of these distinct, yet connected pursuits, that help explain why the teaching has integrated itself into the Global Studies academic program so effectively. It is also the overlapping of these distinct, yet connected pursuits, that gives this research a unique platform among the available literature concerning metanarrative and story. The Global Studies program acknowledges the power of story by using narrative as both a lens and a vehicle for teaching. It is the vehicle by which the subject matter is taught which then enables it to become the lens by which the students can live out and assess their experiences. Tethering the teaching to story attaches their learning to “meaning, context, relevance, and empathy” and makes it long-lasting, just as Haven’s research revealed.¹⁶²

Previously, I discussed how Global Studies students tend to view Scripture and the world around them through a metanarrative perspective. They defined its role in Global Studies using terms and analogies that portrayed its centrality to their learning and their approach to Scripture. While not all of the students had a creative analogy for explaining the clarity that came with their understanding, every student spoke to a deeper mindset that postured the Grand Narrative as much more than just something they learned in an academic program. As I listened to the students, I observed many of them struggled to understand how the metanarrative had specifically affected many areas of their lives. This was not because it had had a small effect, but instead because it had affected so many things. Three of the twelve students said they had a hard time even remembering the perspective they had of Scripture before learning the Grand Narrative. Laura, who had earlier compared learning the Grand Narrative to learning a language, said that “it’s

¹⁶² Haven, *Story Proof*, 125.

kind of hard to separate. You know, like language, it's kind of hard to separate that now that I have an understanding." Seven of the twelve students, at some point, verbalized it was difficult to describe how their understanding of things was different now that they understood the Grand Narrative. They just knew that it was. Anna summed this up by saying, "I think what makes it sometimes tricky to answer these questions, it's like the Grand Narrative affects a lot of my thinking but I don't know it. It's just in my head," then she threw up her hands and simply said, "the Grand Narrative," as though that was the only answer she had.

This reality throughout the interviews showed their learning of the Grand Narrative had become much more than an approach or a tool that they use but, rather, it had become a part of their worldview and identity. In other words, in line with Goheen's research that says that people must choose which competing narrative they belong to in this world, Global Studies students have chosen the biblical metanarrative.¹⁶³ Because a worldview is made up of a culture's interpretation of its metanarrative, rooting the Global Studies community within the metanarrative of the Bible forms its worldview.¹⁶⁴ This worldview provides the GLST community with its values, which form its identity.¹⁶⁵ Knowing what story they belong to helps them apply and live out their own personal narrative well.¹⁶⁶ Or as Steffen writes, having a metanarrative to belong to anchors an individual to a master story "thereby informally validating how life should be lived."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Goheen, "The Urgency of Reading the Bible," 469.

¹⁶⁴ Matthews, "Is There a Reader," 104.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 104.

¹⁶⁷ Steffen. "Discoveries Made while Reconnecting," 173.

This is also affirmed by Wright, who argues that “this grand story articulates a worldview.”¹⁶⁸ This means the head knowledge of the biblical metanarrative serves to develop into transformative applied knowledge.

The Grand Narrative as Applied Knowledge

The progression of the metanarrative learning from the GLST classroom through the internship process allows what could simply be a knowledge-based learning environment to turn into a transformational learning environment. It supports Steffen’s argument that un-fragmenting Scripture allows students to understand how they are connected to it and facilitates transformation of individuals and society.¹⁶⁹ This begins as students prepare for their internships and it continues on as they go and return. They are taught to place their own subplots into the larger plot of God’s story and assess it accordingly. Mott, among other educators, argues for this type of narrative-centered learning environment where learners get to take an active role in the story being taught.¹⁷⁰ As has already been discussed, Clark’s research shows that when students in education are invited to hear stories, tell stories, and then find their placement in the stories in which they find themselves, their learning becomes “a sense-making medium.”¹⁷¹ Global Studies interns are invited to do all of this with their own narratives as they place them in the larger metanarrative understanding. This allows them to make sense of their experiences and their faith.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Vern Matthews, “Is There a Reader in this Text?: The Place of Metanarrative in the Problem of Meaning.” (PhD diss., Trinity Theological Seminary, 2013), 62.

¹⁶⁹ Steffen, “Discoveries Made while Reconnecting,” 180.

¹⁷⁰ Mott et al., “Towards Narrative-Centered Learning Environments,” 4.

¹⁷¹ Clark, “Narrative Learning: Its Contours and Its Possibilities,” 5.

Through this process, they are disciplined in some important areas of the Christian faith. The Grand Narrative impacts their understanding of their identity and purpose, partially through the lens that they are part of a bigger story and partially because they have placed themselves, who they are, and what they are tasked with, within that story. This affects the way they understand their faith and live it out as individuals and as a community. The students expressed the Grand Narrative, in part, tethered the students together and fostered a more biblical understanding of community. That community, defined and affected by the Grand Narrative, then interprets meaning uniquely as they live out their purposes.¹⁷² They are equipped to love each other better and support one another through the internship process partially because they have learned they are all part of the same story. They are also able, as individuals, to assess their lives and internship experiences differently as fitting within a larger narrative. This all begins in the internship preparation process, but it continues throughout the entirety of the program.

The program uses the internship as an opportunity for students to engage in experiential learning in which the students apply classroom content to actual cross-cultural life. In other words, the Grand Narrative then becomes the tool for their cross-cultural effectiveness as they both seek to share the Narrative with those around them and use it to assess their experiences. Global workers have been using narrative around the world for many years and have begged for better teaching of that strategy in training and equipping processes. Steffen writes that keeping the story of Scripture at the forefront of any teaching that is part of the equipping process for cross-cultural workers for Gospel

¹⁷² Matthews, "Is There a Reader," 115.

witness is incredibly important.¹⁷³ He is not the only one to believe this, but his research and writing are extensive and far-reaching. Others, many who are presently living and working overseas, like Fisher, argue for a narrative approach to cross-cultural work and Gospel communication not just for better proclamation, but also for a healthier perspective of the individual in relation to God.¹⁷⁴ Global Studies students are encouraged to do both through a metanarrative lens.

This metanarrative lens is developed during very transformative years for these students. The transformative years of development in college are a perfect time for students to be disciplined in this way; and when that is layered on top of the transition seasons brought on by a cross-cultural internship, there is even more opportunity for a core metanarrative to help form the identity and worldview of an individual.¹⁷⁵ When the transitions that the students go through during their internships cause a disorientation of identity that is common to cross-cultural transition, their reorientation can posture them for a better identity in Christ.¹⁷⁶ As Corcoran writes, seasons of transition and development provide an opportunity for individuals and communities to be “re-formed” or re-written into a better story.¹⁷⁷ The biblical metanarrative provides that better story and students placing themselves in it forms a better worldview. This metanarrative

¹⁷³ Steffen, “Reaching 'Resistant' People,” 474.

¹⁷⁴ Fisher, “Incarnation and Missiology,” 132.

¹⁷⁵ Corcoran, “Biblical Narratives and Life Transformation,” 35.

¹⁷⁶ Murray Decker, “Student Sojourners and Spiritual Formation: Understanding the Cross-cultural Adjustment and Spiritual Disorientation,” in *Effective Engagement in Short Term Missions: Doing it Right!* ed. Robert Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Publishing, 2008), 17.

¹⁷⁷ Corcoran, “Biblical Narratives and Life Transformation,” 41.

worldview anchors the students to a master story and becomes the lens through which they view the world and seek to apply their faith.

Because a narrative worldview permeates areas beyond an individual's mind and connects the story information to emotional depth and meaning, it affects faith very differently than factual knowledge.¹⁷⁸ It becomes a bridge for factual knowledge to become knowledge that is applied. This confirms the proposal of Avraamidou and Osborne, who said that narrative communication is the way to make subject matter that might otherwise just be dogma to learn, applicable to the lives of the students.¹⁷⁹ This is an important thing to note as we consider the storyline of these students and their interaction with Grand Narrative teaching. It means students are leaving the Global Studies program with much more than just head knowledge; they are leaving with the ability to apply knowledge that has seeped into the very way they view and interpret the world around them. This application of knowledge is more personal and fosters a more intimate relationship with God.

The Grand Narrative and Love of God

Though perhaps an assumed part of any believer's choice to follow Christ, a deep love and knowledge of God is not always evident in the lives of Christians and was not one of the specific research questions asked. It was, however, one of the primary themes in the students' narratives, spoken about consistently throughout their interviews. According to them, it is one of the ways Grand Narrative teaching impacted them most. All of the students interviewed expressed their understanding of the Grand Narrative

¹⁷⁸ Haven, *Story Proof*, 16.

¹⁷⁹ Avraamidou and Osborne, "The Role of Narrative in Communicating Science," 1683-1684.

influenced their understanding of God in a way that provided new depth in their relationship with Him. Students mentioned aspects of God, like His sovereignty, wisdom, power, grace, love, and glory, as truths they understood better through understanding God's story. While some might say those things are all visible in common Bible verses and passages, seeing them woven throughout Scripture has rooted their view of God into a different kind of consistency. Isaac described it below:

A verse doesn't tell you the whole story and it doesn't tell you everything about God's heart like the metanarrative does. And so, a verse can be good, and it can lead, and it can be something to remember in your heart; but to recall a whole of a story is to also recall more of God.

Knowing the entire narrative and how God interacts with it fostered a deeper trust of the consistency of who God says He is.

Eight of the twelve students specified they better understood God as being consistent and having consistent character. One of the important points of Grand Narrative teaching in the Global Studies department is that God's plan is an ongoing plan from Genesis through Revelation. In my experience, this is in contrast to what many students come into the program functionally understanding. A perspective often seen in lower level classes and at the beginning of Grand Narrative teaching is that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament, while the same God, have a different set of characteristics. Regarding the storylines of the Old and New Testaments, many believe the Old Testament is God's first plan, then when that did not work, God enacted a new plan. Though Scripture says God is trustworthy and does not change, a fractured understanding of the story of God functionally contradicts that truth. Anna said that "knowing that what happened in the beginning of the Grand Narrative is connected to the end" is a very big shift in understanding that then affects their understanding of

God. It shows the “Lord has such clear purpose” in “His plan of drawing people to Himself and redeeming people,” Evie explained. When students find themselves understanding the continuation of this plan, they also find themselves understanding the continuation of the character of God. Bethany’s explanation of this is as follows:

I think that the Grand Narrative, as a whole, illustrates the consistency of God because you see the threads through all the stories, and you see what God's capable of doing from the beginning. . . . And I think God’s character is illustrated throughout the whole thing and his unshakeability and his faithfulness. . . . I can look back and say, “Here's the thread of how God is. this is who God is. And this hasn't changed from here to here to here, even though it seemed like He had.”

Rooting understanding of God’s character in an entire story, instead of seemingly disconnected passages of Scripture, according to Mark, allows for an “anchoring of the truth” of who He is. As Evie said, “If you just give me a verse, that wouldn’t carry that depth.” For Hannah, seeing “God stays who He says He is through” the entire biblical narrative enables her to root her understanding of God in the experience of His story.

Layered on an understanding of the consistency of God, the students explained the metanarrative of Scripture helped them better understand the power and role of God. Hannah said they appropriately know, “This is God’s story” and is, therefore, purposed by Him. Six of the twelve students specifically talked about God as being a God with a plan He is in control of. He is “the master orchestrator,” as Greg put it. They know, Isaac explained, that “God is the main character . . . and He’s the main story writer.” The impact this has had on students came out, in part, as they described how the Grand Narrative teaching had influenced their understanding of being a disciple. It became clear that their bigger understanding of God allowed them to put themselves in a right perspective before Him.

Ultimately, according to the students interviewed, what this better understanding of God did is allow students to know God as a personal loving God. All of the students expressed that either their love of God had grown or their relationship with Him had become more personal as their knowledge of Him through His story has grown. Evie believes that understanding the story “has such a role in understanding God.” She described it almost like a process where “more understanding . . . has increased my knowledge of who Christ is, which has increased my love for who He is.” Kacy said through seeing the consistent character of God throughout the metanarrative, she is able to “understand God on a much deeper level” as a God who wants to be in a relationship with them. Anna talked about how important this was for her to see God’s “overall character” through the “grand view” of His story. She said that “as you study the Grand Narrative you learn to know God more.” This makes both the story and the author of the story more personal. Isaac said as his knowledge of the Story increased, he could see more of how it “plays out in a personal way.” This personal playing out of God’s story in the lives of the students has allowed them to walk in new depths in their relationship with a loving God. Mark made the statement that this loving relationship is, in fact, the whole point of the metanarrative. He said when he thinks “of the purpose of the Grand Narrative . . . it is us being able to see God’s love and heart for us.”

It is this relationship with God that a passion for the biblical metanarrative finds both a climax and resting place in. As Laura put it, understanding the Grand Narrative “resulted in loving Jesus more and that should be the ultimate goal of everything.” This end result of loving Jesus more is perhaps the biggest reason why the Grand Narrative is such an effective part of the Global Studies program. As Scripture makes it clear, the first

and greatest commandment given from God is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37).¹⁸⁰ It is out of this love that a believer’s obedience and life is fueled. As Jesus said in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” The truths taught in Global Studies are meant to make a student’s obedience more effective so it stands to reason that developing a greater love in them would posture them more fully to be able to do this.

Integrating Academic and Faith Learning for Transformation

The emergence of these primary themes, when combined, form an important conclusion for academic contexts of faith learning. Metanarrative teaching cultivates transformational learning. Global Studies has managed to integrate what researchers have found to be true across multiple disciplines and areas of learning. The Grand Narrative teaching has married what research shows about effective educational learning with what many faith leaders have found to be true for effective discipleship. Table 5.1 shows how Global Studies finds a unique placement within earlier research as an approach to learning that integrates what many researchers across disciplines have already found to be true.

Table 5.1: Placement of this Research within Precedent Literature¹⁸¹

	BD	BE	BM	EB	NC	NE	NI	NT	NU	PS	QU
<i>Alter, The Art of Biblical</i>			X								
<i>Avraamidou & Osborne, “The Role of Narrative”</i>						X				X	X
Bauckham, “Reading Scripture as”			X								

¹⁸⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced come from the *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

¹⁸¹ Sources included within table. See Bibliography.

	BD	BE	BM	EB	NC	NE	NI	NT	NU	PS	QU
Beale & Kim, <i>God Dwells Among Us</i>			X	X							
Byrd, “Narrative Discipleship”	X		X				X	X	X		
Castleman, <i>The Story of Scripture</i>			X								
Clark, “Narrative Learning”						X	X	X	X	X	
Corcoran, “Biblical Narratives”			X		X		X		X		X
Evans, “Matters of the Heart”	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Fisher, “Incarnation & Missiology”		X	X				X				
Goheen, <i>A Light to the Nations</i>			X				X				
Goheen, “The Urgency”			X	X			X				
Goheen & Bartholomew, <i>The True Story</i>			X	X							
Goldsworthy, <i>According to Plan</i>			X								
Haven, <i>Story Proof</i>									X	X	X
Jagerson, “Harnessing the Power”		X	X	X		X				X	
Lawrence & Paige, “What our Ancestors”						X	X		X	X	
Matthews, “Is There a Reader”	X		X		X		X		X		
McNicol, <i>The Persistence of God’s</i>			X								
Mott et al., “Towards Narrative-Centered”						X			X	X	
Myers, “Bible Storying: Not Just”	X			X						X	
Pawson, <i>Unlocking the Bible</i>			X								
Roberts, <i>God’s Big Picture</i>			X								
Rossiter, <i>Narrative and the Practice</i>						X	X	X	X		X
Sharpe, “A Narrative Missional”	X		X				X				X
Short, “Formed by Story”	X		X				X				
Steffen, “ <i>Reaching ‘Resistant’</i> ”	X	X	X	X							

	BD	BE	BM	EB	NC	NE	NI	NT	NU	PS	QU
Steffen, “My Journey”			X	X	X		X			X	
Steffen, “Discoveries Made”			X			X	X				
Vang & Carter, <i>Telling God’s Story</i>			X								
Willis & Snowden, <i>Truth That Sticks</i>	X									X	
Wright, <i>The Mission of God</i>			X								
Global Studies	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Because Global Studies is a program within Liberty University’s School of Divinity, the heart of the program is not simply to impart knowledge, but to disciple students into Christ-likeness and the ability to live out their faith effectively. As Sharpe discovered in his research using biblical metanarrative in a local church context, using a narrative reading of Scripture invites participants to “grow in spiritual formation and join the mission of God in the world.”¹⁸² Combining the knowledge that comes from information with the knowledge that comes from experience layers learning effectively by bridging the head and the heart.

Global Studies layers learning of the head and heart within an academic context so there are multiple levels of integration taking place with the students’ learning. Furthermore, as Corcoran says, because people naturally attach themselves to a narrative, helping college students, who are in a naturally transformative season of life, understand how they fit within the narrative of God allows for identity transformation to be grounded in a core narrative and community that is eternal.¹⁸³ As the students expressed in their interviews, metanarrative discipleship in this context allows for unique integration of

¹⁸² Sharpe, “A Narrative, Missional Approach,” 17.

¹⁸³ Corcoran, “Biblical Narratives and Life Transformation,” 35-40.

academic content, application of the program’s teaching, and faith formation. This integration builds a culture and worldview that results in heart change. Evans writes that “life transformation takes place at the heart level” which is closely connected to culture and worldview.¹⁸⁴ He proposes that stories play an important role in effecting a worldview change and that ultimately it is the story of Scripture that does this best.¹⁸⁵ This has shown to be true in Global Studies as it has turned the Global Studies classroom and program into a transformation learning environment.

The consideration and vision of transformative learning within formal learning settings has been theorized, researched, and written about as educators continue to attempt to find the best approaches for engaging their students in an effective way.¹⁸⁶ Recognizing that transformational learning “is relatively rare within settings of adult education,” educators continue to consider how to develop programs and classrooms that will allow their students to take part in this type of learning.¹⁸⁷ Educators who value transformative learning teach content not only to impart information, but in order to transform the student.¹⁸⁸ This happens, as earlier research has shown, in a variety of ways with educators focusing on different methods and specific goals for transformation.

¹⁸⁴ A. Steven Evans, “Matters of the heart: Orality, Story and Cultural Transformation – The Critical Role of Storytelling in Affecting Worldview,” *Missiology: An International Review* 38, no. 2 (April 2010): 186.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁸⁶ John M. Dirkx, “Transformative Learning Theory in the Practice of Adult Education: An Overview,” *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning* 7 (1998): 1.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

In order to pursue transformation within education, some educators focus more heavily on community change while others consider the transformation of the individual the higher goal.¹⁸⁹ Some would say transformational learning must involve critical self-reflection while others do not see that as quite so important.¹⁹⁰ Dirkx categorizes theories of transformational learning into the following general understandings: transformation as conscious-raising, transformation as critical reflection, transformation as development, and transformation as individuation.¹⁹¹ While there are differing approaches to transformational learning, it is clear that “to think about adult learning as potentially transformative is to ground the content and processes of learning concretely within the lives” of the students.¹⁹² This is what Global Studies metanarrative teaching does. It lays a foundation of story academic content that becomes a worldview within which student faith formation is experienced. Global Studies takes what could simply be knowledge-based information and, through the Grand Narrative story, allows it to become what it was intended to be, transformational.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings laid out in chapter four by overviewing the progression of narrative learning through the program, discussing some key themes that emerged through the research, and placing the findings into earlier literature. Within the narratives of the students emerged three overarching themes: 1) that the progression of

¹⁸⁹ Dirkx, “Transformative Learning Theory,” 1-14.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 1-14.

¹⁹² Ibid., 11.

Grand Narrative teaching allowed the Biblical story to become a core narrative and Global Studies worldview through which the students view their lives, 2) that it fostered a unique applied knowledge in the lives of the students, and 3) that it ultimately enabled students to know God better and love God deeper. These themes showed the effectiveness of the Grand Narrative teaching by reflecting how academic learning had affected the faith of these students and turned knowledge-based information into transformational learning. In other words, through Grand Narrative teaching, Global Studies has taken what could have been simply an academic content classroom and made it into a transformational learning environment.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

The primary question explored during this research was: How do interns at Liberty University perceive the Global Studies program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative? Through exploring the emerging themes related to eight sub-research questions, it is very clear the Global Studies program's teaching of the biblical metanarrative, according to the students, has impacted the lives and personal narratives of Global Studies interns at Liberty University. The following are the primary conclusions drawn from an exploration of the research questions:

1. Participating Global Studies students described the Grand Narrative teaching as the worldview lens, language, and framework that tethered the program to a central purpose and served in the formation of a Global Studies community.
2. Because of the Grand Narrative teaching, participants' understanding of Scripture grew in four primary ways: 1) in understanding the Old and New Testament as connected parts of a larger story, 2) in understanding the Old Testament, 3) in understanding the New Testament, and 4) in understanding the Old Testament as Gospel foundation. There was a clear acknowledgement from all of the students participating in this research that sitting under the Grand Narrative teaching in Global Studies gave them a deeper, more cohesive understanding of the different portions of Scripture that make up the story of God.
3. Participants' understanding of the narrative of Scripture affected their identity and purpose by helping them understand they are part of a larger story of God

whose purposeful storyline they have been invited into. Though very humbling, this truth also gave them empowering confidence that enables them to live out their identity and purpose more obediently and effectively.

4. Understanding the Grand Narrative of the Bible affected the students as disciples by fostering in them a willingness to play whatever role God chose for them in His story because they knew they were loved and known by the Author of the story. The teaching also impacted them as disciple-makers. Students expressed they want to transmit what they learned from the metanarrative, using the entire Bible to teach those in which they were investing.
5. Grand Narrative teaching greatly impacted the Global Studies program and community by helping students focus on God and His Word, which in turn helped them understand their collective connected purpose in God's mission, which built a more cohesive, loving community.
6. Grand Narrative teaching impacted the internships of GLST students by helping students see their experiences as important pieces of God's larger narrative, respond to internship struggles more appropriately, find purpose upon reentry, and debrief more intentionally.
7. The students reported not having been negatively impacted by learning the Grand Narrative. There have, however, been challenges with learning it well and learning how to integrate it well with other approaches to biblical teaching.

8. Students recommended more time and intentionality be given to Grand Narrative teaching in Global Studies programs and also encouraged its use in other programs within Liberty's School of Divinity.

In conclusion, being given a metanarrative framework that outlines the story of the Bible and using that framework for continued discipleship through the Global Studies program has not only equipped Global Studies students to understand and study Scripture better, it has given them a greater understanding of the story in which they play a part and in which they find their place. This perspective of being a part of a greater story contributed to having a greater understanding of identity and purpose within their relationship with God and enabled them to walk in obedience with more assurance. The study of the Grand Narrative also strengthened Global Studies as a community that goes beyond academia and modeled discipleship and support for one another. It has proven to be a foundational and effective piece of how Global Studies trains and sends its students in to the world as effective Christ followers and Christ communicators. Grand Narrative teaching has impacted the lives and personal narratives of Global Studies interns at Liberty University in a way that goes far beyond the academic endeavors of their program and fosters spiritual transformation.

The Researcher's Narrative

Students are not the only ones impacted by Grand Narrative teaching in Global Studies; and I would be remiss, as the researcher, not to comment on my own narrative and the way this research has impacted me. As described in the research method section of this paper, narrative inquiry involves a more intimate type of interaction between the researcher and the research subject. Change is expected as part of the narrative inquiry

process and narrative inquirers find their research links “back to personal, practical and social justification” in their own life and can possibly give new insights into their experiences.¹⁹³ I, as a professor for the participants, have been involved with the students’ learning of the Grand Narrative throughout the program and have lived along with them the experiences they described along. I am, in many ways, part of the context of where they have learned a Grand Narrative approach. As research in narrative inquiry is meant to consider, in part, the experience of the researcher, as well as the context of where the stories are lived out, it is appropriate this research has brought about much self-reflection and assessment for myself and my role in teaching the Grand Narrative. A greater love of the Lord through the Grand Narrative is also something I, as the researcher, have experienced and is part of the story of my own interaction with the teaching of the biblical metanarrative in Global Studies.

Upon beginning this research, I was quite confident students had been affected by the Global Studies approach to teaching the Grand Narrative of Scripture and that it had vastly impacted the students’ understanding of the Word, God, and themselves. I have personally seen the faces of students as they have sat astounded by the story of God, and I have watched as they have made connections from that story to their own identity and cross-cultural experiences in this life. It was incredibly encouraging to hear the students voice the effects that the staff and faculty have seen play out in their lives. I admit that though I was confident the research would show the teaching has been valuable for students, I was surprised to what extent these students have assigned their growth to the Grand Narrative and what place they have given it within our Global Studies program. As

¹⁹³ Clandinin and Huber, “Narrative Inquiry,” 17.

I listened to each student, I think I realized that perhaps I had been so careful not to assume that my great passion for this approach was shared by everyone that I had failed to recognize its significance for them. With each student expressing their excitement and perspective on the definition and role of the Grand Narrative within the narrative of Global Studies and the lives of the individual students, I found myself smiling at the comradery felt in listening to brothers and sisters in Christ who are passionate about the story of God. This caused me to reflect on my own perspective of what role the Grand Narrative plays in Global Studies.

I realized as I progressed through the interviews that though I am personally very passionate about the biblical metanarrative and its placement in Global Studies, I had never quite given myself permission to fully be passionate about it professionally. In some ways I have let my personal passion of the metanarrative of Scripture overlap into my professional life without allowing it to, in some ways, drive my professional life. Upon further consideration, I realized this was because I was afraid I was somehow overly passionate and that putting too much emphasis on it would lessen the other responsibilities and teaching for which I am responsible. As I listened to the students and coded their comments, I realize they already place the teaching for which I am responsible within a Grand Narrative framework and my teaching could be much more effective if I were to allow myself to further develop what I teach through a more strategic use of the Grand Narrative. This marks a shift for me in which I have come to understand that this passion in my life that started as simply part of my personal life, should also be a focus of my professional life. Clandinin and Huber write that “narrative inquirers see themselves and participants as each retelling their own stories, and as

coming to changed identities and practices through this inquiry process.”¹⁹⁴ I can see how this is the case for me as I continue to consider how to retell my story and make some changes of practice in my professional life because of this research. My narrative, along with the narrative of Global Studies and its students, has vastly been affected by the Grand Narrative of the Bible.

General Recommendations

Because of the great value of the use of Grand Narrative teaching within the Global Studies program, the recommendation is that it should continue to be developed and used with more strategic consistency throughout the program. This includes, but is not limited to, offering more narrative-based academic assignments in multiple classes that partner with the subject matter of those classes, a more strategic approach to teaching internship concepts from the Grand Narrative framework, and a focused elective course on the Grand Narrative. Students made many suggestions that should be considered as staff and faculty continue to develop the program. Perhaps more importantly though, the Grand Narrative of Scripture should be considered for wider use and impact beyond the Global Studies program and into the rest of the School of Divinity.

As the School of Divinity continues to seek to equip students for ministry, the recommendation is that consideration be made for how students can learn a Grand Narrative perspective better. Mark spoke regarding the use of Grand Narrative teaching not as something that would be a good idea but as something that is necessary.

You need to make sure that these PLED [Pastoral Leadership] majors, and these pastoral counseling majors, and these women's ministry majors understand the Grand Narrative. Don't just equip them with Scripture and good speaking abilities. Make sure that they understand God's story from Genesis to Revelation and how

¹⁹⁴ Clandinin and Huber, “Narrative Inquiry,” 17.

that applies to us now and what our role is. I think we can equip people with knowledge, and we can equip people with abilities and sharpen their words and their wit. But if they don't understand the simplest story in the simplest way then they might have a really hard time communicating it to people.

Mark was not the only student that spoke of this requirement being necessary, Carrie expressed she did not understand how anyone going into ministry could do so effectively without this understanding. If we, in Global Studies and Liberty University's School of Divinity, are truly in the business of equipping our students to be effective Christ followers and Christ communicators, then we have the responsibility to make certain students understand the story they are living and telling. While I am not saying a Grand Narrative perspective is the only way to better equip our students, I am saying this research has shown this approach to be an effective way to better equip them, and relevant literature and history stand in agreement of its ability to transform the narrative of the classroom and the student. Dirkx, in his writing on transformative learning, acknowledges the rarity of this type of learning and calls it a "conscious presence... best understood as a gift, an act of grace. How we consciously and willfully attend to its presence is perhaps the greatest challenge we face."¹⁹⁵ May we honor this gift of learning by utilizing the approach and the teaching to our students' advantage.

Recommendations for Further Research

This thesis focused on the impact of the teaching of the Grand Narrative within one group of Global Studies interns. While the research showed this group of students was affected by such a Gospel story-centric learning environment, the limitations of the research leave room for further examination. It would be interesting to take this research

¹⁹⁵ Dirkx, "Transformative Learning Theory," 11.

further and explore the use of a Grand Narrative-centered learning environment for students who are not Global Studies majors. It would also be interesting to examine the difference in a metanarrative perspective from students at different points in the program or even from different years of the program's existence. The extensions of research possibility are widespread and greater conclusions could be made if the research were extended into how other schools or programs within academia teach using a metanarrative perspective. I invite anyone to take that mantle and continue the study specifically in considering how a narrative approach in an academic context can foster transformational learning over simple knowledge-based learning.

Concluding Remarks

Liberty University's Global Studies program uses the Grand Narrative of the Bible to disciple students, equip them as messengers of God's Story, and help them assess and understand their own narratives within a larger context. However, until this research, its effectiveness and student experiences with metanarrative teaching had not been explored. This narrative inquiry qualitative research study explored how the teaching of the biblical metanarrative impacted the lives and personal narratives of Global Studies interns at Liberty University. Through interviews conducted with the Spring 2018 intern class, the results showed the Global Studies program and its students have been positively impacted by metanarrative teaching.

According to the students, the Grand Narrative of Scripture has become the lens through which the students learn and apply much of that with which they are tasked in the program, the structure that holds the content, the tether that roots the community of students to one another by having a common story and common language, and the

measuring rod by which they define and assess their internships and lives. But most importantly, according to them, this kind of teaching has made the students know and love God more. The biblical metanarrative is a story whose power goes far beyond academia and provides the students with a narrative to belong to that finds its resting place in eternity. As a follower of Christ, I am humbled to belong to such an incredible story; and as an educator, I am honored to take part in such a transformational approach to learning.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 24, 2019

Chesed Dent

IRB Approval 3634.012419: The Impact of Biblical Metanarrative on the Lives and Personal Narratives of Global Studies Interns at Liberty University

Dear Chesed Dent,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project. Sincerely,

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

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APPENDIX B

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Mission Service and Story Arcs:

Using Narrative to Help Students Understand the Value of Their Cross-Cultural Mission
Projects

Submitted to Dr. L. Lynn Thigpen,

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of

GLST 695

Directed Research in Global Studies

by

Chesed Anne Dent

November 10, 2017

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Introduction

One of the greatest challenges in sending students to serve on short term mission assignments is in debriefing them once they return and helping them with their reentry process. As surprising as it may be to some, the reentry process is oftentimes the most difficult of cultural transitions. There are many reasons why this is the case including the fact that most people do not expect any challenges to arise as they return to their home culture; but another reason that will hold unique value in this paper is that oftentimes these students do not know how to measure the value of their experience.¹⁹⁶ After spending some time on the field and figuring out that serving is not what they thought it would be and therefore cannot be measured in value as they expected, they are oftentimes left questioning.

In order to aid students in understanding the value of their experience and, coincidentally, help them through the readjustment process, those who send and welcome these missionaries back home must do a better job at training and debriefing in a way that shows them how to place and measure their experiences in something of eternal value. This paper will consider the reentry and debriefing process, connect narrative and story arc to student mission experience, and present a training and debriefing model for short term service opportunities that teaches the individual to consider their experience as a part of God's bigger narrative in this world.

¹⁹⁶ Colleen Ward, Stephen Bochner, and Adrian Furnham, *The Psychology of Culture Shock* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 161-162.

Reentry and Debriefing

It is of common knowledge, and even common sense, that embarking on a unique journey with a unique goal requires unique preparation. This is expressed differently in the hundreds of cross-cultural service experiences students are sent on every year. Students sit in trainings, sometimes academic and sometimes not, in order to prepare them for their upcoming exciting adventures. Unfortunately, it is less common for people to prioritize the need for just as much support in the reentry process when they return home at the end of their time of service. Craig Storti points this out in his book *The Art of Coming Home* and identifies why lack of reentry support is a problem.

None of this would make any difference, of course, if reentry were as simple as most people expect—merely a matter of picking up where you left off. But all of the evidence, both anecdotal and statistical, confirms that it is in fact a complicated and usually difficult experience. Indeed, most expatriates find readjusting back home, now commonly known as reverse culture shock, more difficult than adjusting overseas ever was.¹⁹⁷

This must be kept in mind when entering in to the discussion on how to send and welcome students home effectively. Helping them know what healthy expectations and common challenges are can set them up for a much smoother transition. Furthermore, students should be debriefed so that they can process everything they experienced and learned. This helps them understand how they have changed and how to bring that new growth into their lives back home. Additionally, if done well, it can also help them understand how their short-term mission experiences fit into God's greater mission to take the Gospel to the nations.¹⁹⁸ In other words, helping these students understand how

¹⁹⁷ Craig Storti, *The Art of Coming Home*, Revised ed. (Boston, MA: Nicholas Brealey, 2001), xiv.

¹⁹⁸ Neal Pirolo, *The Reentry Team: Caring for Your Returning Missionaries*, (San Diego, CA: Emmaus Road International, 2000), 103.

they fit into God's story will help them interact with and measure their experience appropriately.

Story

Before the conversation gets too far underway regarding story and its placement in debriefing student short-term mission experiences, the term must be discussed. While there are multiple definitions that can be found for story, for this paper the following excerpt from Kendall Haven's *Story Proof: The Startling Science Behind the Power of Story* will serve as the foundation for story discussion:

A story is a "thing," a specific narrative structure. It is the framework–narrative architecture. Story is not the content, but the scaffolding upon which some content (fiction or nonfiction) is hung. All stories are narratives, but most narratives are not stories. Though the term *narrative* (as well as *story*) is tossed about quite loosely in our modern culture, *Webster's Collegiate* and other dictionaries define narrative as a general catch-all word encompassing anything written or told in sentence and paragraph form. Essays, letters, diaries, articles, textbooks, directives, encyclopedia entries, briefs, and lectures, among others, qualify as narrative, but not necessarily as story.¹⁹⁹

Haven's explanation of story and narrative lends itself to the importance of supplying a framework for understanding content. This becomes very important in the debriefing model laid out later in this paper as the Biblical narrative becomes the framework for the content of student life and ministry.

The Power of Story

Historically and in many cultures around the world, one of the primary vehicles for communicating and understanding important truth and ideas has been through the form of story. While the Western world has shifted from this communication style as

¹⁹⁹ Kendall Haven, *Story Proof: The Science Behind the Startling Power of Story* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2007), 9.

cultural preference, it does not mean that the power of story has dwindled.²⁰⁰ In fact, even within the Western world “many disciplines, including management, mental and physical health, apologetics, theology and anthropology rely heavily on telling stories.”²⁰¹ This is because even though the modern world seems to highlight a more scientific literal approach to communicating “it is still story structure that lies at the core of human mental functioning.”²⁰²

Story holds a unique platform for being able to process and learn information effectively because it allows abstract external information to travel into a person’s internal functional understanding. Effective learning of any kind needs “meaning, context, relevance, and empathy” for the information to be accepted in a way that will allow it to be retained.²⁰³ Stories help people connect emotional depth and deeper meaning into what might otherwise just be the passing on or understanding of information.²⁰⁴ This is why “the art of story is the dominant cultural force in the world.”²⁰⁵

The Structure of Story

While there are many terms that can be used to describe what makes up a story, the general understanding is that a story is made up of many parts that come together to

²⁰⁰ Winter and Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 441.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 440.

²⁰² Haven, *Story Proof: The Science Behind the Startling Power of Story*, vii.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁰⁵ Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting* (New York: Regan Books, 1997), 15.

build a structure that communicates a master event.²⁰⁶ This event has a beginning that sets up the story and prepares the audience for what is going to happen, a middle that is the working out of what was introduced in the beginning, and an end that is the result of the first two.²⁰⁷ Within this three-part structure, the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement are found. These smaller parts of this master event must all relate to the overarching drama of the story for it to be successfully told; this also means that the ending of story must be known before the story begins because everything should connect to the resolution found in the main arc.²⁰⁸ This arc is “the great sweep of change that takes life from one condition at the opening to a changed condition at the end. This final condition, this end change, must be absolute and irreversible.”²⁰⁹

The master event, main plot, or spine is not the only plot found in most stories though; subplots play an important role in the main arc of stories.

A subplot is a story with a beginning, middle, and end; it has its own tension and culmination and resolution; and it is a story that belongs to a secondary character . . . the subplot must somehow be subordinate to the main story, thematically related, within the same world as the main story, and play out under the overall structure of the protagonist’s story.²¹⁰

In other words, every character’s actions and smaller story within the main story must somehow relate back to the main event. “For no matter what happens on the surface of

²⁰⁶ McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style*, 41.

²⁰⁷ David Howard, *How to Build a Great Screenplay: A Master Class in Storytelling for Film* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 2006), 256.

²⁰⁸ Rachel Ballon, *Blueprint for Screenwriting: a Complete Writer's Guide to Story Structure and Character Development* (Mahwah, N.J.: Routledge, 2005), 27.

²⁰⁹ McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style*, 41.

²¹⁰ Howard, *How to Build a Great Screenplay*, 298.

the story, each scene, image, and word is ultimately an aspect” of the greater story and “relating causally or thematically” to it.²¹¹ Subplots are written to support the main message being told through the main plot.

Important Players in Story

There are some important players within a story: the protagonist or main character, the antagonist, the minor characters, and the audience. The protagonist is the one who leads the spine of the main storyline as his/her desire is followed to resolution and his/her character developed.²¹² “The deep desire in and effort by the protagonist to restore the balance of life . . . [is] the primary unifying force that holds all other story elements together.”²¹³ The protagonist is, of course, the one who introduces the action that causes for the restoration in the first place. The minor characters are the ones who experience the workings out of the storyline whether as characters that support the main thrust of what the protagonist is seeking to accomplish, or as characters who support the antagonist. A final important player or group of players connected to the story is the audience. Though not oftentimes a part of the story, the audience plays an important role as the story is written and meant for them. This means that the story only finds its value upon reaching its audience.²¹⁴

²¹¹ McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style*, 195.

²¹² Ballou, *Blueprint for Screenwriting*, 20.

²¹³ McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style*, 195.

²¹⁴ Howard, *How to Build a Great Screenplay*, 3.

The Biblical Story

With the above discussion on story, plots, and characters in mind, let the narrative of the Bible be considered. The Biblical story is the most important story in our world because it is the story that everything else exists within. While many consider the Bible a book full of a collection of small stories, it is actually one large story that is being told from the beginning of time to the end of time. It must be read as such to be understood.²¹⁵ It is more than just a good story; “It is *the* story! It is a story that better than any other story makes sense of life.”²¹⁶ This story, though fully written to the end, is unfinished in being lived out and is told through layered story arcs.

We need to understand that the story of the Bible is being told at three different levels simultaneously. You might imagine three arcs, one overshadowing the other. The overarching level has to do with the great, redemptive narrative. The next has to do with the people of God, from Adam and Eve to all those welcomed into eternal life at the great white throne in Revelation. The last layer has to do with all the individual stories of the Bible in their local contexts.²¹⁷

The main story arc of the Bible follows the plot of the protagonist, God, and His purpose being lived out in the world. Beginning with Him creating a world where His creation can dwell in His presence perfectly, the chapters and books of the Bible then follow the plot as that perfect reality is thwarted by the antagonist, Satan. Due to the enemy’s deception, God’s created beings choose to follow the words of the enemy instead of the commands of God and find themselves in a fallen state of sinful consequence that hampers their relationship with God. Throughout the Old Testament

²¹⁵ Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003), 21.

²¹⁶ Preben Vang & Terry G. Carter, *Telling God's Story*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013), 8.

²¹⁷ Bill Jackson, *The Biblical Metanarrative: One God / One Plan / One Story* (Corona, CA: Radical Middle Press, 2014), 14.

God works to remake His presence available to humanity by choosing a people, placing Himself in their midst, and providing them with the law to show them how to live in relationship to Him. The story progresses to His physical presence coming down to earth in the personhood of Jesus Christ who dies on a cross in payment for the sinful choices made. Upon raising from the dead, Jesus tells His disciples that He must return to His Father but that He is leaving a helper, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, to help His people continue to live out their purpose in the story. That purpose is to continue to spread God's presence and intimacy of relationship to those who do not yet know while keeping in mind that a New Creation of ultimate redemption to God's presence is coming at the end of time.

The second story arc goes into greater details of how God accomplishes the goals of His main plan. It is His strategy.

The strategic picture depicts the creation / fall / Messiah / new creation paradigm in terms worked out in light of the history of the people of Israel. They experience slavery / exodus / worship / the restored image of God / wilderness / promised land / and a call to reach the nations. It is the exodus paradigm that is layered underneath the Big Picture as the basic paradigm of salvation in the story.²¹⁸

This level of story shows how God fulfills the purpose laid out in the first level.

The last level of the Biblical narrative, the third level of story arcs, is the collection of stories that most people think of when they think of the Bible. These are the subplots and minor characters that “flesh out the Big and Strategic pictures.”²¹⁹ While these stories hold truths and value in and of themselves, to fully understand the value of these stories, they must be taken and placed back into the larger narrative. Unfortunately,

²¹⁸ Jackson, *The Biblical Metanarrative*, 16.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

many Christians have broken up the Bible into “narrative bits . . . When this is allowed to happen, the Bible forfeits its claim to be the one comprehensive, true story of our world.”²²⁰

The Joseph Story

One story in the Bible that belongs in that third level of story arcs is that of Joseph in Genesis chapters thirty-seven through fifty. The general plot of this part of the Biblical narrative focuses on the life of a man named Joseph. When introduced to Joseph as a young man, the audience learns quickly that he is the favorite son of Jacob (Israel) and has dreams that seemingly communicate that he will one day rule over his family, two facts which only aid in ostracizing him from his ten brothers. Before the story gets too far underway, Joseph is sold by these brothers into slavery and taken to Egypt where he works as a servant in the house of a rich man named Potiphar. He works hard and finds favor with Potiphar who entrusts him to oversee the running of the household. This climbing of the ladder unfortunately does not seem to last too long. Potiphar’s wife tries to seduce Joseph and when he turns her down, she claims that he tried to sleep with her, so Potiphar throws him in prison. Again, in prison he somehow finds favor with those over him and he is entrusted with the care of the other prisoners. In these interactions with the other prisoners, Joseph is given the opportunity to aid two of them in interpreting dreams they have just had. One of these individuals is the chief cupbearer for Pharaoh and when he is released from prison back into service, he suggests Joseph as an interpreter of dreams when Pharaoh finds himself plagued by bad ones. Joseph’s ability

²²⁰ Michael W. Goheen and Craig Bartholomew, *The True Story of the Whole World: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Drama* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2009), 15.

to interpret Pharaoh's dreams places him in a unique position as his interpretation brings to light that there is going to be a very bad famine that lasts seven years which will come after seven years of plenty. Pharaoh decides to place Joseph as second in command under him to help in preparing the land for the coming famine. At the end of the story, Joseph is able to save his family from the famine by forgiving his brothers and bringing them to Egypt where they can eat from the food that Joseph has been storing. As it turns out, Joseph's dreams at the beginning of his story did hold true, as his high position allowed him to save his family.

When taught as though it is an entire story in and of itself with Joseph as the protagonist of the story, the heart of the story is missed. One might think that the value of the story can be found in statements like, "Bad things will happen but if you trust God then things will work out," "Work hard and you will be rewarded," or, "Believe and pursue your dreams and they will come true." While there are things about Joseph's life that can be respected and emulated, it was not Joseph who made these things happen. It was the Lord, the main character of the story, who orchestrated everything.

When one steps back and sets the Joseph story back into the larger narrative of Scripture, some very important things are noted. First, the Joseph story comes after God's covenant with the people of Israel, where part of His covenantal promise is that He would be with them (Genesis 26:3). Throughout Joseph's life, it is made clear that God is with him just as He was with the patriarchs of the covenant and that this is why he finds favor with those above him.²²¹ Upon arrival in Egypt and in Potiphar's household it says,

The Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So, Joseph found favor in

²²¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2009), 549.

his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. (Genesis 39:2-3)²²²

This same statement that God was with Joseph is repeated again when he is in prison (Genesis 39:21, Genesis 39:23) then later it says that God's spirit with Joseph was recognized by Pharaoh when he places Joseph as second in command (Genesis 41:38). Those around Joseph recognize that he prospers because of God's presence with him and that they in turn prosper when Joseph is being utilized well in their service. "Here again is the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant in its blessing aspect: Potiphar blessed Joseph the Jew; God in turn blessed Potiphar."²²³ Furthermore, it is through Joseph being in Egypt that Israel's family is saved from dying of starvation and then made into a great nation during their 400 years there, as explained in Genesis 46:3-4 and Exodus 1:12. This was all prophesied through the covenant in Genesis 15:13. Ultimately the Joseph narrative is about what God was doing with the people of Israel, the same people who later He saves from Egypt in a beautiful expression of salvation.

The Joseph story can be misinterpreted as Joseph being the protagonist partially because he does make some good decisions and things do work out in the end. But there are other stories within the Biblical narrative harder to interpret in that way due to poor decisions and broken circumstances by those one might be tempted to define as the main characters. Again, the important thing to do is to set these stories back into the Biblical narrative. One such story is that of Judah and Tamar, a story nestled within the Joseph narrative.

²²² Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced come from the *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

²²³ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 550.

The Judah and Tamar Story

Genesis thirty-eight tells the story of Judah and Tamar; it is a story full of deception, lack of integrity, and broken circumstance. These hard realities make it difficult to understand where the story draws its value from. In Genesis 38:1 the reader is told that Judah “went down from his brothers and turned aside” to live in a different community of people, away from those God had clearly called him to live life with. Already we see him making poor decisions. Once away from his family, he marries a Canaanite woman and has three sons. When Judah’s oldest son is of age for marriage, he marries a woman named Tamar. But it says that Er was a wicked man and was therefore put to death by the Lord. Upon finding herself widowed, Tamar is told that Er’s younger brother will take her as his own and provide an heir for Er; however, this brother only uses Tamar for pleasure and makes it so that she is never able to get pregnant. Because of this, she is promised that when the youngest son gets old enough, he will play that role. Tamar waits for this to happen; but it becomes clear that Judah is never actually going to fulfill his promise, so Tamar takes matter into her own hands. She deceives Judah into believing that she is a prostitute and he impregnates her. This results in her having twins, Perez and Zerah.

When read as though this is its own story, it is difficult to measure the value. Judah is a poor protagonist, and so is Tamar. In fact, the entire story is somewhat awkward to read and even more awkward to talk about and try and glean truth from. Again, this story is meant to be understood in light of that larger narrative. Tamar’s son Perez becomes part of the family line of Jesus as seen in Matthew 1:3 and Ruth 4:18; and

in fact, Tamar is one of the few women mentioned in the genealogy of Christ.²²⁴ Furthermore, some scholars believe that the intermarrying “shows the reason why Judah’s Egyptian sojourn was necessary . . . the chosen family will be brought into Egypt, and there they will be preserved physically as a nation . . . the chosen family will also be preserved morally.”²²⁵ So while this story might seem “marginal to biblical history, [it actually] records a vital link” in what God is doing through His greater narrative.²²⁶

Present-Day Story Arcs in the Biblical Narrative

In the same way, believers today must place their lives and experiences back into the greater Biblical narrative to appropriately measure their value. In a world and in cultures that are very focused on self, believers need to be trained and disciplined to understand their lives are not ultimately about themselves and that the value of what they experience cannot be measured just through self-interpretation. To truly understand the lives being lived out today, people must understand how they are placed in the larger narrative as part of “the ongoing story of the church of Jesus moving out into nations, cities, towns, and streets.”²²⁷ The story is not finished being lived out and present-day holds a unique role that believers must understand so that they can play their part in it.

In Genesis 1-2, Eden is the dwelling place of God, and God commissions Adam and Eve to expand the boundaries of that dwelling place to fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). While God’s original call seemed to be thwarted by sin in Genesis 3, God continues to establish his dwelling place among the patriarchs until the

²²⁴ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 546.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Tremper Longman, *The Story of God Bible Commentary: Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 474.

²²⁷ Jackson, *The Biblical Metanarrative*, 335.

construction of the tabernacle and temple. After the destruction of Solomon's temple, the prophets anticipate the coming of a new and expanding temple, and these prophecies begin to be fulfilled in Jesus and the church. The church as the dwelling place of God must expand until one day it fills the entire heaven and earth; the entire cosmos becomes the dwelling place of God. Mission does not begin with the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, but mission is God's heartbeat from Genesis 1 until the new heaven and earth become the dwelling place of the Lord God Almighty in Revelation 21-22. This ultimate picture of the whole earth filled with God's presence fulfills God's original intention from the sanctuary of Eden.²²⁸

Recognizing that part of the call to be an active part of God's church is a call to be a part of God's mission to expand His presence to the nations sets the context for the individual storylines being lived out today. Furthermore, it gives insight into the different experiences within those story arcs.

Infusing Story Perspective into Student Short-Term Mission

This approach to understanding Scripture and believer story arcs within the greater narrative of what God is doing in the world vastly changes a student's interactions with short-term mission service. While the present-day worldview communicates that you only have one life to live and should therefore live it for yourself, the narrative God is working out in the world says that there is one story and the individual lives lived out belong in it. This means that every stage of life, goal pursued, relationship etc. should be placed back into God's larger purpose for the world. This approach holds unique value when applied to sending students on short-term cross-cultural mission service projects because it can aid a student to view their experience healthier and more appropriately. Such an approach also grounds them in a confidence that comes from recognizing that

²²⁸ G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 16.

their experience, whether good or bad, however they might define it, is valuable because it is placed in a story of eternal value under a main character that does not waver.

Below a strategy is laid out for how this approach can be used in sending students on cross-cultural short-term mission experiences, specifically that of semester-long internships. Recognizing that the process begins much earlier than when a student sets foot on the plane headed overseas, four stages of the experience have been identified and how story and story-arcs can be utilized in each stage.

Stage One: Initial Training

Upon a student first entering into most preparation trainings for overseas mission experience, some form of worldview and evangelism training is introduced. This is when a student must begin to learn that what they are tasked with is much more than just taking a Gospel presentation to those who do not know Jesus. Through classes, trainings, or other avenues, something must be written into the program that infuses this worldview and language into the foundation of the process. They must know the story before they can be expected to live it out and tell it appropriately.

Pages five through seven of this paper give an overview of the Biblical narrative; but there are many ways that this story can be told. It can be taught following specific threads or themes such as God's presence, God's glory, holiness, etc. The important part is to give the students a foundational framework that they can then continue to build upon. One such framework that has been found to be helpful is that presented by Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen in their book *The True Story of the Whole World*:

Finding Your Place in the Biblical Drama, where they approach the Biblical narrative as a drama with six acts:²²⁹

Act 1: God Establishes the Kingdom – Creation

Act 2: Rebellion in the Kingdom – Fall

Act 3: The King Chooses Israel – Redemption Initiated

Scene 1: A People for the King

Scene 2: A Land and a King for God’s People

Interlude: A Kingdom Story Waiting for an Ending – The Intertestamental Period

Act 4: The Coming of the King – Redemption Accomplished

Act 5: Spreading the News of the King – The Mission of the Church

Act 6: The Return of the King – Redemption Completed²³⁰

Stage Two: Specific Short-Term Service Training

As the student gets closer to time of departure, their upcoming experience can begin to be placed more specifically into the narrative so that they understand how strategically their obedience plays out in what God is doing. As Act Six has not yet taken place, the student must understand that they are uniquely placed in Act Five where the Church is living out the mission of God to take the Gospel to the lost. This will help them pursue well that which God has set before them.

During this stage of training, students also have the opportunity to begin to learn that their smaller story arcs in God’s narrative will possibly include hardship. This can be included in training on transition, culture shock, or other aspects of training that seek to equip the student for some of the difficulties they might face in transitioning into another culture. While the Bible clearly communicates that obedience to Christ comes with a cost, many students functionally do not understand this and respond to hardship as though God is telling them not to pursue His specific mandate anymore. Showing them that hard

²²⁹ Goheen and Bartholomew, *The True Story of the Whole World*, 9.

²³⁰ Ibid.

is not the same as bad is a very important equipping for their time on the field; it opens the door to begin to talk to them about how to actually measure the value of their time on the field through the character of God, not the character of self. At this stage in the process, they are dreaming of all the wonderful things that will take place and all of the stories they will be able to tell, so it becomes increasingly important to continue to remind them that they are not the main character of their stories and that the value of their stories must be found in the larger narrative.

The stories of Joseph, and Judah and Tamar, as discussed on pages seven through eleven of this paper, are very good examples to use at this point in the students transition process. Joseph's story specifically includes cultural transition and many students will be able to relate in a new way to the story. But, more importantly, showing them the contrast of a seemingly good story and a seemingly bad story is helpful as they also begin to consider that some of them will have seemingly good cross-cultural experiences and some of them might have seemingly bad cross-cultural experiences. These stories will aid in further training the students to see beyond their own experiences to how they fit into the larger work of God in the world, so they do not define their experiences by how they feel but instead by who God is.

Stage Three: Time on the Field

While on the field, it is important to help students have an outlet that encourages them to debrief and process through their experience in real time so they can eventually honestly consider their experience in light of the larger narrative. This will make their overall debriefing at the end much more effective. For students gone for an entire semester, an effective way to do this is through a weekly journal. The important thing to

keep in mind regarding this journal is that it must, while allowing the student to consider their own feelings and experiences, not foster a “me-focused” perspective. One way to do this is by including questions with each journal prompt that specifically give the student the opportunity to talk or write about how what they are experiencing, whether good or bad, and give them the opportunity to learn more about God and how that truth is then being applied back into the work they are doing and overall experience of their time of service. This helps them functionally begin to reflect on their experience with God as the main character instead of themselves and it begins some of the hard works of reflecting and debriefing while they are still in the midst of the experience.

Reflection is of utmost importance in this process. Many students have not been trained to really spend time reflecting on their daily experiences and when they are in the midst of oftentimes face-paced ministry, they do not naturally pause long enough to consider what has just taken place. It is through prayerful reflection that one gains insight into experience so giving students an outlet to do this holds incredible value, though some of them will not recognize that at first. They must consider and reflect on their own experiences in order to place them into God’s purposes for the world.

Stage Four: Reentry and Debriefing

Reentry is a very important stage for the brunt of debriefing, processing, reflection, and placement in Story to happen. Students need to be given space to express their experiences and the connected joys and disappointments they bring back with them without fear of judgement or failure. For some, they will need more than just encouragement to actually do this, so it is helpful to infuse it into their reentry process through expectations communicated beforehand.

Once initial space to just consider their emotions and experiences have been given, the student oftentimes needs help knowing how to direct those experiences in a purposeful healthy way. One way to do this is by having students consider the story of their experience through a debriefing timeline. This can be done with the help of the students' journals, social media posts, etc. to graph out their time. This is where the reflection they did on the field will help them remember and process their experience more easily.

The general structure is for them to begin with the big events and memories that lay at the surface of their experience and slowly work their way down through their perspectives, emotions, and lessons associated with these ideas. This then leads into further processing that shows them who God was and what He was doing during their time. As they do this, they will begin to see that seemingly random experiences and lessons work together to write the story arc of their time overseas. When prompted, oftentimes the student will be able to connect this story arc to earlier seasons and even to the current one of reentry. This allows them to summarize their experience in a way that helps them communicate it to others and then allows it to be placed back into the larger story of what God is doing in the world. See Appendix A for a guideline for this type of time-lining.

This is also the stage of debriefing where the teaching on Joseph, Judah, and Tamar can be brought back into conversation to help remind students that the greater value of their story arcs must be found in the larger story. Some students will have had very difficult and seemingly meaningless experiences; or, their perspectives have jaded their understanding of their time overseas beyond anything other than their own

disappointments and confusing emotions. Other students will have had a seemingly easy experience with much spiritual fruit and a lot of stories that are easily celebrated. No matter how hard or how easy, how good or how bad, how fruitful or not, students need to be reminded to evaluate and value their experiences in the way God does. Bringing earlier teaching on Joseph, Judah, and Tamar into the conversation can help do this. It can also show them that even if they do not understand why they experienced the things they experienced, the Lord has an understanding that comes from a much wider angled perspective and they can trust He knows what He is doing. Using timelines similar to what they have just done for their own cross-cultural experiences can connect earlier Scriptural truths learned to their present processing. See Appendix B and C for examples of this.

Conclusion

Infusing story and story arc into the training and debriefing done for short term cross-cultural service teaches students to consider their experience as a part of God's bigger narrative. As more and more students are sent on short term cross-cultural service projects, those in charge of equipping, sending, and welcoming these students back home would do well to consider infusing this model into the culture of their sending. Obviously, every program is different; but the foundational values of this type of model can be contextualized into different programs and situations. This type of processing and debriefing is not the only thing taking place during the entirety of the student's service experience; but it does ground the experience in something of eternal value and teach the student an appropriate way to measure their experience. This methodology will then help with their reentry and overall perspective. But, perhaps of greatest value is the further

knowledge it gives a student of God's Word, what He is doing in the world, and what part they play in it.

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Appendix A

Short Term Mission Timeline Example

	Month 1 (Example)	Month 2	Month 3	ETC.
<i>Big events / memories. Easy things remembered. Surface level experience.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Goodbyes -Org. Orientation -Made it to field -Met team -Met L (who later became a believer) -Began language school -Began teaching 			ETC.
<i>Deeper level of experience. Fears, joys, challenges etc. that the above row is the context for.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grieved missing out -Realized roommate issues -Feelings and acceptance of loneliness -Scared to teach - Excited to meet L because she is interested 			ETC.
<i>Lessons learned or things God was teaching. God as the main character.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -God calls me to obedience and that means sacrifice -God goes with me and is constant -God equips me -He is worth it -God was working before I got here 			ETC.
<i>The continuing thread and storyline of your time overseas. Consider how it fits in with God's storyline for you and the world. That is what goes here.</i>	<p>I had to sacrifice many things (relationships, events, comforts) to serve overseas; but more than that, I watched a reality of sacrifice for a friend who became a believer and went through a lot of persecution. Through that experience I learned that Jesus' sacrifice is greater than any sacrifice anyone will be asked to give as we live in obedience to Him. It will be worth it in order to spread the news of His Gospel.</p>			

Appendix B

Joseph Narrative Timeline

	Gen 37	Gen 39 - 41	Gen 42 - 47	ETC
<p><i>Events</i></p> <p><i>Joseph as the main character</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joseph's brothers are jealous of him being his father's favorite - Joseph has dreams and tells his family about them - Joseph is sold by his brothers and taken to Egypt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joseph works in Potiphar's house, finds favor, and rises to be over the household - Joseph refuses Potiphar's wife's advances and is thrown in prison - Joseph finds favor and is placed in charge of other prisoners - Joseph interprets dreams of cupbearer and baker - Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams - Joseph rises to power for the years of plenty as he prepares for the coming famine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joseph provides food for his brothers and demands they bring his younger brother back - Joseph forgives his brothers - Joseph sends for his father - Joseph makes it possible for his whole family to relocate to Egypt and be cared for 	ETC.
<p><i>God as the main character</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The story is about the family line chosen by God as His covenantal people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Potiphar's house "the Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man" (39:2) - "The Lord caused all he did to succeed" (39:3) - "The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake" (39:5) - In prison "the Lord was with Joseph" (39:21) - In prison "because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed." (39:23) - God equips Joseph to interpret dreams (40:8) - God equips Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dream (41:16) - "God has revealed" the plan for the years of plenty to prepare for the years of famine (41:25) - Pharaoh recognizes that the Spirit of God is with Joseph and places him in leadership (41:38-40) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "... God sent me before you to preserve life. . . . And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on this earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt." (45:5-8) - God assured Jacob about moving to Egypt by saying "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again. . ." (46:3-4) 	ETC.
<p><i>How does this fit into the greater narrative?</i></p>	<p>In covenantal faithfulness God is with Joseph and sovereignly takes him to Egypt where He causes him to prosper and rise to a position of power where he is able to provide for and preserve the lives of his people. Through this, they become a great nation who all the families of the earth are blessed by through Jesus Christ.</p>			

Appendix C

Judah and Tamar Narrative Timeline

	Gen 38:1-11	Gen 38:12-24	Gen 38:25-30	ETC.
<i>Events with Judah and Tamar as the main characters</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judah left his brothers and married a Canaanite and started a family - Judah found a wife for his firstborn named Tamar - Tamar's husband dies and Judah gives her to his second son to provide an heir - Judah's second son doesn't fulfill his duty so Tamar is told the third son will when he gets older 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "in the course of time" Tamar sees that Judah is not fulfilling his promise of his third son - Tamar deceives Judah into thinking she is a prostitute. He impregnates her. - Judah is told that Tamar is pregnant and it comes to light that he is the father of the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb." - Perez and Zerah are born 	ETC.
<i>How does this fit into the greater narrative</i>	<p><i>Ruth 4:18-21</i> "Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David."</p> <p>Matt 1:1-6 "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king."</p>			