

# STEP INSIDE

Where Stories  
Come to *Life*

✧ CD Included ✧





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# CONTENTS

Special Acknowledgments . . . . .	7
Step Inside . . . . .	15
An Introduction . . . . .	19
The King Who Waits . . . . .	23
 We Were Made for Story . . . . .	29
A Song for the Darkness . . . . .	35
The Worriers . . . . .	47
The Regular Kingdom and the Beautiful Kingdom . . . . .	57
The Sack . . . . .	69
 Letting the Story Speak to Us . . . . .	74
The Giants Without Manners . . . . .	79
The Land of Sighs . . . . .	89
The Fountain . . . . .	95
The Land of Stinky Feet . . . . .	107



The Benefits of a Good Story . . . . . 121

The Grudge Bearer . . . . . 125

Suitcases . . . . . 133

The Great King's Longing . . . . . 143



Touch Lives with Your Story . . . . . 151

Permissions & Use of My Stories . . . . . 155



# AN INTRODUCTION

*Look back and see our footprints—Our Me within the Who!*

I've always loved the ending line of this little poem. Footprints. Footprints are the evidence of a distance traveled. And as I anticipate your time spent between the pages of this book and your own stepping inside the stories, I am certain you will discover things about the *who* you think you are, the *who* you long to be, the *who* that's hidden way down deep, and that incredible, altogether wonderful *who* that is really and truly you. There will be footprints.

This collection represents some of my best work as a storyteller and writer. Some stories are time-worn as I've told them hundreds of times. Some are new, and their life and value to me, the teller, and you, the listener, has just begun. In the back cover of the book you'll find a compact disk of the six new stories. I hope you will enjoy what happens when I tell you a story. I know I had a ton of fun creating it for you.

In between the stories, I share my thoughts about the rich value of story. Let's think of it as our little coffee break. We'll step away from the right brain activity of these stories and pick up that beautiful left side of our brain. I want to provide you with more than a collection of stories; my hope is that this book will encourage you to explore your own story and use of stories.

Besides enjoying my stories on the page and in CD, please take the time to tell them to others. It's such a brave thing to do—to lift a story with your voice. And if you'd like to bring any of my stories to a public performance level, I've provided some simple guidelines here in the book.

Most authors hope their books linger on coffee tables or bookshelves or are passed on to readers' friends or family members. My hope is that my book does more than that. I want these stories to linger in your heart and mind and soul. I want them to come to life in you. So step inside with me . . . .

*Enjoy! Melea*



## We Were Made for Story

*God so wants us to live in the larger story—His Story.*

*But the choice is ours . . .*

Life began as a story. Go to the first chapter of Genesis in the Bible and you will find a strong narrative, compelling dialogue, and clear descriptions there. God, the greatest storyteller and artist extraordinaire, spoke His creation into being. The comment at the end of this first chapter in His story is this: “And God saw that it was good.”

In fact, God’s Story has an incredible beginning and a magnificent ending. You and I are living somewhere in the middle of this story. Not the easiest place to live at times—in the middle of a story. Life can get so loud that we can barely hear one another, let alone God. Yet He keeps speaking. The narrative, dialogue, and description He pursues with us daily is that of an Author deeply devoted to His work. Oh, how He loves us.

He speaks to us in the beauty of a sunrise; the small, brown sparrow seeking its food on a snowy road; a child’s infectious laughter; or an old and wrinkled face brightened by the remembrance of a moment once lived. He speaks to us

in mundane and ordinary things while we're driving to a destination; running an errand; enduring a dry lecture in a classroom; or preparing a meal while juggling a fussy baby. And God is never the silent One at a funeral, graduation, wedding, birthday celebration, or other milestone in our lives, is He?

He speaks.

So if God is doing all this talking, all this storytelling, what's going on in me and you that is stopping that flow? Why are we missing out on His communication? Why can't we hear Him?

I believe I know part of the answer. We need to have our stories restored to us. We restore furniture, books, photos, paintings, cars, houses, land, water—even our hair. What if there was a way to restore what is eroded away by our culture, the stuff of life, sin, and self? What if there was something you and I could do to restore our stories?

There is. It's all about story. If I had the way or means, I would pass out a prescription for all people that would read something like this:

*Take one restoring story per day. Results are best when consumed  
in large quantities and shared in community.*

Jesus used a prescription like this. Wherever and whenever He spent time with His creation, He told stories. They were stories that encouraged, enlightened, convicted, taught, and pursued the listeners. They were stories that restored





Constance. It's a good name, a strong name. Constance.

"Constance, you're so like your name," people would tell her.

"Yes, I know. I'm steadfast in purpose and faithful in affection. I'm loyal, unchanging, plodding on . . . just like my birthdays."

Constance had just turned 30, which meant a big party with 30 candles, 30 balloons, 30 presents, 30 friends and family, and 30 days of wondering why she was 30 and unmarried, unsettled in her career, and uninterested in life. She had spent most of the last month of her 29 years complaining about this momentous turning of age.

You've heard of "Forty Days of Purpose"? Well, this was more like "Thirty Days of Pouting."

The great and grand momentous day had come and gone, and now she was living in 30, feeling its weight and a strange, unsettling grief.

“Well, Aunt Lily turned 30 and didn’t die,” she mused. “Oh, but she did die.”

Aunt Lily had passed away some 30 days ago, missing Constance’s 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. She’d been in hospice care for a long time and had finally slipped from here to The Great There.

“Don’t weep for me when I’m gone from here, because I’ll be There with Him,” she’d said.

So perhaps it was Aunt Lily’s death that had started Constance pondering (pouting), and not the passing of this third decade. Or perhaps it was all the sorting and sifting through the room on the third floor of Aunt Lily’s home.

On weekends since her Aunt’s passing, Constance had traveled to the old, empty home, climbed the stairs, and walked into that special room, hoping for a message in the darkness and the dust.

Aunt Lily was what some would probably call “an odd one.” She’d never married, but lived in a beautiful, old house and rented rooms to “practically strangers”—that’s what Constance’s mother called them.

“They’re practically strangers, paying practically nothing to you, Lily,” she would say, thinking it would change her mind about her renters.

“Ah, but they are God’s creatures, made by His own hands,” Lily would reply with a smile.

Aunt Lily loved people, God, and her dogs. It was that simple.

And Aunt Lily loved Constance. So much so that Constance was bequeathed Aunt Lily’s “upstairs basement,” as it was affectionately called. It was a large room filled with the treasures of the world . . . Aunt Lily’s treasures.

“This is from the upstairs basement,” Aunt Lily would say as she passed you a gift. Or she would write that phrase neatly on the tag of your gift. It was always some unique item that you had never thought of buying for yourself. A little bit of the “upstairs basement” was now a part of your life forever.

Aunt Lily had created this special room and filled it with trinkets, furniture, pictures, photographs, phonograph records, vintage clothing, shoes, hats and accessories, thousands of magazines and books, and far too many things that others would say were ripe for a yard sale or the Goodwill bin.

She also had a peculiar filing system for the room—one that would’ve amazed the most fastidious of organizers. The markings on the many boxes stacked one upon the other always brought a smile or a chuckle to Constance. Some of her favorites, already sorted through, had been

THE GIANTS  
WITHOUT  
*Manners*



*In the Land of  
Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum &  
Fiddle-Dee-Dee,  
There lived some Giants  
who never said,  
"I'm sorry, thank you, or please."*





*I*n the Land of Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum and Fiddle-Dee-Dee,  
There lived some giants who never said, "I'm sorry, thank you, or please."

They were rude and crude and an awful sloppy bunch,  
And they made noises and messes when they ate their lunch.

When they were out walking they left trails full of trash,  
And people knew to stay clear or their feets would get smashed.

"We will not say it, no way," the giants would grumble.

"It's dumb! Just try to make us, and you'll take a tumble!"

So they went through life rudely, just thumbing their noses,  
Never saying “thank you,” “I’m sorry,” or “please” to one single soulses.

Their families all cried. Their friends all complained,  
“We taught them. What happened? I guess we’re to blame.”

So that’s how it was for the longest of time,  
And these giants ruled the land and thought life was just fine.

And then one day to the surprise of all in this land  
There appeared a fairy with a special book in her hand.

“Ah-hem!” she said as she cleared her throat,  
“I’ve been sent by the Big Guy who gave me this note.

“Go to the Land of Fiddle-Dee-Dee and Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum  
And take care of the giants who are acting like bums!”

“So come out, come out wherever you are  
There’s no need to hide from a fairy with a star!”