

A man was thinking and he wondered if ...

what was really happening was that ...

the big Entrepreneur in the heavens was ...

Creating Characters With Character

By

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To the **Master Novelists**

from one of their characters

Introduction

My better friends and family have heard me sometimes refer to the Creator God as the "Big Entrepreneur In The Sky." Of course I sincerely mean it as a compliment - probably the greatest compliment my human mind can produce. The universe was created because a righteous and loving Entrepreneur decided to share the gift of life.

In the pages that follow I offer another take as to what is really happening and why. Stated another way, I would like to offer an answer to the proverbial questions, "What is happening to me?" and "Why is this happening to me?"

Creating characters with character. Could God, "The Big Entrepreneur In The Sky," actually be creating characters with character the way a great novelist does? The short answer is, "Yes." I believe that is precisely what is happening and in the pages that follow I share with you my reasons for so believing. Some of the reasons are Biblical and some are based on logical reasoning and life experiences.

My research into this subject came about because some day I would like to write at least one really great dramatic novel and/or screenplay. It might happen and it might not. To be prepared to succeed I have actually undertaken quite a bit of study about how you would go about getting such a job accomplished. And in those studies I learned some interesting lessons paralleling God's process of character creation in us. The main purpose of writing this book was so I can share with you some of those lessons I have learned.

As an important note, I have chosen to write the pages that follow mainly in a conversational style. Having said that, let's get started. I offer for your serious consideration and hopeful edification what I have learned below.

A good novel is intense. And to be intense a novel must have drama. And drama involves conflict. Generally it goes something like this: there is a protagonist, who is the main good guy, and there is an antagonist, who is the main bad guy.

In attempting to achieve his goal, the protagonist is faced with a dilemma of some sort. The dilemma develops into a crisis. The

crisis builds through a series of complications into a climax. And in the climax the crisis is resolved.

Creating Characters

In my research I learned that one of the most difficult jobs a good novelist has, probably the most difficult, is to create interesting characters. And the novelist is forced to start with a blank sheet of paper, which is to say to create characters from nothing, as it were. This started me thinking.

Then another one of the research books I read had a very interesting subtitle, which is, "Creating Wonderfully Rounded Characters, Or How To Play God." I found this to be a fascinating subtitle and it proved to ultimately be the inspiration for this book. In point of fact, the subtitle impacted my life and I have been thinking about it ever since.

To be very clear, after thinking about it I came to the conclusion that God, the Father, and Jesus Christ are Master Novelists. They are in the process of making a family of righteous spirit beings with unique personalities. They are creating characters with character. And they are

doing it by starting with dirt, so to speak. And creating character, in characters, is not an easy job. And it involves a process that is not easy.

The following scriptural references are from the King James Version, KJV, or the Modern King James Version, MKJV, unless denoted otherwise. Any emphasis, in the scriptural quotations, is mine throughout this book.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”
Genesis 1:26, 27, KJV

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”
Genesis 2:7, KJV. [To me, God starting with dirt to create humans is very comparable, in a way, to a novelist creating characters starting with a blank sheet of paper.]

One of the research books I read actually advocated writing a 30-page biography on each main character before you start writing the actual novel. I was stunned. A 30-page biography on each main character ... I thought, "You have got to be kidding me!" That is a lot of work to do before you even begin to start writing your novel.

The reason for writing a 30-page biography on each of your main characters is because you want to end up with all your characters being three-dimensional and well rounded.

So what three dimensions are we talking about? There is physiological, which pertains to the character's height, weight, eye color, hair color, build, etc.

There is sociological, which is the character's upbringing and background. Were they raised in a tenement, or a penthouse? This obviously makes a difference in how the character develops.

And there is the psychological. What is the character's main motivation? What makes them tick? Do they have a burning passion, or are they just malingering in their life?

Great characters do have burning passions that rule their every action. When I read this I immediately thought of the famous scriptural passage in the book of Revelation, being one of Christ's messages to one of the churches:

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to

sit with me in my throne, even as I also
overcame, and am set down with my Father in
his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear
what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”
Revelation 3:14-22, KJV

I think what God is saying here is, “I wish
you had some passion. I really wish you had
some passion.” Great characters have passion.
Perhaps sometimes we are a bit boring to God.

Drama and External Conflict

Now, a novel cannot be boring, it has to
have drama. So let’s say, for example, we were
going to write and, in our mind’s eye, we see
one of our characters about to do something.
Let’s call our character, Scott. Let’s say we see
Scott get in his car, drive to a convenience
store, buy a pack of gum, go up to the cashier,
pay for the gum, get back in his car and drive
back home. The problem is, there is no conflict.
And with no conflict there is no drama. And with
no drama, what we see in our mind’s eye is not
worth writing about because it will be boring for
someone else to read.

But, what if Scott goes into the convenience
store and just as he is getting ready to select his

pack of gum, three masked men come in. One of the masked men discharges a couple of rounds into the ceiling and says, "This is a stickup. Everybody get down." Now we have some conflict. Now we have some drama. Exactly how is Scott going to get out of this? Is Scott going to be able to get out of this? The reader must now continue on to learn what happens next and he wants to continue on to know what happens next because the drama from the conflict makes it interesting and more worth reading about.

Emeril Lagasse, the famous chef, frequently asks, "Should we kick it up another notch?" For purposes of illustration, let's kick it up another notch. How about if one of the gunmen looks at Scott's face, points the gun right between his eyes and says, "Hey, you were on that jury that convicted me."

Well, now it's not so boring, is it? Scott has a real dilemma on his hands and it won't be easy for him to get out of it, if he can. Now the reader is much more motivated to continue on to find out what happens next to poor Scott. That's the writer's challenge – to hold the reader's interest and to get them to keep

turning the pages. With your character facing conflict, you have drama.

So why aren't stories smooth and easy? It's because the clever author is always placing obstacles in the path of his characters. It has been said that the three most important rules for investing in real estate are location, location, and location. Well, the three most important rules for writing a great dramatic novel are conflict, conflict, and more conflict.

Your character will spring to life when he is put to the test. When you force your character to make a choice and to take action, this is when we will learn what kind of a person the character really is. Which brings to mind an interesting scripture in I Peter.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Peter 4:12, 13, KJV

There is a purpose for the test, or trial. The test gives us an opportunity to develop

judgment and to grow. There is a saying in business that "Good judgment comes from experience. Unfortunately, experience comes from bad judgment." There is a lot of truth to this, isn't there?

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."
Romans 5:3-5, KJV

The tests have a purpose for God's characters.

Now, when two or more characters have different goals and are intent on achieving them conflict results. If the stakes are high and both sides are unyielding, you have the makings of high drama.

In Matthew 4 Satan battles Christ. In verses 10-11, near the end of the conflict it says:

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”
Matthew 4:10, 11, KJV

So Mathew 4 is an example of an external conflict where an important battle was won with Jesus Christ defeating Satan.

The Crucible

Now you have to put your characters into something called a crucible if you are a good author. Think of a crucible as the container that holds the characters together as things heat up. Neither side can escape the crucible. So you lock your characters in a crucible, with the antagonist against the protagonist. And they, for their separate reasons, are committed to continuing the conflict until there is a final resolution. That is to say until the final battle is won; the Death Star has been blown up; Rocky is still standing at the end of the 15th round; or whatever. That is external conflict. A crucible makes it impossible for your characters to run away from their conflicts.

So, dear reader, let me ask you a question: “Have you ever felt like you had no way out?” I feel quite confident there have been times

where you have felt exactly that way. You may have even felt betrayed. So what was happening to you and why was it happening? Keep reading.

Again, as I Peter said above, in so many words, "Don't think it strange if a fiery trial comes upon you to try you." **The Creator knew we would think it strange** and so he provided a gentle warning, in advance, to help us balance both our minds and emotions. And to help us not lose our faith.

Another good Biblical example of external conflict is found in Daniel 3, in verses 16-18. I am going to use The Living Bible this time:

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not worried about what will happen to us. If we are thrown into the flaming furnace, our God is able to deliver us; and he will deliver us out of your hand, Your Majesty. But if he doesn't, please understand, sir, that even then we will never under any circumstance serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have erected.'" Daniel 3:16-18, The Living Bible

Daniel's three friends were locked in the crucible of the Babylonian kingdom. They could not escape either bowing down to the image, or being cast into the fiery furnace. Notice, they did not know if God would protect them for sure. All they could do was to win the inner conflict, to make the right decision, and hope that God would deliver them from the external conflict.

Another example of an external conflict is found in Revelation 13, the famous "mark of the beast" chapter. In that chapter, which you can read for yourself, the faithful to God are locked into a crucible whereby they have to refuse to worship the image of the beast, but if they do refuse to worship said image, they are to be put to death. That is some crucible and some challenge.

Inner Conflict

Having your characters face the external conflict of a savage opponent, while locked in a crucible, is tough enough. But, there is another thing you can and should do to your characters, which makes it even tougher for them. You must force them to experience inner conflict.

There are obviously many and varying examples of inner conflict. For purposes of illustration I am just going to recite three.

One example of inner conflict is when duty conflicts with fear. Try to imagine, if you can, what it would have been like to be in one of the Allied forces landing craft on June 6, 1944, about to hit the shores of Normandy. You have a duty, when the door of that boat opens and the Germans are shooting at you, to get your 60 pounds of gear and yourself off that boat, through the water, and up onto the beach. People are getting shot on your right and left and dying all around you. You cannot tell me these brave young men were not afraid. But they had a duty and they had to battle through the inner conflict of fear to get a job done. And they did.

Another example of inner conflict would be something as seemingly simple as a Jew marrying a Muslim. And then all kinds of things happen when they "meet the parents." It would make for an interesting and perhaps a very long weekend.

Another example of inner conflict was well dramatized in the movie *Vertical Limit*. At the

start of the movie, a daughter, a son, and a father were all rock climbing, and they were all on the same rope when some of the fasteners started giving away. It became obvious, very quickly, that the rope was not going to hold the combined weight of the three people. The rope was just simply not going to hold. It was a terrifying scene to behold. And it was high drama.

The father didn't have the knife, he was on the bottom, and he wanted to make sure his daughter and son lived. He started telling his son, "You have to cut the rope." Now, since the father was underneath the son, for the son to cut the rope would be an act that would send his father plummeting to his death. And if he did not cut the rope probably all three family members would die. What a horrific position to have thrust upon you. That's an inner conflict. When you have to do something you don't want to do. His sister is screaming at him, "Don't cut the rope." She is thinking with her heart. But the son is the one in the middle with the knife. And the inner conflict. Does he cut the rope and send his father to his death, or not?

When you don't know what to do, or you have to do something you don't want to do you have an inner conflict.

I am sure we have all experienced various forms of inner conflict. As an author, if you create inner conflict really well, you will have impaled your characters on the horns of a dilemma. Does that sound familiar? Have you ever felt that way? I bet you have.

Whenever your character must have something, or do something for very powerful and convincing reasons and yet cannot have that something for equally powerful reasons, you will have a character that is being ripped apart internally. That is impaling your character on the horns of a dilemma. It is making your characters agonize.

The best example I know of this, by far, is described in Romans 7:14-23. I will again use The Living Bible, because I think it makes the point a little bit better:

"The law is good, then, and the trouble is not there but with me, because I am sold into slavery with Sin as my owner.

I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I can't. I do what I don't want to - what I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws I am breaking. But I can't help myself, because I'm no longer doing it. It is sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things.

I know I am rotten through and through as far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. When I want to do good, I don't; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. Now if I'm doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp.

It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love to do God's will so far as my new nature is concerned; but there is something else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. In my mind I want to be God's willing servant but instead I find myself still enslaved to sin.

So you see how it is: my new life tells me to do right, but the old nature that is still inside me loves to sin. Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free." Romans 7:14-23, The Living Bible

By allowing the sinful nature to be inside us, there is some serious impaling going on. It is sort of like spiritual weightlifting. Without resistance you cannot build adequate muscle. God has locked each of us into an inner crucible, where we have to battle this human nature all of our lives. Each of us has to face our own nature and with God's help, battle it. You cannot escape from yourself.

Slowly Rising Conflict

Moving on, I learned another thing you can do, in a good dramatic novel, is to let the conflict rise slowly. The reason for this is because conflict develops character; conflict reveals character; and conflict also proves character. You can think of slowly rising conflict, or conflicts, in terms of attacks and counterattacks. In other words the slowly rising conflicts are a series of obstacles or battles.

As an example of slowing rising conflict, in the movie *Star Wars* there was a lot of drama before the ultimate destruction of the Death Star. Somebody had to steal the plans of the Death Star. Then they had to get the stolen plans hidden inside of a robot. Then they had to get the robot off of an enemy spaceship. Then Obi-Wan Kenobi had to be found. There were a lot of challenges and problems to be solved even before the heroes could get themselves into a position to take a one in a million shot. There were a lot of attacks and counterattacks, with some periods of relative peace in between. God himself warns us it is going to be a battle.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”
Ephesians 6:10-12, KJV

Conflict. The Master Novelists are describing conflict – against a very serious adversary. And the conflicts we face do very much resemble a

steady stream of attacks and counterattacks with relative periods of peace in between.

A Symbol

Moving on, yet again, onto another interesting thing I learned, if you are a really good author, you might want to use a symbol, if possible, to show the character's main goal, or to reveal something important about your character.

For example, in Hemingway's, *Old Man and the Sea* there was a Cuban fisherman who was very old. He wasn't sure if he could catch the big marlin anymore. He lived in a simple house. He doubted himself a little bit. His friends doubted him. The community, his village, doubted him.

He had to land the big fish more to prove to himself and the community that he was still a productive man. He needed this confirmation more than he needed the money, or the food from the big fish. So the fish became a symbol of the old man's masculinity.

But would God use a symbol for our hero? If he were a Master Novelist, he just might. If you turn to Mark 6:3, it says,

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.” Mark 6:3, KJV

I believe “carpenter” could be better translated as “general contractor”, or “builder.” Do you think it was an accidental career choice that Christ, when he was working on this earth, was a builder? I don’t. I believe it was an intentional choice to send a clear message and to provide a symbol for an important part of the work he is doing.

In 1 Peter 2:5 and Hebrews 11:10, it says,

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:5, KJV

“For he [Abraham] looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Hebrews 11:10, KJV

Jesus Christ is still building. So is God the Father. And it is not an accident that Jesus Christ was a builder when he was on the earth.

Core Conflict

Now, in a really good dramatic novel there should always be an easily identifiable core conflict. Below, I am going to recite a number of scriptures to illustrate this. The first occurs in Genesis 1:26-27 which scriptural passage, I believe, is the theme of the Bible.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”
Genesis 1:26-27, KJV

It is a great honor to be made in the image of God. It is a tremendous honor to be made in God’s likeness. It shows intent on the part of God, the ultimate protagonist, aka the good guy.

In Ezekiel 28:14-15, we have a description of the ultimate antagonist, aka the bad guy.

“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”
Ezekiel 28:14-15, KJV

Satan’s rebellion began THE good versus evil core conflict of the ages. Was it over God’s plan to create human beings in God’s image and likeness? I don’t know for sure. It might have been. It is also possible that Satan rebelled long before human beings were even contemplated. One thing is for sure. It started an epic struggle, throughout the ages, involving many different battles and Bible heroes. We ourselves have also been drawn into this epic struggle. Satan, of course, is not a trivial adversary, at least to humans. God so warns us in 1 Peter 5:8:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”
1 Peter 5:8, KJV

So now we have this good versus evil; builder versus destroyer; truth teller versus liar; life-giver versus murderer core conflict scenario that we all have a role in.

The Story Shows Character Growth

There are many different definitions of a story, but here is the one I like the best:

A story is a series of consequential events involving characters that change as a result of those events.

In other words, a great story is all about characters that change as a result of the conflicts they endure.

The characters in the story are goal-oriented. If you think about it, your favorite characters in stories (the great ones) are the ones who grow through the trials and tests they endure. You want to be the character that grows. So do I.

Fortunately, God made it possible for us to grow. In Genesis 2:7 it says:

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”
Genesis 2:7, KJV

So we started out as dirt. That’s how it is. That’s the bad news. The good news is that we can grow and change. See below.

“But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.” Isaiah 64:8, KJV

God, our Father, is not going to leave us as dirt. He is working on us. I am reminded of a story where, maybe a 150 years ago, a hellfire and damnation preacher, catches a little boy in some old farming town doing something wrong. The preacher confronts the young boy and scolds him, “Is God pleased with you young man? Do you think what you did was pleasing to your Creator?” Fortunately for the little boy he makes a quick recovery by thinking before he answers. And then answering, “God’s not done with me yet!”

The little boy in the story saved himself with a good answer and a correct one, for at that

moment in time, God was not done with the little boy yet. Nor is he done with you, or me. It's true for all of us. God is helping us to grow. He is building us up. He is fusing character into his characters.

In Acts 20:32 it says:

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”
Acts 20:32, KJV

God's motive as the Master Novelist is to help us grow, to build us up. It's very important to remember that. If he breaks us down, it is to build us up. If Satan breaks us down, he is trying to kill us. Fortunately, God controls the process.

There is a scripture that further elaborates on God's intent. It is found in Deuteronomy 8:15-16. God is speaking the ancient Israelites, but it applies to all of us.

“Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no

water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;"
Deuteronomy 8:15, 16, KJV

God is going to do us good at the latter end, and it's important to remember that.

Moving Forward Past Failure

So what happens if you failed some test and you are feeling like a loser, or a failure? Because we all sometimes feel like we failed God, or we failed ourselves, or we failed others. What can we do? Does the Bible say anything about that? Actually it does and it is good advice. In Philippians 3:13-14, it says:

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14, KJV

We just have to accept the fact that we have made mistakes and move on. It helps to

remember that no human gets through the minefield of life unscathed. No one. We can learn and grow from both our victories and our defeats. In 2 Peter 1:3-8, it says:

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:3-8, KJV

In verse 5 when it says, “giving all diligence,” I think it means working with God and his program. It means deciding to be one of the characters that grows (see the being fruitful reference in verse 8) and cooperating

with the Master Novelist as he works to build character into us.

Each battle or conflict might put a certain aspect of character into you that was not there before. For example, that trial that you went through seven years ago might have taught you faith. The trial you went through six years ago might have taught you patience. That trial that you are currently undergoing might teach you endurance, etc. God and Christ are rooting for both you and me and want to do us good in the end.

The Climax

Now, what makes for a great climax? One famous climax at the end of a story is when Luke Skywalker blows up the Death Star at the end of *Star Wars*. Everybody cheers at that one, right?

There are actually a lot of different ways a novelist can end their story. Surprise can be a fun way to end a story. In Mark 16:5-6, it says:

“And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him." Mark 16:5-6, KJV

Satan thought he had killed off his adversary, Christ, but Satan was wrong. "He is risen" are three of the most important words in the Bible. God the Father used the element of surprise and turned things around on Satan by using Christ's death and resurrection to create a bridge from death to life for us, his characters. God's characters were trapped. We were all trapped. But God turned the tables on Satan in a very big surprise.

You can also end your story by exploiting powerful emotions. If you think back to the first *Rocky* movie you will know what I mean. Rocky's main goal was to just be standing at the end of the fight.

At the end of the fight Rocky is beaten to a bloody pulp, but he also gave pretty much as good as he got. And, at the end, he was still standing. He had won the inner conflict within himself and now he knew what he needed to know. He was a good fighter, with tremendous courage, and he was a man. And now he was

calling out to Adrian, the woman he loved. For Rocky, it was enough.

The writer exploited powerful emotions to end the story. It did not even matter that Rocky lost the external conflict. He did not win the fight. But he defeated his inner conflict. He got the woman he loved. And he won our hearts with his heart and with his courage and determination.

Another way to end a story is to issue a verdict in the court of poetic justice - one of my personal favorites. If you would like to read a great story that ends with a verdict being issued in the court of poetic justice then read the Bible book of Esther. The entire book covers a story where the bad guy gets what he deserved in the end and in a most unexpected way. Haman, the antagonist, ends up being hung on the gallows that he has built for Mordecai, one of the good guys. If you read the entire story I believe you will agree that it just doesn't get any better than that, right? It just doesn't. Now, who do you think wrote the story of Esther and Mordecai and Haman? It was and is the Master Novelist.

Whichever way the author decides to end their story, the resolution should make the novel

whole. The character should have grown, or not, and the goal should have been achieved, or not.

The Master Novelists foreshadow their ultimate ending by telling us they are in the process of creating an environment where you will want to live. And they are creating character in their characters, so we can grow to the point where we fit in once there.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, **Behold, I make all things new.** And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am

Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 21:1-7, KJV

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the

healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”
Revelation 21:22 to 22:5, KJV

Since Revelation 21 and 22 give an overview of the environment, what about the people? What happens to God’s characters in the end?

1 Corinthians 15, verses 20-26, 49-50, and 51-54 explain:

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last

enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”
1 Corinthians 15:20-26, KJV

“And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”
1 Corinthians 15:49-50, KJV

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”
1 Corinthians 15:51-54, KJV

God’s characters are going to be changed in a marvelous manner. And God is working toward that realization constantly.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."
Ephesians 2:10, KJV

God, the Master Novelist, is working on us! Why? Because we are his characters. And to give us victory through Jesus Christ and that victory is eternal life with other righteous spirit beings, in a great new heaven and new earth. This is what makes God's novel whole.

God isn't writing a 30-page biography on each one of us. For God, that would be mailing it in. Instead, he is investing decades of time and effort and care and thoughtfulness in each of us. He cares about each and every one of us.

God Using Evil In An Amazing Way

We will come back to the novel analogy in a moment. But first, I am going to segway into a concept needing some explanation - which is that God can do things we cannot. Sometimes it helps to state the obvious. More specifically, one of the things God can do, that we cannot, is to use evil for a good purpose.

There is this saying that, "The end justifies the means." Now, whenever somebody says this, you pretty much know they are not a good person and they are about to do something terrible. Human beings cannot use evil in order to do good. It is beyond us.

And Ralph Waldo Emerson actually came up with a saying to counter this foolishness, which is "Cause and effect cannot be severed; for the end preexists in the means."

I have lived most of my adult life believing Emerson's saying to be true, and I think it is the rule at the human level, but God is better than humans and he can do some things, many things, which we cannot. For example, in Isaiah 45:7 it says:

"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." Isaiah 45:7, KJV

Evil does not exist because God was not smart enough to see it coming. And evil does not exist because God is not strong enough to stop it. Evil exists because God allows it to exist, for a time, for its purpose.

Evil exists because God is using it to provide both internal and external conflicts for human beings, so we can grow to become great characters with character in the real world, not a novel. God, as the Master Novelist, is not thinking at the same level as his characters. In Isaiah 55:8-9 it says:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:8, 9, KJV

Evil causes great suffering, but evidently it is necessary. After all, God is attempting to turn dirt into righteous spirit beings with eternal life. This is no small creative process and it requires extraordinary measures. Evil must be one of those extraordinary measures. And the conflict that evil engenders must be another.

Jesus Christ himself was not immune from it. When he came, with great courage and vision, to this earth, as a man, he had to go through it, too. In Luke 22:42-44, it says:

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”
Luke 22:42-44, KJV

Christ asked for another way but evidently there was not another way and so Christ had to submit to what God, the Father, the Master Novelist had for him. Christ experienced both the internal and the external conflicts that we do. In Hebrews 5:8-9, it says:

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;”
Hebrews 5:8-9, KJV

Notice he became the author of eternal salvation, which is interesting phraseology from my point of view. See also, Hebrews 12:1-2, where it says:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us

lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:1-2, KJV

God can create another universe if he wants to. What he cannot do is to create another you. You are unique and you are special to God. He has a lot invested in you. He cares about you. God can just manipulate matter. But for human beings, with free moral agency, it's tougher – even for God. It's a very complicated interactive creative process.

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

James 1:2-4, KJV

The conflict and the suffering produce patience, wisdom, empathy, courage, and a lot of other fruits. The process is not in vain. It is experienced for a reason.

1 Corinthians 15 shows us that God can give us an eternal spiritual body, but evidently he cannot just will righteous character into us.

I know that for some of you this is a really painful message to read. And I have to be the first one to confess: I really dislike the process. In point of fact, I intensely dislike the process. It wasn't just me studying on how to become a novelist, where I learned about the process. I also spent hundreds of hours thinking about this topic. And maybe more than that, just trying to understand, "What is happening?" and "Why is this happening?" and "What good can come of it?" I have tried to really look at the process from a lot of different camera angles, as well as to look throughout the Bible to get a grip as to what is really happening.

If you are having a difficult time accepting the process, all I can tell you, from someone who has had to do this, is to trust the character of the one behind the process. Remember that in 1 John 4:8 it says that, "God is love." So if you don't like the process, at least trust the character of the one behind the process, because God's character is trustworthy and he is faithful. The conflict, the drama, and the

suffering are NOT for no reason. They are to build us up. Please remember, he wants to do each of us good at the latter end (see Deuteronomy 8:15-16 referenced earlier). God is perfect and he is love. Trust the character of the Master Novelist.

Grace

Next I want to segway into an additional subtopic, which is grace, and the role it plays. As Christians each of us has asked God to remove a temptation from us. And sometimes, or even many times, he does not, so we are stuck with our base desire.

In any case, let's say the base desire is not completely taken away. Especially when you are a new Christian, your "Plan A" is something like, "OK God, take away my temptation, or take away all my human nature and then I will obey you perfectly." That's the "Plan A" for some Christians.

Well, "Plan A" doesn't work – at least not, completely, right? God does not remove every temptation or test from before us. After all, the inner conflict that the apostle Paul wrote about in Romans 7 was written after he has been an

apostle for probably 20 years; after he has met with Christ face-to-face; after he had been taken up into the heaven and seen things he wasn't even allowed to write about (see 2 Corinthians 12). So "Plan A" doesn't perfectly work.

The next step in the caring Christian's thought process is to form "Plan B," which goes something like this: "OK. I am in a battle to resist my base desires and to obey God, which is kind of like a spiritual arm wrestling contest. And since my temptations have not been taken away I need to utilize superior force to win the battle. All right, God, just give me more of your Holy Spirit and I will overwhelm and overcome my human nature." That's "Plan B." "God, if you are not going to take away my base human nature and you are not going to take away specific temptations ("Plan A"), then just give me more of your Holy Spirit so I can win the spiritual arm wrestling contest."

Both "Plan A" and "Plan B" are good things to pray about, and I believe God answers those prayers, though not completely. Not yet anyway. At any rate, he does not evidently give us enough of his Holy Spirit to where we win the arm wrestling contest every time, does he?

So let's think about this honestly for a moment. If God does not completely remove our base desires and he also does not give us enough superior spiritual force to perfectly overcome the base desires, who is responsible for us in this tough creative interactive process of character creation in characters? God is.

Now, I am not condoning sin and I am not condoning a lack of effort on our part. So if you read or thought that, you thought the wrong thing. We definitely have an obligation to resist sin and to submit to God no matter how much of the Holy Spirit we currently have. I am just being honest with you about some of the things we think as Christians, i.e., either "take away the base desire, or give me more of your Holy Spirit." In our limited, but potentially exceptional minds, we tend to gravitate to either "Plan A" or "Plan B."

So if God is responsible for us, what is really happening and why is it happening? In my opinion, he has locked us into a crucible where we have ongoing inner conflict and that crucible is our own body. That's my opinion. You can take it or leave it. I believe God is responsible for us and we are his workmanship.

So what is the solution? Is there a solution? Yes there is. Right after the apostle Paul was taken up into heaven, either in a vision or directly into heaven, he was given some difficulties he had to deal with in order to keep him humble. That passage of scripture is found in 2 Corinthians 12, verses 7-10:

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.** Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, KJV

The solution is that God gives more grace! He does this because no human being (excepting Jesus Christ) is perfect. To use a baseball comparison, no human being bats a thousand, i.e., gets a hit every time up at bat.

No human being scores 100% on every single test. At some point we fall short and we need grace. Thankfully God gives it to us.

In 1 Peter 1:3-11, God makes it even more plain:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 1 Peter 1:3-11, KJV

"My grace is sufficient for thee" and "who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" are powerful portions of scripture. God's grace is the answer to the spiritual arm wrestling dilemma we find ourselves in. God is responsible for us and he provides what is needed. And ultimately what is needed is grace.

God's Characters Ultimately Justified

Satan, of course, would have us think that God will not extend the grace and also that God's process is cruel, harsh, unloving, and unmerciful. And sometimes we listen to him, instead of listening to God. As human beings we struggle with sin over and over again and we also struggle with various internal and external conflicts. We struggle with other irresponsible human beings who are not yet mature and good people. Life can wear us out and sometimes we

feel like a failure on so many levels. So it is important to remember the powerful statement contained in Romans 8:1, where it says:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”
Romans 8:1, KJV

There is no condemnation, but there are lots of crucibles, conflicts, and tests. But keep walking “after the Spirit” and know that you are justified through God’s final answer, his grace provided via the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

In Philippians 1:6, scripture further encourages us as follows:

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:”
Philippians 1:6, KJV

The Book of Life

Am I taking this novel analogy too far? Let’s turn to some book of life scriptures. In Philippians 4:3 it says,

“And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.” Philippians 4:3, KJV

Isn't it interesting to see how the Bible denotes ultimate success ... “whose names are in the book of life.”

As an admonishment about where you do not want your name to be written, please consider Jeremiah 17:13, which you might not have been aware of:

“O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth [be put to death], because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.”
Jeremiah 17:13, KJV

So failure, a forsaking of God, is denoted by a warning that those so doing shall have their names written in the earth, i.e., from dust they were formed and unto dust they shall return, thus making true the old saying “... from dust to dust.” We don't want our names written in the earth, but rather in the book of life.

Turning back to the positive, Revelation 3:5 says,

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” Revelation 3:5, KJV

In other words, Jesus Christ is going to say, **“He is one of my characters.”** Insert your name into the previous sentence. Wouldn't you like to hear Jesus Christ, speaking of you, say the words, “He is one of my characters. I have a lot invested in him and I have got big plans for him. He is one my characters.”

Further, in Revelation 21:27, it says,

“And there shall in no wise enter into it [New Jerusalem] any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.” Revelation 21:27, KJV

The master novelist will not write us out of his amazing Torah Story. He will not leave us without resources. He will, through a wondrous

process, succeed in creating eternal characters, with righteous character, and unique personalities. You are important to God, or he would not have made you in the first place.

But God is just like any other author on this point: without characters you don't have a story. You can read Hebrews 11 to see where God references just some of his characters, characters who believed God and did not quit.

God has invested a lot more in each one of us than some 30-page biography before he starts to write his Torah Story. So, when you find yourself locked into a crucible, battling either external or internal conflict, I do not want you to be confused, discouraged, angry, afraid, or to quit. Press on. You are not alone.

I do want you to understand the process so that you can accept the process and submit to it, believing in God the Father and Jesus Christ as the authors and finishers of our faith. I do want you to work with God the Father and Jesus Christ and their process as best you can.

Sometimes we complain against God for indignities suffered, and I am personally very guilty of so doing. It is hard not to take

indignities suffered personally and many times I have complained to God about the process. But I think God's basic logic, in answering, is at least somewhat as follows: "Look, you are not changing me. I am perfect. I am changing you." I really think it's about as simple as that. "You can complain all you want, but you are not changing me. I am changing you." That's what's happening.

As an encouragement, there are two powerful scriptures to keep in mind relative to God being in control of the process and promising to work things for our good. The two scriptures are found in 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Romans 8:28:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13, KJV

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28, KJV

Be glad that it was not George Lucas writing you in, as one of the characters in *Star Wars*, because *Star Wars* is not real. It is fiction. Here's an important newsflash. Luke Skywalker does not really exist. But you do. You exist. You are a very special character, in a very real and important Torah Story. And in the very real and epic battle of good versus evil, please note that, in the end: light will banish darkness; truth will expose falsehood and error; God will defeat Satan - after he is done using him; justice will prevail; and there will be the great new environment of a new heaven and a new earth to live in. And there will be righteous characters with unique personalities to share and enjoy an eternity together with.

Will your name be written in the Lamb's Book of Life? It will be if you work with the Master Novelists, God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, to become the great character you were created to be.

The End ... but only of the process.