

# THE ULTIMATE

# Love Story

By Joseph Tkach

**If the word 'princess' appears in a book title, I know my wife and daughter are going to buy it. They love princess stories. My son claims he is burnt out on princess stories, but he still enjoyed the movie, *Princess Bride*. It had everything; pirates, monsters, sword fights, as well as a love story.**

We all love stories. It's an easy way to learn and a very effective way to teach. Princeton University researchers have discovered that storytellers cause the brains of their listeners to operate in sync with their own. Groups of specialised neurons called 'mirror neurons' exist opposite each other in the left and right hemispheres of the brain. This makes it possible for us to participate vicariously in what someone else is experiencing. These neurons also enable human empathy, allowing us to tune into each other's feelings. In effect, mirror neurons allow us to live 'inside' the minds of others. A good story provides a point of entry—a portal—that allows the listener to join in the adventure. This is why hearing a story of adventure can be almost as exciting as having the adventure for yourself.

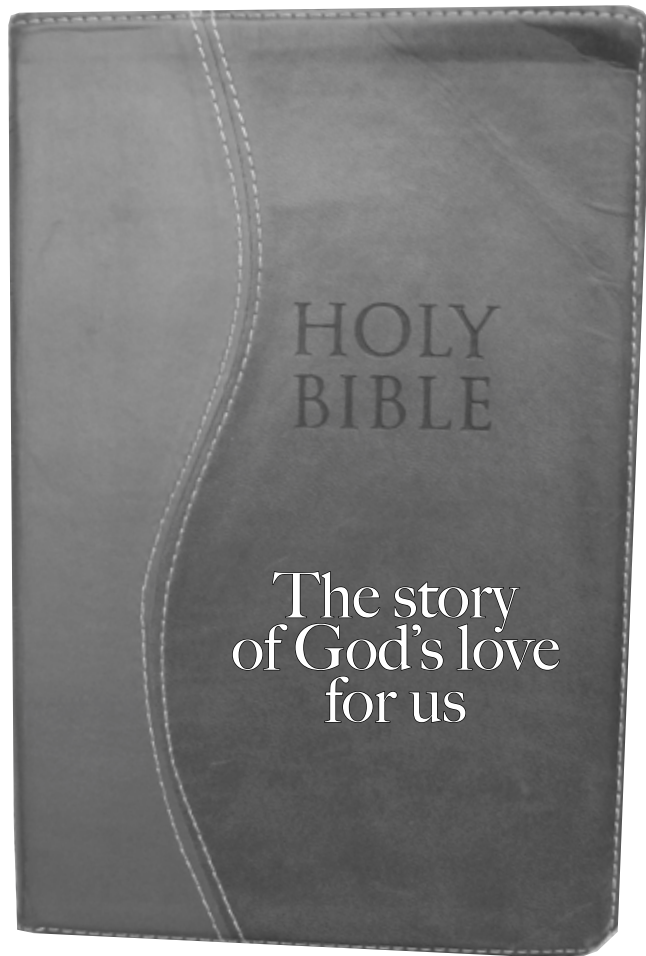
Every human being's life is a unique story. Just think of it: over seven billion different stories going on all at once, intertwining, and overlapping, as we love each other, hate each other, struggle, and laugh together. Every minute, new human stories are beginning in birth, and old ones are winding down in death.

Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message* says, 'We live in a narrative, we live in a story. We have a beginning and an end, we have a plot, we have character'.

It would seem that story is the language of the heart. Our lives are not just a series of impersonal calculations. Rather, we experience the images and emotions of a dramatic narrative.

And each of our stories has its own context, culture, and time in history. No matter when we live, or where we live, we are all part of a bigger story. The Bible introduces us to that story. God is the ultimate author and the ultimate storyteller. In the books of the Bible, he tells us, in many different ways, of the relationship he has had with us, a relationship that actually began before the creation and was consummated in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

It is sad that so many use the Bible as a rulebook, or even as a weapon, to instil fear and lay guilt on themselves and others. The Bible is a love story. God gives us the plot and shows us how we all have a part in it. It is the story of God's love for us individually and collectively. A love that has to deal with rebellious and distrustful people who can be full of pride and evil desires—all too often even carrying out those sinful desires. We are given an overview of the entire plot in



John 3:16-17. These verses have been called the story of the Bible in a nutshell:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (TNIV)

The God of the universe has made our story his story, by entering into it himself, reconciling us to himself that we might receive from him life eternal. Truly, no greater love story has ever been told.

This is a transcript of a weekly 'Speaking of Life' radio programme by Joseph Tkach, president of Grace Communion International. For more information visit [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org).