

# Storytelling Our Lives

Books by

MARY SHARON MOORE

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# Storytelling Our Lives

How to turn your life experience  
into compelling narratives of  
engagement, meaning, and insight

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## Storytelling Our Lives

How to turn your life experience into compelling narratives of engagement, meaning, and insight

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## INTRODUCTION

Our times seem unique.

Our forebears, in their times, thought the same.

In fact, our times *are* unique, as were the times of our forebears.

Which means that our times, like times before us, urgently call for the wisdom, compassion, insight, and encouragement of Storytellers.

You and I are the Storytellers for today. We are the keepers of the memory, tenders of the flame of all that is tested, courageous, generous, noble, and worthy within the human spirit.

Our times *need* us. You might say that *we*—not our forebears, not generations to come—*we* are the ones sent to meet the moment we are in.

Our times need our memory, our ways of finding meaning, and the fire at our core.

Why? Because our stories do not end with us. They point to the larger Story that unites humankind.

In *Storytelling Our Lives* I will help you to wordcraft the memories of the flame that has guided you and shaped the experiences unique to your life.

First, we will explore what's in your Storytelling Toolkit—tools that you can unwrap and use to call forth and polish the Storyteller in you.

Then we'll look at your unique life experiences through five helpful storytelling lenses, starting close in:

- 1. Stories of Life in COVID County**—vignettes of struggle, loss, isolation, grieving, courage, loneliness, unexpected closeness, surprising discoveries, and more, in a season of pandemic
- 2. Stories of Trial by Fire**—stories of times of testing, stories of raw courage, of fear and survival, of brave passage through life's many forms of fire—from raging wildfires to the fires of kinship and costly love

3. **Stories From the Vault**—treasured stories of loved ones or strangers, circumstances and events, that shaped you and opened up your innate reserves of life, talent, and generosity that have blessed or even saved others in some particular way
  
4. **Stories From the Lost and Found**—stories that call forth what your heart has treasured, what you've had to lose, grieve, and receive in a new way; stories of being purified, perhaps, in life's crucible, to bring forth a deeper beauty, resilience, and vitality
  
5. **Stories of Pure Human Kindness**—tender accounts of the unexpected compassionate goodness of others when you were alone, lost, vulnerable, caught short, or feeling excluded from the circle of life

In other words, you will be crafting real stories that carry your audience from a beginning, to a complex middle, clear through to the end.

Reminiscing and sharing memories or anecdotes from your past is good. But actual storytelling reveals how you “show up” in *your* world, what matters to *you*, and how *your* heart, attitude, and spirit have been changed in the process.

**A note about this workbook**

This workbook is *yours!* It's meant to be written in, underlined, highlighted, dog-eared, maybe even smudged with the runaway splash of coffee.

I have provided wide outer margins so that you can expand thoughts, jot down ideas, and capture creative sparks as they arrive.

My own inner Storyteller draws on experiences of times when I have been challenged, or gently invited, to live more intently from my deeper roots. So I will illustrate some definitions in our workbook with examples from my spoken-word albums *Free to Be Free* and *Living as Jesus Taught* (on my artist page at [spotify.com](https://open.spotify.com/artist/spotify)).

I encourage you to tap your own deep roots—perhaps religious or spiritual—that nourish your ways of finding or creating meaning in your life and in this world.

We will journey, you and I, into the unique treasure trove within *you*, to call forth and craft the stories that are waiting to be shared.

Shall we begin this grand adventure?

## PART 1

### YOUR STORYTELLING TOOLKIT

What is storytelling? Well, it's *not* reminiscing.

But it *can* be a form of memoir, packaged in condensed and tightly focused vignettes.

Storytelling, as we use the term here, also is not fact laced with fiction.

Storytelling is the art form of wordcrafting the amazing discoveries and truth unique to your life, richly embedded within your experience. It takes your audience on a journey from an engaging start to a complex middle to a safe-landing end.

So consider our time together here as a form of apprenticeship. We are entering the workshop. This Storytelling Toolkit gives you a way to hone your craft.

Good storytelling tools used well enable you to shape and deliver memorable stories that carry *your* voice—whether spoken or laid out on the page. And good tools used well deliver your personal and unique expressions of engagement, meaning, and insight to your audience.

This might sound like a tall order. But chances are good that you already recognize good storytelling when you hear it or read it.

**Your Storytelling Toolkit includes:**

- Disciplines of Compelling Narratives (page 7)
- Defining Our Terms (page 23)
- Focusing the Lens (page 56)
- Skills for Strong Delivery (page 64)
- Growing in Confidence (page 76)