**Acts 5:27-32**

When the temple police had brought the apostles, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

**Psalm 150**

1 Hallelujah!
Praise God in his holy temple;
praise him in the firmament of his power.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts;
praise him for his excellent greatness.

3 Praise him with the blast of the ram's-horn;
praise him with lyre and harp.

4 Praise him with timbrel and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe.

5 Praise him with resounding cymbals;
praise him with loud-clanging cymbals.

6 Let everything that has breath
praise the LORD.
Hallelujah!

**Revelation 1:4-8**

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

**John 20:19-31**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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In his book, *Exodus to the Virtual World,* economist Edward Castronova argues that we have begun the greatest mass migration in the history of humanity. People are moving en masse from the real to the virtual world. Bodies will always be marooned here on earth, but human attention is gradually "draining" into the virtual world. Tens of millions of MMORPG (online role playing games like World of Warcraft) devotees already spend an average of twenty to thirty hours per week absorbed in online adventures. According to a survey of thirty thousand MMORPG players, about half of all serious players form their most satisfying friendships in-game, and 20% consider MMORPG land to be their "true home," while Earth is "merely a place they visit from time to time." The pace of the exodus will increase as technological advances make virtual worlds more and more appealing.

According to Castronova, the exodus will be fueled not only by the attractive force of new virtual worlds - by the strong suction of interactive story - but by the repellent force of real life. Castronova asks us to imagine an average guy named Bob. Bob works in retail - shelving product, sweeping floors, manning the register. He drives through a bleak landscape of big box stores and fast-food joints. When he bowls, he bowls alone. He is not involved in civic life. He is no real sense a member of a community, and his life is meaningless. His job asks so little of him, and he produces nothing of lasting value.

But after work, Bob goes online and finds everything that is missing from his life. In MMORPG land, Bob has friends; he may even have a wife. He doesn't live to sell and consume trash; he lives to crusade against evil. In MMORPG land, Bob has big muscles, big weapons, and dangerous magic. He is an essential and respected member of a tight-knit community….

[He then goes on to suggest that we are becoming 'junk story' consumers just as we are preferring junk food to nutritious food.]

Maybe we can avoid this fate. Maybe like disciplined dieters we can make nutritious choices and avoid gorging on story. In that spirit, here are some modest suggestions based on the research in this book.

Read fiction and watch it. It will make you more empathic and better able to navigate life's dilemmas….

If you are a doubter, try to be more tolerant of the myths - national and religious - that help tie culture together.

- Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal* (2012)