**Once Upon a Time ... |** Liz Curtis Higgs

The power of story and the gift from the ultimate Storyteller

**W**hen we're small, we see the world through story.

Story fuels our childhood games of make-believe and let's pretend. Story fills our head and heart whenever clever adults spin imaginary tales at bedtime. After all, little ones don't say, "Tell me a fact." They say, "Tell me a story."

**When I was eight,** I discovered a story that shaped my young life—and has continued to do so for decades. The opening line still makes me smile: "It was a dark and stormy night." Only a writer as accomplished as Madeleine L'Engle could begin the book A Wrinkle in Time with a literary cliché and win readers' hearts—and a Newbery Award—in the process.

After a vivid description of that tempestuous weather come two simple lines: "The house shook. Wrapped in her quilt, Meg shook."

With those few words, I found myself transported to Meg Murry's bedroom, shaking right along with her. A few more paragraphs, and I sympathized with her struggles at school. By the third page, I longed to know more about Charles Wallace and their missing father. And what sort of chapter title is "Mrs. Whatsit"?

That's story at work, quietly drawing you into its embrace. You can resist rhetoric, but it's hard to fight narrative. Without realizing it, you're turning pages—no longer aware of the chair you're sitting in or the clock ticking beside you or the birds singing outside your window.

What makes L'Engle's A Wrinkle in Time truly powerful is its timeless theme: the struggle between good and evil and the ultimate triumph of love. Not only Meg's love for her brother, Charles, but also God's love for his people.

In the closing chapter, "The Foolish and the Weak," God's Word makes a timely appearance: "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25, KJV). Three more verses follow, taken verbatim from the King James Version—not in a "Christian" novel per se, but in a young-adult novel published by Dell and applauded worldwide.

As a third-grader I knew little of the Bible, but I knew truth when I heart it. When Meg's heart began to pound, mine did, too. When her cheeks streamed with tears, mine grew wet as well. Deep inside me, life-changing truth landed like seeds in fertile soil gently broken open by story.

God's Word began to take root.

**Twenty years passed** before I discovered a tiny green shoot poking out of the hard ground of my heart. Once again a writer was at work—C. S. Lewis, through the pages of Mere Christianity—as at last I understood the Story was meant for me, meant for everyone.

Another 20 years passed before I took a great leap of faith and became a storyteller myself. I believe that long process unfolded because two celebrated writers bravely told the only story that truly matters: the Story of God's love for his people, demonstrated in the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Story was born in God's heart. He's the Storyteller, the "author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2) and the "author of life" (Acts 3:15). Over the centuries, his Story has appeared in countless novels and movies and plays. Though the events and setting may change, the Hero doesn't.

Some tales are better left untold, of course. But if the thread of God's Story is clearly woven throughout—if genuine humility and sacrifice and love and transformation are evident—then that's a story worth reading, worth remembering, worth sharing.

Liz Curtis Higgs is the author of numerous books, including [The Girl's Still Got It: Take a Walk with Ruth and the God Who Rocked Her World](http://www.christianbook.com/girls-still-with-ruth-rocked-world/liz-higgs/9781578564484/pd/564484?product_redirect=1&Ntt=564484&item_code=&Ntk=keywords&event=ESRCP&p=1006329) (WaterBrook Press). [www.LizCurtisHiggs.com](http://www.lizcurtishiggs.com/)