

# Editorial: The stories we tell one another

June 6, 2018

As I write, I am a chaperone on a school bus with the Covington Independent School District National Elementary Honor Society, and we are headed to the Johnson Space Center outside Houston. We stopped for lunch at a restaurant in College Station where the ceiling was covered with hundreds of chrome disks.

One of the fifth grade students asked, “Are those speakers?”

“No, those are hubcaps.”

We take for granted what we know. Knowing what we know, we assume everyone else knows it, too. Thinking we have a reservoir of shared knowledge, we roll through life wondering why so many around us look confused. How often do we allow their confusion to call attention to our assumptions?

One of our assumptions is thinking the things we know and the stuff of our experience will always be just as we knew and experienced them.

I remember as a boy watching one of my dad’s hubcaps roll down the road and off into the weeds after it popped off the wheel. I remember my dad stopping the car, running back to retrieve the hubcap, and popping that chrome disk back on the wheel with ease. He was not about to drive around with three hubcaps or be out the money for a new one, especially when it was so easy to retrieve and reinstall the one he had.

While children today still know what hubcaps are, while we still have some shared knowledge, something about those chrome disks covering the

ceiling was unrecognizable to the children today. What I regarded with familiarity and fondness, they encountered as strange. How much else do we experience differently? More than we realize and want to accept.

As I begin the work of executive director and publisher of the *Baptist Standard*, I find myself looking at a box of chrome disks. Some people want to keep them all. Some want all of them displayed with care, even reverence. Some want only the American makes. Others want only the Ford or Chevrolet. While these groups argue (also read 'discuss') the virtues of their choices, another group simply wants someone to tell them what those chrome disks are.

"Are they speakers?"

"No, they're hubcaps."

"Oh. They seem very important to you."

"They are. They remind us of good things."

Is the *Standard* here to name hubcaps? Not any more than that restaurant exists to display them. The restaurant exists to feed people. The hubcaps are simply adjectives in the restaurant's story. The *Standard* exists to feed people, too, using adjectives like 'news,' 'commentary,' and 'opinion' to tell the story of Jesus' redemptive work in the world.

As we join together in telling the grand story of Jesus, you will appreciate some of what you read and will dislike other things you read. The *Standard* may revere some of your chrome disks while seeming to disrespect others, and we will have engaging conversations about which ones to display and how. All of that is fine as long as we keep the conversation in perspective so when we hear, "Are those speakers?" we can say: "Yes, we are, and those are hubcaps, and they remind us of something very good. Would you like to hear about it?"

## **A couple of things to remember:**

1. Communicate as much as possible in your listener's language, which means you will have to slow down and be more deliberate about seeking common understanding.
2. Be open to hearing the stories of others, even if what interests others does not make sense or seems unimportant to you. Listening with your full attention is an act of Christ-like love.