

Max Lucado

Illustrated by

RON DICIANNI

Tell Me
the
Story

A Story for Eternity

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to many for their contributions to this project as well as to my life. To Pastor Maddox for his research and input when it would have been easier to do what I felt like doing. To Lane, Jan, and Mark for believing that a second Renaissance has been mandated in the halls of Heaven, and then acting accordingly. To my wife, Pat, and my sons Grant and Warren, who submitted to the call of God on my life and, like Abraham's family, stayed stride for stride with me even when they didn't know where we were going. Every painting has some of you three in it. To my mom for praying. To Max for listening. Finally to the Lord Jesus, the One and Only, who went by way of Calvary so that we could tell His story to our children.

RON DICIANNI

All credit for this project goes to the Author and Maker of life. I'm grateful to Ron DiCianni for the idea and vision, to the Crossway family for their dedication, and to my administrative assistant Karen Hill for incredible insight and skill.

MAX LUCADO

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Published by Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover Design: Studio Gearbox

First printing 1992
Second edition 2005
Reissue of first edition 2015
Printed in China

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Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4335-4744-7
ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-4747-8
PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-4745-4
Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-4746-1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lucado, Max.

Tell me the story / written by Max Lucado ; illustrations by
Ron DiCianni

p. cm.

1. Christian life—Juvenile fiction. 2. Children's. I. DiCianni, Ron. II. Title.
PZ7.L9684Te 1992 [fic]—dc20 92-26963
ISBN 0-89107-730-8

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

OGP 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15
12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*Dedicated to
our dear friends and coworkers
Bryan and Becky Gibbs and their four sons:
Bryan, Lucas, Benjamin, and Samuel
In gratitude for a decade of
devotion to Brazil.*

MAX LUCADO

*Dedicated to
All Who Know The Story,
and Those Who Need to Hear It.*

RON DICIANNI

INTRODUCTION

When Mice Roar



TWO-YEAR-OLD SARA SITS ON MY LAP. We are watching a comedy on television about a guy who has a mouse in his room. He is asleep. He opens one eye and finds himself peering into the face of the rodent. The camera gets eye-level with the mouse, and suddenly the screen is filled with two eyes, whiskers, and a twitching nose. I laugh, but Sara panics. She turns away from the screen and buries her face in my shoulder. Her arms encircle my neck and clamp like a vise. Her little body grows rigid. She thinks the mouse is going to get her.

“It’s OK, Sara,” I assure her.

She won’t let go. “It’s only a picture.”

She peers up at me with one eye and then burrows her nose back into my shirt.

“Mouse get me,” she whimpers.

“There’s nothing to be afraid of,” I say. “It’s only a pretend mouse.”

I speak with confidence because I am confident. There is really nothing to fear. I know. I’ve seen big mice on picture screens before. I know they go away.

Sara doesn’t. Two-year-olds don’t understand the concept of television. As far as she knows, the rodent on the screen is about to bound out of the box and gobble her up. As far as she knows, the mouse will be there every time she comes into this room. As far as she knows, television sets are nothing more than glass cages that house giant mice. There is reason to be afraid.

So she is afraid.

But with time, I convince her. With time, she believes that the mouse is just a toy and that the tube can be turned off. Soon she relaxes on my lap, and we giggle at the man as his water faucet

breaks and sprays him with water. Sara has gone from white-faced fear to peaceful chuckles in a few moments. Why? Because her father spoke and she believed.

Would that we would do the same. Got any giant mice on your screen? Got any fears that won't go away? Got any whiskered monsters staring at you?

I wish the fears were just television images. They aren't. They lurk in hospital rooms and funeral homes. They stare at us from divorce papers and eviction notices. They glare through the eyes of cruel parents or an abusive mate.

And we, like Sara, get frightened. But we, unlike Sara, don't know where to turn. Why did Sara turn to her dad for comfort? Simple. She knows me. Her world is comprised of a handful of people and I'm one of them. And it just so happens that I'm the biggest person in her world.

She thinks I'm strong. (I can pick her up!)

She thinks I'm smart. (I can drive a car.)

And she thinks I'm wise. (Please don't tell her the truth.)

And because she knows me, she trusts me. Instinctively, she is aware that I know more than she. So when I tell her not to worry, she doesn't worry.

Instinctively, we should know that God knows more than we do. Common sense would tell us that He isn't afraid of the mice that roar in our world.

We squirm at death. (He doesn't.)

We are afraid of tomorrows. (He isn't.)

We grow nervous in changing times. (Not God.)

He's been there before. He knows how these shows end. He knows that the worst fear the foe can throw is only a mirage. And He wants us to listen to His voice and trust Him—as Sara trusted me. To do that, however, we must do what Sara did. We must know our Father. And that is the goal Ron and I have in this book—to help you know your Father—

To help you know the Father who

put the ocean in the palm of His hand,

used His fingers to measure the sky,

used scales to weigh the mountains.

And even more to help you know the Father who “takes care of His people like a shepherd,” and “gathers them like lambs in His arms” (Isa. 40:11). These stories and paintings are for children from six to sixty who desire to see God.

There are times when mice roar. There are times when we need a strong pair of arms. You need to know that the arms of God are there.

It's up to you to turn to Him.

In the Beginning



God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1 NIV

THE FATHER WAS DREAMING. I could see it in His eyes—the sparkle. It was there again.

“What is it You see, my King?”

He didn’t turn, but kept His gaze fixed on the great emptiness—the massive, boundless, unending space. The more He looked, the more His eyes would dance. I knew He saw something.

I looked in the same direction. I leaned forward and stared intently. All I saw was emptiness. All I ever saw was emptiness.

I hadn’t seen the sphere that He had pulled out of the sky. “Where was that?” I asked as He began molding it in His hands.

“It was there,” He replied, looking outward. I looked and saw nothing. When I turned, He was smiling. He knew a seraph’s vision was too limited.

The same thing happened with the water. “Where did this come from?” I asked, touching the strange substance.



“I saw it, Michael.” He chuckled as He filled an ocean from His palm. “And when I saw it, I made it. I saw it near the stars.”

“The what?”

“The stars.” Out into the void He reached. When He pulled back His hand, He kept it closed as if to entice me to lean forward. I did. And just as my face was near, He opened His hand. A burst of light escaped, and I looked up just in time to see it illuminate His face, too. Once again, He was smiling.

“Watch how they sparkle,” He revealed. And with a flip of His wrist, the palmful of diamonds soared into the blackness until they found their destiny, and there they hung.

“Won’t the children love them?” the Maker said as together we watched the twinkling begin.

I still wasn’t sure what or who these “children” were, but I knew they occupied a place in the Dream like nothing else. Ever since the Dream started, the Father spoke often of these children—what they would like, how they would respond.

I remember once, the Father held the sphere in one hand and motioned to me with the other. “Come. See what the children will see.” He then put His fingers to His lips and blew gently. Off His fingertips floated tiny whiffs of white cotton balls of fluff.

“What do they do?” I asked as the train of puffs sailed toward the globe.

“Oh, Michael,” He boomed with excitement, “they do everything. They give shade. They give rain. But most of all, My children can watch them pass and, if they look closely, they will see Me.”

That was the way He thought about everything. All the Dream was for the children. And in all the Dream was the Father. With a waterfall, He said, “I made it small so they could run in and out.” With the dandelion: “This is just the right size for the children to blow,” and the rivers in the canyon: “They can sit right here and watch the water race into the valley.”

“But where are the children?” I once asked, looking into the same space from whence had come the rest of the Dream.

“Oh, not out there,” responded the Artist. There was urgency in His voice as He repeated, “Not out there.”

But that is all the Father said. And that’s all I asked.

With the coming of the creatures, I almost forgot. We laughed so much as He made them.

Each one was special. The tiny wing for the mosquito. The honk so unlike any other sound for the goose. The shell for the turtle. The darting eyes of the owl.

He even let me decorate a few. I put violet in the butterfly wings, and He loved my idea to stretch the elephant's nose.

What fun it was as the heavens gave birth to fowl and fish, reptile and rodent! No more had the little ones scurried off His palm than the giant ones appeared. He grabbed the giraffe and stretched its neck, and He put a hole in the whale's head ("so it will come to the surface to breathe and the children will see it").

"What will we call them all?" I asked.

"I'll leave that up to the children."

The children—I'd almost forgotten. But He hadn't. As the last winged creature left His fingers, He turned and looked at me and I knew.

"It's time?"

"Yes, it's time."

I expected to see His eyes dance again. But they didn't. I anticipated eagerness. But He didn't begin. For a long period, He sat looking out into the void—longer than normal.

"Do You see the children?"

"No. They are not to be found out there."

"Then what do You see?"

"I see their deeds."

He spoke softly. The joy was gone from His voice.

"What? What is it? What is it You see?"

Perhaps it was because He thought I needed to know. Or maybe because He needed someone else to know. I'm not sure why, but He did what He had never done. He let me see. As if the sky were a curtain, He took it and pulled it back.

Before I could see it, I could smell it. The stench stung my eyes. "It's greed you smell," He explained. "A love for foolish, empty things."

I started to turn away. But my King didn't, so I didn't. I looked again.

It was so dark—a darkness unlike the starless sky—a blackness unlike the void. This darkness moved. It crept. It shadowed and swayed. It was a living soot. He knew my thoughts and spoke.

His words were slow and spaced. “They will put it out.”

“What?”

“They will destroy that which makes them Mine.”

It was then I saw it for the first time. He reached into Himself—deep into His own self and pulled it out. A flame. A shining circle.

It glowed brilliantly in His palm. Much brighter than the constellations He had spread about or the sun He’d ignited.

“This is . . .” I began.

“This is a part of Me,” He finished and added what I couldn’t have imagined. “And out of Me, I will make My children.”

For the first time I saw. I saw why the children were so treasured. I saw the uniqueness in them. They bore His light—the universe He created, the children He fathered.

“But the darkness?” I had to ask. “Why?”

“Just as I chose, so must they choose. Else they won’t be Mine.”

Just then His face lifted. His eyes brightened. “But they won’t all forget Me. Look.”

Into tomorrow I gazed. At first I saw nothing. Just swarthy darkness billowing. But then, as I searched, I saw. First, only one, then a cluster, then more—lights they were. Flickers of candles, weakened but not lost in the blackness. Like the stars He had cast against the black heavens, these flames flickered in a sable sea.

“It’s My children.” There was pride in His voice. “My children remember.”

The look on His face, I cannot forget. His eyes had sparkled when He suspended the planets in space; His cheeks had danced as He heard the cat purr. I had seen His face alive before—but not like now. For at this moment—when He saw His children alight in the darkness—when He saw those who were His seeking Him—He celebrated. His countenance exploded with joy. His head flew back, and laughter shook the stars.

“My children, My children, My children,” were His only words. And then, He paused, wiped the tears from His face, and pledged a promise for all of Heaven to hear.

“You haven’t forgotten Me; I won’t forget you.”

Then He turned to me. “To the work, Michael; we’ve much to do. We must make the Dream come true.”

And I thought making the animals was a delight. “No two will be alike,” He vowed as He

began reaching into Himself for balls of light. “Some big, some small. Some timid, some bold. Some with big ears, some with little.” And off His palm they came. Generation chosen. Destination determined. Each with a different thread of character or shape of body.

But each with a bit of Him—a light within.

And He even let me help. “Look what I made, Father,” I told him. “I call them freckles. Let me show You how they work.”

And He smiled.

IT BEGAN WITH A DREAM IN THE HEART OF GOD.

Against the soundless sweep of infinity, the great Creator shaped a world and filled it with children made in his own image. And that world is now the stage where a great human drama is played—the fall of the human race, its redemption, the ongoing battle between good and evil, and the coming again of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Winner of the Gold Medallion Book Award, *Tell Me the Story* from best-selling author Max Lucado and award-winning illustrator Ron DiCianni offers parents a powerful tool for introducing their children to the overarching story of the universe. Combining engaging illustrations with sensitive narrative, this first volume in the “Tell Me” series helps prepare children to understand their place in God’s story and hear the voice of their heavenly Father.

MAX LUCADO is a best-selling inspirational author and speaker, and a minister of preaching at Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas. His award-winning books have been translated into more than 41 languages and have occupied spots on every major national bestseller list.

RON DICIANNI is the founder of MasterPeace Collection as well as owner of Art2See. He has been an illustrator for over twenty-five years and is widely recognized for his artistic talents.

CHILDREN, AGES 6–12

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