

Inner Deeper Hidden Secret Meaning

Good Morning!

How many of you enjoy a good story?

Yes – we all enjoy a good story.

Good stories are everywhere! We read stories. Hollywood brings us stories worthy of Oscar nominations. We watch TV stories. We catch stories in the news.

Stories are entertainment. They're comedies or tragedies. They're thrillers or romances. Good stories may be short or they may unravel to be epic tomes.

Consider what stories give us. They give us literature. They give us history. Stories give us our science and our religion. They give us our art and our news. Stories are the foundation of our culture and who we are.

Stories are shared right here when we converse in the dome room or in one of our classes or when we attend a meeting or when we simply greet and meet each other in the hallways or pews of this church. Look around you – you're sitting in a library of stories!

What is the difference is between a good story and a great story?

Good stories are ones we like – they're entertaining – they provide information – they provide a brief escape.

Great stories, in my opinion, are those that are transformative. They change us. They **change our world perspective and shift our values. Great stories cause us to act differently and to say different things.**

They matter because they change our life's path.

When I was a college student I took English classes. Dr. Prausnitz was the English department head. He told us it wasn't enough to understand a story's plot. He said it's not enough to understand how characters are developed.

He told us to always, always, always – read a story to discover its **Inner Hidden Deeper Secret Meaning**. Dr. Prausnitz taught us to be aware of literary devices such as symbolism or foreshadowing and to consider what the story meant – either from our perspective or from the author’s.

Look in – look deep – look for the hidden – look for the secret. Discover the true meaning of the story! Try to discover the inner truth of the story.

I have a story I want to tell you. Now it’s important for you to pay attention to it because there will be a test question for you when it’s over.

I also want to let you know that the story is true – though you may think it’s not because it sounds a bit unbelievable. It’s as true as it’s a fact that I’m standing here before you.

Once-Upon-A Time...

I grew up on a farm in North Dakota. The story begins when I was a freshman in high school. I was a skinny, runt of a kid. I was the shortest kid in the entire high school. Even all of the girls were taller than me. What made it worse is the fact that my birthday is in December and my mother had held me back because I was so small. That means I was the oldest kid in my class.

Every spring of the year we would take some cattle to a distant pasture. The rest would be taken to market and sold. We shared that pasture with our cousin Irvin.

One of Irvin’s pens wrapped around two sides of the barn. The fence had a huge iron gate that was very heavy. The big, iron gate was half-way open so I went over to try to swing it shut and found I couldn’t even lift it! Dad tried to help but the both of us couldn’t budge it.

My dad told me to stand there and guard the gate so no cows would get out.

He left this short, runty, Norwegian kid standing in the gate opening to keep the cows from getting out.

Oh, yeah, that was a good plan.

How could I stop cows from rushing through the gate? I looked around and picked up a couple of good sized rocks knowing I'd probably have to use them to scare the cows away. I took my place in the mud and told myself I was ready.

It didn't take long before a cow came barreling around the corner. I wasn't really thinking she'd come on a full run like that. I should have known better.

You see – cows are determined creatures. There's really no stopping them if they make up their minds. And they're not stupid animals. They're quick to figure out the shortest distance between them and freedom. That cow figured the shortest distance was straight past – or over that scrawny kid standing in the mud. She lowered her head and charged right at me. Oh – sure – I waved my arms and shouted! But she kept charging!

Imagine a ton of beef charging at you and imagine yourself not flinching or faltering in any way.

OK – I exaggerated there about ton of beef. That's called taking some poetic license. Cows only weigh several hundred pounds. Many times what I weighed! I'm sure you get the picture.

I knew I had one shot so I stood my ground and when the cow got just a few feet away, about the distance to the third pew, I threw a rock and hit that cow right in the forehead!

Whack! She dropped like a ton of bricks! That's a little imagery for ya.

Whump! Right there in the mud. She didn't move.

I killed the cow! I killed Irvin's cow! I looked at the barn and nobody was coming around the corner. Nobody had seen me kill the cow! Oh – My – God!

What am I going to tell Irvin?! What am I going to tell dad?!

I took a couple of steps towards the cow and she raised her head. She was still alive! She rose up out of the mud and shook her head and slowly wondered off to the distant corner.

Whew! That was close! My heart was beating like an Indian war drum! The whole episode probably lasted seconds but it seemed like it had been a half hour!

I looked back at the corner and here comes cow number two! Around the corner came another ton of beef heading for the open gate!

Again I had one shot. I waited and let the second rock fly when she got as close as the third pew. I hit her right in the forehead.

Whack!

Whump!

She dropped like a ton of bricks right in the mud! She didn't move. I took a step closer. She still didn't move.

This time I really did kill the cow! I looked up and nobody else came around the corner. Nobody had witnessed the short Norwegian cow killer!

I took another step and the cow lifted its head. Oh – My – God! I had lucked out again. She got up and staggered over to the other cow that had just been knocked out.

You know what I thought then?

I thought: I need more ammo. I looked around for another rock. This time I got a bigger one. It was like a shot put.

I had just found it and had taken my place when cow number three rounded the corner!

This time I knew what to expect. I took my place and stood my ground. When the ton of beef came charging at me this time I let her get even just a little bit closer. Maybe it was about as close as the first pew this time. Then I really let her have it. I could feel the adrenaline and I was feeling it as I let the rock fly and hollered at her all the same time. Yeaaaaw!

Now there's something you need to understand about the physics of throwing rocks at cows. If the cow is running faster, and the rock is bigger and heavier, and the target is closer, and the rock is thrown harder...The impact is a lot more impressive!

Whack! The rock hit hard!

Whump! She hit the mud just a couple of feet in front of me. I waited. I looked up at the barn and nobody had seen me. I waited. I waited some more.

Time ticked on....uh-oh.

This time it was different. This time she was dead for sure!

I reached down and shook her head and waited.

I killed the cow! Oh! My God! I really did kill Irvin's cow!

She shook her head and stood up and wondered off.

This scrawny kid had had enough! I grabbed that heavy steel gate and lifted it out of the sucking mud and dragged it to the post and threw the big log chain around it. I was done guarding the gate!

I never did tell Dad or Irvin what had happened. In fact, I've never related this story to anyone until this morning.

So, here's the test question.

What was the **Inner Hidden Deeper Secret Meaning** of that story?

Here are some possibilities.

- Is it about animal abuse by a runty Norwegian kid?
- Is it about how fear –adrenaline – can give you super strength?
- Is it about being resourceful?
- Is it about keeping secrets?

Maybe it's about how a runty Norwegian kid did his best to be obedient. I did what I was told and stood in the face of adversity –not just once but for three fear-filled times!

There are many inner-deeper-hidden-secret meanings to that story.

It's a silly story, but, I hope, it was a good one for you. It was entertaining. It had some information. But it's not a great story! By itself it didn't change your life or inspire you behave differently than you did before.

I know for example that my little story didn't inspire you such that you'll go home today and take an inventory the rocks you have in your yard. You know, just in case a cow comes charging at you.

You may not have what you'd call great stories, but if you share your good stories with others, those stories begin to matter – they do great things.

Our stories catch our attention, they entertain – sometimes our stories teach. Our stories have the power to change our lives!

- Our stories transform our values.
- Our stories transform our beliefs and our attitudes.
- Our stories transform what we say and what we do.
- Our stories help us transform our world.

So I'm simply saying that our stories make a difference! Our stories add color to our lives – and texture – and substance. Our stories make life worth living for all of us.

Sharing our stories caused us to gather here. Our stories caused us to have these pews and these windows. Our stories caused us to build a new education wing. Our stories cause us to be hopeful about our future.

To learn about the stories that are around you, you have to open the book. You have to scan the pages. You have to listen when they're told. You have to encourage others so **they will share their stories with you.**

Share our stories of our history – our challenges and failures, our stories of tragedy and humor. Share our stories that transform us so we can transform our community and our world.

Our stories help us connect with each other. We build community. We touch the core of our being. We become better people.

So the message of the day is for you to share your stories – and share their inner deeper hidden secret meanings.

The **Inner Hidden Deeper Secret Meanings** of the stories we share, individually and collectively, is that we matter.

Amen and blessed be.