

## “Cliffhangers” or “To be Continued”

There is something in the human condition that desires “closure” where everything comes together to complete the story. Open ended stories leave a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration. We want to know “the rest of the story. Some books of the Bible don’t end in a neat and tidy way but leave us hanging as to what happened or will happen next. This is done intentionally by the authors to draw us in and create tension and suspense. The term “cliffhanger” actually comes from a Thomas Hardy novel ( A Pair of Blue Eyes) where he left a character hanging off of a cliff, where the audience does not know what his fate is.

Examples of modern day cliffhangers

**TV series** examples : the old Batman program. The “24” series many other examples here.

**Films:** The Lord of the Rings and Two Towers, Italian Job (1969 literally ends with a cliffhanger!)

### Biblical Examples:

1. **Deuteronomy** Will they or won’t they enter into the Promised land? Invites us as readers to contemplate our response- will we or won’t lay hold of the promises of God.
2. **Joshua** Will they or won’t they follow the example of Joshua who “serves the Lord”?
3. **Jonah** Does he respond positively or does he stew in his bitterness? How do we as readers respond to God’s grace towards “others”?
4. **Malachi (and Ezra and Nehemiah)** How will Israel survive exile even though they are still disobedient. Leads into the so-called 400 “silent years” where no revelation from God comes.
5. **Mark** ends with the empty tomb and the women running off, afraid to say anything to anyone. Why? Mark closes the Gospel in this unfinished manner precisely because the Gospel is unfinished. Mark was not telling a story that ended. Mark was telling a story that began with Jesus but continues with you and me.
6. **Acts** What happens to Paul? Enquiring minds want to know! It ends focused on the gospel going forth “unhindered” rather than on the death of one key person.
7. **Revelation** Will he or won’t He return? We are still waiting for resolution to this cliffhanger!

Other individual stories:

- Jesus about to be thrown off a cliff (Luke 4:14-21) a literal cliffhanger!
- Death of Jesus on the cross

### So what’s:

- Cliffhangers conclude without a true resolution but with the promise (actual or implied) of more to come. That draws us in as readers and to “stay-tuned” for more!
- Some cliffhangers invite us to place ourselves in that situation and contemplate our response (Deuteronomy and Jonah).