

## AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STORYING

**Bible Storying, What is it?**—Bible storying is the intentional use of Bible stories for the purposes of evangelism, church planting, discipleship, leadership training, and ministry. Bible storying is distinguished from other forms of Bible teaching by its reliance upon the preserved biblical narrative or story. Bible storying is often used with various forms of instructional teaching including exposition, inductive sessions and simple application to today's life.

The Bible is 60-70% narrative format in content. It contains *explicit stories* which are those that are well defined and located in one or more references as a story. Examples of this are the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Flood, Abraham's offering of Isaac and many others. In fact there are several hundred stories of which some are very long covering several chapters of the Bible and others are very short complete in only a few verses.

There are *implied stories* in which all the details are included in the Bible but not in one place or not written as a story. The creation of the Spirit World is one such story if you accept the accounts in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 are referring to Satan's first estate and subsequent fall. In Psalm 148:2, 5 plus a number of other references there begins to emerge a story of the creation of the spirits which we know as angels and those which became demons. There are other stories related to Paul's letters in the Epistles as Paul addressed the issues such as the young man's sin in the Corinthian church, improper observance of the Lord's Supper and the straying of the Galatians due to false teachers.

Many of the stories were told as stories by Jesus or are the stories of what Jesus did as he taught, healed, forgave sin, brought peace, and fed hungry people. Jesus began to teach in parables because of the opposition of the religious leaders (see Matthew 13:10-13; Mark 4:1-2, 33-34). Later Jesus did explain to his disciples the meaning of the stories he told the public.

**Why use stories?**—There are several reasons why Bible stories should be used even though other forms of witness and discipling presentations could be used. The first reason is simply that many of the unreached peoples of the world live in *oral cultures* where people share news *orally*, learn new things *orally*, and teach others *orally*. In these cultures stories are utilized as a form in which the important things may be easily remembered in the stories. Oral culture people prefer stories as their medium of instruction even if they could learn by other means. They often describe people by telling stories about them. One way to teach about God is to tell stories about God and His work. The stories may be told and retold by those who hear them.

Another reason that many prefer oral culture is that they cannot read and write. While some in the culture may read and write, others, typically older adults, cannot read or write at all. Even the readers may be handicapped in what they can read and understand. Overcoming the literacy barrier then is one powerful reason to use stories to inform and instruct a people.

In some instances the Bible may be available in the regional market language that is used for trade and travel but not in the spoken heart language of the people. This means that many religious vocabulary words are not known or not commonly used by the people.

Another important reason that stories are used in a Bible storying strategy for evangelism particularly is that either of resistance to traditional evangelistic presentations or outright hostility to the Gospel. There is no intent to trick the listeners into hearing what they do not want to hear. But if the Bible stories are entertaining to them and they are attentive to hearing them, the Holy Spirit can use what the people are hearing to convict them of sin and need for a Savior.

Another reason for using Bible storying is that of giving the people an *Oral Bible*. What is an oral Bible? It is a Bible in stories, proverbs and memory verses that the people can remember

and retell to others. It becomes a living Bible in their hearts. Incidentally, we all have an oral Bible of sorts in our hearts as we can recall a significant amount of the Bible orally from the stories we have heard as children, sermons we have heard and our own Bible reading and study.

**What forms of Bible storying are used?**—The most common form we are all familiar with is the *topical story* which is usually related to a Bible lesson topic. Topical stories are often used to instruct and disciple and are a good way to give corrective teaching as several story lessons are brought to bear upon an issue. Topical stories work best with people who already are familiar with the stories and where there is general acceptance of the Bible and its teaching as being relevant to their lives. One of the disadvantages of topical teaching is that, unless several stories and lessons are used, the stories may be reinterpreted or restructured negatively to support an erroneous view. In stories that dealt exclusively with God's judgment upon a sinful people it could give the impression that God is an angry God that looks for opportunity to destroy people. These stories would need to be balanced with stories that explored the grace of God in providing an escape from the punishment of sin if the sinner would believe him and do what God told them to do. Topical stories are best used for discipling and training leadership.

*Chronologically arranged stories* are those which are used in a timeline chronology so that each story leads into the following story or in some way prepares for the following stories. When chronological teaching was being popularized by the New Tribes missionaries it was basically a chronological teaching by exposition. That is, they taught through the Bible *story* following a chronological timeline and used the method that most Western trained missionaries would use—exposition verse by verse giving interpretation of what the Bible taught, but making no effort to preserve the Bible stories as *narratives*. This doesn't mean what they did was wrong, it just has certain limits and may not be as field reproducible as oral culture methods involving storying the Bible.

**Why follow a chronological timeline?**—The main reason is that it follows the pattern or order in which the stories happened, it is therefore a natural organization of the stories. Oral culture people like to begin at the beginning and tell the stories as they happened. That is how they remember the stories in the order stories happened. Jumping around in the order of stories can be very confusing to them.

There is another reason for keeping the chronological organization of stories. With those hostile to the Gospel in which the Gospel challenges their beliefs, it is important to have the stories to lean upon one another. That is, a group of stories, or a *cluster of stories*, that are related tend to lock in the truth better. An example of this are the stories related to God's promise to Abraham being carried out through the descendants of Abraham beginning with Isaac and not Ishmael. The themes which run through the stories as promises, actors in the stories, etc., all link the stories together making it much more difficult to change a story even if you don't like what it teaches.

It is important to prepare a people for hearing the good news of a Savior. The best preparation for this is the bad news of man's sinful condition, accountability to God, and his inability to save himself from God's wrath. So the Old Testament stories make the best backdrop for presenting the stories of Jesus as fulfillment of all prophecy and promise.

There are two types of storying that are more often used in either acclimatizing a people for the hearing the Gospel. One is the *situational story* which is effective in ministry to individuals and families. It is simply a story which is chosen and told as fitting to some circumstance in which the Bible storyer has opportunity to use it. A typical use of situational storying is an invitation to enter a home to pray for a family member or family need. This is opportunity to lift up Jesus before the people in a quickly told story before offering the requested prayer. Then the

storyer offers to come again and tell more of the stories about Jesus from God's Word. Bible stories may of course be used in weddings, funerals, and any other occasion when a story fits the occasion. The other type is called *fast-tracking the Gospel* and will be covered later.

**Where to begin when preparing to story the Bible?**—There are two essential things for the storyer to know. This is assuming that he or she already has a working knowledge of God's Word. First the storyer needs to be aware of the *basic Bible truths* which a person needs to hear and understand in order to be open to salvation. There is a suggested list of some twelve truths that need to be considered by the storyer in his preparation. Not all of these truths will need equal treatment as some may already be understood or at least not challenged by the people's existing belief system. Others may need extensive treatment as the people might have strongly embedded beliefs and practices in their culture. One basic starting point is the issue of the sovereignty of God which includes His sovereignty over the spirit world as well as the visible world and all its people. Others will have to do with local concepts of sin and how that sin may be atoned. Others have to do with the afterlife, its nature, and who goes where. The greatest is that God himself provided the needed Savior according to his promise. Here is a suggested list:

#### Basic Bible Truths Leading To Salvation

1. God alone is Sovereign, acting in history and communicating with man.
2. God is all powerful, all knowing, the source of grace (love, peace, mercy, forgiveness, Salvation, provision for man's needs).
3. God communicates through his Word and is faithful to keep it.
4. God loves man and wants fellowship with him.
5. God is righteous, hating sin.
6. God punishes sin by death (separation from God).
7. Man is accountable to God for all he says and does.
8. Man is a sinner separated from God by his sins.
9. Man can do nothing to save himself from God's righteous judgment.
10. Man can approach (have fellowship with) God only through a perfect (acceptable) sacrifice.  
This involves faith and trust in God.
11. Jesus the Son, the One sent by God, is the only perfect sacrifice.
12. Salvation involves faith in God's provision in Jesus as Savior.

Some would add *repentance* to this list though we often do not deal with it in a major way initially to avoid giving the impression that our works make us "acceptable to God". It is only the grace of God that saves man. Repentance must be covered thoroughly in discipling to be sure that new believers understand they are a new creation in Christ. Repentance is inferred in several stories like Zacchaeus and when Jesus told the adulterous woman to leave her life of sin (John 8:11).

The list of Basic Bible Truths gives criteria for an outline of a *Core Set of Stories* that deal with the truths. This is a list of possible stories that could be used for evangelizing when the storyer knows nothing about the worldview of the target people. This list is a good beginning point for building a set of Bible story lessons for evangelizing. There may be a need for substitutions on some stories to others more appropriate for a people. The list does not take into account stories which may be needed to bridge between major stories nor to deal with certain Bible truths that need more attention and depth in teaching. Again, this list is a suggested list of typical stories which may be used to cover the Bible truths:

## CORE STORY LIST

1. Creation of the world
  2. Creation of man
  3. The first sin and judgment of Adam and Eve
  4. Judgment of a sinful world in Noah's day
  5. God's promise to Abraham—a descendant through which God would bless all people
  6. God provides the substitute sacrifice for Isaac
  7. The Passover—the blood and the lamb
  8. God gives His holy Law—the Ten Commandments
  9. The Sacrifice System—shedding of sacrificial blood to cover sin
  10. The Prophets' message and promise of a Redeemer who would suffer for man
  11. Birth of Jesus according to prophecy
  12. Baptism of Jesus—"Behold the Lamb of God", testimony of John and the Spirit
  13. Jesus and Nicodemus—"You must be born again"
  14. Jesus has authority to forgive sin—paralyzed man and four friends
  15. Jesus has power over nature—Calms the Sea
  16. Jesus has authority over demons—Gadarene Demoniac
  17. Jesus is the resurrection—Jesus raises Lazarus to life
  18. Abraham, Lazarus and the rich man—Man must believe the message of the prophets in this life
  19. The Last Supper—"This is my broken body and blood shed for you"
  19. Jesus is betrayed, arrested, falsely accused, tried and sentenced to death according to prophecy
  21. The crucifixion, decision for and against Jesus, "It is finished"
  22. The resurrection and appearance to disciples and followers
  23. Jesus returns to the Father, the Ascension
- Following are optional stories for certain spiritual worldviews—*
24. Jesus the true High Priest (Heb 8-9), an advocate before the Father making intercession for believer's sins (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25)
  25. Return of Jesus to receive believers unto himself, to judge and punish unbelievers, Satan and the evil spirits thus fulfilling all promises and prophecies.

The obvious weakness of this list of core stories is that many important belief issues of the target people may not be addressed sufficiently. In some cultures people may have an understanding of their sinfulness and a desire to be accepted by God and included in His family. In other cultures the people may have very faulty concepts of the severity of sin and its consequences and further be offended by anything which ties God to man implying that man can have fellowship with a transcendent God. Stories about Jesus' ministry are chosen to qualify Jesus as having authority and power like the Father.

**The need for an adequate understanding of a people's worldview.**—The Bible storyer, as well, as anyone seeking to evangelize a people must understand some of the basics of their worldview. This is important because in the worldview are the concepts of how a people relate to the deities that control their lives, how they view themselves, what is wrong or harmful and how they atone for wrongdoing. The important distinction to make is that the worldview must be known, not so that the storyer can simply engage in apologetics to combat erroneous beliefs,

but so that the storyer can engage a people at their point of greatest spiritual need while dealing with beliefs that hinder an understanding and acceptance of the Gospel. The best way to explain this is to say that a people's worldview must *inform* and *instruct* the use of Bible truths in witness. This means the choice of stories to be used and the themes to be developed in the story sessions is related to both the Bible truths and relevant worldview issues. Knowing their worldview also helps the storyer to know certain stories which may need to be avoided initially as these may be misunderstood or increase the hostility to the Gospel.

There is not space here to go into a full explanation of how to assess a people's worldview. But there are some helpful categories related to worldview which the storyer should know. These are:

*Perceived need*—Where a people see themselves as needy, especially in the spirit realm.

*Change points in their culture*—This is where change has been occurring in the recent past, perhaps as the Holy Spirit has been preparing a people for the Gospel, where there is ongoing change among a people—their present value system, and areas where future change is likely due to circumstances among the people and their environment.

*Barriers to the Gospel*—These are both active barriers like hostility for whatever reason and other barriers, typically cultural which hinder hearing and acting upon the Gospel.

*Bridges to the Gospel*—These are areas in their culture in which due to existing beliefs and expectations there is an openness to hear the Gospel and to relieve existing spiritual fears and uncertainties.

To explore these there are various instruments such as questionnaires which suggest issues and facts to explore about a people. Beyond having this information there is a need to prioritize the information so that only the major issues are dealt with in the evangelizing effort. It is generally found that a short list of only 10-12 are real barriers which need forceful addressing. Later in choosing Bible stories, multiple stories will be needed for the greater worldview barrier issues. Save lesser issues for later discipling lessons and for teaching to mature believers after an adequate biblical base has been established for reference. Following is a list of key issues to explore in determining a working worldview for Bible storying.

1. Knowledge of the Bible and attitude toward it as an authoritative source of truth.
2. General conception of Christians and whether this a desirable lifestyle.
3. Understanding of the sovereignty of God and His attributes, His Oneness.
4. Understanding of sin, its origin and spread, prevalence among all mankind.
5. Consequences of sin, how may it be atoned for, role of sacrifice. Is forgiveness practiced?
6. Role of spirit world and its relationship to world of living. Fears, taboos, appeasement.
7. Attitude toward death, the afterlife, places of blessedness or retribution and conditions for entering. Can one leave after "paying for sin" or escape punishment in some way?
8. Knowledge of Jesus, who he is, the circumstances of his coming, his relationship to God.
9. The ministry of Jesus—his teaching, healing, forgiving, restoring to life, implications.
10. The betrayal, suffering and death of Jesus as a substitute sacrifice for sin.
11. Any open or hidden barriers to hearing the Gospel, understanding it, and acting upon it.
12. Any bridges (other than the above) such as where God is at work preparing a people.
13. The role of intermediaries in beseeching the deity, changing life circumstances.
14. Is literacy a factor in sharing God's Word? Is the Bible in their heart language?
15. What is their preferred mode of learning and teaching others—oral culture? Other?
16. Where and when is true teaching conducted? Who may be recognized as a teacher?

*There are many other possible questions for exploring their spiritual worldview and constructing a worldview with implications for evangelizing and discipling a people.*

**Preparing a strategy for Bible storying.**—Following is a helpful organization of the Bible into a strategy for evangelizing, affirming new believers, planting a church, discipling new believers, and bringing closure to the Bible story. This strategy should be seamless in that each part should flow into the next and it should be invisible, that is, done without announcing what is to happen next. This strategy for evangelizing and church planting has grown out of experience in a number of countries where Bible storying is used. And it takes into account the natural organization of the Bible content. The strategy is most helpful for breaking down the task into objectives which can be addressed. The Bible truths and worldview issues together point to criteria for choosing Bible stories and themes to be developed in each session with the people. This strategy organization is only a suggested one which may be modified as needed. Each major objective has a range of stories that are helpful in addressing the issues. Here are the objectives and suggested range of stories:

Evangelism Track—Genesis to Acts 1 (Creation to the Ascension)

Affirming or Review Track—Genesis to Acts 1 (Review only of essential stories)

Church Planting Track—Acts 1 to Acts 12 (The characteristics of the New Testament Church)

Discipling or Characterization Track—Acts 13-28, selected Epistles (Establishing and maturing believers toward the whole measure of the fullness of Christ)

End Times Track—Revelation and other passages related to the End Times (To bring a note of victory and celebration to the church and a final warning to unbelievers)

These five tracks cover the basic Bible story and contribute to an initial Oral Bible for a people. The tracks may be paused for more indepth coverage of any issues as well as repeated if response is slow in coming. The most critical track will be the Evangelism Track because it is the one at which a people are first engaged and initial worldview issues are challenged.

After an initial coursing through the Bible it is possible then to continue the church strengthening objective by going back through the Bible following the same chronological pattern and adding new stories in the timeline. These stories may be along a topic such as love, forgiveness, worship, etc., they may be on leadership or any other aspect of need among a people. The chronological presentation preserves the organization and makes it easier to include new stories by referring to where they fit in. Their objective is to give the people a Bible in their hearts they can remember, live by and share with others.

**The Bible stories are presented during storying sessions.**—There are four typical parts to each storying session. Following is an idealized storying session with suggested parts. How each part is conducted must be determined by the storyer and their knowledge of the people. Typically the Bible storying session is NOT a worship service but a teaching time. If prayer is used keep it brief and directed to God's blessing His Word and opening the people's hearts to understanding it. Resist efforts of those with knowledge of Christian worship to force it into a worship service. Later, when there has been positive response to the Gospel elements of worship may be introduced as there is now reason to worship because of forgiveness of sin and the new relationship to God through Jesus.

### **1. Pre-story dialogue:**

- 1.1 Introductory greeting according to local culture and social practice.
- 1.2 Inquire about recent events in the community. Look for tie-in to recent lesson topics and current lesson.
- 1.3 Recall/review previous stories and the biblical truths in them with special attention to

- those relating to the current lesson theme.
- 1.4 Ask questions to build anticipation, to arouse curiosity. At this point there are no “right or wrong” answers, but do note what is said and pick up on it in the post-story time. These questions are like adding a little “salt” to make the people “thirsty” for the story.
  - 1.5 Review any “bridging” or “linking” stories necessary to set the stage for or to get into the current story. (Ex: Moses’ killing the Egyptian causes him to leave Egypt and live in the desert where he meets God.)
  - 1.6 If applicable, give a Listening Task—to listen for certain things in the story to promote an active participation and arouse interest. It is “playing the game.”
- 2. Read from the Bible:**
- 2.1 Pick up the Bible and hold it in your hand (or however a holy book is held).
  - 2.2 Read from the a part of the story to “anchor” the story in the Bible.
  - 2.3 Continue to hold the Bible after finishing the reading.
- 3. Tell the story:**
- 3.1 Tell the story. Holding the open Bible signals the story is coming from the Bible.
  - 3.2 Tell the story as a *story* and not as a description of what God and the people did and said.
  - 3.3 Use summary statements as needed to bridge time gaps and to link episodes.
  - 3.4 Tell the story accurately but interestingly, preserving the biblical rhythm.
  - 3.5 At the end of the story—STOP! (Know where and how you are going to stop.) Put down the Bible.
- 4. Lead listeners to discover the truths in the story:**
- 4.1 Ask someone to retell the story in their own words. (If you get a poor or inaccurate retelling, ask if someone else would like to tell the story. Keep fishing until you get a good retelling. If not, then retell it again yourself. Tell the listeners perhaps they would like to hear it again.)
  - 4.2 Let the listeners respond to the Listening Task if used. (Fish for a good answer.)
  - 4.3 Continue the Discovery Time with easy self-evident questions and move to ones that provoke thought. From these move to questions that have a personal application.
  - 4.4 Where there appears to be uncertainty in answering, probe tactfully with more questions. Feel free to retell the story if necessary or to review portions of the story if that is acceptable to them.
  - 4.5 Handle incorrect answers in a culturally sensitive manner. (Thank you, would someone else like to answer.)
  - 4.6 Don’t entertain questions about yet-to-be-revealed truth. (Visiting Christians can really pose a problem here. Tell them you haven’t yet come to that part of the story. When you do they will get their answer.)
  - 4.7 Defer answering questions you don’t know the answers to—you will look in God’s Word for an answer. (Probably you would know the answer. This models for those you are training not to “wing it” if they don’t know. Defer answering until they have looked in God’s Word or asked someone who does know.)
  - 4.8 Be sensitive for the appropriate time to stop the session.
  - 4.9 Use a memory verse to sum up the lesson and to give the listeners a verse to hide in their hearts.
  - 4.10 Tell them a story about yourself, your family or your people.

Remember this is only a suggested ideal story session. Where there is hostility or suspicion it may only be possible to ask a few rhetorical questions and then tell the story without any discussion, trusting the power of the Word to begin changing attitudes. As trust grows and listeners do ask questions, answer them by referring to the stories—the story answers the question. In time there may be openness for a more typical teaching session.

**A review of the planning process for chronological Bible storying.**—Here is a review of the basic suggested steps for preparing to engage your people by storying the Bible:

1. Consider the Basic Biblical Truths for Salvation. Be very sure in your own mind what the Bible teaches about sin, forgiveness and salvation. Go over the list of Bible truths and reword them as your own.
2. Examine your people's worldview keeping in mind that you are looking for any barriers to the Gospel. There are many interesting things to know about a people—What do you NEED to know before beginning to witness to say the right thing and to keep from saying the wrong thing? Make a list of major barriers and any helpful bridges.
3. Write out some criteria (or objectives) which will guide you in selecting stories and identifying themes in the stories for emphasis in teaching.
4. Select your stories beginning with a model story list or Core Story List and changing it to fit your teaching objectives. Remember to keep them in obvious chronological order.
5. Adjust your story list to fit the time frame when you can meet with the people. Do you need to cut it short because of planting season, rainy season when the roads are impassable? Other factors including your own schedule.
6. Prepare your stories first from the Bible and then develop a lesson around them to highlight the story and draw out its message to the listeners.
7. Test your stories on a friendly informant or a small group you know well. Make necessary cultural adjustments and others edits as needed for clarity.
8. Make arrangements with proper authorities for teaching in their jurisdiction. Select a place accessible to the whole community unless there is some reason not to. Remember, the goal is to involve the whole community if possible.
9. Begin your teaching and make any adjustments to the story list and lessons as experience warrants.
10. Begin training an assistant.
11. Keep a diary or good notes which may help someone else in beginning their storying sessions.
12. Think about what you are doing and why so that you can train others to teach by storying.

**Some Bible story themes which have been helpful:**

The Living God—Hindus and idol worshipers

The Way to Life and Heaven—Buddhists

The Suffering Servant—for those who live under persecution, threat, or natural disasters.

The Honor of God and Man—exploring the issue of honor as God honored man and man is to honor God just as Jesus honored the Father.

Stories of the Prophets—primarily for Muslims

God and Woman—focusing on the worldview of women where it is significantly different than that of men.

The True High Priest—the need for a reliable intercessor that only God could provide.

The Emmaus Road—while developed for Muslims focuses on why the Christ had to suffer and die.



Peace with God—speaking to Hindus and those burdened with the broken relationship due to sin.

The Family of God—focusing on the loss of relationship with God through sin and the restored relationship when there is repentance, forgiveness of sin and salvation (deliverance).

*The value of a theme is that it helps in the development of lesson themes and teaching activities and questions.*

**A special application of Bible storying useful for a variety of purposes is *Fast Tracking the Gospel***—What is it? Fast-tracking the Gospel is telling the Bible stories in a continuous sequence from some beginning point (typically Creation) through the story of Jesus. It can be done in varying amounts of time from an hour to several days depending on how many stories are used and how much detail is kept in each story. In Fast-tracking the storyer does not stop to conduct a typical teaching session with dialogue and questions. Instead the impact is brought through the continuing stories which flow from one to the next. It is realized that the listeners cannot remember all they are hearing, but they do get the drift and they do get an excellent panorama of the Bible story which lets them see where it is headed.

How is Fast-tracking helpful? First, it can be used to test for interest and potential response to the Gospel. It moves quickly and does not give time for hardening against any one story to really set in. If well done the listeners are usually willing to stay tuned even if they do not agree with what they are hearing or if it is challenging their beliefs. If the listeners are moved by the stories or interested to hear more, then arrange for a normal storying strategy.

Second, Fast-tracking is helpful for testing worldview assumptions when putting together a model set of stories. It keeps one from having to use many weeks or months in working through a set of stories to see if they are hitting home.

Third, Fast-tracking over a day or several days can be used with people who are inaccessible for longer periods of time for whatever circumstances.

Fourth, Fast-tracking can be used to redeem the time if asked to spend some time in a community following some ministry activity. One typical example is to story while waiting for food to be cooked and served when asked to stay for a meal after praying for a family or community members. Always use the opportunity to tell the people that someone could come and tell more of the stories so they could understand them better. The people generally like to hear the stories repeated so they can relax and *hear* them better.

Fifth, Fast-tracking the Old Testament is an excellent way to prepare a people to view the Jesus Film. Even better is to Fast-track on into the Luke stories following the Jesus Film storyline so they are prepared to hear and understand the film better.

And sixth, Fast-tracking in a modified short session can be used bedside in a hospital or shared while traveling, or used in a home visit.

**Using Bible pictures when storying**—The old adage says that a good picture is worth a thousand words. This is true up to a point. Pictures have their advantages and their disadvantages. A good set of Bible teaching pictures can be a great asset in telling Bible stories and in qualifying someone who may not be accepted otherwise as a teacher except that the person possesses pictures (and hopefully a good working knowledge of the stories).

Advantages:

Pictures help to clarify story settings, relationships and any activities not commonly known to the listeners. (Altars and sacrifice, the tabernacle, anointing, the crucifixion)

Pictures are very helpful in reviewing earlier stories as the visual is associated with the story and triggers the recall.

Pictures may help to preserve the flow of the story as they are displayed in a sequence.

Pictures may help to illustrate the main truth in a story or climax of the story.

Pictures may give courage (and focus) to an otherwise fearful beginning storyer.

Contextualized pictures may ease some culture shock in presenting the stories.

Many pictures have powerful emotional content in certain cultures—prodigal son at father's feet, woman wiping feet of Jesus with her hair.

Pictures, especially color pictures, are necessary to illustrate certain story items like shed blood in the OT sacrifices and of Christ on the cross.

Disadvantages:

Cost and availability.

Introduction of pictures may say to new storyers that one must have pictures in order to tell the stories. (Think before you leap!)

May introduce things in the pictures that are culturally inappropriate—length of women's clothing, Jesus and Samaritan woman alone at the well, etc.

May focus on wrong instant of the story—Noah and sons building the ark, etc.

If produced by non-evangelicals may picture inaccurate observance of baptism.

Wear out from constant use and poor storage and transport conditions, needing periodic replacement.

Pictures of prophets are generally unacceptable to conservative Muslims.

Contextualized pictures may ease culture shock by identifying with clothing, race and features but are historically inaccurate. (It is a toss-up between accuracy and effectiveness in teaching the lesson point.)

*Always test pictures before using them to determine which ones are unacceptable and which ones do not communicate well.*

Training of Bible storying workers is essential. Bible stories are themselves a good source of teaching good leadership principles and contrasting with poor leadership principles. Practice makes perfect. Every Bible storyer will have their own style. It takes a lot of time and perseverance to become proficient at storying without having to rely constantly upon notes. It is worth the effort. The FIRST PERSON who will be changed by the stories is YOU the storyer. God's Word will never again be the same for you. You will LIVE the stories. You will make mistakes, we all do. Remember, even a child can tell a story and so can you. The stories you tell are for adults with adult themes and will help to determine where the listeners will spend eternity.

There are Bible storying trainers like myself who are available to give counsel as time permits and give direction for helping to develop an effective Bible storying strategy. May God bless you as you TELL THE STORY.

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