Storytelling

Making disciples of oral learners

About 70% of the world's population are oral preference learners. So about 4+ billion people are at risk of never understanding the Gospel unless we make changes in our evangelism, in how we disciple, in leadership training and in church planting.

Oral learners need communication in stories, proverbs, songs, chants and poetry.
[I like lists, outlines, word studies, apologetics and theological jargon!]

Here are 5 key issues

1. Make the Gospel available in an oral form in a way that is meaningful.
2. Use oral communication patterns **already in place within the culture of the local people** – not only in evangelism, but in discipleship and developing leaders. We must do our best to avoid any methodology that hinders oral preference learners from winning and discipling their own families, friends and others.
3. Ensure that believers remain true to the historic Biblical truths of the Christian faith and don't add into the storytelling any traditional beliefs or practices.
4. Develop national believers as storytellers. If they have come to faith this way, then it will be easier since the new believers will use the same ways that were used to reach and disciple them.
5. Increase effectiveness among secondary oral learners. Many people are hearing the Gospel through electronic media which also uses stories, music and drama. This can be through the radio, through Christian television, the Internet etc. We need **oral strategies** for this segment of the population.

Two examples of how orality works

In evangelism: a husband and wife entered a Muslim village in West Africa. They got permission from the village chief to live among the people. After living there for a while, they asked the chief for permission to share stories about God in the village. He gave them permission. They avoided words like 'Christianity' and 'Islam'. They only used a storytelling approach and taught the Bible chronologically bringing out truths people needed to know in understanding the Gospel. They began in small groups with Creation and moved through selected stories in the Old Testament laying the basic groundwork for the story of the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The Imam used their stories in his sermons on Fridays. During the year about 20 individuals became followers of the Lord Jesus.

In leadership training: in a North African country 17 young men took a two-year leadership training programme using the chronological Bible story method. They learnt 135 Biblical stories in the correct chronological order from Genesis to Revelation. They could tell the stories. They composed songs for each story and enacted dramas about each of the stories. They have now gone out as church planters.

There is effectiveness and reproducibility in using music and songs in orality and storytelling. In his book **The New Testament and the People of God**, N.T. Wright says, *"Stories are actually peculiarly good at modifying or subverting other stories and their worldviews. Where head-on attack would certainly fail, the parable hides the wisdom of the serpent behind the innocence of the dove, gaining entrance and favour which can then be used to change assumptions which the hero would otherwise keep hidden away for safety."*

So the aim is for you to use 'storying' skills that will enable you to be effective in a very natural way.

I hope you will learn a few new skills such as:

- Crafting a good Bible story
- Developing stories so they are simple, accurate and memorable to yourself and to your listeners
- Developing some drama as you tell the story – apparently 80% of communication is body language
- Teaching your story so that each person can tell it back accurately to you

It is good to practice storytelling in small groups. Others in your group can give you constructive criticism. There are guidelines on how to make your story simple, accurate and memorable. We will look at how oral learners learn. It is very different from how literate/well-educated people learn.

Let's keep praying that God will help us and bless us as we learn clearly and accurately **His Story** through Bible stories.

I hope you will be convinced that storytelling is a powerful way to teach and a powerful way to stimulate change. It works well with the young and the old, the educated and the uneducated, oral learners and highly literate learners.

Look at storytelling in the life of Jesus. ***"Jesus was teaching them many things in parables."*** (Mk. 4:2)

"The Lord Jesus said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the Kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables.' " (Mk. 4:11)

Why do you think this was so? At least part of the answer is that this was the teaching method God had largely used in the Old Testament. Remember the story Nathan told King David (2 Sam. 12). Why do you think that Nathan did not say directly, "Your Majesty, you have committed a terrible sin against God"?

Understanding and teaching the Bible with a 'Golden Thread' story

N.T. Wright sees the narrative story of the Bible as a five-act drama:

- Creation – Genesis 1 and 2
- Crisis – the 'Fall in the Garden' and the story of Noah
- Community – starting with Abraham and going through sections of the Old Testament
- Christ – the Lord Jesus, the Messiah – the Gospels
- The Church – the world-wide community – Acts to Revelation

AT the end of this paper I have given you a list used by many of the 52 stories in chronological order for a year-long story programme.

Adapting other people's stories

You can also adapt local stories or other stories from around the world. In Numbers 32:23, Moses told the two tribes who remained in Gilead that they had to help the other ten tribes win their inheritance. He said, ***"But if you will not do so, behold you have sinned against the Lord and be sure your sin will find you out."***

Martin Goldsmith tells the following story:

Once upon a time in a far-off village there was a young boy who proudly owned a much loved hen. Early each morning his hen would lay a fresh egg and proudly let out a triumphant 'call'. So each morning, a beautiful fresh egg lay in the hen house for the boy to come and collect.

Near the hen house, in a pile of wood, lived a young snake with his father. Each morning they heard the hen's call and the young snake could not resist the temptation. He knew that a fresh egg was delicious. One morning the young snake found that there was a small hole in the bottom of one wall of the hen house. He thought to himself, "I could get into the hut very easily and steal the egg".

He shared this good news with his father who warned him, "Be very careful, stealing other people's eggs can lead you into great danger". But the little snake ignored his father's warning. He thought 'My dad is far too careful. There won't be any danger and I shall enjoy the egg'.

[Martin says that when he tells this story in a village context, the listeners often participate by telling a story about snakes killing hens as well as stealing their eggs. All this adds interest to the story.]

The next morning, the hen duly laid a lovely fresh egg and crowed with delight. The boy heard it, but he was half asleep. He got up slowly. But the young snake was wide-awake and quickly crept into the hen house through the hole. He found the fresh egg and swallowed it. The egg slid down his body making a bulge in his stomach. So the little snake wiggled on its tummy. At this point the egg broke spilling its

fresh warm content deliciously in his stomach. Now the little snake's body no longer protruded in the middle, so he could get back home safely.

The boy gets to the hen house a little later to fetch the egg. But there is no egg anywhere! This was repeated for several days. The hen laid the egg and the little snake stole the egg and escaped home safely. The boy couldn't understand what was happening.

The boy's father said, "I think there must be a snake that is stealing your eggs. We will boil an egg until it is rock hard. Then we will go into the shed before dawn and wait until the hen lays an egg. We will quickly swap the new fresh egg with a hard-boiled one."

The next morning the little snake heard the hen's call and set off to get her egg. The father snake warned the little snake, but the little snake thought he knew better. He duly swallowed the egg and happily made his way to the hole hoping to feel the lovely feeling of fresh food in his stomach. He wriggled and wriggled but the egg did not break. He was stuck. He couldn't get through the hole nor could he reverse. He was caught and he was killed. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

Every Muslim believes we will be judged when we die. How can we escape the judgement of God and enter into paradise – the holy land – the place of total purity? The usual answer is, "God is merciful". But God will never allow people to enter heaven when their sin has not been dealt with and removed, for otherwise heaven would be horribly contaminated with sin.

This generates many questions and debates in Muslim countries. It doesn't work well at all in the UK where no one wants to hear about judgement or hell! Ethics and morality are completely separated from "religion".

This is a Jungle Doctor story (slightly adapted) – another non-Biblical story.

Tell this story to your small children/grandchildren and then try and tell it in in the local language to adults to see if it makes sense.

A farmer had a pet monkey who he loved a great deal. One day he said to his pet monkey, "It's time for us to plant our peanuts, so we can have a good harvest later on in the year. We shall feast on our peanut harvest and we can sell some and get money to buy other things."

So the farmer set out to go to the field with a bag of seed peanuts and a spade. The monkey walked quietly beside him. On arrival in his field early in the morning while it was still cool, the farmer went to work digging a shallow trench the whole length of the field. The monkey quietly followed him and the farmer was happy for the companionship of the monkey.

Opening his seed bag, the farmer began at the beginning of the trench and carefully planted the peanut seeds about half a metre apart to give the plants room to grow. Each seed was then covered with soil.

Having finished one long trench, he looked back and saw his pet monkey was following him and digging up each peanut seed that had been planted and eating it – perhaps thinking it was a game!

The farmer said sternly, "Don't dig up my peanuts!" But he didn't want to frighten the pet monkey, so as he spoke, he stroked the monkey gently. Then the farmer started all over again digging the trench and again he planted the peanut seeds carefully and pressed down the loose earth with his foot. As he did this he was really annoyed that the monkey was again digging up the newly planted peanuts and eating them.

The farmer thought to himself, this time I will get really angry and he shouted and hit his pet monkey very hard. Then the farmer started all over again, making the trench, planting the nuts and covering them up with soil. Again the pet monkey followed him digging up the nuts and eating them!

The farmer was really frustrated for he was fond of his pet monkey, yet he couldn't communicate with him. Finally, he had the idea that if only he could become a monkey he would be able to identify and communicate with his pet. But he couldn't.

The point is that God can do the impossible. Indeed God put aside the glory of His heavenly state and came down to become a human being. Nothing is beyond God's ability to do.

Most Muslims believe that the man Jesus was elevated by man to be a God – a son of God. But this story reverses that idea and illustrates the importance of God becoming human. God usually treats us with grace and love giving us great blessing. Sometimes He shows us His holiness and His anger at our sin. But just like this pet monkey, neither love and gentleness nor punishment of any kind is effective.

Usually there is a lively debate with Muslims and many questions flow. Does God in His absolute glory still desire to communicate His will to us as human beings? Does God just **reveal** His will or does He want a relationship with us? Does He communicate with us in a way we can understand? Christmas is God's unique way to teach us not to eat His peanuts.

In many different cultures there are similar stories to this Kenyan story. Seek out similar stories in your culture.

Teach the Parables as the Lord Jesus did, but change the environment to a typical Near East situation. Get a book by Kenneth Bailey entitled **Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes – Cultural Studies in the Gospels.**

In evangelism amongst Muslims, a straightforward evangelistic presentation – the wordless book, the Four Spiritual Laws, the bridge method etc. – generally generates anger and sometimes violent anger! Is this ***"casting our pearls before swine"***?

There are 3 things about stories:

1. People enjoy stories and remember them and they may come back to see you again.
2. When people smile and don't get angry, then the name of the Lord Jesus and the glory of the Gospel is not abused.
3. Rejecting Jesus and His Gospel is a hardening of the heart experience.

We are to love people. We don't want their hearts hardened. We don't want to make it more difficult for them to trust God. But we must share the Gospel without compromise.

We can tell the parable of the widow's offering (Lk. 21:2) in a different context: Two individuals gave money to UNHCR. One was a very poor widow and the other was a billionaire. To many, the question of motives is highly relevant, but rarely discussed except in the case of tax avoidance.

Another example is the parable of the two men who went to the temple to pray. (Lk. 18:9-14) Humility is at the heart of this story. The main focus of the parable is righteousness and those who believe they can reach that pious goal by their own efforts – the Pharisee and the tax collector.

Muslims have a teaching on *niyyah* (intention) focused on the intention to pray. One goes to the mosque at prayer time. After ablutions etc. an important person goes to the front row of those who are praying. You always pray in straight lines. No gaps are allowed because an evil spirit (a jinn) will fill any gap between people as they pray. Gaps imply that there are evil spirits in their midst. The Muslim leader does everything perfectly, just as he has washed the various parts of his body perfectly. His prostration in prayer is always with his back straight, his fingers exactly parallel and pointing in the direction of Mecca – perfect in every way.

But as he is praying the required prayers, his thoughts are elsewhere on a young and beautiful woman and his thoughts begin to be lustful. Now Muslims know it is wrong to mentally undress anyone when one is doing one's prayers. But God is merciful if one's "intention" is right.

Also, not at a prayer time, a beggar walking past the mosque steps inside. It has been years since he went into a mosque – not since he was a boy. He hasn't fasted or paid any alms. He has never even thought of the possibility of Hajj. He realises he always had just about enough to eat, his clothes are old and dirty but they cover him adequately. So the beggar decides to go into the mosque to give thanks to God. He goes to the washing area, but he can't remember what to do. He waits for a while for someone else to come so he can copy him, but no one comes! So in the end he puts his hands in the water coming out of a tap and washes his face and hands and goes into the mosque leaving his sandals at the door. He goes to the far back behind a pillar and sits cross-legged on the floor. He can't remember the prayers and has forgotten the ritual movements.

So he prays something like this, "O God, I have not been a good Muslim. I haven't fasted or prayed or paid the *zakat* and I haven't been on Hajj. But you have been merciful and kind to me. Please forgive me and help me to follow you and be obedient to your will."

Which man's prayers would God consider better? Several answers common:

- The unspiritual – usually young – men think it is a silly story.
- Conservative Muslims always say it was the man who did everything correctly because that was in accordance with the revealed will of God.
- There are always some people who raise the issue of *niyyah* (intention) – i.e. what is our motive for prayer. What is the motive in our hearts in our relationship with God?

There are many other parables about prayer – see Luke 11:5-8.

Learn as many traditional stories as you can. Which ones could you use? Many cultures tell stories in different ways. Use non-Biblical stories if appropriate. Dramatize the story if you can.

The Secret of Storytelling

In telling the story it is really important to love the people you are speaking to. Look at your audience as much as you can. If the audience is large, let your eye catch the eyes of the people in all sections of the crowd. If people feel we relate to them and sense we genuinely love them, our stories will carry much more weight. Think about the following points:

1. **Storytelling with love**
2. **Storytelling with prayer**

   "At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the Word to declare the mystery of Christ … that I might make it clear, which is how I ought to speak." (Col. 4:2-4)

   "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." (Col. 4:6)

   It is always God, not our communication skills, working so that people, families and even a society become responsive to the message of the Lord Jesus. So ***"watch and pray"***. We should ***"devote ourselves to prayer"*** and also be **watchful** against the attacks of the 'enemy'.

3. **Storytelling and the Holy Spirit**

   We can do nothing effective in our ministry without the Holy Spirit (Jn. 15:5). Our stories will be dead without the Holy Spirit bringing life to them. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God. So let us seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit as we tell these Bible stories and other stories that they will convey Bible truth. Set out on a life of storytelling for the glory of the Lord Jesus.

4. **After you have told your story always debrief**

   - ✓ Try and learn from the outcomes. As you review, learn how it could have been done better. Always keep on learning.
   - ✓ Were there any difficulties? How could they be overcome next time?
   - ✓ Did anything happen that was significant? What was the really enjoyable part? What were the helpful comments from the audience or from some other believer present?

Crafting a Story

Some hoped-for outcomes

- As the listeners hear the story, they begin to imagine it happening in their village/town as it unfolds.
- The listeners can, as they re-tell the story, understand its spiritual applications. There is a danger that the listeners will try and memorise the story rather than imagine it, so if you are asked to repeat the story tell it in a different way.

Crafting a story – the various steps

- Work in twos. This helps for the following reasons:
  - The possibility of using different gifts: in choosing to work as a pair, there is a possibility that your partner will have different insights so you can learn from each other.
  - Crafting a Bible story that is **simple**, **accurate** and **memorable** is hard! It really helps if you do it together.
  - It often helps to have men with men and women with women. This way the stories end up better and usually the stories will be told to an all-male or all-female audience.
- You will be given either an Elisha story or a parable spoken by the Lord Jesus. Look at the passage. One of the pair should read the story while the other shuts his/her eyes and **imagines** the events. Don't try and memorise the story. The listener should just shut his eyes and try to imagine the scene. Now reverse the process.
- Go out of the room – preferably right outside – and tell the story to your partner. Then change roles and let your partner tell the story while you listen.
- Go inside and you have 20 minutes to craft your story.
- Finally, all the pairs come together. Divide them into two groups – the parable group and the Elisha story group. Have **all** the students tell their story.

Sorting through the Bible and analysing which sort of stories are appropriate for different occasions

There are various things you should ask yourself:

- Some stories are great to use in a village evangelistic context. Many of the Elisha stories teach principles of living the abundant life and are suitable for disciples.
- You need to discern what kinds of data are essential to include in a story and what can be left out.
- What is important cultural information that is essential in telling the story and what kinds of cultural data can be omitted?
- Identify the main participants in the story – i.e. the main characters whose names need to be retained.
- The important information in the Bible story will be the **actions** and the **events**.

The Assignment

Get in a group of 3 or 4 and ask yourselves what kind of information you are looking for? You will probably have a range of answers. You usually find 7 or 8 kinds of stories.

Ask yourselves:

- What actually happened?
- The names of the important people – don't have more than 3 names.
- Religious terminology may not be understandable to the local people so adapt it.
- What are the cultural issues that are essential to the story? In the Middle East the culture hasn't changed that much, but you might have to explain anything that is culturally different.

Identify the Theme of the Story

1. **Introduction:** Knowing the theme sets the stage for the whole story. Some stories have more than one theme and you will have to choose one of them.

   Conflict: Most good stories have some element of conflict. For example: the story of the paralysed man let down through the roof. Once you have identified the conflict, test the story so that it provides a resolution to the conflict. In the story of the paralysed man, the conflict was the four

friends who couldn't get him to the Lord Jesus to be healed. There are probably about eight steps that they took to resolve the conflict and get the paralysed man to the Lord Jesus.

Opening the story: There are four ways to get people's attention. Start with:

- ✓ threatening news
- ✓ an intriguing question
- ✓ an appeal to their self-interest
- ✓ some shocking facts

Closure: The closure needs to fit the overall theme of the story.

2. **Identify the theme:** Without a theme the story is like a boat without a rudder!

Step 1: Read your passage through and ask yourself what is the theme in the story – probably conflict. The ending will be the resolution of the conflict.

Step 2: 'Paint the canvas'. Ask yourself how the Biblical writer paints the conflict. You could copy that or you could seek to make it clearer. Sometimes this needs careful thinking about.

In Acts 8:26-40 there is the story of Philip and the Ethiopian courtier. There is no obvious conflict. Remember what the Lord Jesus taught the disciples in Acts 1:8, ***" … you will be My witnesses in … Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."***

Look at the story (Acts 8: 4-8, 26-39). Philip was having a fruitful ministry in Samaria and so he had a hard decision when, ***"An angel of the Lord said to Philip,'Rise and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. It is a desert place"*** – i. e. no people!

Step 3: The resolution of the conflict – sometimes there is one step and sometimes several steps. In the story of the men carrying the paralysed man, they couldn't get to Jesus because of the crowd.

Action – they made an opening in the roof after digging through it and they lowered the mat/stretcher on which the paralysed man was lying.

Step 4: Work on your opening sentences (1-3). The ideal is to get people's attention in the first two or three sentences. These sentences should help direct their minds to the theme of the story, but don't give the storyline away. You need the storyline as bait to keep them listening!

Step 5: Closure – this should wrap up and make clear the theme of the story. It should be brief!

Remember that we have to tell the world that God is the One who has complete authority over the world – the God who speaks through the Bible and is the Father of the Lord Jesus and the God who sends the Holy Spirit. So we have to tell all people the story of the Bible.

Developing the Story

These are some steps to use to develop your story. On a large piece of paper – one page for each story – draw a box for each part of the story. Take the story of the paralytic man in Mk. 2:1-12. Make a number of boxes:

B 1 The Lord Jesus inside a house with lots of people both inside and out

B 2 Religious leaders inside the house listening to the Lord Jesus teaching

B 3 A paralysed man at home with four friends deciding if they should carry him to the Lord Jesus

B 4 Four friends carry the paralysed man to the house where Jesus is

B 5 The four friends can't enter the house where Jesus is

B 6 All the rest of the story

When you have identified a box for each part of the story, practice telling your story to fellow team members and be open to their suggestions as to how to improve the story. Practising several times will help the story flow well. As you tell the story, emphasise those areas where the action occurs.

As you repeat the story several times, add in the improvements each time. This will help to make the story more memorable and reinforce the theme.

Introduce different intonations into your story. Try and mimic the characters by your tone of voice. Indicate their expressions and actions as you tell your story to your team members. Ask them to discern what actions and sentences are not central to the theme of the story. Feedback is essential!

You need to incorporate where the locations in your story are – on stage or in the room. Tell your story moving to the different locations on the stage. For the story above you would have:

- ✓ outside the house so the stretcher can't get through the crowds
- ✓ on the rooftop digging
- ✓ lowering the stretcher
- ✓ finally the healing

As you tell the story, move to these locations.

Revising the Story

You have crafted a good Bible story. Now it is possible to revise your Bible story so that it is simple, accurate and memorable. Here is what you need to eliminate:

- **Redundancy:** you need the help of others to detect redundancy and remove it from the story. Redundancy makes a story longer and more complicated. The simpler the story, the more memorable it will be.
- **Remove unnecessary details:** you need to eliminate all that is not needed in the storyline.
- **Eliminate passive verbs:** the Bible often uses passive verbs because the Jewish people didn't want to use the name of God. For example, instead of, *"When the Holy Spirit is received; you will tell everyone about Me"*. This could be altered in your story to, *"When God gives you the Holy Spirit, you will tell everyone about Me."*
- When appropriate make 'God' the subject of the sentence. For example, ***"He will be great in the sight of the Lord"*** (Lk. 1:15). This could be altered to, *"God will count him as a key leader in accomplishing His plans."*
- **Convert indirect speech to direct speech.** Again in the foretelling of John the Baptist (Lk. 1:15) ***"And he must not drink wine or strong drink…"*** could be changed to, ***"Tell him 'You must never drink alcohol' ".*** Direct speech makes the story more vivid, interesting and memorable.
- **Convert generics into specifics:** you may say, "Paul was persecuted in _____". This is generic. It doesn't tell you how he was persecuted. A specific would be, "Paul was beaten 39 times with rods". You can easily see it happening and imagine the pain. It is much more memorable.
- **Convert religious language into simple ordinary language:** religious language is often hard to understand. ***"And he*** (Elisha) ***will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah."*** (2 Kings 2) This could be changed to, *"God will give him the kind of power that Elijah had".*

The Value of Repetition

Your audience will memorise your story more easily if there is repetition. It may make the story longer, but this is fine if it becomes more memorable.

Read the story of Elijah and King Ahaziah. This is a fairly complicated story, but repetition makes it easier to remember. (2 Kings 1:2-17)

What is the hardest part of the story to remember? Did you notice that there were **four** separate items that were repeated in the story (Baal-Zebub the God of Ekron) and **three** times a captain and his men went to capture Elijah?

About 60% of the story is made up of repetition. As you look at your story are there any opportunities for useful repetition?

Polishing your Story: a checklist

- **The opening:** a good story needs a good attention getter. Your opening sentence must relate to the theme of your story. It could be:
  - ✓ a shocking fact
  - ✓ an appeal to self-interest
  - ✓ an intriguing question
  - ✓ threatening news
- **The theme:** the main theme of the story must be clear and reinforced throughout the story.
- **Imaginable:** make the story easy to imagine. Introduce action/drama. This will make it easier for the audience to watch and remember. *"The people cried out in fear"*. Cry out! What explanations can you convert into action? Act out things like slipping, falling, being injured etc.
- **Direct speech:** try to use this in order to make the story more vivid.
- **Length:** it may be too short or too long. Make sure you time your story and adjust it to the attention span of your audience – usually 5 to 10 minutes.
- **Repetition:** Have you explored the possibilities for repetition in your story?
- Are there any **unnecessary explanations** in your story? Count the names in the story. There should be no more than 3 names.
- **Have you simplified the language?** Avoid difficult or religious words whenever possible.
- If you have ability in the language, use **rhyming** to make difficult explanations more memorable.
- One way to do all this is to tell your story to your team and ask them to evaluate the opening sentence – to time the story – to list the names in the story – to identify the theme and how clear it is throughout the story – to evaluate the closing sentence .
- **Closure**: how does your closing sentence in some way complete the story, relate to the theme of the story as well as to how the story started?

The Four Cs of Bible Storytelling

1. **Context:** what is the context where you will tell the story? Is it to a group of Muslims or to Christian minority people, to well-educated literate people/urban dwellers or to semiliterate/illiterate rural people? How different would your story be if you were telling it to a child/children or to an adult audience? The choice of stories, words, idioms and themes depends on the context.
2. **Cohesion:** the story needs to be internally cohesive so it flows well. This makes it more memorable.
3. **Connection:** hopefully over a period you can tell your audience a series of stories to make a sort of panorama of Biblical truth. Chronological storytelling does this.
4. **Completeness:** if you are constructing a panorama of stories, the stories in Exodus will be different from those in Jonah or Daniel. A good rule of thumb is that Old Testament stories illustrate New Testament truths.

Think carefully about how, in the Bible, God exercises His authority. Over and over again He exercises His authority through human beings anointed and equipped by the Holy Spirit. This is an expression of His love for He knows that we all love a good story and even if it is a warning story, it indicates that He doesn't want to obliterate all opposition. He reveals Himself in judgement **and** in mercy in such a way that He will save people.

So before parting from this earth, the Lord Jesus said, ***"God has given to Me all authority. Now I am sending you. Go to every ethnic group and make them My disciples."***

Presenting your Bible Story

It is said that 80% of communication is body language and only 20% is in the words we say. So the storyteller must "see" the story in his imagination before he can tell it with the whole of his body and

mind. You must have the same emotions the people had at the original event and express these as you tell the story. It is this that makes the story believable! It isn't only the words, but your whole body that will help make the story believable! All this will make the story more memorable.

To illustrate this, say aloud to yourself, "John says he's getting married tomorrow." Then say the sentence with joy, with contempt, with anger, with excitement, with doubt, with fear and with sadness.

When you tell a Bible story that has different locations, map out the space in which you will tell the story and tell your story in the different locations this will help the audience to "move along with the story" as they "see" it happening.

Then use gestures to create the imaginary world of the story. Gestures increase memorability. Try an exercise like imagining you were Zacchaeus who was a short man so he had to climb into a tree to see the Lord Jesus.

So your job is to help your listeners to follow, understand and enjoy the Bible story. When they do that, they will be motivated to pass it on to others. This is the ultimate goal of Bible Storytelling. The Lord Jesus said, ***"You will tell everyone about Me."***

In all of this it is enormously helpful to work **with others** and develop a number of stories that can be used in evangelism and in discipling. It also ensures that the story is accurate.

The difference between literate learners and oral learners

Both of these groups of learners may be of equal/average intelligence, but oral preference learners believe the best way to learn is by interacting with other people as they learn. You will meet oral learners who are well educated and all they have done has been by negotiating with and overcoming a system of education that is geared to rote memory.

Oral learners also find it easy to think chronologically. They like to know the facts and the details. Literate learners think that reading and writing is the only important way to learn anything (except perhaps sports and cooking). For literate learners, "concepts" are important and these "concepts" have to be logically developed from repeated observations. "Concepts" need to be taught – like systematic theology. Literate learners value innovation. Oral learners are comfortable with repetition and tradition.

Both ways are valid ways of thinking and learning and both have a part to play in extending God's Kingdom. But in general, oral learners want to know what did …. ? Literate learners, at least some of them, want to know systematic theology and how it all fits together.

Our problem is that most of us are literate learners and this is true worldwide of about 90% of workers/believers who work amongst oral peoples. The way we teach is the way we learned – literate communication styles.

Face your fear in storytelling

Fear is a normal human emotion but one that shouldn't prevent us from obedience. We need to face our fears. The Lord Jesus said, ***"When God gives you the Holy Spirit, He will give you power"***. (Acts 1:8)

2 Cor. 7:5-7 is helpful: ***"For even when we came to Macedonia our bodies had no rest, but were afflicted at every turn, fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downhearted, comforted us by the coming of Titus and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you … so that I rejoiced still more."***

Again in 1 Thess. 3:5 you sense Paul's fear, ***"For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labour would be in vain."***

Ask yourself what Paul's fears were? Identify five major fears. If your fear is speaking/sharing the Gospel with unbelievers, make a note of this. Read Lk. 21:12 and 16-18 and finally verse 19, ***"By your endurance you will gain your lives."*** Now read Luke 12:4-7. What are all the reasons we have not to be afraid?

Remember, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to the Lord Jesus. ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations … and behold I am with you always, to the end of the age."*** (Mt. 28:18-20)

52 Stories in Chronological Order

1. Genesis 3:1-15 Creation/The Fall in Garden
2. Genesis 4:1-13 Cain and Abel
3. Genesis 12:10-20 Abram & Sarai
4. Genesis 28:12-22 Jacob's Ladder Dream
5. Genesis 35:1-5 Back to Bethel
6. Exodus 3:1-12 Burning Bush
7. Exodus 4:10-17 Doubt of Moses
8. Exodus 14:5-14 God, Pharaoh, Moses
9. Exodus 14:21-31 Crossing the Red Sea
10. Exodus 17:1-7 Moses Rock One
11. Numbers 14:22-30 Adults Die
12. Numbers 14:36-45 Slow Learners
13. Numbers 20:1-13 Moses Rock Two
14. Numbers 21:1-9 Brass Serpent
15. Joshua 5:12-6:5 Joshua Meets Captain
16. 1 Samuel 13:6-14 Saul Loses Kingship
17. 1 Samuel 17:39-51 Goliath's Defeat
18. 1 Samuel 24:1-12 David and Saul's Robe
19. 2 Kings 4:1-7 Jars of Oil
20. 2 Kings 6:1-7 Lost Axe Head
21. 2 Kings 8:1-6 Elisha, King & Lady
22. Psalm 1:1-6 Which Council?
23. Psalm 23:1-6 Good Shepherd
24. Jonah 1:1-17 Jonah Runs
25. Matthew 2:1-15 Wise Men Seek
26. Matthew 8:5-13 Centurion's Faith
27. Matthew 14:22-33 Walking on Water
28. Matthew 17:1-9 Transfiguration
29. Matthew 28 16-20 Great Commission
30. Mark 1:21-28 Jesus Demonic in Synagogue
31. Mark 1:40-45 One Leper
32. Mark 2:1-12 Paralyzed Lowered
33. Mark 4:35-41 Storm and Jesus in Boat
34. Mark 6:1-6 Jesus in Hometown
35. Mark 10:46-52 Blind Bartimaeus
36. Mark 12:41-44 Widow's Mite
37. Luke 2:40-52 Jesus as Boy
38. Luke 10:25-37 Good Samaritan
39. Luke 10:38-42 Martha Mary
40. Luke 13:10-17 Crippled Woman
41. Luke 17:11-19 Ten Lepers
42. Luke 18:9-14 Two Prayers
43. Luke 18:18-27 Rich Ruler
44. Luke 19:1-10 Zacchaeus
45. John 2:1-11 Marriage and Wine
46. John 6:1-15 5,000 Fed
47. Acts 3:1-10 Silver Gold Healing
48. Acts 4:13-22 Peter and John Preach
49. Acts 20:7-12 Fall Out Window
50. Acts 24:24-27 Paul and Felix
51. Acts 28:1-11 Paul's Shipwreck
52. James 1:22-27 Do the Word

Books

Dillon, Christine; **Telling the Gospel through Story**, IVP 2012

Goldsmith, Martin; **Storytelling – sharing the Gospel with passion and power**, IVP 2014

Terry, J.O; **God and woman: chronological Bible story model for oral culture Muslims and Hindus a woman's worldview**, 1998 (IMB/SBC) printed in Singapore

Perry, Bill; **Storytellers Bible Study for Internationals**, Multi-language Media (1992)

Some websites

- http://biblestorying.org
- http://www.communication-strategy.net/synapse/documents/Files_public.cfm?website=communication-strategy.net

  This is a good introduction to the world of orality and development of strategies to reach oral people. The accompanying power points are general overview of orality and its impact in Christian work around the world. It is a free download.

Storytelling Resources

- www.gods-story.org/ The God's Story Project. This is an 80 minute presentation – God's story: from creation to eternity. This panorama highlights God's plan to rescue fallen mankind.
- www.chronologicalbiblestorying.com It contains training manuals, story sets, research reports and PowerPoint presentations.
- www.oralbible.com The Oral Bible Network conducts training workshops for both learners and experience storytellers. It is a group made up of many agencies – CC, IMB, Wycliffe, Jesus Film Project and several others.
- www.storytellingcenter.net/ This site has an abundance of storytelling resources and activities.

An exercise

You have 20 minutes to prepare.

- **Get into groups of four.**
- **Choose whether you're going to do:**
  - an evangelistic parable story
  - a discipling story from the Elisha stories
- **Some options:**

  Parables:
  - The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37)
  - The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin (Lk. 15:4-10)
  - The Two Lost Sons (Lk. 15: 11-32)
  - The Noble Vineyard Owner and His Son (Lk. 20:9-18)
- *If you had more time to prepare, how would you illustrate your story?* Mime? Acting it out (all 4 of you) with facial expressions and gesticulations?
- **Each group will tell their story with actions** – 5-6 minutes each.