



**BECOMING A**  
**BIBLE**  
**STORYTELLER**

**WELCOME** to what we hope will be a simple and practical guide to learning about the Bible Storying process and how to be a Bible Storyteller.

We start from a simple premise: You want to learn how to tell Bible Stories and draw out of people what God is showing them in His Word.

This guide is written with that premise in mind and assumes that you have participated in at least one Bible Storying experience.

First, let's be clear about what Bible Storying is and is not.

### **BIBLE STORYING IS:**

- A way to follow what Jesus modeled as He taught using stories and parables to inform His audience about the Kingdom of God.
- An active group participation experience that is intended to lead to deeper understanding and application of God's Word.
- An opportunity for the Holy Spirit to be THE leader and for us to act as facilitators drawing out what He is saying to His people.
- An effective tool in the discipleship process.
- Open to everyone and is a great way to include people at all phases of their spiritual journeys, including non-believers.

### **BIBLE STORYING IS NOT:**

- A leader-centric, study-focused, one-right-answer type of experience.
- A good fit for people who do not wish to participate and share openly.
- Easy; it takes prayer and preparation so that God is able to use you as His vessel.
- Dependent on a gifted speaker or someone with lots of Bible knowledge.

# **OVERVIEW OF A BIBLE STORYING EXPERIENCE**

While every Bible Storying experience is different, we recommend that leaders use the following basic outline each time:

## **REVIEW**

A Bible Storying session usually begins by taking a few minutes to review the previous story by asking questions about what people remember, what stuck out to them, and how they put into practice what God gave them.

## **HOOK**

The hook is something that the Leader uses to get people ready to hear the story. The hook can be an example, a question, a demonstration, or a personal story.

## **TELLING THE STORY**

Begin with any information that people may need to know about the story, and then simply tell the story. Your listeners should have their Bibles closed, so they can focus on you and the story.

## **RETELL**

Facilitate group participation by having everyone open their Bibles and read the Scripture passage that you just storied. You can either have group members read the passage line by line, or you can work through the Scripture passage by asking sequential questions.

## **REFLECT (HEAD) QUESTIONS**

Now move to asking the group questions by first requesting that they Reflect on what they just heard or learned. These are called “Head” questions because they focus on what people think, know, or have learned.

## **RELATE (HEART) QUESTIONS**

Then move on to Relate questions, which are designed to get at what people are feeling or what is stirring in their hearts as a result of the story. This is an important step to help people move from head knowledge to more personal, heart-felt answers.

## **RESPOND (HANDS) QUESTIONS**

Finish with questions that are directed at what the group members believe God is asking them to do as a result of the story. These questions focus on how they will be the “hands” of Jesus, and they often help to bring a healthy form of accountability to the group. Pay particular attention to what people share, as this will set the stage for your next storying session’s Review step.

Now that you have the basic outline of how a leader takes people through a storying experience, let's look at the three main steps to focus on in preparing to tell Bible stories:

1. Your personal preparation in getting ready to share a story
2. Telling the story to your group
3. Facilitating your group's discussion and interactions

## **STEP 1: PREPARING YOUR SELF TO SHARE A BIBLE STORY**

The first and most important part of getting ready to lead a Bible Storying session is for you, as the Leader, to prepare your heart. Here are a few recommendations on how to prepare your Self to share with your group:

- Set aside time to talk to God about your role as His storying leader, asking Him directly for guidance, power, discernment, and understanding.
- Confess to Him any fears or anxieties you have, or anything else that might stand in the way of you being His instrument in a storying experience.
- Ask God to use this experience to help you grow in intimacy and dependence on Him.

Don't underestimate the need for this time of preparation. What you do up front is arguably more important than all the details that follow.

The next thing you'll need to do is to select the story or story series you are going to share (unless you and your group have already come to this decision or you've otherwise been given a story to share).

If you are just starting out and are not sure which story or story series to share, contact the Pastor or Director you are working with and they will assist you in this process.

Once you've prepared your heart and you know the story you are going to share, you are ready to move to Step Two in learning to Bible Story.

## STEP 2: TELLING THE STORY

The great thing about Bible Storying is that it can be used in a variety of settings. As you learn to share Bible Stories, you will be able to use it as a ministering tool in the lives of individual friends and family members (believers and non-believers), in small groups, and in almost any environment.

For the purposes of this guide, we will focus on preparing you to share Bible Storying with a small group.

We believe that the following guidelines will help you in your storytelling experience, but we also want you to know that these are recommendations only and that you are free to use whatever methods work best for you. With this said, here are some suggested guidelines to help you prepare to share a Bible Story:

- Read your selected story several times and in a few different Bible translations.
- Write the story out in your own words.
- Practice, practice, practice saying the story out loud. Repetition is the key to learning!
- Be sure you are not adding any extra information.
- Ask a family member or friend to listen as you share and then ask for their feedback.
- When telling a story, be yourself. Let the story come naturally from the way God has made you... no fancy bells or whistles are needed!

Once you have prayed, prepared, and practiced, you are ready to simply tell the story. Do the best that you can, and don't worry if you make a mistake or leave something out. In Bible Storying, there is a built-in way to handle mistakes, additions, or omissions that we'll address later in this guide.

After you've done your best and shared your story with your group, you are now ready to focus on Step Three in Bible Storying.

## STEP 3: FACILITATING GROUP DISCUSSION AND INTERACTIONS

After sharing your story, you will switch gears from being the one who shares to being the one who asks questions and listens in order to draw out what God is doing in the minds and hearts of your group members.

Before you begin to ask questions, there is an important part of the storying experience to be done called the Replay.

The Replay is when everyone in the group opens their Bibles to the story you just told and you walk them through the story, by either reading the Scripture passage line-by-line or by asking sequential questions. This is a critical component to Bible Storying, as it ensures that the Storyteller has not left out anything important or added anything that is not in Scripture.

After the Replay, you are ready to ask the group a series of question. Your questions should fall into these three categories:

**REFLECT (HEAD) QUESTIONS** What did we learn?

**RELATE (HEART) QUESTIONS** What are you feeling?

**RESPOND (HANDS) QUESTIONS** What is God asking you to do?

### ASKING REFLECT (HEAD) QUESTIONS

Most group discussions typically begin by the Leader/Facilitator asking a few “Head” questions that are meant to draw out what was learned from the story. These are the types of questions that people are most accustomed to and most comfortable with.

#### EXAMPLES OF REFLECT (HEAD) QUESTIONS ARE:

- What was the key learning for you in this story?
- What is something new that you saw?
- What do we learn about God from this story?
- What do we learn about people (ourselves)?

Since these types of questions are the most comfortable and easiest to answer, start with them, but take the least amount of discussion time to deal with them.

## **ASKING RELATE (HEART) QUESTIONS**

Next, transition from the “Head” to the “Heart,” with questions that are specifically designed to draw out an emotional response from group members. These questions will help determine what is stirring in people, and what they are feeling or sensing from the story.

### **EXAMPLES OF RELATE (HEART) QUESTIONS ARE:**

- What were you imagining when you heard the story?
- What most stirred you about this story?
- Tell of an experience you had that relates to this story.
- What about this story is personally convicting to you?

When drawing out feelings from the heart, be aware that strong emotions may begin to surface. Don't be afraid of this and don't be quick to move away from emotions.

## **ASKING RESPOND (HANDS) QUESTIONS**

This final part of the discussion should receive the most time and attention, as it's when you will ask very specific “Hands” questions about the ways God is asking your group members to be His Hands.

### **EXAMPLES OF RESPOND (HANDS) QUESTIONS ARE:**

- After hearing the story, what is God asking you to begin, change, or stop?
- Where, or in what ways, is God inviting you to join Him?
- Who is God asking you to reach out to as a result of hearing this story?
- Who can you share this story with during the coming week?

“Hands” questions can be the most uncomfortable and difficult for people to respond to, and can seem like a big risk for a Facilitator to take. And while this can be true, it's also true that these times are often when the most powerful transformational moments occur. So we encourage you to take the risk and courageously ask specific application-oriented questions!

It's now time to bring your session to a close, and doing this with a time of prayer is a good recommendation! We trust you to decide what form of prayer best fits your group dynamics, but do let your oversight Pastor know if you need any resources in the area of prayer.

# APPENDIX: RESOURCES AND HELPFUL HINTS

Bible Storying Discussion Guidelines.....Page 9

Sample Reflect (Head), Relate (Heart), and Respond (Hands) questions.....Page 10

38 Reasons Bible Storying is Different from Other Learning Styles.....Page 13

Additional Bible Storying Resources.....Page 14

# BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

- Everyone's view is welcomed--no put downs or correcting
- Everyone is expected to participate. For many of the questions, there is no "right" answer. The questions have to do with what you noticed and observed in the story, connections you may have made, and questions you have. It is okay to pass or say, "I don't know" when asked a question.
- Ask each other questions about the story.
- Be transparent--we will only grow in our walk with the Lord if we are able to practice the one-anothers--that requires being transparent about the good and hard things in life.
- When someone else is responding, listen first to what people are saying and not be as quick to give your answer.
- Don't rescue others--if they are having a hard time, don't step in to rescue them. Don't try to 'fix' someone or give advice without asking if the person wants it.
- Use "I" statements: not the church, we, us, etc.
- Stick to today's story and other stories already discussed. Work to not bring in other Biblical knowledge you may have or stories not yet discussed as a group.
- Use Imaginative Listening: try to picture what is going on in these scenes--what do you see, smell, what are the interactions and emotions going on?

## REMEMBER:

- Listen in expectation that God is present and revealing truth through each person
- Remember discipleship is a life-long journey. Cultivate listening and observation skills that will continue to bear fruit.
- Trust that God will work through the process. Value the experience as much as the knowledge and content.
- Let go of the role of the expert teacher and embrace the role of co-learner, encourager, and guide.
- Be patient allow time for process, different opinions, tangents, tension, questions, and wonderings.
- Have faith that God, through the Holy Spirit, will speak and bring to light the truth and implications God desires to reveal.

# SAMPLE

# Head · Heart · Hands

# QUESTIONS

## Reflect (Head) Questions:

- What was Jesus/God teaching them in this event?
- In your own words, what was Jesus teaching his followers in this scene?
- Where in previous stories have we seen God do this?
- Which of our other stories talks about \_\_\_\_\_?
- What kinds of emotions do you think...?
- How did people respond...?
- As a result of their decision/choice, how did it change their relationship with God?
- What did you notice about \_\_\_\_\_ from the story?
- What feelings do you think motivated...?
- What do you think it was like...?
- What do you think was going on in \_\_\_\_\_ heart and mind in this story?
- What was \_\_\_\_\_ risking to follow God?
- What was the relationship between \_\_\_\_\_ and God like? How is your relationship like this?
- What do you think God is showing us through...?
- What surprised you about today's story? God? Jesus? How the character responded?
- Who are the main characters in the story?
- What were the main events in the story?
- What important things do people say/do to each other in the story?
- What words are repeated in the story? I wonder why.
- What do you think are the most important words in the story?
- How are the characters alike or different in the story?
- What does God / the writer mean by \_\_\_\_\_?
- What did you like about the story? What was new for you in today's story?
- What is something new that you learned or have not seen in this story before?
- What did you see in your mind as the story was being told/listening to the story?
- What did you notice in the story for the first time?
- What did you wonder about when the story was being told?
- How does this story challenge or reinforce something you already know?
- We may have already heard this story before. What jumps out at you as new or different?
- What questions do you have about what you have heard?
- What did you hear/see/smell in this story?
- How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you in the story?

- Something new I learned today about...
  - God
  - Jesus
  - What it means to follow Jesus
  - Myself
- What is the best/worst/single thing...?
- I like it that...
- I don't like it that...
- What do you like about \_\_\_\_\_? What do you not like?
- Why do you suppose...?
- What might you conclude from...?
- On a scale of 1-10...
- Does anyone in the story have a problem? How big is the problem?
- How do the people with the problem try to handle it?
- What does the story teach us about God?
- How did the story describe God's relationship with people?
- How did God...?
- For what purpose did God \_\_\_\_\_?
- What do you think is really important to God? To the character?
- How did God respond when the person/people came to Him?
- What did we learn about \_\_\_\_\_'s relationship with God from this story?
- Does anyone in the story change beliefs, behaviors or attitudes?
- How does God respond to people's beliefs, feelings, words or actions? What does this show us?

## Reflect (Head) Questions:

- What did the story tell you about God?
- Why do you think God put this story in the Bible?
- What did the story tell you about yourself?
- Where in your life has...?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_'s life inspire you?
- Has God ever used you...?
- How are we just like \_\_\_\_\_?
- How can we become \_\_\_\_\_?
- Where does your story fit into God's story?
- After hearing the story, how might it change how you view yourself?
- How have you experienced...?
- Which character in today's story do you most relate to?
- In what ways, if any do you...?
- Why do you think God uses people to...?
- Why do you think God...?
- What have we learned about what God is like? Where have we seen that?
- What did we learn about Jesus from this story?

- What amazes you the most about Jesus/God?
- What do you notice about God from this story?
- What point does this story make about God?
- Do I see any of the characteristics of God demonstrated?
- What did the story tell you about people?
- In what ways are we also like...?
- How are the characters/stories alike? How are they different?
- What kind of guy/gal is \_\_\_\_\_?
- In what ways is our situation like...
- What can we learn about/from...?
- Is there anything in the story that surprised me, actions of God or people or results of people's behavior?
- What are the characters in the story thinking and feeling? In what ways are they acting in a God-like way?
- What do you feel after reading/hearing that...?
- Something new that I learned about God/myself today is...
- Something I never realized before today is...
- The most interesting thing you heard today is ...
- How would you have felt...?

## Respond (Hands) Questions:

- What does God want you to do because of what you learned today? What should I do differently because of today's story?
- What did we learn about being a follower of Jesus from this story?
- How should we respond to Jesus today?
- How does this story affect your life?
- What is God inviting you to through this story? (Is there an invitation for you in this story?)
- After hearing the story, how will you live differently?
- Based on this story, what do you think God desires of us? What in this story makes you think so?
- What I think Jesus is saying to me is...
- When I hear Him saying that, I feel...
- How do you feel about God now?
- So I feel the main thing Jesus is after in this passage is...
- What do you think Jesus wanted his audience to do with/in response to this parable?
- How can you put this insight into practice this week?
- What did you hear today that makes you think you ought to make a change in your life?

## Miscellaneous Questions:

- Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?
- If someone asked you what was the most important part of today's story, what would you tell them?
- From all the stories we have heard so far, what are you noticing about...?

# 38 WAYS BIBLE STORYING IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER LEARNING STYLES

Some people may face some shifts in thinking when learning and using Bible Storying-- especially people who are trained and experienced in a literate style of Scripture preparation and ministry. Some challenges are due to the content and others are due to the methods we use to train. Not everyone will face all of these shifts, but most of us will face some:

1. Using questions instead of lecture to deliver information
2. Answering questions with questions
3. The teacher is not the central focus; the Word of God is the focus
4. Opens doors to teach deeply those formerly rejected as unteachable
5. By using questions that cause thinking, the Holy Spirit has room to teach
6. Achieves results through non-traditional teaching structure
7. The very core of Bible Storying trains people to teach others
8. Goals strived for become natural outcomes
9. Allows teachers to be impacted through those who are taught
10. Teaching is independent of written material or physical devices
11. Equips people to minister in and outside of a Christian environment
12. When people are able to discover, the teacher waits to give information
13. Information is not told; questions assist others to find for themselves
14. Vibrant discussion occurs, but content and decorum stay controlled
15. Wise participants learn the value of holding back, allowing all to discover
16. Teachers learn to listen well and respond to input from those they lead
17. Not using information outside the story or material outside the Bible
18. Literates learn to operate inside the world of oral communicators
19. Gain skills of preparing and sharing Scripture without written notes
20. To trust the Word and Holy Spirit to do the work of transforming lives
21. Body unity results from common ground of staying in one message
22. To be comfortable discussing story ideas not prepared on the mental list
23. Young people can discover spiritual information valuable to others
24. Non-literates can gather deep spiritual truth from God's Word
25. Truth gleaned in the story and internalized prompts learners to apply
26. Both those new to and familiar with Scripture learn alongside one another
27. Socio-economic and ethnic prejudices lose significance
28. People who feel superior start seeing the value in others as God does
29. Meditation strived for begins to occur naturally
30. The depth of what can be found in a short passage astounds all
31. Non-literates and the uneducated can think critically
32. Bible Storying stimulates teachers and listeners to think more deeply
33. Remembering Scripture content is as valid as memorizing--and easier!
34. Literates are able to learn Bible passages without seeing the printed page
35. People can co-lead easily utilizing Bible Storying
36. Set training schedule can flex according to needs of the attendees
37. Teachers act as interested learners rather than all-knowing superiors
38. People taught by story remember content and share with others

# **BIBLE STORYING RESOURCES**

## **MICHAEL NOVELLI**

- Website: [www.echothestory.com](http://www.echothestory.com) (resources, curriculum)
- Book: *Shaped By the Story*. Zondervan. 2008
- Facebook: Echo

## **JOHN WALSH**

- Website: [www.bibletelling.com](http://www.bibletelling.com) (training, curriculum)
- Book: *The Art of Storytelling*. Moody Publishers. 2003

## **REAL LIFE MINISTRIES/NAVPRESS**

- Website: [www.rlmchurchtraininganddevelopment.com](http://www.rlmchurchtraininganddevelopment.com)
- *Walk Thru the Bible*. Story Thru the Bible. 2011

## **STEVEN JAMES**

- Website: [www.stevenjames.net](http://www.stevenjames.net) (resources)
- Book: *Creative Storytelling Guide*. Standard Pub. 2002.

## **INTERNATIONAL ORALITY NETWORK**

- Website: [www.internationaloralitynetwork.com](http://www.internationaloralitynetwork.com) (resources)
- Facebook: International Orality Network

## **STORY4ALL**

- Weekly Podcast: story4all on iTunes

## **SIMPLY THE STORY**

- Website: [www.SimplytheStory.com](http://www.SimplytheStory.com) (training handbook)

## **MARK SNOWDEN**

- Website: [www.truthsticks.com](http://www.truthsticks.com)
- Book: *Truth That Sticks with Avery Willis*. Navpress. 2010
- Facebook: TruthSticks

## **INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD**

- Website: [www.imb.org](http://www.imb.org) (put 'storying' in the search line)

## **SOMA COMMUNITIES**

- Website: [www.somacommunities.org/soma-school](http://www.somacommunities.org/soma-school) (training, curriculum)