

Simply The Story

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Draft 11/27/07

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Simply The Story **(STS)**

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“The profound truths from God are housed in the simple stories of the Bible.” D.A.M

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” [2 Corinthians 11:3](#)

The Jesus Model: Tell The Story, Ask Questions

God wrote the Bible as:

- 10% exposition
- 15% poetry and
- 75% narrative (story)

Simply The Story encourages presenters of Bible information to utilize stories the way God gave them, as whole stories. No need to write out Bible stories for STS. The "stories" are any story in the Bible. How to tell stories interestingly and accurately, and how to teach using STS is what this document contains.

Hands-on STS workshops help people develop these skills. Attendees learn how to find the spiritual information (the treasures) that the stories contain, and then to form and ask questions in a discussion forum that will lead listeners to those treasures.

Anyone following these guidelines, or learning these skills in an STS workshop, can be an effective practitioner. May the Lord bless His Word as it goes out through these practitioners. Note: practitioners are not certified to train others under the banner of *Simply The Story*. Because of the wonderful results we see from STS, our desire is to certify many more STS instructors world wide. Certified instructors not only are skilled, experienced practitioners, they also know how to train newcomers correctly and well.

What Are Bible Treasures?

Once there was a man who left his village and went to the city to work. In the many years he was in the city, the man earned a lot of money. Finally, he returned to his home whereupon everyone greeted him as a great friend.

This newly wealthy man wanted to use some of his money to give gifts to his true friends. So he thought of a plan. He left his village for a day and then came back. Then he called everyone together who was saying, “I am your friend,” and he asked them all to come meet him at the other side of the nearby hill.

The wealthy man gathered the people who came and then made an announcement. He said, “I’ve been working on the path that goes to the river. If you follow the path, you will find some treasures. Now go. Find my gifts for you.”

So the people left and started walking down the path. A few people went a short ways, and then stooped down and picked up some sand from the path. They agreed saying, "Let's go home and study this sand for awhile."

Others ran down the path toward the river. When they reached the end of the path, they complained, "We know this path well. There is nothing new. We didn't see any treasure."

The rest of the people continued walking down the familiar path. As they moved along, they began talking with each other, saying things like, "Look at this old fallen tree. Our friend moved it out of the way to make our walk on the path easier." Other walkers noticed that the thorn bushes had been cut back to make the way safer.

Instead of running down the path to find the gifts, these people began walking even more slowly, so that they could enjoy the results of the hard work that their wealthy friend had done for them. They recognized that the path itself was a gift from their friend.

Suddenly, one walker stopped, and called everyone over to look. "Look by the side of the path here, under this bush. There are jars of sweet potatoes."

Then another walker called out, "Look over here, under the bushes beside the path! I found a big box of brand new cooking pots."

Again and again the slow walkers kept discovering hidden treasures just off to the side of the path. They realized that these gifts had been placed there for them by their rich friend. You see, the wealthy man knew that his true friends would trust him and appreciate his path, so they would be the ones to discover the gifts he had placed there for them.

Those who had rushed down the path, that had been lovingly prepared by the rich man, missed all of the treasures. They did not go slowly enough to be able to appreciate the path, or the path maker. (Those who decided to study the sand on the path are still studying. They still have not yet traveled the path!)

Every story in the Bible is a path prepared for us by God. Those who will walk slowly through the path of a Bible story can discover hidden treasures, gifts of truth from God. This we do in *Story The Story*.

Simply the Story, Short Overview

A Bible story is studied and questions are prepared according to *Simply The Story* guidelines. Then two-phase teaching takes place: first telling the story, then second, discovering the treasures.

Phase One: The story is presented three times allowing the listeners to become totally familiar with the story's contents.

1. The storyteller tells the story (The first telling helps the listener visualize the story and feel its impact.)
2. The storyteller asks a volunteer to retell the story. (Listeners pay close attention to see if the volunteer gets it "right" which helps seal the story into the listeners' memories.)
3. The storyteller goes through the story a third time. (This is just one more retelling of the story, but this time the storyteller enlists everyone's help to step through it together.)

Phase Two: The storyteller leads the listeners to the spiritual treasures in the story. This is done in two sections.

1. First the storyteller leads listeners to Spiritual Observations through questions. (This is when listeners are invited to take a look at the activities of the characters in the story. Then, in response to questions, the listeners share what they learn about God and the people in the story.)
2. Second, questions are then used to lead listeners to discover and share Spiritual Applications. (These are the spiritual truths that apply to people today.)

The Power of Story, Following Nathan's Example: In 2 Samuel 12:1-14 God gives us a principle of communicating spiritual truth. King David had clearly sinned by committing adultery, and then ordering his military leader to murder the woman's husband. Afterward, David tried to hide his sin.

Nathan the prophet came to David and told a story. The story was about two men, one rich, one poor. The very wealthy man owned many cattle and sheep. One day when this rich man had company, he stole the one pet sheep that the poor man owned and killed it and gave it to his guest as a meal.

When David heard Nathan's story, David became extremely angry and said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die! And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man. "

Before David heard Nathan's story, David knew that he had committed sin, but he had not admitted to it. David had not faced his sin. Nathan was a prophet, and a very wise man. Nathan could have appeared before the King and confronted David in the usual style of a prophet by preaching a sermon against adultery and murder, but instead Nathan told a story.

Notice what happened. David rightly judged the wealthy man as being guilty and worthy of death! David looked in the window of the story and saw the sin of the wealthy man and made a righteous spiritual observation.

After David committed verbally to what was right, Nathan took David into the story and made the spiritual application. "You are that man, David" said Nathan.

David then faced his sin. "David said unto Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' And Nathan said unto David, 'The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.'"

The punishment of death (which David had told Nathan should come on the wealthy man) instead came to David's own household.

This Bible story in 2 Samuel illustrates a major distinctive of *Simply The Story*, its central part. After people have heard a Bible story and really felt it, they discuss it. As they look into the window of the story they speak aloud what we call their, "Spiritual Observations" about the story. They verbally commit to spiritual truths seen there.

Then, after the listeners have shared aloud what they saw in the story as they stood outside of it and looked into it through the window, the storyteller invites the people to come through the door of the story and enter into it personally. While discussing the "Spiritual Observations," that the listeners themselves discovered, the Holy Spirit speaks to people. He makes sure that truths in the story are made personal. That is what we call in STS, "Spiritual Applications."

The How-To of *Simply The Story* **To teach using STS style requires three skills:**

- I. **How to Prepare a Story and Tell it Well**
- II. **How to Find Treasures in the Story**
- III. **How to Frame and Ask Insightful Questions**

Skill I: How to Prepare Your Story (and Tell It Well)

As you go through the processes of *Simply The Story*, the one guideline to follow above all others is to trust God's Word. Trust that the stories in the Bible are best told in their entirety as God wrote them. When you tell a Bible story, add no information, leave out nothing, and do not preach or explain the story's contents while you tell it.

Selection of Bible Stories

In some situations, you may be assigned a specific story by a leader. If however you are selecting your own stories, here are several guidelines.

1. When you only have one (or just a few) opportunities to tell Bible stories to a specific group, pick stories with content that is appropriate for the age of the listeners and of a length that fits the time available. *Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you to stories that contain the truths the "listeners" need to hear.*
2. When God gave us the Bible, He had innumerable quantities of historical incidences from which to choose. Of course God in His wisdom selected the perfect ones needed for humankind. Since our God created all people, He knew their needs. As well, in His omniscience, God knew every culture and belief system that people would ever develop. We say this to suggest to storytellers that the Lord has something of spiritual value in every story for all people. Do not be overly concerned about picking a wrong story to tell a group. As you tell your selected story, know that the Holy Spirit will deliver His message to each person present.
3. If you will be having multiple opportunities to tell stories to the same listeners for an extended period of time, it is best to start at the beginning of the Bible. Most Bible stories are built on the information in the stories that preceded them, so when possible it is wise to select and tell stories in chronological order. You can skip some stories if you feel led, but if you do that, you will probably want to give an introduction to that next story to make the connection smooth. Even when you do not skip any stories, at times, it is wise to prepare listeners for the story you are about to tell by giving a reminder of the previous story you told.

Now that you have selected your story, let us examine some of the ways to learn to tell it.

1. **Read the Story Through Once.**
2. **Pray** for the ability to remember and understand the story and to tell it accurately and with enthusiasm.
3. **Read the Story Again, Out Loud.** As you go through, you may want to change some of the wording. Select words for your story that are the ones your particular listeners use to express themselves. For instance instead of saying “fearful,” you might decide to say “afraid” or “scared.”
4. **Close Your Bible and Tell the Story Out Loud From Memory.** Just do your best to recall as much of the story as you are able. As you go, if you falter or forget parts, don’t worry; don’t stop. Just keep going. You can add the missed information in a later sentence if it comes back to mind. ***This is storytelling, not memorization.***

For instance, if the text says “Jesus took Peter, James and John... , but suddenly you forget all three names, you could just keep going saying, “Jesus took three disciples...” Then, as you continue telling the story, if you remember their names, instead of saying “they” you just say, “Peter, James and John...” The story stayed true. (Next time you tell the story, you will probably remember to say the names when they first appear in the story!)

5. **Read the Story Out Loud Another Time.** As you read, note any information you may have added or left out. You will probably be surprised at how much of the story you remembered. If your story is long (more than 12 to 15 verses), you may want to remember it in two parts. Many stories have several natural sections. You might want to remember your story as two scenes or pictures in your mind. You are not memorizing words; you are ***remembering a story by following the pictures in your mind.***
6. **Again, Close Your Bible and Tell the Story Out Loud.** This time through, you will discover that you can recall even more of the story than the first time you told it. Once more, open to the story and read it out loud to see if you added or left out any information. Even small parts need to be correct. Every part of the story, the way God gave it to us, is important.
7. **Select Your Beginning and Ending Statements.** This establishes the path of your story, where you will start your story and how your story will end. Your selected story may be easy to remember, which means it is one straight path, beginning to end. Very often your story will have some hard spots, junctions that you will miss unless you make a mental mark on your path. (Below see Mental Markers)
8. **Mental Markers:** After you repeat the retelling and check yourself a few more times, you may discover a few parts that are difficult to remember. If names or any other definite parts of the story were missed several times, now is the time to use some mental markers on the road map of your story.

- a. For words, names or details in your story that are hard for you to recall, draw a silly picture in your mind. (Jerry Lucas, known as the Memory

Doctor, popularized this method.) For example, when telling the story of Jonah you might have trouble remembering Jonah's father's name, Amittai. Think of a word or words in your language that sounds like the word or name you are trying to remember. In English a storyteller could imagine a ridiculous image of a man wearing a baseball mitt for a necktie. A-mitt-tie. You will find that the sillier the picture is that you draw in your mind, the easier those hard words are to remember. In whatever language you speak, find a rhyming word or silly image that brings the name or situation to your thoughts.

- b. Some who teach storytelling do not stress remembering specific names. We do encourage saying the names in your story, even though they are usually the most difficult parts of the story to remember. The Lord knows that we struggle to remember names. But, since God did choose in many cases to give us the names of the characters and places in a story, we like to include that information when we tell the story.

9. Tell and Check Until You Can Go Through Accurately. Repeat these steps until you know the story well. Keep telling the whole story out loud, and then glance back at the text to see if you covered ALL of the information. Always guard against adding facts to the story, even **facts found in some parallel passage of this Bible story!** The Lord made the decision to tell some stories in the Bible more than once. Each telling is slightly different. If God chose to keep the stories separate, so will we. In time, as more stories are told, the truths found in each story and the way they fit together will be discovered.

Adding Depth and Listening Interest to the Story

1. Read Some Scripture that Leads to Your Story. This will help you better understand the story. Reading some verses that are in front of your story and ones that follow it allows you to decide if you need to prepare an introduction or "set up" to the story.

- a. At most, this introduction should only be a few words or sentences. ***Introductions are by nature more of a documentary style than a story***, so keep introductions short to maintain listener's interest.
- b. Use a set up only if it is needed to place the story in a time and situational context. Make sure your introduction is very brief and vital to the understanding of your selected story.
- c. Whatever information the story contains, you probably do not have to include that part in your set up. Sometimes no introduction may be needed.
- d. In STS we use only information found in the Bible, not extra biblical information or Greek/Hebrew word definitions as that kind of information is only available to a select few. We want to encourage and empower all believers to share Scriptures through stories. People need to be encouraged to utilize and ***trust the story***.
- e. The introduction is Bible information you have compiled. After your introduction, make it clear that your set-up is done, by saying something like, "Now this is the story" or "This is the Bible story."

2. **Avoid Pronouns!!!!** To help your listeners follow the story as you tell it, *use the names of the people in the story* and *the specific location or name of an object* as much as possible instead of saying “it,” “he,” “she” or “they.”
3. **Think About the Timing of the Story.** (Noticing this “timing of the story” and the next point “living the story,” are central both to understanding the story and to being able to tell it well.)
 - a. We can all read through a Bible story much more quickly than the actual amount of time it took for the story to take place. So to fully understand a story, read through it slowly.
 - b. Picture in your mind each scene in the story. From the information given in the story, imagine what each character in the story is feeling and thinking.
 - c. Note that even though the stories in the Bible occurred thousands of years ago, the people in the stories were living those events for the first time. Although we may be familiar with the story we are reading, take note of this....no one in the story had ever lived the incident before it occurred. So walk through the events in your mind as the characters in the story must have experienced them.
4. **Live the Story.** Notice what each character does and says and how each reacts to the other characters in the story.
 1. The actions and words of others tell us much if we listen to them. Through the use of observations, a storyteller can most accurately tell the story with the correct feelings.
 2. Do remind yourself that all people we read about in the Bible, even the leaders and prophets of God, are just people. Although many obey God and show faith in hard situations, *in every instance*, each of them had to make that choice to believe and trust.
5. **Speak all the Quotes in Your Story.** Say the words as the people (or characters) must have spoken them. Expressing emotion as you quote what characters said gives you an opportunity to give great life to the story. Hint: If the emotion of the speaker is listed in the story, or is very obvious, then use that emotion. Look for anger, sadness, fear, disappointment etc. Be as dramatic as possible as you say what that character said. **Caution: If you cannot be CERTAIN from the story what emotion the speaker is feeling, do NOT speak the words with the emotion that you THINK the speaker had. That would be adding to the story, which in the Bible God cautions us never to do!**

Deuteronomy 12:32 “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”

Proverbs 30:5-6 “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 6. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

Matthew 15:9 “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

- 6. Express the Story.** As you practice telling the story, your voice needs to reflect the mood and feeling the story contains.
1. When people first start telling stories, sometimes in an effort to be dramatic, the storyteller begins the story by speaking in an excited voice, but then continues with that same excited voice throughout the whole story! Speaking excitingly with a high voice for too long eventually wears out the audience causing these listeners to lose interest. In truth, no story would be correctly represented by excitement throughout.
 2. Actually some parts of the story might be about sadness, disappointment, fear, kindness, or some other emotion that an excited voice would not correctly represent. Express the story by raising and lowering the volume of your voice and its excitement level as it fits the story. As well, the various emotions of the story can be reflected in your voice.
 3. Most stories have some ordinary narration that connects the words of the speakers. Those parts can best be told with a normal voice.
 4. Sometimes however, even the words of the narrator can add interest to a story. The narrator's words can show a change of location or draw attention to an amazing part of the story. These words are spoken with a deep feeling of interest. It is as if the narrator is sharing some secret exciting information with listeners, so it is spoken in a loud whisper. Speaking like this points people to the words that will follow as particularly interesting. You can even speak ordinary words such as "meanwhile," or "at the same time," or "after they arrived," but say them in an intriguing manner.
- 7. Beginning the Story.** As listed before, when you begin telling the story, say, "Now this is the story" or "This is the Bible story." As you start telling the story, hold an open Bible. This indicates to the listener that what you are saying comes out of the Bible. When telling some stories you may want to use both of your hands to add drama to your storytelling. As you are speaking gently set your open Bible on a nearby table or raised platform of some kind. Keep talking as you set it down, so that the listeners will know that you are still telling a story found in the Bible. As you near the end of your story, continue telling your story as you reach over and pick up your open Bible.
- 8.** If you are storytelling in a region that is anti-Christian, you may not want to hold a Bible or even tell listeners it is a Bible story. In this case just tell your story and let the listeners be touched spiritually by the content and the discussion afterwards.
- 9.** When you complete the story, tell the listeners, "This is the end of the story," and close your Bible.
- 10. Tell Your Selected Story Often,** to anyone who will listen to it, until it flows easily. If no people are available, tell it to your pet or a tree. Remember, you are not memorizing exact words, ***but you are telling an exact story.***

Skill II: How to Find Treasures in the Story

The second skill you need to acquire is how to find the treasures within the story that you plan to tell.

What are treasures in a Bible story? We call the truths that God weaves into every Bible story “treasures.” These treasures are the combination of Spiritual Observations and Spiritual Applications.

The Spiritual Observations are how God is working in the lives of the people in the story. **The Spiritual Applications** are the spiritual truths that apply to our lives today.

1. How to Find the Treasures Called “Spiritual Observations”

Imagine that you are outside looking through a window and observing the story that you selected as it unfolds. You are not just watching the story as a piece of history, you are seeking to discover what is happening spiritually. God always has a plan for everyone in each Bible story. From what those characters learn (or don’t learn) we can discover what God wants us to learn. As explained before, part of the way you remember and understand a Bible story is to live that story.

As you live a story through what each character says and does, notice also how God works in the story. This “living in the story” helps you to discover some of the story’s treasures.

To find these spiritual treasures, go through the story and take some time to look at what is said about each individual or group of people in the story. God will be working with everyone in the story to teach them something.

In general as you explore every story to find its spiritual treasures, ask yourself such things as:

What does each character in the story do and say?

What does this show me about that person?

Can I know from the story if the person is a believer, a seeker, a doubter or a rejecter?

Is faith or doubt being shown?

How does God use circumstances to warn, teach or encourage?

Next are examples of more detailed questions that you can ask yourself as you look for treasures. These are just suggestions to give you an idea how to look for the potential wealth of treasures that might be found in a story.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. *Is there anything in the story that surprised me: actions of God, or people or the results of people’s behavior? As you carefully “listen” to the story the way God presents it to us in the Bible, see if you can discover the reason for the surprising part.*
2. *What came before this incident that could give me some insight as to who some of the characters are and why they behave as they do?*

3. *Do I see any of the characteristics of God demonstrated such as patience, longsuffering, anger, knowledge, justice, kindness, grace, mercy, concern for the weak, equal respect for all people or love?*
4. *To whom did God show those characteristics and does that teach me anything?*
5. *Can I know from the story if the individuals in it are believers or unbelievers?*
6. *Are the people in the story sincere seekers, skeptics or hardened rejecters of God.*
7. *Does anyone in the story have a problem? If so, how big is the problem?*
8. *How do the people with a problem try to handle the difficulty?*
9. *If the person with the problem goes to God for help, how does that person ask for the help?*
10. *Does the person approach God with respect or arrogance?*
11. *How does God respond to this approach and what might that show us?*
12. *Does the person with the problem go to another person for help?*
13. *How is help asked for in this situation?*
14. *Does the person with a problem show respect for leaders?*
15. *Is there a leader in the story who follows God, and if so, what are the results of the obedience?*
16. *Is there a leader in the story who does not follow God, and if so, what are the results of the disobedience?*
17. *Does anyone in the story change beliefs or attitudes? Do people change when they have a similar experience?*
18. *Are characters in the story showing or telling what they think and feel? Do you or does anyone you know show some of these same thoughts and feelings?*
19. *Do any of the characters show evidence of faith, love, mercy, anger, fear, hope, prejudice, doubt, greed, confusion, ignorance, wisdom, respect, disrespect, superstition or other attitudes?*
20. *How does God respond to those people's beliefs, feelings, words or actions and what does God's response show us?*
21. *Do some characters in the story change their behavior?*
22. *What exactly causes them to change?*
23. *What happens when they do change and what might that teach us?*
24. *Are there any miracles or supernatural events in the story and if so how did they affect the people in the story?*

Key to STS Success **Spiritual Applications** are based on the **Spiritual Observations** that you discover in a story.

2. How to Find the Treasures Called "Spiritual Applications"

To find the Spiritual Applications, mentally review each of the Observations you found. Look at each Observation. Then ask yourself, *In what ways do we have similar feelings and experiences to the character in the story?* Note how situations were handled and what we can learn by what God or the people did.

When you first read through a story, its contents sometimes can be confusing when you try to figure out why God responds the way He does to a person in the story. Also, at times when you read a story you may think this to yourself. *This is a nice story, but I do not observe anything spiritual in it.*

Know this. Every story in the Bible contains something for us today. See if you can discover what the following two Scriptures tell us about the usefulness of all of the information God put in the Bible. This insight will encourage you to try to find out why God acts as He does in a story and to know that there are spiritual observations to be seen in every Bible story.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

1 Corinthians 10:11-13 "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (12) Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. (13) There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

These verses say that all of the words in the Bible, including the words in the stories, are written to us...and for us. Since we know God does not just put words in a story to make the pages come out even, then we need to begin to carefully look at Bible stories to find out what all of the information in a story should mean to us.

As the storyteller and the designer of questions, there are steps you will take to help your listeners discover those truths for themselves. ***But, you cannot lead listeners to the treasures in the story until you first discover them for yourself!*** If, while preparing a story, you as a storyteller are not impacted spiritually by the story, it is a good time to go back and seek God for the truths of the story. If you have followed all of the guidelines for finding treasures, and you have not yet found any spiritual truths in that story, you are not yet equipped to tell it to others.

Once you do discover the many lessons (treasures) inside your story, you are now ready to design questions that can gently lead listeners to discover those treasures for themselves.

The Importance of Asking Questions

If you were out walking and discovered a treasure, you would be thrilled! If you took that treasure back and shared it with your friends, they would be very happy to receive it. But their happiness upon receiving it would not be as great as yours when you discovered it. Discovery is a thrill in itself.

Use easy to answer, leading questions during the beginning of discussion style teaching. This is vital to the success of the STS Bible study concept.

Many people do not know that they are capable of finding spiritual truths in the Bible. Others know spiritual treasures are in Bible stories, but they do not realize that they can find those treasures. When people answer the easy questions correctly, they are encouraged to look for more answers.

Most believers are not accustomed to carefully looking at the words and meanings in a Bible story. Purposeful questions (even if they are yes/no questions) are used to move people toward discovering spiritual observations for themselves.

Those with advanced Bible school or seminary education may have learned how to dissect or analyze the story, but may not have developed the skill of listening to story as a whole. STS keeps the Bible story together and it is listened to and heard as a stand-alone container of truth.

Occasionally people come to a study thinking that they pretty much know all that can be known about the Bible! The types of questions you use may include a technique that allow these proud people to voluntarily fall into a hole. A “hole” refers to a question that is asked in such a way to get listeners to volunteer misconceptions or false assumptions that they hold. As the discussion moves along, and the correct answer is discovered during the discussion, these responders realize that they made a mistake. Their mistake gently reveals the fact that that they do not know as much as they first thought. The surprising experience of falling into that subtle trap encourages self-satisfied attendees to become more interested in truly listening and learning.

At times people discover that what they had heard previously about the story (and had just assumed was accurate) is not that accurate, and that they had missed a lot about the story. These people too recognize that they must “listen” to the story to see what is truly there.

Still others just had no idea that the path of a story held treasures that they could find. In STS as we begin working with a new class or learners, we often lead them right up to a treasure and almost hand it to them. The skilled teacher can imperceptibly lead responders so that they think that they did most of the discovering! When class members are able to uncover even smallest part of a treasure for themselves, they are encouraged to start looking for more treasures.

The Holy Spirit, The Great Teacher

We know that the Bible says that the Holy Spirit will guide believers into all truth. But sadly too many believers do not even KNOW that there are treasures in the story, nor that God will help them to learn. So, the Holy Spirit waits to teach, standing in front of an empty classroom.

Once in awhile questions will come from your listeners that must be answered from other stories and information in the Bible. If you know the answer and can give a Biblical source, you need to seek God for wisdom on whether to give a complete answer then or to just give a short overview response. You may be led to just say, “Good question. Let’s wait as that is a whole new direction. But another time I plan to tell a whole Bible story that deals with your question.” Some of these unexpected questions are wonderful opportunities, prompted by the Holy Spirit or a person’s hunger, for truth to be discovered. Don’t miss those chances.

Storytellers teaching in this discussion style can learn to be sensitive about which questions to use. Wise leaders learn that as the class members begin to find their own treasures, they as the storyteller/teacher can back off from giving obvious clues and slowly allow the responders to do more and more of the discovering.

In the sample story of Martha/Mary that we will use later, many of its spiritual treasures and applications are written out for you. As you, the storyteller, move through this story, some of these very observations and applications will be discovered and offered by the class members even before they are taught. This is wonderful as it shows that the people are experiencing discovery. Use only enough of the leading questions as are needed to help class members to discovery.

Show Love

When we use this discussion style teaching, we must all use the one vital key to success, as seen in 1 Corinthians 13:1 We must show love. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Know this: Most people are frightened when they have to stand in front of a group and speak, so you must be very encouraging in your treatment of them.

At times you may be teaching leaders or pastors. Although they are no doubt comfortable in front of people, most of them have not been "corrected" publicly (or at least not for a long, long time!)

So, as you teach using discussion, be particularly sensitive in your responses both to the frightened ones and to the leaders who are not accustomed to public correction. As listeners retell the story, or respond to questions or even offer their own observations, remember this. No matter how poorly people may respond, it is essential that the storyteller/teacher be very gentle and affirming in the way corrections are made.

Always remember that gentle corrections said with a smile can more easily be received than serious corrections. Always keep in mind that you as the storyteller set the group's atmosphere. You have a choice. You can either give the listeners a feeling of investigation and discovery by encouraging them to submit their ideas and thoughts or...you can create tension and discourage participation by making the participants feel as if the whole discussion time is an exam and they must always give the "right" answer.

Again, as you work hard to remember your story and ask your questions, think of the people you are leading. Respond to them, keeping uppermost in your mind that it is not your skill that matters most...it is the love shown to the people as you use your skills!

Skill III: How to Frame Your Questions

The major goals and fruit of telling Bible stories, and then discussing them afterwards, are these:

Learning the character of God and What He wants for and from mankind, and then

Seeing and admitting the truth about ourselves.

Now go back to the beginning of your story. Walk through it in your mind, thinking about the Spiritual Observations you made. Turn the first observation into a question.

For instance, if you were telling the story of Genesis 12:10-20, you would have observed many things as you prepared, even in the first few verses.

"And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. 11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: 12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee."

You probably had noticed as you learned the story that at the beginning, Abram, who could have trusted God, instead showed fear. He ran from the promised land because of a famine, went to Egypt and asked Sarai to lie to protect him.

Then you would have gone back and formulated some Spiritual Applications that you based on those Observations. You might see that God has given all people promises that are based on our going to and staying in the place of obedience to the Scriptures. Then you would see the application of how we can make the bad judgments in time of stress and go to the world for help and not consult God. As well, you would realize that sometimes in our time of running, that we do more sins, such as conspiring, lying and involving those who trust us in our sin.

Here are some questions that could open up a lot of discovery based on those Spiritual Observations.

- a. From the story we learned and talked about together the last time, where had God told Abram to go and what did God say that He would do for Abram there?
- b. What caused Abram to leave that promised land and to whom did he go for help?
- c. What could Abram have done besides leave the land when food was short?
- d. What kind of emotions or feelings controlled Abram? How did you see that in what Abram told Sarai to tell the inhabitants of Egypt?
- e. In the story before this one that we talked about together, had God given Abram any promises that could have helped Abram to be bold and not fearful? What were they? Where did Abram put his trust?

- f. Who close to Abram was hurt by his sin? Explain.

Now look at the following sample questions that could open up discovery of Spiritual Applications. These are all based on those Spiritual Observations that the listeners just discovered through discussion.

- a. Do we have any instructions from God as to where we need to live to be blessed? Maybe not. But did God give us any instructions on **how** to live to be blessed? Such as?
- b. When we lack faith, who might we run to for help instead of God?
- c. What kind of occurrence in our lives might happen that would tempt us to leave the place of obedience to God in our lives?
- d. When hard circumstances come in our lives, what should we do?
- e. What kinds of emotions do we sometimes let rule us when difficulty comes into our lives? What emotions should rule us?
- f. Does God ever make promises that people today can trust?
- g. When we sin or lack trust in God, might others be affected? Give some examples.

Now those are just a few observation and application questions that you might ask from the first part of that story in Genesis.

Note this. Although you have questions prepared to lead listeners to treasures you have found, you must always be responsive to the questions, observations and answers of your listeners. They may see other treasures or have questions about the part of the story you are covering. Ask your questions, but allow the Holy Spirit freedom to speak directly to listeners as He wills.

Learn This Sample Story

Go back in Skill I, and use that information to learn this Bible story in Luke.

Luke 10:38-42 "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. (39) And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. (40) But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. (41) And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: (42) But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Now it is Time to Actually Tell a Story to Real People!

Phase One: Telling The Story Three Times

(Letting the listeners hear the story three times helps them know the story well enough to respond accurately to the questions.)

1. **You tell the story,**
2. **You ask the story to be retold** and
3. **You step through the story** (which is actually you retelling the story, but you ask class members help you tell it as you go through it.)

Presentation 1. – You Tell the Story.

Tell the story as accurately and as interestingly as you can. Use lots of body motions and gestures to illustrate the story as you speak. Practice the story ahead of time with some helpers.

Sometimes as you tell the story, your helpers can silently act out the parts of the characters in the story. Always keep speaking the words as they act it out. Because the listeners have heard just one storyteller present the whole story, they will be able to repeat the story back to you. Listeners often will go home and tell the story to their family or to others who did not hear you tell it.

Note: If you let the different helpers speak the lines, it becomes a drama. Although the spoken drama style of presenting a story is entertaining and can enlighten those in attendance, the story loses its ability to be retold.

Presentation 2. – You ask the story to be retold.

If you have time limitations, you may have to skip this retelling of the story and go to Presentation 3 - Step Through the Story. If the listeners are shy and do not respond quickly to your request, say, *Just tell as much as you remember and then others will help fill in what is missing.* Clap when a volunteer offers to try. Encourage the volunteer to start telling the story. Say to the person, *If you get stuck or forget some of the story, the other listeners will try to help you.* Ask others to listen carefully.

Afterwards, if the story was well told, you show and tell how impressed you are at how well they told the story. Sometimes on these well told stories (and there will be many of these) you might want to turn toward the listeners and say, "Now I will test you!" Ask if the listeners can add anything that might have been left out of the re-telling. At times you may knowingly smile as you ask, "Did this storyteller add anything to story?" No one feels pressure if you word your questions tactfully. Usually listeners will provide good comments. Thank those responders and acknowledge their contributions to a well retold-story.

Occasionally a re-teller will not remember much of the story or tell it very poorly. If this happens, don't ask the other listeners to make corrections. Making a lot of corrections in front of others could embarrass the volunteer. Also, when a story is told with many errors, is too hard to put back together.

However, no matter how good or bad the re-teller does, find something to compliment. You can say such things as, "I appreciate your bravery," "That was a wonderful job," "The part you remembered was well told," "I loved the way you dramatized the quotes," or other encouraging remarks.

If the re-teller added information, that needs to be mentioned as well, but even that can be said in a kind way, such as "You are so eager. You even shared extra information with us that I think might not be in the story."

If a story is long, another way to get a volunteer to come forward is to ask, "Can one of you come up and just start the story and then we will ask others to continue telling it?" After that you will keep having others come forward and continue telling the story as a group until it is completed.

Presentation 3. - Step through the story.

This will be your third "telling" of the story. You have told the story, a volunteer has retold the story and now you ask everyone to step through the story with you.

This is a style of telling the story using frequent hesitations. It is done as if the you, the storyteller, need help to remember the story's contents rather than it being a test of the listener's memory of the story. You as the storyteller look expectantly at the listeners, as if you are hoping that someone will say the next few words or sentences. Remember, this is just one more retelling of the story.

So you start the story as if you are telling it, except that at every phrase or sentence, (or maybe new thought), you start it, then hesitate and invite the listeners to fill in the rest of the information.

For instance. You could say, *Jesus and His disciples went to a certain city and met there a lady named um...* Then you hesitate and gesture as if you need help and look expectantly, waiting for the people to fill in the blank. After they say "Martha," you respond "Right" or "Good" and continue.

Ask, *So whom did Martha invite to do what?* After they say "Martha invited Jesus to come to her home," you say "Good. "

Sometimes the storyteller will stop in the story and ask the listeners to tell the next part of the story by saying something such as, *"Now Martha had a relative mentioned in the story. Who is it and what are we told about her?"* When they answer, "Mary is Martha's sister and Mary sits at Jesus' feet and listens to Him teach," say, *You are correct.*

Then say, *So Martha has a problem, or something she feels is a problem. What is it?*

You can continue through the story using either this fill-in-the-gap style or tell-the-next-part to encourage the group to recall the story for you.

If here, (or any other place), the listeners do not respond after you hesitate for them to fill in the rest of the story, start slowly speaking the answer and give the people every opportunity to remember the story and fill in the rest of the sentence or thought.

By providing key words in your questions, you can remind people of the next part of the story. It is vital that your questions contains those key words, because those words act as clues that will prompt the listeners to give an answer from the next part of the story without skipping any information.

Without Key Words: For example, as you review the story, if you say, “*and Martha said what?*” A listener might correctly respond, “Martha said, ‘Go tell Mary to come help me.’” Now it is true that Martha did say “Go tell Mary to come help me,” so the listener did give a correct answer. BUT BEFORE Martha said, “Go tell Mary to come help me,” Martha had asked, “Lord, don’t you care that Mary has left me alone to do all of the work.” So by being too general in your review question, you allowed the listener to jump too far ahead in the story.

With Key Words. To help listeners give the answer you want, you can ask a question that reminds listeners of the content of the story. An example would be: “*Martha asked Jesus what?*” By using the word “ask” in your question, you have kindly guided listeners to recall what Martha asked Jesus.

To help your listeners find more answers which encourages them to speak up more freely try this question. “*Now what did Martha call Jesus; what title did she use?*” They will say “Master” or maybe “Lord.” If they answer “Lord,” you say *that is correct.* If they say “Master,” you can say, “*Right, Martha called Jesus Lord.*” Even though the listener’s answer of, “Master,” was not exactly correct, the person had the right idea. You are encouraging response, but at the same time gently giving the correct answer to keep the story accurate.

As you step through the story, beginning to end, ask such things as, *Who invited Jesus into the home? What is Mary doing in the story? What is Martha doing? Then a problem develops. What is the problem? When Martha speaks to Jesus, what does she call him? How does Martha want to solve the problem? What does Jesus tell her?*

During this third telling, the story is being locked into the listeners’ minds. Additionally, the very easy questions (which are just a review of the story’s contents) encourage listeners to answer the storyteller’s questions out loud. When people answer these easy questions, and are affirmed, they gain confidence. This confidence is needed for the next two phases of STS which are a bit more challenging. Through discussion listeners are required to look for treasures in the story and report their findings out loud.

(If a story is long, say more than 20 verses, it may be wise to combine some of the phases. The step-through the story can be done in several shorter segments and then the questions can be asked to lead people to the Spiritual Observations and Applications.)

Now is the time to move on to phase two, the treasure hunting.

Phase Two, Finding Spiritual Treasures in This Story

Treasure Hunt 1. – Finding Spiritual Observations in the Story

During the time spent learning the story, you may have made these Spiritual Observations.

1. When Martha finds herself unable to complete all the serving by herself, she makes some poor decisions. Although she gave the invitation, Martha blames others for her plight. She accuses Jesus of not caring. She bosses Jesus. She fails to ask Jesus for help.
2. Martha calls Jesus “Lord,” but she behaves as if she is the one in charge.
3. Jesus does not respond negatively to Martha’s disrespect.
4. Jesus lovingly corrects Martha.
5. Martha thought what she was doing was necessary, but Jesus said Mary chose the one thing that was necessary.
6. Martha had a choice.
7. Mary chose for Jesus and against her culture and people’s expectations of her.
8. Jesus would not take away Mary’s choice.

Treasure Hunt 2. – Finding Spiritual Applications in The Story

Now, based on these Spiritual Observations that you just found, go back into the story and look for some treasures of Spiritual Applications. Here are some you might find.

1. Do not choose to take on so much work that you lose the vital time you need to learn from God’s Word.
2. How sad it is when there is a problem in our lives to say to God, “Don’t you care?” To ask for help is good, but to accuse God of not caring must break His heart.
3. When we make choices to take on more than we can accomplish, how foolish it is to blame God for not caring about our load!
4. Should we be TELLING “God” how to solve our problems?
5. After we take on more work than we can accomplish, or work for God that He has not asked us to do, is it right to take others away from spending time learning from God’s Word to help us?
6. So many times we question God’s love for us when a situation does not occur as we think it should.
7. Even when we treat God disrespectfully, He speaks kindly to us. He is longsuffering and patient as He explains our errors to us.
8. As Jesus’ genuine concern and personal relationship with Martha is shown when He calls her by name, so God knows us by name and speaks to us personally.

9. It is not that spending time in the kitchen, or serving, or doing any other ministry work is wrong, but if our work takes us away from hearing God speak through His Word, we have not chosen the good thing.
10. It is not always where our body is located that marks us as a Martha or a Mary. We may be working physically, but be worshiping and communicating with God as we work. On the other hand, we might be located in a Bible study, or church or even in our quiet place reading the Bible, but our minds are wandering as we think about the work we need to be doing!
11. In Jesus' final statement about Martha's behavior, He says that Mary chose the one thing that is necessary. This puts what Martha is doing as above all else!
12. Jesus also says that what Mary is doing is the good thing that cannot be taken away. This statement indicates that what Martha is doing can be taken away. In the final judgment, as God looks at what we have done in our lives, it may be that some of what we decided that we would do for God was not the good choice. Jesus tells us in this story that learning from Him is the good choice.
13. Many times we must choose against our culture and family, against what people expect of us when we choose spiritual options.

Now you have found the treasures for yourself. It is time for you go back to the beginning of the story and begin to form questions that will lead the listeners to discover those treasures for themselves.

Forming Questions to Invite Discovery of Spiritual Observations

These following questions are just some of the Spiritual Observations and Applications that have been discovered in the Martha/Mary story during STS workshops done all over the world. Some or all of these could be used as you teach this story. No doubt more treasures will be found as the Holy Spirit continues to reveal to us all the depth and riches of God's Word.

The words in italics in each of these numbered observations are the words the storyteller might ask the group. The words not in italics are possible answers or treasures that the group may discover and speak aloud.

1. *In this story, Jesus seems to be complimenting Mary's behavior, but criticizing Martha's. Am I right?* [Wait for answer.] *Now I am confused! Is hospitality a good thing?* [Wait for answer.] *Is preparing a meal for guests a nice thing to do?* [Wait for answer.] *If we decide that this story shows us that it is better to be doing Bible study than to cook a meal, who will be cooking your meals gentleman?* [Wait for answer.] *Also, is it right, gentlemen, to tell your wives to go into the kitchen to prepare meals for guests when it causes them to miss Biblical study, and then you tell them that this story teaches that they are doing the less valuable thing?* [Wait for answer.] *So then why is Jesus happy with Mary and not with Martha? We know that Jesus always speaks truth, but what exactly is that truth that He is speaking? Maybe we should look again at this story?*

2. *Who did we say invited Jesus to her home?* [Wait for answer.] *Is there anything in the story that would show us if Martha knew that Jesus was someone very special?* [Wait for answer.] Listeners may mention that Martha did invite Jesus to her home, that Martha called Jesus "Lord," that Mary was listening to Jesus teach or that when Martha met Jesus He had disciples, so that set him above the ordinary. All these are valid responses.

3. *We do see in the story that Martha's sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him teach. What does the description of "sitting at his feet" mean to you?* [Wait for answer.] Sitting at someone's feet is a way of describing a devoted student/teacher relationship. As well it shows commitment and identification.

4. *What was it that Martha called Jesus?* [Wait for answer.] *What does "Lord" mean?* [Wait for answer.] *What does that again show us that Martha knew about Jesus?* [Wait for answer.] *So she knows Jesus is special, someone she should look up to as superior. She says, "He is Lord," but stays in the kitchen working and does not listen to Him? What do you think of Martha's behavior?* [Wait for answer.] *How do her words and her behaviour not match?*

5. *The story says Martha was overburdened with work and is serving alone. Can we tell from the story what size of a meal or how elaborate of a meal Martha is preparing?* [Wait for answer.] *Is she preparing simple food, like offering her guests fruit or tea and cookies, or is she preparing a very elaborate large meal?* [Wait for answer.] *Whose idea was it to invite Jesus to the home?* [Wait for

answer.] *I have a question. If Marth thought Jesus had something valuable to teach, isn't it surprising that SHE made the choice to make such an elaborate but time-consuming meal? What do you think of her decision?* [Wait for answer.] *We see Martha complain to Jesus that SHE has too much work to do, but she is the one who chose to use all of her time to cook! Is she thinking reasonably?* [Wait for answer.]

6. *Here is another question. What EXACTLY does Martha ask Jesus?* [Wait for answer.] *She says what to whom? ("Don't you care?") What do her words show us about her trust in Jesus?* [Wait for answer.]

7. *What do you think of Martha's solution to her problem? "Jesus, you tell Mary to help me!"* [Wait for answer.] *How is Martha now treating Jesus? Like He is Lord or like what?* [Wait for answer.] *You are right. She is acting like she is the boss of Jesus and He is her servant! What kind of spiritual wisdom is Martha revealing?* [Wait for answer.]

8. *As we listen to the words Martha speaks, and then notice what Jesus says back to her, do you see any reason why Jesus was scolding Martha and complimenting Mary? Jesus says only one thing is what?* [Wait for answer.]

9. *So, what two individuals does Martha blame for her having too much work?* [Wait for answer.] *Yes. Mary and Jesus! How does Martha blame them?* [Wait for answer.] *Martha had asked, "Jesus, don't you care that my sister has left me with all of the work?" Also, note that Martha pointed out that Mary left her with all of the work. But remember, who gave the invitation?* [Wait for answer.] *Who chose to do the big meal?* [Wait for answer.] *In this story, whose name is not suggested as being responsible for Martha's overwhelming situation?* [Wait for answer.] *Yes. Martha does not list herself as having any responsibility for the overwhelming situation.*

10. *Notice that not only has Martha made decisions that drew her away from learning from Jesus, how would Martha's solution to the problem (that she created) have effected someone else?* [Wait for answer.] *Yes. Mary would have to had leave Jesus' presence. Explain why her solution was not wise.* [Wait for answer.]

11. *What kind of respect does Martha show to Jesus?* [Wait for answer.] *The way Martha talks to Jesus shows disrespect. She first accuses Jesus of not caring about her problem and then she speaks to Him as if He is her servant!*

12. *What kind of emotion does Jesus show in His response to Martha? Jesus could have been really be angry at that kind of disrespect, but he was not. Describe His way of speaking to Martha.* [Wait for answer.] *He kindly explains to Martha that Mary's choice is the better one.*

13. *In what other ways did Martha show disrespect?* [Wait for answer.] *Jesus was a respected teacher. Notice that Martha was not only criticizing Jesus, she criticized Jesus when His followers were present! By doing that, Martha again showed no respect at all to Jesus! Did Jesus demonstrate pride or*

humility in the way that He responded to her? Explain your answer. [Wait for answer.]

13. *By what Jesus calls Martha, can we tell whether or not He knew her? [Wait for answer.] Yes. Jesus shows genuine interest in Martha by using her name when He spoke to her. Jesus uses her name, not once but twice!*

14. *Do we have any information in the story that shows us whether the way Martha was worrying was something new for her or a habit she had? [Wait for answer.] Jesus mentioned to her that she worried about so many things and was concerned, suggesting that it was her habit.*

15. *Is there anything in the story that would show whether or not Martha had a choice to stay in the kitchen and prepare a meal, or to sit at Jesus' feet and be taught? [Wait for answer.] Yes. You are right. Jesus shows us Martha had a choice when He says, "Mary has chosen that which is good." By those very words of Jesus, what do we see that Martha chose? [Wait for answer.] Martha had CHOSEN to be busy in the kitchen.*

16. *Jesus said, "Martha Martha. You worry about so many things and you are so concerned. Mary has chosen the one thing that is necessary." What is Jesus saying here about Martha's choice to make this big meal as compared to Mary's choice? [Wait for answer.] What Mary chose was the one thing necessary.*

17. *Does Martha think what she chose to do is necessary? [Wait for answer.] Does Jesus think what Martha is doing is necessary? [Wait for answer.] Is eating necessary? [Wait for answer.] Please then explain exactly what Jesus is saying about what was and was not necessary in this story?*

18. *In a culture strong on hospitality what would have been expected of Mary? [Wait for answer.] What kind of hard decision did Mary make in this story? What did Mary have to choose against or go against to make her choice? [Wait for answer.] Yes. Her culture and her family's expectations.*

19. *We saw what Martha did do when she found herself overwhelmed and unable to complete her task. Think for a moment. What else could she have done when she could not handle her load? [Wait for answers.] Many will be offered. Encourage the people to think of all possible things Martha might have done when she found that she was unable to complete her task.*

20. *What possible resource was available to Martha? [Wait for answer.] Who else might Martha have gone to for help? [Wait for answer.] Very often when we listen to this story and discuss its meaning, the very last suggestion people make is that Martha could have gone to Jesus and asked him, "Lord, I cannot get all of this food preparation and service done. What shall I do?"*

20. *Did Martha not go to Jesus and ask him for help because she was too shy? [Wait for answer.] How would you describe Martha's attitude? [Wait for answer.] Compare her attitude in this story to Jesus' attitude.*

Forming Questions to Invite Discovery of Spiritual Applications

Spiritual Applications Now let us ask ourselves why God gave us this story in the Bible. What does God want us to learn?

By using more questions, you can now lead listeners to the spiritual truths we call Spiritual Applications that you found when you originally studied the story. Resist the temptation to just hand them the treasures. Design questions to help listeners to discover for themselves the treasures in this story.

1. *In the story Mary leaves the kitchen and chooses to spend her time at Jesus' feet learning from Him.. What does that mean to us today? Can we sit at Jesus' feet and learn? [Wait for answer.] We hope that listeners will come to the following application...Today, studying God's Word or worshiping God or learning from pastors and teachers is like listening to Jesus. Today, to us, the idea of sitting at Jesus' feet shows a sincere interest in what is being taught.*

2. *We saw that Martha took on so much work that she was overburdened. Can we today have that problem? What do you think? [Wait for answer.] Do we ever say "yes" to too many responsibilities, even in Christian work?*

3. *Do we have choices in life? [Wait for answer.] Can we make choices that look good because they are choices to do Christian work? How we might choose to do something for God when it is nothing He is asking us to do or nothing He needs. Have you ever seen this happen or experienced it yourself? Tell about it. Explain how our choice to do something for God can lead us away from spending time learning from our Savior? [Wait for answer.]*

4. *Martha blames Mary for not staying to help prepare food. What is the tendency today when people take on too much work? Are such people quick to assume responsibility for the overload, or do they blame others for it? What have you observed? [Wait for answer.] What should we do when we realize that we find that the ministry work we have decided to do is crowding out the time we need to be spending learning from God? [Wait for answer.]*

5. *We saw that Martha foolishly accused Jesus of not caring about her problem. Have we ever gone so far as to blame God for decisions we have made, and then suggest that God doesn't care about us? [Wait for answer.] How must God feel when we take on more than we can handle, and then we accuse Him for not caring that people aren't helping us? [Wait for answer.]*

6. *Martha called Jesus "Lord," a term meaning that she looked to Him as her leader, her superior. Then she told Jesus what to do to solve her problem. Have we ever created a problem and then prayed to God telling Him how to solve it? [Wait for answer.] Does it make sense to call God our "Lord," and then tell Him how to solve the problems that we ourselves have caused? What do you think? [Wait for answer.]*

7. *Do you think it is possible to be doing physical work, like Martha, and at the same time be learning from God and worshipping? Try to describe what this would be like? [Wait for answer.]*
8. *On the other hand, do you think someone could be in a location where that person looks like a Mary, learning and studying the Bible, and yet that person's thoughts are actually about some work project? [Wait for answer.] Is that something that you have ever found yourself doing? [Wait for answer.] Have you ever been reading your Bible and your mind starts wandering, and you start thinking about other things, maybe some work you need to do? [Wait for answer.] In light of this story of Martha and Mary, how would you describe your mental wandering? [Wait for answer.]*
9. *Jesus told Martha that what Mary chose could not be taken away. What is Jesus saying about what He would or would not do as far as interfering with the choices we make? [Wait for answer.]*
10. *Compare Martha's choice to Mary's choice. Which lady is giving to Jesus and which one is receiving from Jesus? [Wait for answer.] Which act does Jesus value? [Wait for answer.] Martha is doing something for Jesus while Mary is receiving from him. Jesus says the work Martha is doing is not necessary. Think about any religion that comes into your mind. In that religion, are its followers doing works for the deity or deities, to appease or impress, or is that religion one of freely receiving from that deity? Compare a religion of works to what Jesus valued.*
11. *How do we react when some of the ministry work we decide to do, begins to overburden us and takes us away from our time of learning from the Lord? [Wait for answer.]*
12. *As we saw, when Martha realized that she had more work to handle than she could do, she blamed Mary and Jesus but not herself. When she realized her inability to complete the task she thought she needed to do, what resource did she overlook? I mean who was there that she could have gone to for help? [Wait for answer.] Yes, Jesus. Are we ever faced with our own over commitment? How do we handle it? What does this story teach us about wise choices? [Wait for answer.]*
13. *Jesus honored Mary when she chose to listen to Him, even when it caused her to go against her culture and the expectations of those around her. What might this teach us? [Wait for answer.] In pursuit of knowing God, or spending time with Him, would we ever need to choose against our culture or peoples' expectations for us? How?*

General Tips for Leading Discussions

As the discussion moves forward, God can use your past experiences and Bible knowledge to design questions as you teach. The Holy Spirit knows what needs to be discussed and will lead you as you teach.

Even though you might think it is impossible to remember your questions without writing them, it is important to NOT write out the questions that you want to ask about the story. To recall your questions, mentally go through the story, letting its contents remind you of your prepared questions. ***The story becomes your way to remember; the story becomes your notes!***

Rethink Your Introduction. Now that you have discovered many treasures hidden inside your story, you may want to add to or shrink the introduction that you prepared. If you find that the information in your introduction is actually contained in the story, you would be wise to take those facts out of the introduction. For instance, you may have originally planned to introduce the Abram story in Genesis 12:1-9 by saying, "This story is about a man who is called by God to leave his people and his country and to start a new nation." However, after you have now spent some time thinking about that passage as you were hunting for spiritual treasures, you now realize that particular information about Abram is contained inside the story. So, you can take that information out of your introduction.

If, however, you have found some insight in a story that would be better understood if you could give a small amount of information about that which is not in the story, then tell the information in your introduction.

For instance, one of the many treasures in the Martha/Mary story is based on Martha's choice to make an elaborate meal for many guests. Another treasure is the shock that Martha shows such disrespect to Jesus by criticizing and bossing Jesus in the presence of His followers. The story does begin that Jesus and his disciples enter a certain town. But in the story we are only told that Martha invited Jesus to her home. It is not stated in the story that the disciples came with Jesus.

To give clarity to the discussion, it is wise to give the story an introduction something like this. "When Jesus lived on earth He chose men to go with him. These men, called disciples, stayed with Jesus, except when we are told that Jesus went away by himself for a time or in some cases when Jesus took just a few of the disciples apart from the others for short time." This information helps listeners to realize that the visit by Jesus also included his disciples.

You as the storyteller must assume that one or more persons present do not know any Bible information other than what you tell them in your story and in your introduction. Giving all of the information you want to discuss to everyone listening, **before you ask them questions that involve that information**, is a key to successful STS discussion.

At times you may have already taught a few stories to everyone present. You CAN ask questions that build on any information gained from those earlier storytimes together. Just keep in your mind that most stories have ample information inside them, so usually you do not have to go other places in the Bible to teach a story well.

Occasionally, bringing in added information such as God's rules pertaining to lepers, the Sabbath or eating, or how Jews felt about Samaritans gives depth to the events in a story. Also when discussing treasures in an Old Testament story, you may want to introduce some of the very obvious symbols that are explained in other passages in the Bible. If you believe your listeners have really grasped the deep parts of that particular story, you can tell the added verse or two and then let the listeners make the application.

For instance, if you have told Exodus 17:1-7 and your group has observed and applied the spiritual treasures, and finished the discussion, you may feel led to say this: "It will be a long time before we can discuss all of the stories in the Bible together. There is one part of a story in the New Testament that I want to share with you now. It can help us to discover even more in this story of Moses and the Rock. We hear in 1 Corinthians 10:2-4, 'And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.' God said in the story that the rock symbolized something or someone. What does the rock represent? How does that speak to you?"

Your out-of-the-story background information must only be from Scripture. God's Word never changes. You can rely on it 100%. Extra biblical information may or may not be 100% valid. Teach people by demonstration that the Bible is sufficient by itself.

Listen to the Responses of the Listeners to the Story. The answers people give will help you to sense their needs and their personal questions. Those insights will help you form original questions as you continue. This is called, "teaching off the moment."

Most Questions Should Be About What People Did or What God Did. These questions will move listeners toward discovering spiritual truths. Just review the actions and the words characters spoke. Be careful about asking "why" questions as they may invite speculation and guesses that cannot be backed up by Scripture. Using questions that ask "what," are usually the best.

Ask Observation Questions. Maybe say, "What in the story shows us about the beliefs of (select characters in the story)?" "How did the story show us what that person valued?"

Say, "What shows us something about the character of God?" or "What in the story showed faithfulness?" "Tell what part of the story demonstrated disrespect (or fear, or confusion, or greediness, or kindness or bravery or trust, or wisdom?)" Make sure that the questions you ask can be answered from the information contained inside the story that you just told.

Gradually Help Listeners Make Applications of the Truths in the Story. As you move through your discussion time, you may find openings to ask if we sometimes have the same feelings and reactions as we saw in the people in the story (doubt, fear, faith, hope, confusion etc).

Share Personal Applications. If you are led by God to do so, you may share how the story impacted you or ask how it impacted them.

Helpful Hints on Choice of Questions. Answers to storyteller's questions must be contained in, and provable by the story.

Information Outside the Story. If a very important insight or application in the story requires an outside verse to show that truth, you can include that Scriptural information in the introduction to the story. As well, the added Scripture can be added after all applications provable from within the story have been presented. Do this only on rare occasions, as use of Scripture outside the story makes the listener dependent on the storyteller's research, instead of just listening to the story. Storytellers can ask questions built on Bible information that they know listeners have gained during previous storytelling times.

Good Answers. When people offer acceptable answers, encourage them. Say such thing as, "Good answer," "I have never thought of that," or "That makes sense."

Not So Good Answers. If answers given by listeners are incorrect information, you might say, "Let's go back and see if that matches the story." If the conclusions they reached are wrong, you might want to take the blame and say, "I did not make that part clear" or "Maybe my question was not worded well." If an answer or a question from a listener is totally off of the subject, you can say, "That would be a topic we could discuss another time," or "Maybe in the next story we will find the answer." Some questions are trails that lead to nowhere and the whole group will go off of the main path if you take time to answer them.

After Completing Discussion of Your Specific Questions, Ask Questions Such as, "What was there in this story that spoke to you?" or "What new thing might you have learned from our discussion about this story?"

Why Use *Simply The Story*

One of the major differences in the conventional, topical way of teaching and this way of storytelling with inductive study, oral style, is reflected in this vital question: Who or what is going to teach?

In topical teaching the presenter decides ahead of time what is going to be taught. Verses or passages are selected by the teacher and given to the listeners to illustrate and prove that the teacher's view is correct. This method is not wrong, but it is not the only way to teach. Breaking up a story makes the information more difficult to remember. Bible stories speak to our spirit, soul and body. The more a teacher breaks apart the story and presents information in categories, the more the information only goes to our minds, not our souls and spirits.

Have you ever tried to share an incident with someone, but the person kept interrupting you all the way through, asking questions and making comments? By the time you completed the story, it had lost its impact due to the multiple interruptions. Bible stories too carry their maximum power when they are presented as they are written. Remember: God gave 75% of the Bible to us in story format. We must let the Lord tell His whole story.

The value of presenting Bible stories in their entirety takes on greater importance when we recognize what the classification of "oral learner," means, and how oral learners gain information.

People who cannot read are, by default, oral learners. Upon investigation, it is found that most countries either inflate their literacy rates or publish rates based on poor measurements of literacy such as the ability to sign ones own name! Multiple tests and research such as the National Adult Literacy Study show that 50% of people in the USA are unable to read or to read well enough to understand the meaning of a full paragraph of text. Additionally, another 30% of people in the USA prefer to learn information from listening and discussing it. Those surprising statistics hold true for other developed nations as well. This means that 80% of the people in the USA and developed nations are oral learners.

In developing nations, the literacy rate is much lower, so the percentage of non-literate or preferred oral learners is even higher in them.

Oral learners do not, or cannot, take notes, so the way they remember information is by weaving it into a story. When information is presented to an oral learner in concepts, precepts, topics or in an outline, the story, the people's framework for remembering, is lost.

Pitfalls of Current, Most Used Methods: Imagine shipping a package to someone in need, and it comes back to us unopened and stamped "return to sender." Should we assume that the needy person did not want the package's contents? Could it be that the intended recipient did not know how to open the package? When we wrap Biblical truths in topical, conceptual or analytical

packaging, those who are oral learners simply cannot open it.

It is time for those of us who desire to communicate Biblical truth to consider the consequences of losing “the story.” The vast majority of people who need to hear the Gospel and need discipleship are oral learners. When we as communicators step outside of story, and restructure and reorganize information, oral learners not only cannot remember that information, most of them will not have even understood the truths that we presented!

Topical teaching is most often the method used to convey Biblical information. When teaching topically the presenter selects passages from throughout the Bible, to verify pre-selected points. The congregation listens and might take notes. But, with this approach there is no story to follow. Afterwards, most of the congregation can not remember much of what was taught, nor are they able to repeat the information to others. Without a story to follow, nothing connects the information together.

Also, most of the listeners have no way to find that kind of topical information for themselves, so dependency on the teacher is maintained. Morsels of information are handed to the listeners much the same as a mother bird gathers food, and then drops it into the open mouths of her waiting babies. Each week these listeners wait for their next meal. Too much topical teaching creates fifty year old birds in a nest!

Another pitfall in the overuse of topical teaching is this. Teachers often choose a subject to teach that they think people need to hear, then they select verses they already know from many places in the Bible. This method does not expose teachers to new information and insights since often teachers utilize only the passages with which they are familiar.

In the oral inductive type of storytelling, the teacher uses the whole story and lets the contents of the story determine the insights and lessons to be taught.

Sometimes teachers think that they are using the STS concept, but in reality they are only partially doing it. They make this mistake. A story will be told, and then the teacher makes the story speak to a topic that the story really does not address. The story is made to fit the teacher rather than the teacher fitting to the story.

Whatever insights you teach must be seen in the story. When teachers use a story just as a platform to teach what they already know and believe, they lose the blessed opportunity to be taught new information by the Holy Spirit. Learning to find treasures in a story is challenging. Additionally it is challenging for the storyteller to learn how to gently deliver the treasures to listeners in the form of questions.

Vital Decision: If our goal are to communicate Biblical truths in developed nations, and to do all we can to reach both the lost in 10/40 window and the unreached people groups (UPGs) of the world, a radical change must take place

in the way we present our information. (For data, download the book *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* www.oralbible.com)

What or Who Makes This Work?

No matter how many years a person has known the Lord in a personal way, or how much Bible education, formal or informal, a person may have, there is only one way that the Bible can be understood. Our relationship with God is spiritual. Scripture contains God's spiritual messages to mankind, so the spiritual truths that the Bible contains can only be understood through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Far too many believers in Jesus Christ have become dependent on others to teach them the Word of God. Church-goers wait for their pastors to tell them spiritual truth. Some studious learners attend Bible school. Pastors attend Bible schools and seminaries to learn, and for ongoing inspiration they look in commentaries and attend conferences to find new information. Seminarians study writers of the past to increase their understanding.

All of these sources have great value, but the best source of understanding God's message is overlooked! This source is God's gift to us. What is that source? After more than three years of personal teaching from Jesus, the disciples heard a startling message from Him. Jesus was leaving them! He said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

This assurance from Jesus lets us see that the disciples were afraid. Their wonderful, personal teacher would no longer be with them. Who would comfort them? Who would teach them? As part of Jesus' last message to the disciples, He assured them that they would not be alone. Jesus promised a resident teacher. This teacher would be with each disciple, day and night, seven days a week.

John 14:26 "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

God explains in another Scripture how the Holy Spirit will teach spiritual truth.

1 Corinthians 2:9-16 "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (10) But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

“(12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

For too long the classroom of the Holy Spirit has stayed empty. Let us attend His class, raise our hands and ask questions. As we study each story, we can ask Him for wisdom to understand the content and believe that He will give us the answers.

Maintaining Accuracy, Finding The Elephant

This finding-the-elephant principle can help storytellers maintain accuracy as they hunt for spiritual treasures.

First a case of ... **Missing the Elephant:**

You may have heard a report similar to this before. Five blind men were led to an elephant. "Men, you are standing by an elephant. Please describe it." Immediately, four of the men began feeling whatever part of the elephant that he first touched.

One felt the tail, and he described an elephant by saying, "It's a small tree branch."

A second blind man handled the elephant's ear and he said, "An elephant must be a giant leaf on a tree."

Then another of the men felt the elephant's trunk. "It's a long hose that bends different ways."

The fourth man tried to reach around the elephant's belly. He couldn't. So he explained, "An elephant is like a huge round rock, but it is not as hard as a rock and it moves!"

The fifth blind man scoffed, "Oh, I don't need to feel the elephant to describe it. I have heard that loud elephant trumpet sound many times. Everyone knows that an elephant is a big musical instrument!"

Even though each man correctly described some part of the elephant, none of the men understood what the whole animal was like. They missed the elephant.

When we look for treasures in a Bible story, we must remember that there is a wholeness to every story. We call this wholeness, "The Elephant." (When a story is long, there are often several parts to it, similar to a play that has more than one act. In those long stories, each act or scene may contain its own elephant of truth.)

Sometimes when we read through a familiar story, we might have a preconceived idea of what the story is about, so we fail to really listen to it. Remember the one blind man who didn't even take the time to investigate (because he was so convinced that an elephant was a musical instrument)? We too can think that we already know all about a Bible passage and as a result we totally miss the overall truth of the story.

As well, it is easy to commit the same mistake the four blind men made. We do this by grabbing hold of some individual parts of a story and then just stop there. By failing to stand back to consider the whole story, and the way all of its parts fit together, we might miss the whole elephant.

It takes careful listening and prayer to make sure that we accurately grasp the complete story. Those individual truths you discover have value, but those individual parts still may not describe well the whole elephant.

Example of Finding-The-Elephant in a Bible Story:

First read Mark 1:40-45.

Then take your time and look for the elephant in the story.

- 40 “And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.
- 41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.
- 42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.
- 43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;
- 44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.
- 45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.”

Of course there are many wonderful and important treasures in this story. But do you see the elephant? Often teachers miss it.

They do see:

1. The man’s faith that Jesus can heal,
2. Jesus’ willingness to heal
3. Jesus’ compassion and tenderness,
4. Jesus showing his love by even touching a leper
5. Jesus’ identification with an untouchable, and
6. Jesus’ ability to heal.

But then, they rush through the rest of the story and don’t listen to it well. Instead they grab hold of a few familiar words and then try to make other truths they know in Scripture fit in this story. As a result, they miss the elephant.

7. They do mention that Jesus said not to tell anyone about the healing and to go and show himself to the priest. But these teachers proceed to say that this man was so full of excitement that he shared his healing with everyone and gave testimony as to what Jesus had done. Then they preach a sermon on joy and appreciation.
8. Some explain, “Although the healed man was not supposed to tell people what had happened, for joy he could not help but witness.” Then a sermon is preached about witnessing.
9. Others teach that because this man burst forth to tell everyone of his healing, that Jesus had to go out of the cities and “they came to him from every quarter.” They say that as a result of the man’s proclamation that even more people than before were able to come to Jesus for healing. Then a sermon is preached on how God’s sovereign will was accomplished through the healed man.

But let us take a look. Do all of those nine treasures listed above give an accurate overview of the story, or are only half of them what the story is actually about? Was only half of an elephant discovered?

It is good to discuss those many early treasures that we discovered in the story, about the healing and the leper's faith to be healed. But, if we miss the truth of the leper's disobedience and his disrespect of Jesus, the one who just healed him, we miss the other half of the elephant.

Just as we take seriously the information on healing, we must take seriously the healed leper's disobedience.

If we use this story to preach about unrestrained joy, the glories of witnessing, or the sovereignty of God, we have missed the elephant. This latter part of the story is not about joy or witnessing; it is about self will. It is about those who ask for and receive a life changing gift from God, and then live in disobedience to his commands.

The Lord gave us enough information in the overall passage to enable us to grasp this whole truth. A storyteller/teacher who has properly prepared will have read the story in context. The two verses in front of this story make Jesus' will plain.

Mark 1:38-39 "And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils."

Notice that God told us in verse 38 that Jesus wanted to go into the next towns. But unfortunately after the healing, due to that one man's willfulness, God tells us in the story that Jesus could no longer go into the towns.

What did Jesus want the leper to do? In the story Jesus sternly commanded the healed leper about going to the priests, "Go show yourself according to the commandments of Moses..." So first of all we see that Jesus' instructions to be obedient to the Mosaic law were disregarded by the healed leper.

The directive Jesus strongly spoke to the leper, that the leper was to show himself as a testimony to the priests of the healing, was not done. Jesus wanted the priests to know about and authenticate the healing. So the man did not show respect to Jesus nor to the priests, nor to God's laws in the Old Testament.

By carefully reading the story (and not reading our ideas into the story), this central truth, this elephant can be found: Jesus miraculously and with compassion brought new life to an untouchable, a man who then followed his own will and disobeyed the one who just saved him. That is the elephant in this story.

The leper seems to have more focus on the healing than the healer. Throughout the Bible, in many stories we see people making that same mistake. They commit "religious" sins. In their zeal they do works "for God" without listening to or respecting what God had told them to do! Is it wrong to testify? No...In fact we are told to be witnesses. Was it wrong in Jesus' plan for that particular time and place? ...Absolutely!

Too often we tend to excuse willful religious disobedience or just not discuss it. But consistently in the Bible, God shows that He wants (and requires) obedience.

A classic example of how God views those who do something that appears to be correct is in 1 Samuel. There we see one person performing a religious act, but the timing and the circumstances of the act is wrapped in disobedience to a directive of God. The Lord compares this disregard of His directives to the very worst kinds of sin.

1 Samuel 15:22-23 “And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”

Condoning, or even justifying the leper’s disobedience when we lead a discussion on this story, **gives license to probably what is mankind’s most common sin.** Although sometimes this sin is subtle because we have not spoken out loud, “I choose my way over God’s,” if we ignore what God has said and choose instead to focus on what we want to do, it is sin. Lack of obedience is disobedience.

We cannot overlook this second part of the story (the act and result of the disobedience). If we excuse the leper’s disobedience for any reason, we encourage this common sin of deciding to override God’s will with our will. How sad it is to hear believers today say, “Oh I know what God says in His Word about this situation, but I have good reasons for doing it differently.” Funny. We rarely hear people describe their actions in this way. “I am going to disobey God’s Word because I make better decisions than He does.”

We have spent a lot of time just on one part of one story. This particular passage was selected because it is typically one that people fail to listen to well, and as a result miss the second half of it. We wanted to illustrate how easily we can miss the wholeness of a story and in so doing miss teaching God’s whole message.

We take on a solemn responsibility when we prepare to teach a story. This elephant illustration is used to remind us to carefully and thoroughly listen to all of what God says. As the Bible says, “He that hath an ear let him hear.”

For every story we teach using STS concepts, we must listen to the whole story very carefully and pray to understand and trust what God says in each story. As well, we need to see how all the individual parts of a story show us the story’s wholeness.

In the leper story, God lets us see the consequences of disobedience. However, notice that in many other Bible stories, we are not shown the consequences of people’s sin. We can also teach from those stories the wisdom of obeying God because we trust His leadership, not just because we fear the consequences of disobeying.

If we teach this Mark story in its wholeness, it can help people learn about the

sadness and consequences of disobedience to the Saviour who brings us life as well as the joy of healing. If we gloss over, or miss altogether, the disobedience in this Mark story, we have failed the story and failed to encourage believers to obey God by faith. Know that if the consequences of a sin are not recorded in a story, there still always are consequences. Even when the price of sin is not visible in the physical world, know that our sin grieves the Lord and causes us to lose joy and peace.

Of course, as in every story, many wonderful treasures make up the whole. As this story is taught again and again, more treasures inside it will be revealed by the Holy Spirit, to the storyteller, and to those who hear and discuss it.

Classifications of *Simply The Story* Storytellers

Practitioner

A person who attends at least 2 days of an STS workshop is a “practitioner.” In a 2-day workshop, most attendees are able to utilize the STS concepts well enough to go to their circles of influence and effectively tell Bible stories and deliver truths through discussion.

Toward the end of a workshop, practitioners can ask to be evaluated. If time allows for evaluating, these Practitioners demonstrate their understanding of all five of the STS components and their skill level in all areas of the process will be noted.

Practitioners are strongly urged and encouraged to go out and tell the Bible stories they have learned and to engages others in discussion using the STS methods. However, these practitioners are **NOT ready** yet to lead a STS workshop or to formally train others under the STS name.

Instructors

After at least four days of STS training, and some field practice in their own environments, practitioners may apply to assist in a STS workshop. After two days minimum of assisting in a workshop, practitioners who demonstrate solid knowledge of all five of the STS components and who obtain a grade level of at least seven in all of the STS skills may apply for STS “instructor” status.

Senior Instructors

When approved instructors teach alongside a senior instructor, showing expertise at teaching, critiquing and encouraging new storytellers, and when they are able to organize and lead a workshop, trainers may apply for “senior instructor” status. Senior instructors may lead STS workshops and certify qualified practitioners as instructors. As well, the Timothy Church Planters Training instructors come from this pool.

***Simply The Story* for Non-literates is Called “Timothy Church Planter Training.”(TCPT)**

When STS workshops are held for non-literates, all of the skills in STS are gained. STS instructors need added training to become certified TCPT instructors.

Because TCPT attendees cannot read, 5-10 stories are learned during the workshop by listening either to a TCPT instructor tell the stories or to recorded stories. Solar-powered audio-players manufactured by MegaVoice are used to play the stories. Seventy or more recorded Bible stories, *God’s Story* and a New Testament (if available) all in peoples’ mother tongues are used during the TCPT workshops. These players formatted with this custom recorded Bible content are called “WordLights.”

As funds allow, TCPT graduates receive the gift of a WordLight. Usually one

Wordlight is given for each village represented in the workshop. The graduate who is the WordLights's custodian shares the player with other graduates which enables them all to learn many more stories.

Of course, villagers love listening to the Bible stories as well.

The WordLight serves as a source for non-literates to learn more Bible stories and it acts as a reference point to keep the Bible stories accurate.

For more details, impact responses and results from Timothy Church Planter Training go to www.Gods-Story.org/BibleAtLast.htm

Ways to Learn *Simply The Story*

The God's Story Project presents *Simply The Story* in various ways, including these listed below.

1. We offer this STS document detailing the process.
2. We train in STS Vision Castings that are a day or less in time where we demonstrate and briefly explain the concept.
3. Our four-day STS Workshops offer demonstration, explanation and hands-on participation in STS by attendees. Most attendees become good practitioners from these four days of training. A few attendees are able to obtain certified instructor status.
4. Manual for Instructors & How to Run a STS Workshop
5. In process, on www.SimpleTheStory.com is a wealth of STS information in written, audio and visual formats.
6. Look for the DVD of the training process.

* Info@Gods-Story.org * www.Gods-Story.org *
www.SimpleTheStory.com

Look for live teaching of STS.

Visitors can listen to actual live stories told in multiple languages so that they can hear how a "told" Bible story sounds.

Simply The Story **Evaluation of Storyteller Practitioner**

Storyteller _____ Instructor _____ Date _____

Details of *Simply The Story* processes are in the STS document. Before starting your story presentation for evaluation, remember this: no matter how literate your workshop comrades may be, **you are to present your story as if the listening audience are oral communicators** and they only know the content of the story you present and that of the other stories that which been told during the current training.

As a reminder, storytellers will....

- 1) Use no extra-biblical information in the introduction.
- 2) Only if needed give a short pre-story setup. (Sometimes this helps listeners understand key parts of the story or enables you to place in evidence information needed later to teach essential truth contained in the story).
- 3) Maintain accuracy of the Bible story, with no information left out or added.
- 4) Stay in one Bible story, not combining information from parallel accounts.
- 5) Deliver thoughtful, encouraging responses to listeners who respond as volunteers and who answer questions.
- 6) Show spontaneous flexibility in answering the specific questions of the responders.
- 7) Give an interesting step-through that moves quickly through the story showing various types of methods to involve listeners.
- 8) Lead to observations in the story through a style of questions to which an oral learner can respond.
- 9) Share spiritual applications by asking questions to which an oral learner can respond.
- 10) Not preach!
- 11) Not use the story as a springboard to teach a favorite personal topic. Rather...they will trust God's skill in communicating truth through the Scripture and will let the story speak its messages.
- 12) Be able to define and demonstrate the 5 separate components of STS.

Name of Storyteller	Date	Story Title	Reference	1. Story	2. Retell	3. Step Through	4. Observations	5. Applications

Ratings in the major categories above reflect only the understanding that the storyteller demonstrated of the 5 components of STS. Any category above that was skipped or not clearly presented will have a "NTY" rating (Not there yet). Otherwise it will have a "GI" for Got-it!

Overall Recommendations	
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The comments for some evaluation categories may be filled in with compliments when something is done exceptionally well. Some comments may be suggested helps if an area needs work. Many of the topics will have nothing written beside them if that part went well. The checklist helps the trainer remember what to say afterwards so the flow of the whole STS presentation can be done all at once with no interference. If it will help, stories can be started again when a nervous storyteller gets lost.

Evaluations of 3 Times of Story Presentation

	Story, Comments
1. Introduction	
2. Accuracy	
3. Listening Interest	
4. Stayed in Story	
5. Felt Story	
6. Body Communication	
	Retelling, Comments
1. Prompting Volunteer	
2. Encouraging	
3. Correction of Volunteer	
	Step Through, Comments
1. Promptly Completed	
2. Varied Styles	
3. Participation	
4. Accuracy	

	Evaluations of 2 Kinds of Spiritual Treasures	
	Spiritual Observations, Comments	
1. Use of Key Words		
2. Oral Style Questions		
3. Gestures As Keys		
4. Valid Observations		
5. Cross Ways Discussion		
6. Group Interaction		
7. Kind Interchanges		
8. Affirmations		
9. Answers In Story		
10. Led to Treasures		
11. Listened Well		
12. Let Story Teach		
	Spiritual Applications, Comments	
1. Oral Style Questions		
2. Gestures As Keys		
3. Valid Applications		
4. Cross Ways Discussion		
5. Group Interaction		
6. Kind Interchanges		
7. Affirmations		
8. Applications are in Story		
9. Led or Told Applications		
10. Answers Attainable		
11. Avoided Preaching		
	Overall Handling of Group	
1. Problem Management		
2. Response to Any Out-of-	Story Questions	
3. Group Description		

