

Simply The Story

Exploring Scripture Through Discussion

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STS Handbook, Draft 08/24/08

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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 **(STS)**

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Chapter 1

Simply The Story (STS)

“The profound truths from God are housed in the simple stories of the Bible.” D. 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](#)

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. There is 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.

The Jesus Model: Tell The Story, Ask Questions

How did Jesus teach? Out of the 183 times Jesus was asked a question, He only responded with a direct answer three times! All of the other times Jesus responded by asking a question or telling a story or parable. Also, did Jesus just tell a story and move on? No. Usually, after the story, He asked a question and invited discussion.

In STS, attendees also learn how to find the spiritual information (the treasures) that the stories contain, and then learn 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? *The Path*

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 looking for gifts, these people began walking even more slowly. They wanted to 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. This 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 *Simply The Story*.

Chapter 2

Simply The Story, Short Overview

A Bible story is studied and questions are prepared according to *Simply The Story* guidelines. Then a 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. The skill of story presentation is needed: the ability to tell a story well, to encourage volunteers and to review its contents in an interesting manner.

1. The storyteller tells the story. (The first telling helps the listener visualize the story and feel its impact.)
2. The storyteller asks one volunteer to retell the story or for listeners to retell it to each other. (Listeners pay close attention to the retelling by their peers to see if they get 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. To do both well, two more skills need to be developed. The skills of finding the spiritual treasures and then the skill of forming those treasures into questions.

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 how God works with 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 based on the Observations as they apply to people today.)

Hint: Notice that five times (both in Phase One and Two) the storyteller starts with the beginning of the story. But remember, in Phase Two, just questions are asked. No more retelling is needed! All the storyteller needs to do is to anchor each question in the part of the story to which the question connects.

Chapter 3, 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 it. He had not faced his sin. Nathan was a very wise man. He could have appeared before King David and confronted him in the usual prophet's style by preaching a sermon against adultery and murder. 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.

After listeners have shared aloud what they saw in the story, as they stood outside and looked into it through the window, the storyteller invites the listeners 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."

Chapter 4

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 incidents 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. The Bible is supracultural. That is, its contents rise above all cultures. 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. In STS we do not pre-select some stories to use for evangelism and some for teaching. Consistently, we see evidence in the application of STS that the

Holy Spirit can and does move through all stories to disciple and bring people to faith in God.

4. 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 your particular listeners would use to express themselves. For instance, instead of saying “fearful,” you might decide to say “afraid” or “scared.” (If you happen to be one of those fortunate people who read and also speak more than one language, you have access to a unique way to read out loud and learn a story. Read out loud from a Bible that is not written the language in which you are going to tell the story. For example, if you can read Hindi, and want to tell the story in English, look at the Hindi and speak the story out loud in English. This way you won’t be trying to recall exact words, but will be more prone to remember and tell the story as a story. As well, you will more naturally select words that are conversational.)

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. (The 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.** Establish 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.

Stepping Into The Unfamiliar

As we endeavor to learn new skills, there is a tendency to incorporate only part of what we are learning into the systems we have already found to be valid.

Let me illustrate: Several of our dedicated volunteer staff agreed to listen to a new teaching piece I was writing for *Simply The Story*. Although my intention was to see if one certain segment had clarity, God used this episode to show me a valuable lesson.

To properly understand the segment, they had to know the story, so I asked these two rather shy people to first learn the story. One, a lady, has attended and helped administrate in four STS workshops. The other, a man in his eighties (who works as if he was 20!) had, until this moment, successfully evaded telling a story.

"If you follow the instructions," I explained, "you can learn this ten-verse story in ten minutes." I reminded them of the STS way of learning a story. "Read the story one time through, out loud. As you read, speak the story in your own words. For instance, in this story, instead of saying 'behold, you might say 'look.' See in your mind's eye what is happening in the story. Immediately after reading it one time, close your eyes and say aloud as much as you remember of the story. Your goal is to remember the exact story, not the exact words. Then go back and read it out loud again. You will notice the parts you left out. Close your eyes and again repeat the story out loud. Do this four times."

These cooperative, servant-hearted people repeated the instructions to me. "Read it out loud in my own words, close my Bible and tell the story," they dutifully repeated.

So they began. They read...silently! Neither uttered a sound out loud. I interrupted their study. "How were you supposed to read this?"

They both responded, "Out loud."

"But I don't hear anything?"

"Well," the man stated, "I am just reading it to myself."

"But you already said you knew to read out loud. You are such a cooperative person. Why did you not follow the instructions?" I asked.

"I don't know," he puzzled, "I guess I just never do that."

"And you," I turned to the lady, "Did you know you were supposed to read out loud?"

"Yes."

"Then I don't understand. Why did you not read out loud?"
Sheepishly she explained, "I felt foolish to do that."

We all laughed, especially when we realized that the story is about Zacchaeus, a man who wanted to see Jesus so badly that he did something that might have been considered foolish. As well, one of the other truths in their story was how Zacchaeus totally followed instructions!"

Finally, after quite a bit of coaxing, they broke out of their bondages of "I've never done it that way," and "fear of looking foolish." They read their story out loud, closed their eyes and repeated their story as best as they could.

After four times through, I asked them, "Will you tell your story to me now?"
Wonderfully, after only ten minutes of study they both told almost perfect stories!

"So," I joked with the eighty-something man, "Do you always memorize ten verses in ten minutes?" He just laughed.

The lady burst out, "I could never learn these Bible stories before! I wanted to. I tried, but I just couldn't do it."

I asked. "Did you ever follow all of the instructions?"

"No."

We included this incident to encourage you to fully try all of the components of STS. Since right now you are reading these words, it is clear that you are literate. Remember, the learning and communication style of STS is oral, so you are being asked to step into another world. By faith, try all of the STS steps as they are laid out. The incident in the office is very common, and it shows that using part of the STS guidelines will not give you the desired end result. AFTER you try STS as outlined, the Lord will probably show you many useful innovations that will enhance your study and STS presentations.

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 come before 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 since 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 such as, “Now this is the story” or “This is the Bible story.”
2. **Avoid Pronouns!!!!** It helps listeners follow the story as you tell it, if you will ***use names of the people in the story*** and ***specific locations or names of objects*** instead of saying “it,” “he,” “she” or “they.” Do this when possible (and as acceptable within a language).
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 of 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” well to them. Through careful observation, storytellers are able to understand a story, enabling them most accurately tell the story with the correct feelings.
 2. Do remind yourself that all of the 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 storytellers begin the story by speaking in an excited voice, but then they continue 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 real life, no story would be accurately represented by excitement throughout.
 2. Actually, some parts of the story might be about sadness, fear, kindness, disappointment 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 your voice’s excitement level to fit the story. As well, the various emotions of the story can be reflected in the tone and expression in your voice.
 3. In every language, when people converse, there are sounds that are not really words, that will naturally slip into their speech. These sounds will be unique to every language and culture. It may be that a sigh

shows fatigue or an expelling of breath could indicate frustration. In most cultures, clicks of the tongue indicate an emotion. A quick gasp or intake of air may show surprise or fright. Laughter or a catch in one's voice delivers the emotion we feel. All of those sounds and many more unwritten but never-the-less spoken sounds exist. We learn those sounds from those around us as we grow up. As a way to learn to tell Bible stories in a natural and interesting manner, start listening for those sounds as you converse with others. Then, as you hear new sounds, store them in your mind so that you can purposely use them when you tell Bible stories.

4. Even a pause or a hesitation between words can add great drama and listening interest to the telling of a story. For example, in the story of the one leper the narrator says, "Jesus reached out His hand and touched the leper." If the storyteller speaks those words with no hesitation, a great opportunity is lost. For Jesus to actually touch a leper is astounding; it shows such great compassion. The storyteller needs to slowly say the words with hesitations in between each movement [by the storyteller] of reaching down to touch the leper. The beautiful moment between Jesus and the leper is seen, and heard and felt when the storyteller says in an increasingly slower and increasingly more amazed voice, "Jesus.... reached out His hand.... and touched....the leper."
 5. Look for moments of drama within in a story. When a healing takes place, or there is anything unusual or even a strong statement is made by a character inside a story, consider using a hesitation or pause in speech. By doing that, you allow the dramatic incident enough time to unfold and be felt by the listeners.
 6. Most stories have some ordinary narration that connects the words of the speakers. Those parts can best be told with a normal voice.
 7. 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. **Use Actions, Show the Story.** Actions that correctly fit the story can show fear, greed, aggression, flight, surprise, bravery, wisdom, depression and other emotions. Emotions can be demonstrated through even slight gestures. By where you stand, look or gesture you can establish the location of people, crowds, or places mentioned in your story. As you speak a person's quotes, slightly reposition your body to be in the place and looking in the correct direction that simulates where the person is located, would have been looking

or what the person was doing. For instance, healed people may look amazed, and slowly move their newly healed body or they may become excited and jump for joy. Hesitations in speech and also in movement add realism and drama to storytelling.

8. **Stand or Sit to Tell a Story?** In many cultures and situations it is more appropriate for a storyteller to sit down along with the people to tell a story, than to stand. We suggest that you practice your story standing up. You will be able to tell the story with total body actions and positioning. This way, when you do have the opportunity to tell a story to a large group or in some other settings when standing would be the best way to tell the story, you will have practiced all of the actions. If you tell the story while seated, you will still be able to use some of the actions that you practiced. Of course, when telling a story seated is the best choice, by all means sit.
9. **Beginning the Story.** As stated 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. (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.)
10. **Look At Everyone, Sometimes!** In STS we teach attendees to look at everyone as they tell their story. Interestingly, in one workshop when a new storyteller in a group looked only at me the whole time, a discovery was made. Before correcting him I asked the man if in his culture, it was expected that he tell his information only to the older or most important person in a group. He answered, "This is true."
 1. Oh no! Culture clash. Our desire in STS is draw out everyone and encourage all present to become involved in responding to questions. That evening we discussed at length this conflict with the national STS instructors. We agreed that, although respect for elders and leaders is good, no one should be overlooked. For sure, begin by acknowledging the elders, but as much as possible storytellers need to speak to everyone, regardless of people's rank or status in the community. Throughout, the storyteller continues to include and speak to the high ranking people. But as well, by also looking at others in the group, by demonstration, the storyteller shows (as in the parable of the Good

Samaritan) who our neighbors are today.

2. The god of this world has woven into all of mankind's cultures the mind set to elevate the strong and devalue the weak. In the STS workshops, we teach that as believers we must especially involve those people on the fringe of life, women, children, simple, outcasts, etc. Plainly in Scripture there is a biblical principle of including everyone. Jesus did this. He was often criticized for this very activity of noticing and spending time with those His culture considered the lower sort of people. When something in a culture clashes with Scripture, believers must make a choice. Whether to let ones culture guide ones actions and beliefs or to let the Word of God move one's actions and beliefs to a higher level, each believer must decide.
11. **End the Story.** When you complete the story, tell the listeners, "This is the end of the story," and close your Bible.
12. **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.***

4-B

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 spiritual 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 people in the story. **The Spiritual Applications** are the spiritual truths that apply to our lives today.

Helping Seekers Find: Remember the story of Philip and the Eunuch? In Acts we read of an important man, an Ethiopian eunuch, who sat in his chariot reading in the book of Isaiah. The Lord sent Phillip to the eunuch to explain the Scriptures. Hearing a story is good, but helping people understand the content of the story they just heard has a biblical precedent.

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 also 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.

Short Overview of Finding Spiritual Observations:

Information before the story

1. If you have printed or audio Scripture available to you containing Scripture that precedes your story, first go back to it. Consider the information that comes before your story. Is there anything that might help you understand who the characters are, what they know, and have experienced?

You may find it helpful when you prepare a story for STS presentation to imagine each scene or new segment of information as a photo. The words that make up a story are a series of these picture photos. Think of these photos as being placed in chronological order in a photo album, one photo on each page. Go through the story in your mind, starting at the beginning. Look carefully at the first photo. Do more than just glance quickly at the photo before turning the page to look at the next photo. Linger on it in your mind's eye so you can see beyond the image and see the spiritual treasures it contains.

Look at the photo and go through these following questions in your mind.

In your story, in the Scripture section (or page of the photo album you are seeing), ask these questions...

1. **Setting:** What do we know that has taken place before we open this story that may help us to understand the storyline more clearly?
2. **Circumstance:** What circumstance is seen in this photo? Take time to think about how serious, or maybe how wonderful this situation is. Imagine what it must have been like to be in there and think about how this situation might cause people to feel. They might have feelings such as being brave, happy, fearful, confused, doubtful, angry, humble, prideful, self-righteous or other emotions. Remember. Look for how someone might feel, which is not necessarily what someone "should" feel. This kind of look at a circumstance allows us to move deeper into the story and realize that living, breathing people with feelings and emotions, such as we are, actually experienced these circumstances.
3. **Actions:** What can we learn about those in the photo of the story from what was said or done? Do we see their character, thoughts, hopes, fears, doubts, or other beliefs or emotions?
4. **Choices:** Are choices made in this photo? On a daily basis our lives involve choices. These choices are first made in our minds and then the results of those choices are usually seen in our actions and words. If choices are in the photo, do you see those choices as wise or unwise? Ask yourself, *What other choices might these in the story have made?* If the choice was wise, take time to imagine what other selections might have been made that would have been not as wise. In the story you are preparing, you see only the choice that was made. It is vital to see that everyone, in every story in the Bible, had many options of choices they could make.
5. **Results:** What are the results of their choices?
6. **Impact:** Who in the story was impacted by the choices and how?
7. **Character:** How do we see the character of God (love, mercy, longsuffering, anger, judgment etc.) in this story?

In short, 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, for those who like detailed information, is a long list of questions that you can use to find Spiritual treasures. These are all just suggestions to give you an idea how many ways you can look for the potential wealth of treasures that might be found in a story.

Ask yourself:

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, prejudice, 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 there a wealth of spiritual truths in the Bible. Others know that there are many spiritual treasures in Bible stories, but they do not realize that they are capable 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 a 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 allows 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 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 simply 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 of 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 a small part of a treasure for themselves, they are encouraged to start looking for more treasures.

The Holy Spirit, The Great Teacher

In encounters with the unsaved, do we only quote John 3:16 and then not talk with the person about the verse afterwards? Do we refrain from discussing that Scripture because we think it is only the Holy Spirit's job to teach? No! We most often discuss that verse.

We know the Bible says that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. But sadly, as we travel the world sharing STS, we continually see that most believers do not even KNOW that there are treasures in Bible stories, let alone know that God will help them to learn. So, the Holy Spirit waits to teach, standing in front of an empty classroom.

In STS, when we prepare a story, we ask the Holy Spirit to show us treasures in the story, and we seek His help to form questions that will help us lead others to the treasures we have just found. As we ask listeners the questions, we also ask the Holy Spirit to guide the discussion. Then, as discovery by the listeners is made, we recognize that the Holy Spirit is speaking to every heart in the room.

Occasionally, 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 will be wonderful opportunities, prompted by the Holy Spirit or a person's hunger, for truth to be discovered. Don't miss those chances. Answer them.

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 storytellers/teachers can back off from giving obvious clues and slowly allow the responders to do more and more of the discovering.

(Please note: In the sample story of Martha/Mary and of several others stories that appear later in this handbook, many spiritual treasures and applications are

written for you. In an STS workshop we do teach those learning STS to NOT write their questions. We are listing questions in a written form only in this handbook so that those who are literate, and who are not able to attend a hands-on workshop to learn STS, will be able to mentally walk through the preparation process of STS.)

As you, the storyteller, move through the Martha/Mary story, some of the very observations and applications that we list will be discovered and offered by the class members even before you arrive at the questions that are supposed to lead them to those treasures. This early-finding of treasures by class members is wonderful as it shows that the people are experiencing discovery. In action, as you lead people in STS, use only enough of your prepared leading questions as are needed to help class members to their moments of 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!

4-C

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.**

After an STS workshop in Kenya, a church planter who attended shared a wise observation. This man, strong in theological training, let go of his city business to minister, but in four years he has seen little fruit in his rural village work. To come to this workshop he traveled two days by camel, one day by “airbus” (hitching a ride on the top of a passing truck) and one day by bus! He loved what he learned in the workshop, feeling empowered! He stated, “I have been teaching what others taught me, but until this training I did not know how to learn from the Bible. I now see that I cannot take people to a place where I have not yet been.”

This is why we use questions. First the storytellers learn new information for themselves from God’s Word and then through questions the storytellers lead others to the valuable truths they have learned.

People starting out in STS usually try to ask just one perfect question to lead people to a treasure. This rarely works. You can’t just drop a loaf in front of a cage and expect the bird to find the cage. To coax a bird into a cage, lay a trail of bread crumbs. In the same way, when you want to lead people through questions to discover a spiritual treasure, most often you need to ask a series of small questions that will easily lead listeners to the truth.

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. (Some may see a conflict in this observation with a time later when Jacob and his family were led by God to go to Egypt. But of course, the words “led by God” do show the difference in the two situations.)

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.

Anchor Questions in the Story: 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. We saw that a famine prompted Abram to leave the promised land and go to Egypt for help. What else could Abram have done besides leave the land when food was short?
- d. What kind of emotions or feelings controlled Abram in this story? 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 based on the Spiritual Observations that the listeners just discovered through discussion, look at the following sample questions that could open up discovery of Spiritual Applications.

- a. God gave Abram instructions on a location for blessing. Do we have any instructions from God on where we need to live to be blessed? Maybe not. But can we discover a principle on **how** God wants us 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. In any Bible stories that we have listened to together, did 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!

Presentation 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 to help you tell it as you go through it.)

First Time – 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. Helpers may add appropriate sound effects, but **always you** keep speaking the words as they act it out. Because the listeners still hear just one storyteller present the whole story, they will be able to retell the story back to you. As well, listeners who hear one storyteller do a story report that they returned home and told the story to family and others who did not hear it.

Note: If you let the different helpers speak the lines, it becomes a spoken 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.

Second Time – You ask the story to be retold. (Two Options)

Option 1: Say, *Turn to the person next to you and re-tell the story to each other.*

Option 2: Ask if someone will volunteer to re-tell the story. If the listeners act 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 the 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, it is too hard to put the story 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. (If you have time limitations, skip this presentation and go straight to Presentation 3.)

Third Time - 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.*

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

So to enlist help from the listeners in stepping through the story you can hesitate and act as if you do not remember the next part, use the fill-in-the-gap style or tell-the-next-part style to encourage the group to recall the story for you.

If here, (or at any time), listeners do not respond after you hesitate to allow them to fill in some of the story, start slowly speaking the answer, giving the people 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 contain 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 Presentation Phase Two, the treasure hunting.

Chapter 6

Presentation 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 what Mary had chosen.

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 are doing work for God that maybe He has not even directed 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. Jesus is patient and longsuffering 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. In Jesus' final statement about Martha's behavior, He says that Mary chose the one thing that is necessary. Obviously, by the way Martha wanted Mary to stop what she is doing and come help serve, Martha thinks what she is doing is the necessary thing. Sometimes we decide what we are doing is the most necessary thing, when it is not what God thinks is the one necessary thing for us to do.
11. Sometimes we take charge of situations and don't stop to ask God what He wants us to do. We make the decisions of what is most important and necessary, and may even decide to pull people away from what God has called them to do!
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.

6-B

Forming Questions to Invite Discovery of Spiritual Observations

These following questions lead to just some of the many Spiritual Observations and Applications that have been discovered in the Martha/Mary story during STS workshops done all over the world. A portion, or all, of these findings could be presented 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 gentlemen? [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 Martha 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? [Wait for answer.] You are right. She acts 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 leave Jesus’ presence. Explain why Martha’s 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.]*

14. *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!*

15. *Do we have any information in the story that shows us whether the way Martha was worrying was something new for her or if it was 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.*

16. *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.*

17. *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.*

18. *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?*

19. *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.*

20. *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.*

21. *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?"*

22. *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.*

Chapter 6-C

Forming Questions 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 might we 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 answers.]*
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 would 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 that 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?

14. *It is 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! What do you think?*

Chapter 7

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, always traveled 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.

The storyteller must assume that one or more persons present do not have knowledge of the Bible 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.

If you have taught some 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, eating, or how Jews felt about Samaritans can give 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. Do this only if you believe your listeners have really grasped the deeper spiritual parts within the story you are presenting. Only then should you tell the added verse or two. This way this added information fits into the story should be obvious enough that the listeners easily make the application.

For instance, if you told Exodus 17:1-7 and your group 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. Trust it 100%. Extra biblical information may or may not be 100% valid. Show 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 things as, "Good answer," "I 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?"

If Groups are Large or Time is Short, If the group being taught is small enough in size, and time allows, the answers from the listeners can heard. If time available does not allow fielding answers or the circumstance or size of the listening group rules out receiving answers, there is an option. Teachers using STS can ask rhetorical questions. People are asked to think of answers to the questions, but not to speak them out loud. Just make sure as the storyteller that you allow a slight moment for the listeners to think of their answers.

Chapter 8

Why and Where to Use *Simply The Story*

Why to Use *Simply the Story*:

One of the major differences between 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 one's 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 primary 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.

Most believers have been to a Christian conference. Topics presented may be ones such as, evangelism, reaching UPGs, family, finances, abstinence, prayer, attributes of God, healing, integrity in business or prophecy. All are important topics. Interestingly, we see that all of these topics are also covered through the presentation and discussion of stories. 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.

When teachers decide which part of a Scripture passage or which story will be used to teach their selected topic, the rest of the information in the passage or

story will be missed. When a story is fully explored and developed through questions and discussion, the Holy Spirit reaches out to give His topic to those involved in the teaching. As well, when teachers make a list on a topic and then pick out Scriptures to verify their list, the Biblical information comes to the hearer as a rule or a law. When stories are used, the spirit of the entire story is allowed to speak to the hearers.

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 is to communicate Biblical truths in developed nations, and to do all we can to reach both the lost in the 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.

Ways to Use *Simply The Story*

Fold STS Into Your Existing Ministry: Whether you work with children, teenagers, young adults or adults of any age, STS will enliven interest and involve your people in the study of God's Word.

1. Whatever time you have available, you can tailor the length of the story presentation by the number of observations and applications you cover. If you have a limited time, say less than 30 minutes, you can save a bit of time by leaving out step 2 of Phase One. Do not have a volunteer retell the story. You tell the story. Then have the group step through the story with you by retelling it together. The STS model will still work.

2. When the allotted time or opportunity to tell an STS story is extremely short, you can do some very creative things. A story can be told in just over a minute and a few selected observations and applications can be done in 5 to 10 minutes. Tell the story and then go right to a few selected observations and then their applications. Before you ask each question, repeat the part of the story in detail that contains the treasure you want people to discover. If, for example, you were telling the One Leper story, you would say, "Remember how Jesus felt compassion when the leper bowed down and begged Jesus and said 'If you will, you can make me clean.'?" Then ask your question. This detailed repeating is usually enough to remind people of the story so that they can respond well to your questions. What you miss is the two tellings of the story which conditions people who are not accustomed to interactive learning to respond to questions.

Pastors Innovate: Pastors of traditional and conservative denominations and congregations hesitate to use STS from the pulpit. It is very different in many churches for a pastor to ask questions during a sermon. As well, to tell a story instead of reading it is a big leap in some circles. Pastors in various world regions who have attended STS workshops and liked the concept have found these solutions.

a. Some pastors use it in an informal meeting with youth. The responses were very positive from the youth. The parents came to the pastors and said, "Why don't you teach us this way?"

b. Other pastors follow the STS style from the pulpit, but instead of telling the story, they read the story from Scripture, but they moved from a conservative formal way of reading to in an animated interesting style.

c. Some showcase it as "A way that those far from us who cannot read are being reached. The positive responses to this way of presenting the Bible to "others," opened the door to use a customized form of STS in their churches.

d. Some pastors introduce STS to their Sunday School program leaders.

e. Others use it as an option for new believer's classes.

Full STS Live, With No Responses:

1. If a group is very large, or not able to give responses, you will have to alter your STS style. This can be done. All parts but asking the story to be retold can be done by one person with no response from the people you are teaching.
2. STS stories can be presented on the radio or TV. The retelling is left out, but the rest stays in. The key, especially on radio, is to fill up to five seconds of space after each question with some kind of chatter. For example, ask a question and then say, "So what do you think? Do you have an idea of what happened next? What would you say? Your answer is....?" This is chatter that does not really distract the listeners by making them listen to you, but it fills the airways so that people will not change stations because they do not hear anything on the radio.

Chapter 9

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 before 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.

Chapter 10

Journey Through a Sample Story

How to Prepare Questions

Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10

We concentrate on one key part of STS in this chapter which is the forming of questions. When you see the size of this chapter, you may exclaim in shock, “This lesson is too long!” Then, as you start through it you could say, “There is too much repetition!” Have faith. We have a purpose. To practice forming questions, we take you through a specific progression of finding treasures and making questions and of looking at the treasures we find and questions we create.

It goes like this. After you read and learn the Zacchaeus story, we ask you to think of possible spiritual treasures it might contain. To locate these treasures, look for the ways that God worked in the lives of people long ago and the lessons the people did and did not learn, and the results of those actions. These are your Spiritual Observations. God selected these particular events and recorded them for us in the Bible, so we suggest that you start out by listening very carefully to the whole story in order to locate its treasures.

Then read our Observations

Next you think about how you would form your question to lead people to your treasures.

This is important! Here comes the repetition we warned you about. You will see that we first again list our Observations and then afterwards we list our questions. We do this so you can see how our questions are based on our Observations. We re-list these observations so that you can see how we turn Observations into questions.

Next you are asked to recall your Observations, and then to think of how each of those Observations would apply to us today. Those are your Spiritual Applications.

Then you can read our Applications. To make sure you see the progression of thought, we re-list our Observations. This is done so that you can see how each Application needs to be based on a specific Observation.

Next you are asked to think of questions that will lead people to your Applications.

After that, you can read our questions. Yes! As we warned, this chapter is very long. Why? We include “everything” so you can review the way questions lead listeners to Observations, and Observations lead to Applications, and then your questions lead listeners to those Applications.

Remember though. STS is no certain set of questions; it is a concept, a progression of listening, learning and leading to truth. These are possible questions, samples to lead listeners to treasures we have seen so far in this story. The questions you use will be your own. Wonderfully, as you listen well to the Holy Spirit and to the answers and comments of people you instruct, you will be amazed at how much more you will learn as you teach!

Be Bold. Be Trusting. No Writing!

Can you imagine Jesus standing up to deliver the Sermon on the Mount and first setting His notes on a lectern in front of Him? Probably not. When someone asks you to tell your testimony, or how you met your spouse or the happiest experience of your life, do you refer to your notes to answer? Some types of information we speak, we remember. We own it. Even when we talk with a friend about our day, we tell it by memory. We own the information, because it is a story, so we can easily repeat it.

We know STS requires you to acquire new skills. In the past, if you have ever been a speaker or teacher, you no doubt used notes to recall your presentation. When you lecture or learn material that is wrapped in topical content, notes are needed. But with story, you don't need notes.

If you tasted some homemade chocolate cake and found it scrumptious, you might ask for the recipe. If you went home to make one for yourself, would it make sense to swap vanilla for chocolate and rice for flour? No, of course not. The uniqueness of the cake is based on the recipe.

We suggest following the STS Recipe and trusting that each step of STS has a purpose.

When a story is prepared for STS delivery, it should all be done in your mind, no notes! This does not seem possible, since, as we said, almost everyone who reads has learned to depend on written notes to recall information. In this exercise we ask you to do something very unusual. Study and prepare a lesson, and write NOTHING! Yes we are serious...No written notes.

If you ever attend one of the *Simply The Story* workshops, you would experience learning a ten-verse Bible story in ten minutes. As well, you would learn how to discover spiritual treasures and prepare questions, and ALL this you would do without any written notes.

For now, since we are not able to instruct you in person, we will write information in this chapter that will show you how to think through a story.

We chose the story of Zacchaeus for this study partially because it is often seen as a simple children's story. It is usually told that a little man named Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus, so he climbs a tree so he can see over the crowd. The crowd in the story

doesn't like this man because he is a tax collector, but Jesus notices him and comes to the man's home for lunch. Zacchaeus is happy and gives half of his money to the poor people, so we should be like Zacchaeus.

Although this is generally what the story is about, there is much much more in the story. As we go through the story STS style, you will see many of the story's treasures uncovered.

At first, when you explore this story, you will probably not find as many treasures as we present here. Don't be concerned about that. As you continue to prepare and present stories STS style, you will discover more and more treasures. You may even go back later to this story and find added treasures! God's Word is like that. You will never exhaust its supply of truths!

In this study of the Zacchaeus story, we show you a lot of treasures just so you can get the idea of how many truths one story may contain. When you actually teach this story, because of shortness of time or other reasons, you may feel led to not present all of your treasures at once.

How to Proceed

1. It is recommended for this exercise, that you first learn this ten verse story in STS style. (Reminders of that style are soon to follow.)
2. After you learn it, take a few minutes to pray and meditate on its contents.
3. Then reread the pages found in the STS handbook Table of Contents, "Skill II: How to Find the Treasures in Your Story, #1 How to Find the Treasures Called 'Spiritual Observations.'"
4. Next, remember the events of the story in chronological order all the way through to see what Spiritual Observations you can locate.

Remember, do NOT write anything! Instead, as you think of the story in order, use your recollection of the story as your notes. Walk through the story in your mind; connect your Observations to the contents of the story. After that is done, you will go back and form those Observations into questions.

5. Next, you will review the story in your mind and recall as many of the Observations as you are able to remember. For each Observation, seek God for what it should mean to us today, spiritually. What it means to us is called Spiritual Applications. Then lastly, you frame questions that will lead people to those Applications.

Please take careful notice: The Spiritual Observations and Spiritual Applications are written here only so you can see how questions are developed for a story. If you were in an STS workshop, none of this information would be written. The story becomes your notes. The story is a clothesline. As you slowly walk alongside the clothesline in your mind, you hang your Treasures and Questions on it.

Now, just as the STS handbook describes how to learn a story...

1. Read this ten verse story one time through, **out loud**.
2. As you read it, **speak it in your own words**. For instance, instead of saying "publican" you might say "tax collector."
3. See in your mind's eye what is happening in the story.
4. Immediately after you complete your reading, **close your eyes** and repeat **as much as you remember** in the story. Remember the exact story, not the exact words.
5. Then go back and read it **out loud** again. You will notice the parts you left out.
6. Close your eyes and again repeat the story **out loud**.

Often, after about four times of reading and repeating the story this way, you will notice that you are able to tell the whole story! If you can't, there is a strong chance that you changed the STS recipe. Now try learning this Zacchaeus story, STS style.

Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Review of The Traditional Style of Presentation Compared to STS Style

The Usual Method of Teaching From A Story. When using the most common style of preaching and teaching, some parts of a passage, or maybe all of the passage, would be read to the listeners. Then some parts just read would be referenced as a platform from which to teach. Other Scriptures would be brought in to emphasize certain truths. In some cases, information outside the Bible would be presented and

then maybe some Greek and Hebrew would be mentioned to prove the speaker's main points. Occasionally a bit of humor or a story will be brought to keep people engaged.

Then applications to the listeners are made. That is just it. Applications are made by the teacher. The applications are given in the form of telling the listeners what they should do or should not do. This is a common style, not wrong, but not the only way to teach on the passage.

STS Style In contrast, when a person teaches using STS, the story is heard three times, three different ways. Then all of the Spiritual Observations (such as those listed below) are presented to the listeners in the form of questions. This discussion style allows listeners to process the information, to mentally engage and to enjoy discovering the spiritual treasures for themselves. Quite commonly, listeners will uncover additional truths that the teacher had not discovered.

Now that you have learned the story, take some time to go back and meditate on the ten verses. Locate your treasures as explained earlier in the handbook in "Skill II: How to Find the Treasures in Your Story, #1 How to Find the Treasures Called Spiritual Observations." After you have located these treasures, proceed on and read the Spiritual Observations below that we found. Some of them you have seen. Others you found might be different.

These are some Spiritual Observations that a storyteller might notice, in order as they appear in the story. These are just lots of observations, things that seem significant. Not all will be discussed, but as you investigate a story, do not be afraid to think of and consider many ideas. However, when it comes time to teach, you may not be able to substantiate all of your thoughts. So, those unsubstantiated thoughts should be not used to teach others. Just wait. You will find that sometimes as you present your questions, the Lord will speak some added truth to you through the responses of others and your earlier thoughts will be made clear.

1. People who seem to be interested in Jesus are blocking Zacchaeus from getting close to Jesus.
2. This man Zacchaeus is small in height but big in position. As a rich man and head tax collector, he is so intent on seeing Jesus, that when the easy approach doesn't work, he purposely goes out of his way.
3. The probability that people might ridicule this man of importance for his undignified act of climbing the tree doesn't stop Zacchaeus from doing it.
4. At first in the story it does look completely like Zacchaeus is seeking Jesus. Then part way through it is Jesus seeking out Zacchaeus!
5. We see Jesus walking down the street in the middle of a crush of people crowding around him. Although all the people are pushing in against Jesus, He bypasses all of them to notice just one person who was not even nearby, and this

- man is in a tree!
6. Jesus calls Zacchaeus by name, which shows His personal interest in the man.
 7. Jesus invites Himself to Zacchaeus' home, which is kind of presumptuous in most cultures. It shows Jesus' knowledge and confidence of what "must" take place.
 8. When a person looks up, especially a leader people are following, the people would also turn their eyes up to see what the leader is looking at. So it is not just Jesus seeing Zacchaeus, it is all the people! Zacchaeus doesn't show fear or embarrassment at being "discovered." In fact he showed joy.
 9. Zacchaeus doesn't hesitate to respond precisely to Jesus' summons. He hurries.
 10. Even though the crowd speaks against Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus still has Jesus come to his home. Zacchaeus does not let himself be influenced by their criticism.
 11. By the crowd's criticism saying that Jesus is "going to be a guest with a man that is a sinner," I see that the crowd thinks that they were NOT sinners.
 12. The crowd acts like they are "followers" of Jesus. They move along, pressing against Jesus. They seemingly care about who Jesus eats with and indicate that they want that invitation. But they show total disrespect of Jesus by disagreeing with Him on His choice of dinner guests.
 13. The crowd does not have the nerve to question Jesus to His face. They murmur their criticism of Him among themselves.
 14. Zacchaeus, a wealthy man, demonstrates his heart when he refers to giving half of his goods to the poor.
 15. As well, Zacchaeus announces that if he has lied to take anything from anyone, he wants to restore to that person four times what he had taken. Zacchaeus does not say "if" he was indicted or found guilty by the law that he would return four times the stolen amount. Zacchaeus pledges to do this of his own free will. Some might suggest that Zacchaeus has already been giving his money to the poor, but the opinion of the crowd shows us differently. What we do know from the story is that at some point in the story Zacchaeus admits that he was a sinner and wants to make things right. We do see that Zacchaeus shows incredible generosity.
 16. We know that Zacchaeus comes to faith in Jesus that day because Jesus says, "Salvation is come to this house this day." Zacchaeus is the only person in the story who admits that he is a sinner and the only one in the story who gains salvation.
 17. Jesus' statement that the purpose of His coming, "is to seek and to save that which is lost," is a summary statement that is a honor to Zacchaeus and a criticism of the crowd.

Forming Questions: Now, think of these Observations just made, and see how you might change each one into a question. Sometimes you may use several questions to draw the listeners to an Observation.

Next you will see the questions we created. Since each question is formed to lead listeners to the Spiritual Observations, as a help we re-list the Observations. Then the question or questions that will lead to that Observation are written.

1. **SO-** People who seem to be interested in Jesus are blocking Zacchaeus from getting close to Jesus.
 - a. **SOQ-** In this story we saw that Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he couldn't get close to Jesus. Besides the fact that Zacchaeus was short, we see in the story that people got in Zacchaeus' way. What were the people doing that caused them to block Zacchaeus? So are you saying that the people who wanted to be close to Jesus prevented a seeker from seeing Jesus? What do you think of that?
2. **SO -** This man Zacchaeus was small in height, but big in position. As a rich man and head tax collector, he was so intent on seeing Jesus that when the easy approach didn't work, he purposely goes out of his way.
 - b. **SOQ-** Describe Zacchaeus' social, business and economic status in the community. So, Zacchaeus uses a bit of his wealth and hires some big ruffians to break a path through the crowd, right? No? Okay then let me ask. When this man of importance wasn't able to see Jesus using the normal or easy method, to what extremes does Zacchaeus go?
3. **SO -** The probability that people might ridicule this man of importance for his undignified act of climbing the tree didn't stop Zacchaeus from doing it.
 - c. **SOQ -** Did we see in the story what the people of the area thought of Zacchaeus? For a man of Zacchaeus' importance and the fact that people already considered him an unworthy individual, what personal risk does he take by climbing up a tree to see Jesus?
4. **SO -** At first in the story it does look completely like Zacchaeus is seeking Jesus. Then part way through, it is Jesus seeking out Zacchaeus!
 - d. **SOQ -** So far in this story would you say that Zacchaeus is seeking Jesus? What might show us this? But as we look again at the story, would you say that Jesus is seeking Zacchaeus? Where do you see that in the story? So which is it? Is Zacchaeus seeking Jesus or is Jesus seeking Zacchaeus? Can both be true? Explain.
5. **SO -** We see Jesus walking down the street in the middle of a crush of people crowding around him. Although all the people were pushing in against Jesus, He bypasses all of them to notice just one person who was not even nearby, and this man is in a tree!
 - e. **SOQ -** When Jesus was walking down a street surrounded by a crowd, which of the people in the crowd does He respond to? What does Jesus' behavior show us?

6. **SO** - Jesus called Zacchaeus by name which shows His personal interest in the man.
 - f. **SOQ** - Is there anything in what Jesus said to Zacchaeus that shows personal interest?
7. **SO** - Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus' home which is kind of presumptuous in most cultures. It shows Jesus' knowledge and confidence of what "must" take place.
 - g. **SOQ** - Who takes the lead in the conversation and how is this invitation kind of unusual?
8. **SO** - When a person looks up, especially a leader people are following, the people look up also to see what the leader is looking at. So, it is not just Jesus seeing Zacchaeus? It is all the people! Zacchaeus doesn't show fear or embarrassment at being "discovered." In fact, he shows joy.
 - h. **SOQ** - Have you ever been in a group of people and one of them looks upward and stares at something? What did the rest of the people in the group do? Do we know from the story if anyone else besides Jesus saw Zacchaeus in the tree? How? So this man Zacchaeus was caught in a very embarrassing situation and everyone SAW him! How might a rich and powerful person feel at the moment of being discovered in a silly kind of a place, such as up a tree? Did Zacchaeus try to hide or make excuses? Can we know from the story how Zacchaeus felt?
9. **SO** - Zacchaeus doesn't hesitate to respond precisely to Jesus' summons. He hurries.
 - i. **SOQ** - How did Zacchaeus respond? Exactly how?
10. **SO** - Even though the crowd speaks against Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus still has Jesus come to his home. Zacchaeus does not let himself be influenced by their criticism.
 - j. **SOQ** - We know that the crowd felt superior to Zacchaeus by what they said. Was he influenced by the crowd? How did he react to their criticism?
11. **SO** - By the crowd's criticism, saying that Jesus was "going to be a guest with a man that is a sinner," I see that the crowd thinks that they are NOT sinners.
 - k. **SOQ** - What did the crowd think of Zacchaeus...spiritually? What did they think of themselves ...spiritually?
12. **SO** - The crowd acts like they were "followers" of Jesus. They move along, pressing against Jesus. They seemingly cared about who Jesus eats with and indicate that they want that invitation. But they show total disrespect of Jesus by disagreeing with Him on His choice of dinner guests.
 - l. **SOQ** - What at the beginning of the story makes us think of the crowd as "followers" of Jesus? They moved along pressing against Jesus. By their physical actions and by their apparent interest who Jesus spent His personal time with, what were they indicating? In actuality, what respect were they showing Jesus?

13. **SO** - The crowd does not have the nerve to question Jesus to His face. They murmur their criticism of Him among themselves. The crowd has no idea of Jesus' power behaving as if He could not hear their complaints if they just talk quietly among themselves.
- m. SOQ** – Do you remember how the crowd was confused so they asked Jesus how it was that He would leave everyone who wanted to be with him and go to the home of a sinner? No? They didn't. What did they do? So what in their behavior showed whether they truly respected Jesus?
14. **SO** - Zacchaeus, a wealthy man, demonstrates his heart when he refers to giving half of his goods to the poor.
- n. SOQ** - What generous pledge does Zacchaeus make? What does that show us about his values?
15. **SO** - As well, Zacchaeus announces that if he has lied to take anything from anyone, he wants to restore to that person four times what he had taken. Zacchaeus does not say "if" he was indicted or found guilty by the law that he would return four times the stolen amount. Zacchaeus pledges to do this of his own free will. Some might suggest that Zacchaeus has already been giving his money to the poor, but the opinion of the crowd shows us differently. What we do know from the story is that at some point in the story Zacchaeus admits that he was a sinner and wants to make things right. We do see that Zacchaeus shows incredible generosity.
- o. SOQ** - Is there anything in the story that indicates that Zacchaeus had been discovered by the law to be a thief or that he was indicted or found guilty by the law so he is trying to pay his way out of trouble? Can we prove from the story whether Zacchaeus had already been returning money before meeting Jesus or do you think he may have decided at the visit of Jesus to do that? Can we tell by the crowd's opinion of Zacchaeus if he had been an incredibly honest tax collector and had already been sharing half of his money with the poor? Describe the difficulty for Zacchaeus to go back to those he had falsely accused, and had taken money from, and to return the money? How can we see from the story that this encounter with Jesus changed Zacchaeus' life?
16. **SO** - We know that Zacchaeus comes to faith in Jesus that day because Jesus says, "Salvation is come to this house this day." Zacchaeus is the only person in the story who admits that he was a sinner and the only one in the story who gains salvation.
- p. SOQ** - How many people in the story seem to show an interest in Jesus? Is there anything in the story that shows us that Zacchaeus really has a spiritual change in his life that day? Who in this story admitted to being a sinner? Who in the story did not see themselves as sinners? Out of all in the story, who gained salvation? What do you see is different in the one who did gain salvation?

17. **SO** – Jesus’ statement that the purpose of His coming, “was to seek and to save that which is lost,” is a summary statement that honors Zacchaeus and is a criticism of the crowd.
- q. **SOQ** - Jesus ended this story by saying that the purpose of His coming was to “seek and to save that which was lost.” Who is condemned by Jesus’ summary statement and who is honored by it? Explain.

It is recommended that you meditate now on the Spiritual Observations that you found in this ten-verse story. Then reread the sections in the STS handbook Table of Contents, “Skill II: How to Find the Treasures in Your Story, #2 How to Find the Treasures Called ‘Spiritual Applications.’”

Now think back on each of the Spiritual Observations you made. See what Spiritual Applications you can find that would be based on each of your Observations. Often you will have thought of some of these Applications almost instantly when you found the Spiritual Observations. You may have discovered some of the same Applications listed below and others you may locate will be new.

Next is a list of Spiritual Applications (SA). Each one is based on the above Spiritual Observations (SO). For ease in following the process, the Spiritual Observations are included, designated as (SO), and immediately after each SO the Spiritual Application is listed as (SA):

1. **SO** - People who seem to be interested in Jesus are blocking Zacchaeus from getting close to Jesus.
 - a. **SA** - We who claim to follow Jesus can sometimes be so focused on getting close to Jesus (or being religious) that we unwittingly or carelessly keep people away who are seeking Jesus.
- 2 **SO** - This man Zacchaeus is small in height but big in position. As a rich man and head tax collector, he is so intent in seeing Jesus that when the easy approach doesn’t work, he purposely goes out of his way.
 - b. **SA** - When we want to seek Jesus, we must be ready to set aside our pride and do what is needed to seek Him and to follow Him.
- 3 **SO** - The probability that people might ridicule this man of importance for his undignified act of climbing the tree doesn’t stop Zacchaeus from doing it.
 - c. **SA** - We must never let pride or the fear of what people might say about us from getting to know Jesus. Even if what we have to do might be looked at by others, as foolish or beneath our station, we must do it anyway.
4. **SO** - At first in the story it does look completely like Zacchaeus is seeking Jesus. Then part way through it is Jesus seeking out Zacchaeus!

- d. **SA** - We saw in the story that Zacchaeus did seek Jesus, but also Jesus did seek Zacchaeus. Both are true. For us we must seek God, but know at the same time He seeks us!
5. **SO** - We see Jesus walking down the street in the middle of a crush of people crowding around him. Although all the people are pushing in against Jesus, He bypasses all of them to notice just one person who was not even nearby, and this man is in a tree!
- e. **SA** - Many people that day sought favor with God. They appeared to be interested in Jesus, but Jesus ignored them and selected only one person. Many people in the world act as if they are interested in God, but many of them are not genuine. Jesus called out to the one who was genuine. God knows our hearts, and knows if we are truly seeking Him.
6. **SO** - Jesus calls Zacchaeus by name which shows His personal interest in the man.
- f. **SA** - We see here a personal God, one who knows where we are and knows us by name. If we understand that God is merciful to those who seek Him, we want Him to know us by name...that is comforting. Zacchaeus had been seeking to see Jesus so when Jesus called him by name, Zacchaeus recognized who it was who was calling him.
7. **SO** - Jesus invites Himself to Zacchaeus' home which is kind of presumptuous in most cultures. It shows Jesus' knowledge and confidence of what "must" take place.
- g. **SA** - It is amazing and encouraging that Jesus wants to be with those who seek Him.
8. **SO** - When a person looks up, especially a leader people are following, the people look up also to see what the leader is looking at. So it is not just Jesus seeing Zacchaeus? It is all the people! Zacchaeus doesn't show fear or embarrassment at being "discovered." In fact, he shows joy.
- h. **SA** - When we are looked at by unbelievers and unfaithful followers of God as silly or not intelligent for wanting to know God, we must not let them influence us. When we know that God is interested in us personally, we should react with joy.
9. **SO** - Zacchaeus doesn't hesitate to respond precisely to Jesus' summons. He hurries.
- i. **SA** - If at any time we know God is calling us to action, we must respond, and respond according to His instructions. Delayed obedience could be the same as disobedience.
10. **SO** - Even though the crowd speaks against Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus still has Jesus come to his home. Zacchaeus does not let himself be influenced by their criticism.
- j. **SA** - We can start out well. But over time, if we receive criticism from those around us, even from a religious crowd, we must stay the course.
11. **SO** - By the crowd's criticism saying that Jesus is "going to be a guest with a man that is a sinner," I see that the crowd thought that they were NOT sinners.

- k. **SA** - Out of the mouths of proud people they condemn themselves. Let us not be like those proud people who will not admit that they have sin.
12. **SO** - The crowd acts like they are “followers” of Jesus. They move along, pressing against Jesus. They seemingly care about who Jesus eats with and indicate that they want that invitation. But they show total disrespect for Jesus by disagreeing with Him on His choice of dinner guests.
- l. **SA** - Not all who claim to be followers of Jesus really know Him nor do they actually respect Him or His decisions. Not all religious people show respect to God’s Word.
13. **SO** -The crowd does not have the nerve to question Jesus to His face. They murmur their criticism of Him among themselves. The crowd has no idea of Jesus’ power behaving as if He could not hear their complaints if they just talk quietly among themselves.
- m. **SA** - The crowd’s actions are much like people today who think God cannot hear what they whisper to each other or see what they do in the dark and hidden places.
14. **SO** - Zacchaeus, a wealthy man, demonstrates his heart when he refers to giving half of his goods to the poor.
- n. **SA** - A true encounter with God will produce a change in world view and values.
15. **SO** - As well, Zacchaeus announces that if he had lied to take anything from anyone, he wants to restore to that person four times what he had taken. Zacchaeus does not say “if” he was indicted or found guilty by the law that he will return four times the amount. Zacchaeus pledged this of his own free will. Some might suggest that Zacchaeus had already been giving his money to the poor, but the opinion of the crowd shows us differently. What we do know from the story is at some point in the story Zacchaeus admits that he is a sinner and wants to make things right. We do see that Zacchaeus shows incredible generosity.
- o. **SA** - Zacchaeus was a wealthy man, a chief tax collector whose greedy ways changed and he became honest and generous. This head tax collector even humbled himself by admitting to those he had wronged that he had lied to them and then he restored to them four times the amount of many he had stolen. When we come to faith in Jesus, and admit our sinfulness, we should show humility and a willingness to go back and generously right past wrongs.
16. **SO** - We know that Zacchaeus comes to faith in Jesus that day because Jesus says, “Salvation is come to this house this day.” Zacchaeus is the only person in the story who admitted that he was a sinner and the only one in the story who gains salvation.
- p. **SA** - Salvation cannot come to those who do not first admit to being sinners.

17. **SO** - Jesus' statement that the purpose of His coming is "to seek and to save that which is lost," is a summary statement that honors Zacchaeus and is a criticism of the crowd.

- q. **SA** - If we want approval by God, we need to admit our lostness and sinfulness and allow God to save us.

Now go back in the story and think about each part of it. Consider the Spiritual Observations you made and the Spiritual Applications you saw that were based on those Applications. Now, think of a way to rephrase each of those Applications into questions that can lead people to discover those wonderful truths. Do that before you read the questions we offer.

After you have thought about your questions, then move on and look next at the questions we formed. The Spiritual Observations and the Spiritual Applications are listed again so you can see what the questions are based on. Those Spiritual Application questions are written below after the abbreviation of SAQ.

1. **SO** - People who seem to be interested in Jesus are blocking Zacchaeus from getting close to Jesus. **SA** - We who claim to follow Jesus can sometimes be so focused on getting close to Jesus (or being religious) that we unwittingly or carelessly keep people away who are seeking Jesus.
 - a. **SAQ** - Is it possible today for people who act religious to stand in the way of a sincere seeker of God? In what way could that happen?
2. **SO** - This man Zacchaeus is small in height but big in position. As a rich man and head tax collector, he is so intent to see Jesus that when the easy approach doesn't work, he purposely goes out of his way. **SA** - When we want to seek Jesus, we must be ready to set aside our pride and do what is needed to seek Him and to follow Him.
 - b. **SAQ** - Like Zacchaeus, might there be a time for people today that we would have to set aside pride to come close to Jesus? When might that time be? Can anyone share a time when you experienced this?
3. **SO** - The probability that people might ridicule this man of importance for his undignified act of climbing the tree doesn't stop Zacchaeus from doing it. **SA** - We must never let pride or the fear of what people might say about us keep us from getting to know Jesus. Even if what we have to do to seek God might be looked at by others, as foolish or beneath our station, we must do it anyway.
 - c. **SAQ** - There might be times people around us ridicule us for seeking God. How does it feel to be ridiculed? Have you ever been mocked for following the Lord, or have you even had to do something humiliating to find out more about the Lord? Would it be tempting to avoid ridicule if you could? What example in this story of Zacchaeus might help us make the right decision?

4. **SO** - At first in the story it does look completely like Zacchaeus is seeking Jesus. Then part way through it is Jesus seeking out Zacchaeus! **SA** - We saw in the story that Zacchaeus did seek Jesus, but also we saw that Jesus did seek Zacchaeus. Both are true. For us, we must seek God, but know at the same time He seeks us!
- d. **SAQ** - Is it true that we must seek God? Do you see anything in the story about God seeking people? Is this a contradiction? How do you explain this?
5. **SO** - We see Jesus walking down the street in the middle of a crush of people crowding around him. Although all the people are pushing in against Jesus, He bypasses all of them to notice just one person who was not even nearby, and this man is in a tree! **SA** - Many people that day sought favor with God. They appeared to be interested in Jesus, but Jesus ignored them and only selected one person. Many people act as if they are interested in God, but a lot of them are not genuine. Jesus called out to the one who was genuine. God knows our hearts, and knows if we are truly seeking Him.
- e. **SAQ** - What percentage of people in the world do you think are part of some religion? Have you ever met religious people who are not truly followers of God? With that in mind and considering who we saw in this story, let me ask this. Of the religious people in the world, are there some who just follow their religion and some who are true followers of God? What happened in this story that identified the true seeker?
6. **SO** - Jesus calls Zacchaeus by name which shows His personal interest in the man. **SA** - We see here a personal God, one who knows where we are and knows us by name. If we understand that God is merciful to those who seek Him, we want Him to know us by name. That is comforting.
- f. **SAQ** - Does anything about the way Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus bring hope to you? Can you explain why? Do you want a God who is impersonal or one who knows you? If you heard a voice speaking to you, is there anything in the story to help you know if it was God or a false voice? Has God ever spoken to you personally?
7. **SO** - Jesus invites Himself to Zacchaeus' home which is kind of presumptuous in most cultures. It shows Jesus' knowledge and confidence of what "must" take place. **SA** - It is amazing and encouraging that Jesus wants to be with those who seek Him.
- g. **SAQ** - What was surprising about the invitation to Zacchaeus' home? Was there anything in what Jesus said that showed that the visit definitely would take place? What might encourage you to seek God from what you see in this part about Jesus inviting Himself to Zacchaeus' home?
8. **SO** - Zacchaeus doesn't show fear or embarrassment at being "discovered." In fact he shows joy. **SA** - When we are looked at by unbelievers and unfaithful followers of God as silly or not intelligent for wanting to know God, we must not let them influence us. When we know that God is interested in us personally, we should react with joy.
- h. **SAQ** - In our pursuit to know God, is it hard when we have to be different than all of the rest of the people in our family or social group or culture?

What do you see in Zacchaeus' behavior that could encourage you?
What would it encourage you to do?

9. **SO** - Zacchaeus doesn't hesitate to respond precisely to Jesus' summons. He hurries. **SA** - If at any time we know God is calling us to action, we must respond, and respond according to His instructions.
- i. **SAQ** - If at any time we know God is calling us to action, how should we respond? Besides responding quickly, what should God's instructions mean to us? What would you call delayed obedience?
10. **SO** - Even though the crowd speaks against Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus still has Jesus come to his home. Zacchaeus does not let himself be influenced by the criticism of the crowd. **SA** - We can start out well. But over time, if we receive criticism from those around us, even from a religious crowd, we must stay the course.
- j. **SAQ** - The crowd criticized Zacchaeus. Have you ever been looked at by others who felt superior to you and openly called you names? What did that feel like? How must we be influenced by disapproval?
11. **SO** - By the crowd's criticism saying that Jesus is "going to be a guest with a man that is a sinner," I see that the crowd thought that they were NOT sinners. **SA** - Out of the mouths of proud people they condemn themselves. Let us not be like those proud people who will not admit that they have sin.
- k. **SAQ** - In your search for God, have you ever had conversations with religious people who thought they were perfect, not sinners? Do you think self-righteousness is a common trait among religious people? What do you think of that?
12. **SO** - The crowd acts like they are "followers" of Jesus. They move along, pressing against Jesus. They seemingly care about who Jesus eats with and indicate that they want that invitation. But they show total disrespect for Jesus by disagreeing with Him on His choice of dinner guests. **SA** - Not all who claim to be followers of Jesus really know Him, nor do they actually respect Him or His decisions. Not all religious people show respect to God's Word.
- l. **SAQ** - What in the behavior or conversation of the crowd shows the kind of respect the crowd had for Jesus? What about us? How might we act as the crowd did?
13. **SO** - The crowd does not have the nerve to question Jesus to His face. They murmur their criticism among themselves. The crowd has no idea of Jesus' power behaving as if He could not hear their complaints if they just talk quietly among themselves.
- SA** - The crowd's actions are much like people today who think God cannot hear what they whisper to each other or see what they do in the dark and hidden places.
- m. **SAQ** - Do we ever say things in secret or commit acts in the dark, thinking that no one knows what we are doing? What in this story shows us that God knows all we do and say? How should that knowledge affect us?
14. **SO** - Zacchaeus, a wealthy man, demonstrates his heart when he refers to giving half of his goods to the poor. **SA** - A true encounter with God will produce a change in one's world view and values.

- n. **SAQ** - How might a true encounter with God affect our world view and values? Give some examples.
15. **SO** - As well, Zacchaeus announces that if he has lied to take anything from anyone, he wants to restore to that person four times what he had taken. Zacchaeus did not say “if” he was indicted or found guilty by the law that he would return four times the amount. Zacchaeus pledges this of his own free will. Some might suggest that Zacchaeus had already been giving his money to the poor, but the opinion of the crowd shows us differently. What we do know from the story that is at some point in the story Zacchaeus admits that he was a sinner and wants to make things right. We do see that Zacchaeus showed incredible generosity. **SA** - Zacchaeus was a wealthy man, a chief tax collector whose greedy ways changed and he became honest and generous. This head tax collector even humbled himself by admitting to those he had wronged that he had lied to them and then he restored to them four times the amount of money he had stolen. When we come to faith in Jesus, and admit our sinfulness, we should show humility and a willingness to go back and generously right past wrongs.
- o. **SAQ** - In what specific ways today might our behavior change if or when we place our faith in Jesus? What emotion and attitude would have to be inside of us to prompt us to go back to those we have wronged and to make amends?
16. **SO** - We know that Zacchaeus comes to faith in Jesus that day because Jesus said, “Salvation is come to this house this day.” Zacchaeus is the only person in the story who admits that he is a sinner and the only one in the story who gains salvation. **SA** - Salvation cannot come to those who do not first admit to being sinners.
- p. **SAQ** - We know that Zacchaeus was the only one in the story who comes to faith. Based on this story, what do you think is the difference in those who have access to Jesus and come to faith and those who have access who do not come to faith?
17. **SO** - Jesus’ statement that the purpose of His coming “is to seek and to save that which is lost” is a summary statement that honors Zacchaeus and is a criticism of the crowd. **SA** - If we want approval by God, we need to admit our lostness and sinfulness and allow God to save us.
- q. **SAQ** - What in Jesus’ final short speech at the end of the story shows us today what God wants from us? How many people in the world are capable of reaching that goal? Is admitting our lostness and sinfulness a hard or easy thing to do? What did we learn from the story that shows us why some hear and do not come to faith in Jesus? What does this story speak to you?

Chapter 11

Pulling Out The Quills: The Struggle of Adopting Oral Strategies

One highly literate pastor, and leader in the US in reaching international students, attended an STS workshop. This accomplished author, Bill Perry, now weaves STS into his ministry. He wrote, “The difference between this [STS] approach and a more literate approach is that with the former, we treat the Bible less as a book to be deciphered and dissected, and more as a record of events lived out in the framework of historical reality. In this framework, we begin to see events as live, with undercurrents of parallel realities (such as the emotions of the people involved, the spiritual connections, etc.) to be discovered along the way.”

As we introduce *Simply The Story* around the world, we observe this recurring response: For the most part, the least educated acquire STS skills much more quickly than the highly educated.

When people have studied a certain system, and have used it with some degree of success, learning a new system that seems in opposition is a huge challenge. College, University, Bible School and Seminary graduates struggle the most with acceptance of all parts of STS. Although most of the highly educated Christians who attend STS workshops give hearty mental assent to STS, when they try to learn Scripture and present STS style, they commonly use just a small percentage of the concept.

Those with higher education and a legacy of successful teaching do not easily incorporate STS into their preparation and presentation. Areas of difficulty include:

1. letting go of collating parallel passages,
2. learning without any notes,
3. teaching without notes,
4. confining a presentation to just one passage,
5. not bringing in any outside information,
6. leading to truths through discussion as opposed to lecture,
7. presenting a story without reading it (or with minimal reading) and
8. trusting a story to stand alone.

Important to Note: We definitely do not consider any of those familiar techniques wrong or in need of being discarded. But, there is a rising awareness of the high percentage of people in the world who need to be reached through oral strategies. So, we celebrate the interest Christian pastors and educators are showing in expanding their repertoire of Scripture presentations to include the oral strategy of STS.

The pulling out of the quills we refer to in the title of this chapter is NOT the taking away of time-tested methods of preaching and teaching. Quills are the beliefs that one cannot effectively teach without notes, must use information outside a passage or some of the

traditional techniques listed above. It continues to be our experience that most people other than oral learners do struggle with nearly all of the tenants of STS.

To those seriously trying to learn STS, the idea that one must 100% embrace each concept, such as not taking notes, is as hard as pulling out the imbedded quill of a porcupine! We pull. The learners yell, "ouch." Then the quill is out.

After the quill is out, the learners show amazement and joy as they see they have gained a new skill that does work!

Nobody But God Would Pick That Story

Five STS workshops were done in East and North Nigeria. Three months later, the instructor returned to Nigeria to see, "if they got it." Since during the training all that was being taught was being translated into four languages, he was not sure.

"Not only did they get it," he reported, "They practice it, and they use it."

One evangelist told the STS instructor that he had lead nine, hard core Muslim men to the Lord. The evangelist shared what it was that reached these men. He reported that the new believers said, "We knew of the people in the stories but the Koran does not tell us the whole story and...no one ever discusses with us."

When asked what story was told that touched them, the evangelist said, "It was Moses and the Rock. You know, in Exodus 17."

As a senior instructor of STS, the report surprised me. I asked, "But what was it in that story that reached them?"

The STS instructor related, "The evangelist told me that the new believers said, 'When we heard the story and talked about it, we saw that Moses was a faithful leader, but the people were disrespectful to Moses. We were amazed that Moses went to God and asked what to do with the people. Moses cared for the people! Our leaders don't care for us. And then God didn't punish the people. He gave them water. He showed mercy. We want to know that God.'"

I thought to myself. *Would I have selected that Moses story for evangelism? Would that story have been on my list as a good one for Muslims?*

Regardless, of whether or not that story would have been on my list, it was on the Holy Spirit's list! We see this over and over in use of STS. When God's Word is delivered whole, as He wrote it, and when its treasures are discovered by listeners through discussion, supernatural power is unleashed! This is STS.

Certainly if 75% of the Bible can be clearly understood by 80% of the world, we should all be celebrating.

What About The Epistles?

Many who love all of God's Word and who know that the whole council of God is relevant, ask this question: "What about the epistles?" We offer numerous responses.

One is this. For a long time the stories of the Bible have been dissected, disassembled, and used just as springboards to illustrate topical sermons. Sadly these stories, 75% of the Bible, needed to be heard intact, as they are written. By using stories in their wholeness that 75% of the Bible opens for the over 80% of the world who cannot or does not like to learn by the more commonly used styles of Scripture delivery. In the first year of use, those oral learners in the over 40 countries introduced to STS are rejoicing at finally being able to understand the Bible.

These newly empowered oral learners, many who are illiterate, are demonstrating their comprehension by aggressively sharing stories with others. The ongoing use and wealth of spiritual fruit is a testimony to the power of God's Word when wrapped in its original "packaging," the story.

But still...what about the Epistles?

When we train people in STS workshops, we include the Epistles. In addition to the sections of the Bible that are obvious story in content, we also include some passages from the Epistles and Psalms for demonstration and practice. We show that many sections within the Epistles, books of poetry and the Prophets are a story in themselves, and as such can be presented using STS.

Because the connected thread of a story gives continuity to the history of events and people, story is the easiest format of information to remember. Although many other parts of the Bible loosely fit into the story category, and can be easily remembered, there are sections in the Epistles and other parts of the Bible that are topical and lecture in format. We find that these parts need to be read, or memorized and spoken.

Still, when these non-story passages are presented and taught, most of the concepts of STS can still be applied. Well-told stories captivate listeners. The Epistles are passionate letters, written by passionate people from a passionate God. During preparation teachers must recognize that passion and read or speak those words to others with that passion.

Pastors and Christian educators must consider the possibility that the lecture and preaching style of presentation may not be the most effective way to deliver the Biblical truths that they want people to learn and act upon.

Consideration might be given to incorporating some thought-provoking, interactive, listener-discovery, delivery of truth into Christian teaching.

Some who use “story” are introducing the earlier written Epistles to those they teach when storying through the book of Acts. As these pastors and teachers go through the stories of Acts, they bring in the Epistles that tie in with the missionary trips and letters of the New Testament writers. The general principles that make STS effective in teaching are applied to these epistles as well.

What About The Importance of Memorizing Scripture Word for Word?

Compare some pages of Bibles that are written in various languages. Do they look the same? Are the words anything alike? No. In fact, they may even utilize differing fonts to present their words. They look entirely different, and the spoken words sound completely different, but they do have something in common. What is the same about every Bible? Yes. You are correct. It is the concepts that are the same, not the exact words. The message does not change, even though the words are completely different.

In STS we caution everyone to be extremely careful not to add, subtract or alter the exact message of the story by careless selection of words, voice inflection or actions. We do also encourage people to tell Bible stories in a conversational way. But, extreme importance is placed on not changing concepts and information, no matter how small or unimportant that information may seem to be.

Keeping Accuracy: Value of Review

One of the advantages in the discussion style of STS is the powerful tool of “review.”

Review in STS is most valuable when Bible stories are presented in chronological order. Instead of the teacher giving an introduction before beginning the story, the teacher can ask the class members to give a brief review of the previous meeting’s story and discoveries.

Because new people might be present during a teaching session, or perhaps some regular attenders did not come to the previous class, a review of the last story will help those who missed. Having class members take responsibility for the review allows them to repeat the story from memory.

Also members should be asked to share the main points of the treasures previously found and what they learned. Review allows people to solidify their information and to speak Scripture to others. This is a perfect place in the meeting to hear testimonies of attenders about their use of that story during that previous week.

As well, when class members are given opportunity to share what they have learned during the previous meeting together, the teacher is able to make certain that the last story and its treasures were well and correctly understood. If people who were in the prior teaching are vague about what they learned or cannot tell the story, it is a signal to the teacher to do a review for everyone. There is no reason to move ahead into a new story until the last story is well understood by everyone.

Chapter 12.

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 an STS workshop or to formally train others under the STS name.

Instructors: Apprentice, Provisional, Certified and Senior.

Apprentice Instructors: After being part of a two day pre-training or attending a three day workshop, most Practitioners qualify to assist in a STS workshop as an “Apprentice Instructor.”

Provisional Instructors: After a minimum of three days of assisting in a workshop, Apprentice Instructors who wish to advance need to be able to explain well of all five of the STS components. They also must be able to repeat the short list in the STS Handbook of how to find treasures. As well they must show an ability to kindly, wisely and gently teach STS to others. A certified Instructor may approve and give this title to those who qualify.

Certified Instructors: After assisting in one or more workshops, Provisional Instructors may apply for Certified Instructor status. Applicants need to be able to demonstrate to a Senior Instructor specific skill levels in all parts of an STS workshop and STS concepts. Certified Instructors may run official STS workshops in all leadership roles except approving others as Certified Instructors.

Senior Instructors: When Certified 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 not only may lead STS workshops, they are the only people who can approve qualified Apprentice Practitioners as Certified instructors. As well, the *Timothy Church Planter Training* instructors come from the pool of Senior Instructors.

Chapter 13

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

When STS workshops are held for non-literates, the workshops are called *Timothy Church Planter Training*.

The difference in the STS and TCPT workshops are these:

1. All stories taught to the attendees must be read to them, told to them, or played for them on a recorder.
2. When the TCPT workshop is completed, graduates (one per village) are to receive a solar player.
3. STS instructors need added training and certification to become certified TCPT instructors.

What is the same about STS and TCPT workshops is this:

Amazingly, the same STS training as outlined in the STS Handbook is given to the illiterates. Very often, they show more ability than the literates to learn a story and to tell it well. As well, they show keen ability to locate multiple spiritual treasures within the story. They as do all, need the most time to learn how to form questions to lead others to treasures through discussion. This an acquired skill.

Because TCPT attendees cannot read, 5-10 stories are taught to the illiterates during the workshop. They learn the stories either from listening to a TCPT instructor tell the stories, from hearing them read or from listening 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 WordLight'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.

Only as the seventy Bible stories are recorded (in a language in which *God's Story* has been produced) and those recordings are all formatted with *God's Story* onto solar players, can TCPT workshops be held. More on TCPT see www.SimpleTheStory.com

Chapter 14

Ways to Learn *Simply The Story*

The God's Story Project presents STS in many ways, including these listed below.

1. **STS Handbook:** This STS handbook details the process.
2. **STS Vision Casting:** As instructors are available, we offer presentations that are a day or less in length. We demonstrate STS, explain the concept and share impact results. If this vision casting is a 4-hour or longer presentation, we provide some hands-on experience.
3. **STS Three-day Workshop:** This model offers demonstration, explanation of STS and hands-on participation in STS by attendees. Most attendees become good practitioners from these three days of training.
4. **STS One-Stop Workshop:** We feature these five-day workshops because they leave behind certified STS instructors who can then, in their own local region, train others. This workshop is the best choice when a team of instructors needs to come from a great distance to train, or when attendees are gathered from many far places. In the first two days, a small group is taught, with one instructor for every three attendees. After these two days of intensive teaching and practice, these now able-practitioners step into the role of apprentice instructors. They assist in the training of a larger group of attendees or the remaining three-day workshop. This is done with a ratio of one apprentice instructor for every seven attendees. At the end of the fifth day, some of the apprentice instructors are able to become certified instructors.
5. **STS Church Multiplier Workshop:** Using successive weekends (Friday night, 2 ½ hours, and Saturday, 8 hours) everyone in a church can be reached with the STS method of learning and sharing the Bible. It takes four weekends for all the members of an average size church to become competent STS practitioners. In 5-7 weeks, everyone in a larger church (up to 50,000 members) can be trained. As well, a core of the people trained will be able to be certified as STS instructors. Amazingly, in these Multiplier Workshops, most of the people participating only need to attend one or two of the weekend trainings to achieve this total church coverage!
6. **STS Home Workshop:** One certified STS instructor invites three believers to a workshop held in a home. Six, once-a-week, 2 hour sessions make up this workshop. These sessions can be held on an evening, afternoon or weekend. This style of workshop allows participation by those who because of jobs or family obligations cannot break away long enough to attend a one-day or longer workshop. As well, homes offer comfortable non-threatening learning environments for shy folks. We provide needed guidelines, some material and the schedule for training.

By the end of the six sessions, this one instructor will have trained those three people

to be useful STS practitioners. Those three new Practitioners are then encouraged to attend a second 6-week Home Workshop. They are to invite three new people each. As we do in our Five-Day and Church Multiplier workshops, gradually the Instructor guides the newly trained Practitioners into leadership. By the end of the 2nd 6-week session of training, the original three have helped train three more people each. As well, they have added to their STS skill and have experience as Apprentice Instructors.

Some of these Apprentice Instructors, and the nine they just trained, will want to do more workshops, training more new attendees and fine-tuning their own skills.

On the other hand, these twelve may level off and not want to train any more for awhile. They may want to continue to gather weekly to study God's Word, now as a home Bible study or fellowship group.

If these twelve want to continue the process of inviting three more each and training them, then after one more 3rd six-week session, the group will have grown to 36 (plus the original instructor.) Most homes can accommodate this quantity of people since the STS hand-on training is done in small groups. These groups of four can scatter in other rooms or meet outdoors.

Whether these people newly trained in STS continue to expand their number by creating more instructors, or whether they start home groups or they use their Bible storytelling/teaching skills for evangelism, we do not care. We see all of these directions as wonderful. Because STS skills equip people to very effectively learn and share Scripture, their lives, and the lives of those to whom they tell and teach stories, will be impacted for the glory of God.

If a majority of those trained go on to train others, in two years, the initial Home Workshop led by one instructor could impact over 6,000 people! We find that over 50% of the people who attend workshops in the USA do continue on to train others.

This is a natural, workable model of discipleship and mentoring. Since the STS concept centers around listening to God's Word, and making personal application, we can see why the impact and multiplication is so great.

5. *Instructor's Manual: How to Run an STS Workshop*

6. Pamphlet- *Vision Casting for God's Story: Ways to Share TGSP/STS/TCPT*

7. In process, on wwwSimplyTheStory.com is a wealth of STS information in written, audio and visual formats as well as live Skype story-practice sessions. Use the downloadable 3-minute informative DVD to encourage STS participation.

8. Look for the DVD of the training process as well as very short presentations on DVD for use in churches to vision cast STS.

Simply The Story **Evaluation of STS 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 those in the listening audience are oral communicators** and they only know the content of the story you present (and the content of the other stories that have 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.
- 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 using various styles 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 trust God's skill in communicating truth through the Scripture, and they 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		