The background of the cover is a photograph of the interior of a Gothic cathedral. The view is looking up from a lower level towards a high, vaulted ceiling. In the center, there are three large, tall stained glass windows with intricate tracery. Below these windows is a balcony with a decorative, lattice-like railing. The architecture features pointed arches and ribbed vaulting. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures of the stone and the colors of the glass.

Volume 1, Number 1, 2012

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

**The Oral Reality:
From Rural to Hi-Tech Communities**
Lovejoy • Terry • Stringer • LeFever • Evans • Stahl



International Orality Network

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Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

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Cover Photo

The picture of the most important church in Prague, parts of this castle—building complex started in the tenth century. This church took over six hundred years to complete her construction; her design influenced the architecture of churches across Central Europe and as far as England. She stood during the time when oral culture was thriving; she witnessed the printing age; now, she is gliding into the digital age.

My people, hear my teaching;
listen to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth with a parable;
I will utter hidden things, things from of old—
things we have heard and known,
things our ancestors have told us.
We will not hide them from their descendants;
we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,
his power, and the wonders he has done.

Psalm 78:1--4 (NIV)

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be created. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement are welcomed.

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Editor's Notes

by *Samuel E. Chiang*

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Orality Journal.

Irony is not lost that we are moving to include a print mode to express the importance of this multi-discipline and multi-faceted matter of orality. So why another journal, and why now? Let us explore together.

A Gutenberg Parentheses*

Communications from creation to about the time of the Gutenberg Press were primarily oral in nature as writing systems took time to develop and technology for mass printing had not yet arrived. In the fifteenth century the Gutenberg Press allowed printing en mass; this, coupled with the Reformation, where the Church enthusiastically declared that all should be able to read, fueled the trend toward reading, literacy, and privacy. Memory (community and social memory), which was at the core of society, got outsourced to the containers of paper and filing cabinets.

Oral cultures value face-to-face communication, in context, and living within the 'story' of the community. The literate world communicates through textual means and often is not able to convey the whole context in a communiqué. The textual 'story' is truncated or emptied of meaning. As we enter the digital culture, one that is defined by collaborating with multimodal content and tasks, strangely we are on a converging trajectory with the oral culture.

In fact, academicians are labeling the period from the fifteenth to the twentieth century the Gutenberg Parentheses: a period where the left side of the brain took over and gave birth to sciences, inventions, and philosophies, but silenced the right side of the brain from creativity. Proceeding into the twenty-first century, the captured images, reality entertainment, and online video gaming actually mirror closer to the pre-Gutenberg era, where the right side of the brain was much more in concert with the left side. The result is once again a more holistic approach to society and tasks, thereby recapturing creativity, collaboration, and community.

In oral cultures, the information is local and always rooted in context and history, so that there is meaning with coherence to the community. In digital culture, like that of Facebook postings, the emphasis is on morphing the private and individual into open, specific, contextual, and communal experiences, albeit at a distance.

This form of communal experience with a digital identity and digital narrative imbedded into social networking is reinforced by the F-Factor—fans, friends, and followers. So pervasive is this practice that we often discover products and services by relying on our social networks. We are conscious of how our postings will be rated. We are constantly seeking feedback both to improve and validate decisions. Our social networks (communities) are often buying together, and our digital communities are themselves becoming products and services. The F-Factor put in a hard closing parenthesis to the Gutenberg Press, period!

A Rummage Sale

The Church can be described as a large social network and in her book, *The Great Emergence*, Phyllis Tickle has suggested that it is experiencing what amounts to a large rummage sale, one that happens every five hundred years. In the midst of the convergence of oral, literate, and digital culture, coupled with online digital identity and narrative, and further combined with the phenomena of the Gutenberg Parentheses, what does the Church have to say and how do we move forward in this very fluid state?

During the recent International Orality Network mini-global consultation, “Beyond Western Literate Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts” (hosted at the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College), forty-two academicians and practitioners from eighteen institutions and fourteen organizations indicated (1) an abundance of oral preference learners in the classrooms, (2) the need to embrace orality as a part of the curriculum, and (3) that what is working on the field is now beginning to speak into formal education, offering rippling implications for accreditation. This is a defining moment for us to explore and learn together!

With the hard close of the Gutenberg Parentheses and the onset of the great emergence, we continue with the residual effects of the print-based culture, and we are rediscovering the ancient keys to the oral cultures that are infused with visual digital effects. Thus, we commence this new journey with a journal.

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. Since the network is based on the voluntarism of individual and organizational members, this journal is your journal. We plan to publish this journal online, semi-annually. We aim to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Similar to this inaugural issue which is printed, from time to time we will also print other editions.

We welcome submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement. In future editions, we will commence other departments, including a section on book reviews and noteworthy articles. We also welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions! Send your feedback to: oralityjournal@gmail.com.

Journeying with you,

Samuel E. Chiang
From Abuja, Nigeria

Endnote

*For a more complete discussion please refer to the chapter "*Three Worlds Converged: Living in an Oral, Literate, and Digital Culture*", James R. Krabill, gen. ed.; Frank Fortunato, Robin Harris, and Brian Schrag, eds., *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012).



The Worldwide Spread of Bible Storying: A Look at Where We've Been

by J.O. Terry

Before missionary appointment, J.O. Terry served as a radio program producer for the Baptist Radio-TV Commission in the U.S. Appointed to the Philippines as a media missionary in 1968, Terry initially served that country as radio program producer, and later as media



consultant for the Asia-Pacific Region Baptist missions. During 1984, Terry transferred to Singapore to be closer to South Asian countries and local radio, film, and audio cassette projects. In late 1987, he was introduced to Chronological Bible Teaching and the following year began studying the developing Chronological Bible Storying while learning to tell and teach the Bible stories to mostly non-literate village peoples in South and Southeast Asia. Until leaving for retirement in 2003 Terry taught hundreds of Bible Storying sessions and taught Bible Storying methodology in Asian, African, and Latin American countries. Currently, Terry publishes a Bible Storying Newsletter and has written several books on the methodology.

INTRODUCTION

In 1990, I recall that the only reference to “storying” was an advertisement for a book on “management by storying.” It was a few years later that the search engine Lycos.com found a few websites where people had posted items related to Chronological Bible Storying.

Fast forward to the present and most of the search engines now find a wide variety of articles related to Bible storying,

Chronological Bible Storying, biblical storytelling, Bible telling, and orality, as well as reports of local use by mission teams and mission agencies. What began in recent times as a rediscovery of the effectiveness of Chronological Bible Teaching evolved through a development process into a powerful, effective methodology for witness to the unevangelized oral communicator societies using their preferred means of learning.

What has driven the development of the Bible story methodology is a reproducible missiological strategy on one hand and a deliberate sensitivity to



the listener's spiritual worldview that informs story selection and how stories are taught and used by listeners on the other.

In the early days of my ministry career, "orality" was not a known term. During the development of a people-powered, reproducible witnessing methodology suitable for uneducated peoples living in rural, tribal cultures, the term "orality" was implied but not yet defined. Although in the background in early uses of Bible stories, the term was given a major focus when Dr. Avery Willis saw the potential for discipling the unevangelized peoples of both the oral and literate world. The events surrounding Table 71 at the Lausanne 2000 Amsterdam meeting, where major mission and translation agencies committed to finishing the task to engage

all unreached peoples, also gave a significant impetus to the term "orality".

EARLY HISTORICAL USE OF BIBLE STORIES

Orality was not considered a major factor in the early historical instances of telling Bible stories. There is evidence that Moravian missionaries were using Bible stories as a method of evangelizing in the Caribbean.

While in Copenhagen in 1731, Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf met a slave from the Danish West Indies and invited him to Herrnhut. Accepting the invitation, this slave visited Herrnhut and spoke concerning the need for the gospel among his fellow slaves. The church in Herrnhut picked up the burden, and one year later, two Moravians became the first missionaries to the slaves in the West Indies.¹

Another historical account recalls that Count Zinzendorf wrote that the missionaries were not to let themselves “be blinded by reason as if people had to, in order, first learn to believe in God, after that Jesus. It is wrong because that God exists is obvious to them. They must be instructed of the Son; there is salvation in no other.” Talk about Jesus and this will lead naturally to a discussion of God and to the whole unfolding narrative of the history of salvation.ⁱⁱ

“Second,” instructed Zinzendorf, “you must go straight to the point and tell them about the life and death of Christ.” This proved necessary as a few individuals had gone to pagan cultures and had tried in vain to teach theology or to begin with truths of God.ⁱⁱⁱ

A German mission superintendent wrote this of the value and use of Bible stories among the peoples of Nias Island, Indonesia, during the late 1800s:

We are told of the people of Nias that the Bible stories of the Old and New Testaments always made the deepest impression, and imparted a knowledge of God. Sometimes

the story of Abraham, sometimes that of Jacob, reflects their own experience... “The flood and the story of Sodom and Gomorrah always made an extraordinary impression as examples of God’s penal righteousness.” It was the same with the stories of the patriarchs, of Joseph’s fate, and finally the story of the Saviour....“The simple biblical Gospel...fits into the hearts of the children and adults of this primitive people as a screw fits into the nut.”—“they grasped with a childlike vividness the stories of creation, the fall, Jesus’ birth, His miracles, and especially His sufferings.”^{iv}

G. F. Vicedom, a former missionary in Papua New Guinea, wrote an account of group conversion around 1900 and how missionary Christian Keysser used Bible stories:

Part of this teaching consisted of about forty stories from the Old and New Testaments. Candidates were required to learn these by heart, in order to ensure that those illiterate people should have a basic understanding of the Word of God. In connection with these stories Keysser used to

discuss with the candidates all the customs of the Papuan life and the old religion.... For the Papuan hearers, and I believe for others, too, the Bible stories which they learned prove their value in three ways. They tell men what God does for them in a quite definite situation, and what he requires of them. They explain more fully the relationship in which men stand to God. They make plain the response of God to the action of men. In this way they make it easier for the seeker after God to reach the decision which is required of him. Many of the people of the Bible became for the Papuans patterns of the way in which they themselves are expected to behave.^v

The first real emphasis on orality came from an account by Hans Rudi Weber, a Swiss missionary to the Celebes Islands of Indonesia, following his service there in the early 1950s. Weber reminded readers that we cannot ignore the ways of communication familiar to those who are illiterate.

For these individuals, the most common method of communication is that of storytelling. Good storytelling

can transmit realities to those who are illiterate because, through their imagination, they are able to visualize the words they hear. Weber recalled that if you asked someone who is illiterate to describe another person, he or she would likely tell you a story about that person.

Weber further warned that merely telling stories to those who are illiterate may not firmly anchor the stories in their mind. It is therefore advisable to also provide active participative processes to help fix in the mind of those who are illiterate the story they have heard.^{vi} So from his experiences, Weber introduced us to the world of oral learners, providing encouragement to teach as oral learners will learn.

I have exchanged correspondence with Dr. Weber who, even in his retirement, continued to teach the role and value of Bible stories for reaching the non-literate. This was my introduction to orality.

A book that told of early use of Bible stories to evangelize the Choco people of Panama came from Jacob Loewen. The chapter "Bible Stories: Method and Matrix"^{vii} introduced me to a practical model of using Bible

stories that explained the value of worldview to inform the story selection.

The concept was brought to Panama by a set of Bible stories being used in Chile. The resulting twenty-four stories selected for the Choco were told

Narrative form permitted them to meet the cultural relevance in both form and content.

resulting in a report of a whole village coming to Christ after hearing the stories. In the 1950s, New Tribes missionary Glenn Prunty had told the stories. Loewen helped me to locate Prunty's widow, who verified that was what happened. The missionaries there explained that the narrative form permitted them to meet the cultural relevance in both form and content and at the same time permitted avoiding a number of theological problems that would have hindered comprehension.^{viii}

RECENT HISTORY

I deliberately began with the early background to illustrate that a form of Bible storytelling had already been in use prior to the rediscovery and popularization of Chronological Bible Teaching

and later Bible storying format that has continued to spread widely among missionaries and among the peoples with whom they work. It is surely an affirmation of the Lord's blessing to make his word accessible, understandable, relational, and memorable for all peoples, whether non-literate, oral preference learners, or literates lacking scripture in their heart language. The following recounts what God has been doing with storytelling around the world in and through different mission agencies and people.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Fast forward to the 1970s when New Tribes missionary Trevor McIlwain faced a difficult task of leading partially-evangelized Palawan Islanders to understand salvation. McIlwain realized that he needed to begin teaching in Genesis and continue chronologically through the Old Testament to give a firm foundation for the gospel.

When McIlwain shared his experience with other missionaries, they began telling and teaching Bible stories and including participative learning activities to help listeners to



understand, relate to, and apply the teaching. McIlwain has shared his own experience in the first three volumes of *Building on Firm Foundations*.^{ix}

Reports began to come from other New Tribes missionaries. This one is from Dale Palmer:

To go back a little bit in time, we New Tribes missionaries found a small group of Bisorio people in 1977....They were very keen for some missionaries to come work with them. The Kennell and Walker families moved in and began learning the language and culture of the Bisorio tribe. After several years they were able to present the biblical story, from Genesis

to Christ's ascension, to the 60 or so people....

Some of these Bisorio believers talked to their relatives who live farther back in the mountains. These believers came back tellingabout the people who live in the headwaters of the April River tributary....

During the five weeks at Sabibi, Bob and George were able to teach the "old, old story" some 55 times, while the Bisorio believers shared and re-taught the stories at night around the fires. So these dear ones who had come out of the mountains were hearing for the first time, in their Bisorio tongue, that there is a God who knows all

things, who made all things, who has all power, that He is holy and will not tolerate sin. As they heard all these stories, the conviction of sin began to weigh heavily upon different ones. As they heard of Jesus' death on the cross and how he rose from the grave, the spark of faith was kindled in their hearts and one by one the darkness began to subside as God, by the Holy Spirit, revealed to them the Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, through the teaching of God's Word.

Several said they had walked three and four days because they wanted to hear about this "God talk."^x

The account told of one man who walked three days with his wife and eight children. He said, "I wouldn't walk that far to a tribal dance, I'm too old for that, but I wanted to hear this God talk....I believe Jesus died for my sins, that's what I believe."

Other New Tribes reports came in the form of video re-enactments of Chronological Bible Teaching and storytelling among the Mouk people of Papua, New Guinea, where the Bible stories were coupled with literacy. In

the second of the "Ee-Taow!" videos, the Mouk believers were challenged to take the Bible stories to neighboring villages that had come to ask for the light they saw in the eyes of the Mouk believers.^{xi}

Former New Tribes missionary Tom Steffen related his own experiences among the Antipolo/Amduntug Ifugao in the Philippines. Steffen told of his discovery that his people responded far better to the Bible stories than to simply teaching from the stories. Steffen had begun with the Chronological Teaching model:

After several weeks of teaching lessons about God from a topical study approach, I made a startling discovery. I noticed the Ifugao's interest level jumped dramatically when I inadvertently added an Old Testament story....Changing teaching styles resulted in increased comprehension, instant evangelists and a new appreciation of the effectiveness of stories in evangelism.^{xii}

Steffen also noted the value of participation among oral learners when he asked key individuals to review the discussion for latecomers.

John Wilson stressed the importance of participatory learning for oral communicators. He also reminded those working with oral learners to be repetitive and receptor-oriented, while being mindful of the limitations of oral learners.^{xiii}

This brings us back to the Philippines and two successful story sets used, one on the islands of Luzon and one on Mindanao. Dell and Sue Schultze worked among the Ilongot peoples who were a storytelling culture. Their *God and Man*^{xiv} story set utilized the chronological organization of thirty-five key stories sensitive to the local worldview. These were accompanied by participation-based dialogue learning activities. This story set was later translated into English for sharing with other missionaries. The last correspondence with the Schultzes indicated the stories were still in use after more than twenty years.

At least one translation of these stories into Indonesian as *Sampaika Cerita Keselamatan* was used in ministry to a women's sewing group in Bandung.^{xv} Other story sets focusing on the prophets were in early use among the Sundanese and in children's Bible stories conducted in kampongs

in the Bandung area. When confronted by a mother about the stories she was teaching, a Bible story leader replied, "If you wish, I will come and tell you and your friends the same stories, and then you can decide."

Another story set that has found widespread use on Mindanao was compiled by Bryan and Diane Thomas in the Cebuano language. Based on a fifty-four story sets of lessons, it has found use among tribals and as the basic story set taught to trainees at the Asian Rural Life Development Center. The stories were translated into English by Jeff and Regina Palmer and published as *Chronological Storytelling: Telling the Bible Story*^{xvi} and most popularly known as *54 Bible Stories*. These stories were taught to evangelists in Eastern Java and Bali, Indonesia, where an Australian missionary in Surabaya began using the Bible stories in witness to factory workers living in dormitories.

Another missionary couple working among literate office workers south of Manila compiled a *Keystone Evangelism Manual* which is sensitive to Filipino cultural issues and provides a Bible story track to

faith in Christ.^{xvii} They were already using Bible storying in numerous barrio locations in the provinces south of Manila.

A couple working on Mindanao was able to gain access to local schools to teach moral education using Bible stories. School authorities valued the teaching that was continued until the couple retired.



Also on Mindanao, a Filipino Bible storying trainer by the name of Johani G. was teaching 103 Bible stories to young tribal trainees in an out-of-school course that included tribal evangelism, agriculture, and community health. At the conclusion of each training session, an oral exam was given by pointing to one of the representative story pictures on the wall and having a trainee tell that story and

continuing with following stories until another trainee was selected. It was later reported that revival was breaking out in many of the tribal churches when the young leaders returned home.

A missionary who was trained in Chronological Bible Storying at the Asian Rural Life Development Center then took the training to Cambodia, where he began training a group of pastors. The training was later coupled with clean water projects to give villagers drinkable water.

The stories were also used in literacy programs. One older couple came to teach medical English to doctors at the hospital in Phnom Penh. They lived on a road leading to a monastery. Monks walked past their gate often; one day, one of the monks asked if the couple would teach the group English. The wife compiled a chronological set of 133 one-paragraph Bible stories

and began her English teaching. The monks asked for a copy of the stories and soon began distributing them in thirteen other monasteries.

Another report tells of teaching seventy-two stories from the creation to Paul's journeys. One woman, Ming Soka, learned each story detail by detail. "I help them store it in their hearts because there they cannot lose it and no one can take it away," she says. Ming Soka feels called to bring this same experience to others who are struggling in their faith.

In Myanmar, Bible storying was first used for theological education among tribal workers who needed the panoramic story of redemption. One couple who heard the story of Jesus feeding the multitude decided to have a friendship gathering of some Buddhist friends so they could witness to them. But many more came than anticipated. The guests soon realized there was not enough food for everyone. But the couple had faith and believed that if Jesus could feed a multitude that they too could feed this group with his help. So they prayed, thanking God for the opportunity and food and began to serve. Not only did the food

not run out, but there was food remaining that could be given to neighbors. What happened in the miracle was not lost on the Buddhists who wanted to know more about this Jesus.

Back in the Philippines another couple, Dan and Cara Wood, who worked among urban tribal businessmen on Mindanao, began using Chronological Bible Storying in their Mobile Out-of-School Training (MOST) for youth. During one training, a pastor (who also taught air-conditioning repair) did storying with/to over one hundred students.

Several interesting stories have also come from Northeastern Thailand. One missionary had the Bible stories recorded on audiocassettes which she played for the people and then left copies behind. One woman told her that she really liked the stories from the "machine" best because it always told the stories the same way!

With another group of Hmong people, this missionary told the story of Adam and Eve and the temptation, using pictures that depicted the serpent in the tree. After the story, one of the elders

said, "Now I understand. You see, we knew from old stories that at one time the serpent was very beautiful and had legs. But something bad happened and the serpent was punished and from then on had to crawl like a worm. Now we know what happened." Although not the exact point of the story, in this way the story resonated with their worldview and was a point of interest and relationship.

AFRICA

Not all Bible storying as a methodology was intentional. Vincent Donovan, a Catholic missionary among the Masai, was sent to instruct the people in the practice of their faith. He had encountered various difficulties in finding a common ground for his teaching. However, in time he discovered the Masai love stories. He recounted:

When some of those early, bible-less churches used to gather for liturgy, the leaders often asked those assembled to recite or recall all the important stories and events in the life of Jesus. When they all had contributed what they knew and remembered, they had the equivalent of a gospel for



that liturgy...For the illiterate Masai, no other method could better serve our purpose. I would try to convey to them what I knew from the written gospels and simply ask them to recount afterwards what they remembered of the stories and sayings of Jesus.^{xviii}

Another report came from Senegal in West Africa. New Tribes missionary Dubby Rodda wrote an article for SEEDBED journal describing his use of Chronological Bible Teaching among Muslims. He introduced a comparative worldview between local listeners and Christ's

disciples, a list of doctrines necessary for salvation, and a multi-tier set of stories from must-tell to those to tell if opportunity permitted.^{xix}

Bible storying training was brought to West Africa in 1990, 1991, and again in 1992. A couple working among the Jula people in Burkina Faso were given copies of *God and Man* and sent out to teach the stories and lessons. An invitation came after almost two years of enduring a widespread famine. Six of the women indicated a desire to follow Jesus. Among the thirty men, there were no decisions. With a heavy heart, the missionaries prepared to say good-bye before home leave. As they did so, the spokesman for the men stood beside the road with his hoe over his shoulder and when the missionary saw him and stopped to say good-bye, the old leader threw down his hoe and embraced the missionary. "I've been waiting for you here because I knew you would come today, and I wanted to speak to you privately," he said. "I had to tell you. I've been going over all of

those stories you've been telling us. I've read some of them myself. I had to tell you, I have seen the truth. The truth is Jesus!"

Tears filled his eyes. "I cannot tell my people now. If I do, they will chase me from the village. But I think by harvest time they will have seen the change in me, and I can tell them then. But I knew I had to tell you, and to say thank you."^{xx}

In The Gambia, a missionary couple walked the length of the Gambia River telling Bible stories. Local people began asking for audiocassettes of the stories. A couple trained in Bible storying at Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth returned to Senegal and developed story sets in Wolof. These included bilingual sets to use in teaching English as a Second Language.



In Niger, a Bible storying training went alongside of a village receiving a latrine installation and hygiene classes. The door was opened the first time for many to hear the gospel. Recently, Dale Fisher (StoryRunners) and a team returned from Niger. Dale shared:

By the end of this training, each person knew how to learn a story and lead a group. Each story group is reproducible, meaning that the group can divide again and again and still be led by anyone who has been participating in the group. Literacy is not required. The stories they learn and discuss are good for evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training.

The strategy for growing the story groups at the Hausa Bible School calls for the teachers to meet each weekend to develop the story they will use to lead the student story groups on Monday morning. The teachers and students live on campus so it's a great situation. After the Monday morning story groups, the students will then spend the afternoon at the market which is only a ten-minute walk....The students will tell

the stories to anyone who is interested and invite them to join a weekly story group that they will lead.^{xxi}

Recently, South Africa Bible storying was also introduced among the Zulus. Kurt Jarvis of CBS4Kids held training for children's workers among the Zulus. The story sets for children have been translated into Zulu. Meanwhile, Bible storying training has continued in Ivory Coast, Kenya, and soon in Honduras.

SOUTH ASIA

Back in Asia a request came from Pakistan for training among Baloch and Punjabi leaders. At the conclusion of one session, an elder Punjabi man sang the story of Jonah. An interesting experience happened to me while teaching Marwari people in that country. Each day, we taught multiple stories to the group and at night they would retell the stories and select one to dramatize. That day, we had the story of the flood and the group wanted to dramatize it that night. I was chosen to be one of the people who died in the flood.

After the flood came and I died, old Noah sent out a raven that pecked on the dead bodies but did

not return. Noah later sent out a young lady who was the dove. She circled but could not find a place to rest, so returned to the Ark. Noah sent the dove out again, and this time she flew out the door into the night and returned with a freshly picked leaf in her beak. Noah was pleased, opened the Ark, and led the family out and prepared a sacrifice. Then, Noah held up a picture of the rainbow and the drama was finished.

As we discussed the story, Noah reminded me that I had not told the story correctly that day.

In an attempt to simplify the story for these mostly non-literate people, I had left out the birds. So Noah informed me of my error and explained that in their culture “white pigeons” (doves) were good omen birds and black birds were bad omens of things to come. So naturally, when Noah saw the good omen, he knew that God’s judgment had ended. It was a lesson in worldview and storycrafting for me!

At the Women’s Christian Hospital in Shikarpur, Pakistan, many local women deliver their babies. The hospital staff wanted training in Bible storying to use during the short stay in the hospital and to be continued when the outpatient team went to visit the new mothers in the villages. Among those trained was the man who drove the



women home. One of the nurses later told me that the driver had learned enough to gather men in the villages and tell them Bible stories while the nurses shared stories with the women inside.

A worker among the Jat Sikhs in north India reported that she had trained her local team to tell stories in their own venues. When it came time for home leave, she

figured that all the work would come to a halt until she returned. After arriving in the U.S, word came from the team that they were carrying on the teaching just as they had done while the missionary was there. Later, an audiocassette series was recorded with stories and music to blend with their culture.

In Orissa, India, Bible storying brought the Bible to oral leaders and the people in their spoken language until a translation of the Bible was completed. Kui tribal leaders were then trained to tell the Bible stories while assisting local farmers in planting a bamboo cash crop.

In Bangladesh, Bible storying was first introduced to some of the Koch tribal groups along a river north of Dhaka. In one training session in Feni, on the east side, a group of agricultural and community health workers were learning the stories. On the last day, the Passion and resurrection stories of Jesus were being reviewed, and three men arrived and sat to hear the stories.

When the training was finished, the men shared that they had come from a place with six hundred families. Someone had

come for a brief visit and told them about Jesus. Somehow these men had heard about the training from the Jesus stories. They were asking for someone to come and tell them. At the time, it was in an area where foreigners were not allowed so one of the men in the training session said, "I'll go!"

At another training session in that same city, all the trainees were required to tell at least one Bible story. The adults had finished and we were about to close with prayer when a young girl who had been present for the whole week stood up and said, "I haven't told my story yet." We gave her permission not knowing what to expect. This young lady searched through the teaching pictures, found the story of Jesus feeding the multitude and proceeded to tell one of the most accurate Bible stories of the week.

At another training session, a non-literate young woman sat all week listening to the stories. In the evenings when the trainees practiced retelling the stories, this young lady usually had one of the best. As the participants were preparing to depart on the final day, she said, "When I get back to

my village I am going to tell the people all I have heard this week.”

In a small mud-and-thatch church in the hills, another young man nervously but successfully told the story of Adam and Eve. When he finished, we asked where he had learned to do this. As it turned out, he had learned from a pastor who was in one of the training sessions two years before.

In Nepal, the Bible storying concept was not as well received by the literate pastors who preferred to preach and teach as they had learned from other westerners. However, among the less educated the response was very different. During a Bible storying training session in far West Nepal, stories about baptism were told and one of the men said that he wanted to be baptized like the people in the stories. Because it was the dry season and there was little water in the rivers, we had to drive several miles up a river bed to find a pothole deep enough. The man was baptized in that ice cold water and leaped up rejoicing.

In nearby Bhutan, with its limited access, the introduction of Bible storying came during the King's birthday celebration, when people were free to attend

a Bible conference. For the better part of a week, there was discipleship teaching and an opportunity to tell Bible stories both to affirm believers and to open the hearts of those who were seekers. The last story I had opportunity to share was a compiled story of Peter beginning with his first introduction to Jesus and moving through his epistles where he talked about persevering in the face of persecution—a very appropriate theme for the local people.

The evangelical community in Karnataka State of South India banded together several years ago to use the Storying Training for Trainers (ST4T) method to equip congregations in existing house churches to learn Bible stories so members could share the stories with neighbors and the community. A goal of fifty thousand new house churches was set by the year 2025. When I was there several years ago, around five thousand new churches had already been planted.

During my two-week stay, I was privileged to share the creation-to-Christ story in more than a dozen churches and venues. After leaving one town, the people followed our team to the next town, where

the crowd was then too big for the building. A *shamyana* or tent was quickly erected, and here we taught the stories. One account given to me of this time was about an elderly non-literate pastor who had to have children read the Bible stories to him over and over until he learned them. The pastor would then recite the stories several times until his congregation also learned the stories and could repeat them back to the pastor. He would then send the people out to share the stories with their neighbors.

I could have easily filled this article with stories and reports from India shared by Paul Mark (pseudonym used here for security reasons). Several times a week, pastors Paul had trained would share how the stories brought healing, forgiveness of sin, and encouragement to many non-believers. Many of these people would, as a result, take baptism and attend church. If you are not currently a subscriber to *Stories from Storytellers*, I recommend doing so.^{xxii}

SOUTH AMERICA

In Brazil, missionary Christy Brawner developed a short set of evangelistic and discipleship story lessons from the Book

of Matthew. When I asked her why she chose Matthew, she responded that many have New Testaments and that Matthew is easy to find. To date, Christy has shared these stories over seven hundred times the *favelas* (slum areas) on the hillsides on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro!

Another missionary, Jack Day, found that even though many young Brazilian pastors were literate, they learned and performed better using Bible stories. Jack was unaware of the growing use of Bible stories in other parts of the world. The Holy Spirit was raising awareness in many places simultaneously.

In Suriname, a couple working among the Aukaner people saw a good response when they introduced Bible stories. One set of stories on the theme “Do not fear,” was later broadcast daily in the local language when a radio station was established. One Aukaner artists drew illustrations of the stories and when the people saw the pictures, they exclaimed, “That is us!” By making the pictures relational, it reduced the foreignness of the message.

In Colombia, Bible storying training was taken to two

indigenous, interior peoples. In Peru, Bible translators helped workers to prepare stories for the Ashenika people of the Amazon Basin. In Buenos Aires, after a Bible storying training session, one woman of Indian heritage decided to return to India to teach stories of God's love to the outcaste peoples. Today, she teaches women and children in this area.

In Bolivia, a former missionary told the story of how the Aymara people were ashamed to speak their own heart language. As a result, Bible stories were being taught in Spanish. One group decided to begin learning the stories in their seldom-used Aymara language. As the group struggled to put a story into Aymara, one illiterate woman who had never said a word began telling the story in Aymara. She knew the whole story. It was a reminder that heart languages are the real path to reaching someone for Jesus.^{xviii}

Central America and Caribbean
In Haiti, Bible storying had been introduced before the 2010 earthquake. One of the first

believers was a voodoo priestess. That first group later became a church and a set of Bible story songs was recorded in Haitian Creole.

In Guatemala, Bible storying is used among the Nicodemus People—business people who come to study at night. Several projects have been underway to bring sets of Bible stories to the Mayan indigenous peoples. One early project was for the Todos Santos Mam, among whom non-literacy is 90%. The stories were recorded in Todo Santos Mam on audiocassettes.

Bible storying is also being used among the indigenous peoples around Oaxaca.

Cleve Turner in Honduras reported that an Introduction to Storying conference was held among pastors to help them understand how they can reach out to oral learners.

In Costa Rica, Bible storying was taken to those who are deaf and live an isolated life. Pastor Jerry Seale was visiting in San Jose and happened upon a crowd of deaf people and began negotiating his way into their conversations. Someone said, "Tell us a good

*...heart languages
are the real path to
reaching someone
for Jesus.*

story in your signs!" Seale signed the Joseph story since many of their stories are about poor working conditions in San Jose.

his story, the young people were better able to track the story. One student shared, "I didn't know the Bible could be so interesting!"

EUROPE

In France, a missionary formerly serving in the Middle East was now teaching survival French to women from many West and North African countries. She began to use Bible storying in her teaching and through this touched not only many of those women but caught the attention of European missionaries who wanted training. Europeans who received training now serve in various Central Asian and West African countries and report good response from the Bible stories.



EAST ASIA

An interesting report from a missionary who was attempting to use Bible storying in English conversation classes came from Japan. When the fast pace of going from story to story proved too much for the students, he adapted the approach using only the birth to death story of Moses. By studying only one person and

In Mainland China, I was asked to meet with a group of Chinese young people to share Bible stories. One young itinerant evangelist asked for my set of teaching pictures to use when he told the stories. A young woman said that her family needed to hear these stories. In Taiwan, Bible stories have been used among elderly women in rest homes. A young woman asked about stories that mentioned ancestors, dying, and death to use with her parents to bring them to faith in Jesus.

These are but a few of the stories others have shared with me. There are many more.

BIBLE STORYING WITH LITERATES

Bible stories are not just for children and Bible storying is not just for those who are illiterate. In fact, in many countries, when someone begins to tell stories, listeners gather. And one should not be ashamed to tell the Bible stories in the presence of those

who are literate. For example, while in India, I visited a member of Congress and several of his lawyer friends. I was asked to speak to the group, so I told several Bible stories. The group was spellbound and the host later shared that he would like to hear more.

Bible stories are not just for children and Bible storying is not just for those who are illiterate.

Michael Novelli has published the book *Shaped by the Story*^{xxiv} especially for use among literate youths. There is a simple overview of Bible storying methodology, but the real value of the book is the many testimonies from youth leaders of how Bible storying has caught the interest of their literate youth.

The growth of orality and Bible storying and teaching has been extraordinary over the past few decades. God is indeed using this movement to draw many to Himself. We can't wait to see what the next ten to twenty years has in store!

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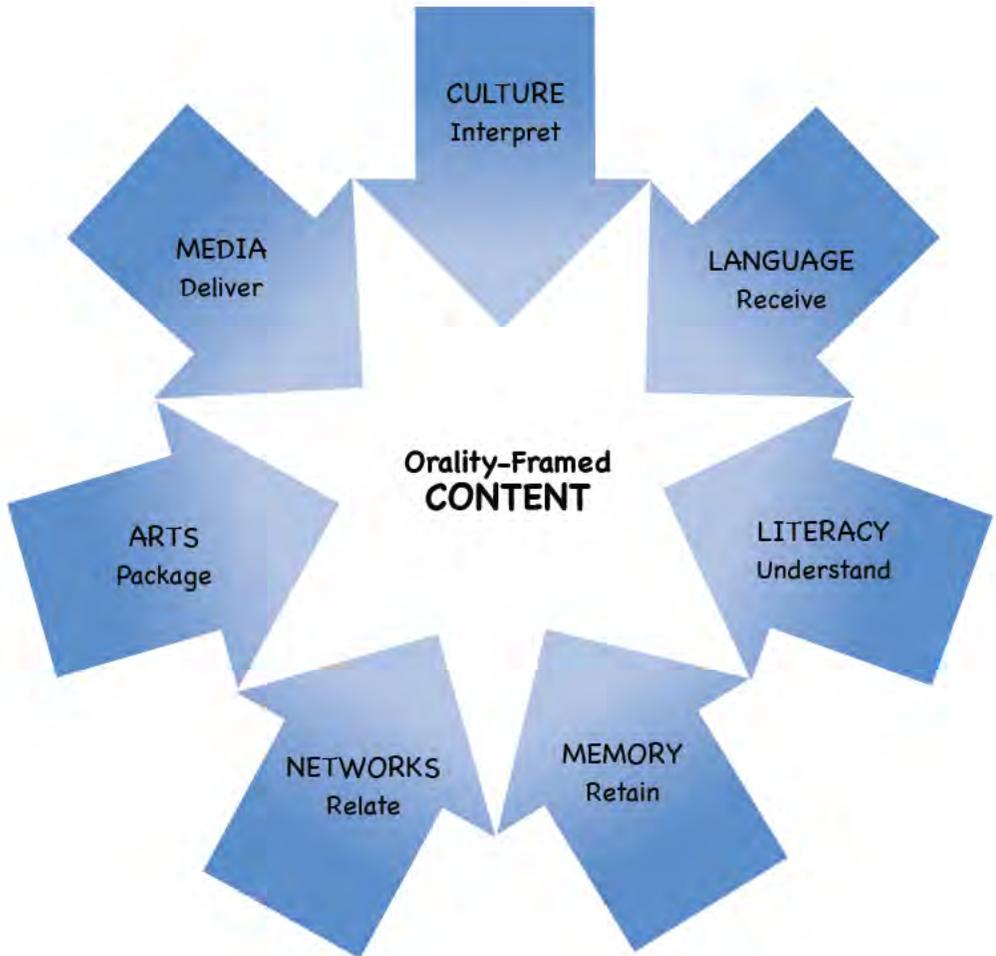
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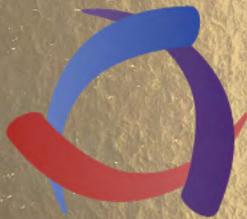
SEVEN DISCIPLINES OF ORALITY: A Holistic Model



Courtesy of Global Impact Mission as is published in Missiology April 2010. Dr. Chuck Madinger leads Global Impact Mission and serves on the International Orality Network's Leadership Team facilitating the Research Task Force.

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