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 designs. Below these windows is a balcony with a decorative railing. The architecture features pointed arches and ribbed vaulting. The lighting is warm, highlighting the stone and 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

Copyright © 2012 International Orality Network
In cooperation with Capstone Enterprises Ltd., Hong Kong

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Volume 1, Number 1, 2012

ISBN 962-767323-4

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.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor

Samuel E. Chiang

Associate Editor

Laurie Fortunak Nichols

Assistant Editor

Bill Sunderland

INTERNATIONAL EDITORIAL/ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Amos Aderonmu

Calvin Chong

Gilles Gravelle

William D. Taylor

Mary Verghese

Hannes Wiher

Graphic Design - Cindy Morris

Photography/Cover - [Flickr.com/photos/babasteve](https://www.flickr.com/photos/babasteve)

[facebook.com/pages/Steve-Evans-Photography/](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Steve-Evans-Photography/)

Website: www.internationaloralitynetwork.org

Editorial Email:

oralityjournal@gmail.com

Your Feedback Is Very Important!

We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions! Let us hear from you. Send your feedback to: oralityjournal@gmail.com.

Please include your name and organization. Any letters or emails used may be edited and excerpted. Please keep all letters and emails to three hundred words or less.

Wish to Contribute

National Christian Foundation
A/C 429666
1311 Tijeras Ave. NW
Albuquerque, NM
USA 87102

ISBN 962-767323-4

Copyright © 2012 International Orality Network

In cooperation with Capstone Enterprises Ltd., Hong Kong

Orality Journal Disclaimer: Articles published in Orality Journal are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the editors, or the International Orality Network.

CONTENTS

Editor's Notes.....7

by Samuel Chiang

The Extent of Orality: 2012 Update.....11

by Grant Lovejoy

Using UN and OCED stats, the author shares how a credible analysis emerges concerning the size of oral preference learners in the world today.

The Worldwide Spread of Bible Storying:.....41

A Look at Where We've Been

by J.O. Terry

An overview of the recent history and expansion of the Bible Storytelling movement.

The Two Journeys of Shanti and Jasmine.....63

by Tricia Stringer

This article offers insights and elucidation of the rippling effects when orality is practiced in hi-tech communities.

One Thousand Orphans Tell God's Story.....71

by Marlene LeFever

The author shares what could happen when a ministry retools in real-time and includes orality principles and practices.

Mind the Gap: Bhutan as a Case Study.....75

by A. Steve Evans

A fresh look at using orality in Bhutan.

Let's Do the Twist:.....79

Learning the Dance of Telling Interesting Bible Stories

by Janet Stahl

The author explains how we experience stories through our own lenses shaped by our experiences and the cultural norms and values of our communities.

Important Points to Remember when Storytelling.....83

by J.O. Terry

Excellent practical tips on what to keep in mind.

Resources.....88

A condensed list of books, periodicals, and useful websites.

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 Two Journeys of Shanti and Jasmine

by *Tricia Stringer*

Tricia Stringer's passion is for all believers to be equipped to effectively share their faith, disciple others, and plant churches using Bible storying. She and her family have lived and ministered in France, Benin, and South Asia for the past thirteen years.



Shanti and Jasmine come from very different backgrounds, but both belong to the Information Technology (IT) community in the country where we work. Shanti was a ‘born Christian’ who grew up going to church and whose entire extended family had been going to church for generations. When she was a teenager, Shanti understood what it meant to choose to follow Jesus instead of being ‘born into’ the faith, and she made a conscious decision to follow him wholeheartedly.

Jasmine, on the other hand, was born a Hindu and grew up going to Hindu temples with her extended family. This had been the family practice for generations. As a teenager, several people helped Jasmine come to believe that there was only one God, and that his name was Jesus. Jasmine now follows only Jesus, but the rest of her family has not yet made that decision.

Both Jasmine and Shanti are highly educated IT professionals and fluent in English.

When I met Jasmine and Shanti, they were friends who loved Jesus and wanted to serve him. They knew Jesus had commanded them to tell people about him, but they weren't sure how to do it. So they hit the streets of our city, passing out tracts and talking to people in parks and major shopping areas. What wonderful intentions and beautiful hearts! Unfortunately, it didn't work for them.

A NEW WAY OF SHARING THE GOSPEL

They decided they needed help so I facilitated a one-day training in how to tell their stories

and how to use the story of the demon-possessed man (see Mark 5:1-20) as an initial hook to sharing the gospel.

They soon realized that sharing stories could be an effective evangelism strategy and began coming regularly to our house for a weekly "satsang", or "meeting of truth", where we worship in a culturally-appropriate way and, of course, tell stories.

JASMINE'S JOURNEY

Jasmine began to see that we were systematically telling a set of stories with a theme and purpose for evangelism and discipleship and decided she should begin telling her non-believing family the stories. She deeply appreciated the last question we asked each week: "To whom will you tell this story this week?"



The story set began in a non-threatening way with the story of David: his beautiful relationship with God, how he broke it, and how it was restored after he repented. As Jasmine told a story each week to her mother, father, and brother at home, she began to see that they were interested; they listened to her in a way they hadn't before. It was as if Jasmine had found a new freedom—she had something valuable to say to her non-believing community.

The story set continued to the stories of Daniel's life. One night, Jasmine shared, "My parents are starting to understand that they should worship only the creator God, and no other. I didn't even have to tell them—they are just getting it from the stories!"

Then another breakthrough came. I told the story from Daniel 7 about the One coming in the clouds who looked like a "son of man", and the Ancient of Days giving him all authority, and all nations bowing before him. Jasmine exclaimed, "I finally got it! The Trinity! I now know how to explain it!" She explained that this proved to her that Jesus was fully God and fully man, because he looked like a man (that's how Daniel recognized him), and he was given authority and the right to be worshiped—a right only given to God himself.

Indeed, the story is a clear picture of two of the three Persons of the Trinity in one place at one time. There are other stories that can

be used to explain the Trinity, but this is the one with which Jasmine identified.

I would never have chosen this story to teach this concept, but thankfully I wasn't trying to control her learning experience. If I had been, I might have paraded past her many stories that meant nothing to her, frustrating both of us. Instead, she had experienced the power of a special story which opened up a new world of understanding for her.

She soon found new freedom to share with not only her parents, but with her colleagues and friends. She began to systematically tell the stories to a friend, and in the cab on the way to her office in the mornings. One day, she traveled three hours one way to a temple with her friend just so she could tell her the stories!

Jasmine occasionally even calls me late at night to practice a story before she tells it to her two aunts—her newest storying group—who own salons. One morning each week, Jasmine gathers the families together and tells them a story.

...She had experienced the power of a special story which opened up a new world of understanding for her.

SHANTI'S JOURNEY

Shanti hasn't been so easy to convince; in fact, I'm not sure that she will use stories for the rest of her life. However, even Shanti would say that stories have opened her eyes to new concepts and have helped her to study her Bible better. Stories have even challenged some of her long-held misconceptions.

Shanti first came to the Sunday night storying group thinking that she already knew too much about the Bible to actually glean anything from a simple story. She was convinced she would be bored. However, she continued attending and took part in the training on how to tell her own story and pair it with the story of the demon-possessed man.

Shanti thought it was a good idea to use simple, non-churchy words in the stories. For example, when she heard that she could say "having a right/good relationship with God" in place of "righteous", she came to a deeper understanding of the

When she told the story, the children loved it so much that many shared it with their parents.

meanings of these words that she had heard all her life. She also began to understand that some words, like "baptism," were actually understood differently in her culture than the way they were meant to be understood in the Bible. For the first time she began using other terms to accurately portray what really happens when someone is baptized.

But Shanti still hesitated to tell other people stories. Then her turn came to teach children's Sunday school at church. She was presenting on the Holy Spirit and decided to tell the story of Pentecost.

She practiced her story and the seven simple questions that came after with me. When she told the story, the children loved it so much that many shared it with their parents. Because the children seemed to really grasp the concept of the Holy Spirit, Shanti felt she perhaps could tell stories! She began bringing friends to the storying group who she thought would benefit from the non-traditional church setting.

Then the crisis came. I told her the story in John 9 of the man born blind. I asked the normal

questions, but at the second question---“What bothered you about this story?”---she began to giggle nervously. She answered, “This story has always bothered me. It doesn’t fit my theology.”

As we talked, it became clear that she believed that all physical ailments and bad things that happened to a person are the direct result of sin and unbelief. This story, however, was clear that this man’s blindness was not the result of sin, but so that “the power of God could be seen in him”. The story, questions, and resulting discussion forced her to face a problem in her theology that she had never before been forced to confront.

Her thinking didn’t change that night; however, she did go home considering what we had discussed. In the following weeks she heard other stories that also confronted her belief (e.g., David and Bathsheba’s baby dying even after they were forgiven; Daniel’s persecution). These weren’t new stories to her, but she was experiencing them in a new way as she learned to tell and discuss them. Each time, however, she avoided discussing her questionable theology.

She was soon, however, forced to live out the story. Even though she felt like she had been obeying God, something ‘bad’ happened to her. *How has this happened?* she wondered. I reminded her of John 9.

A few weeks later, we told the story again in the larger storying group. During the discussion, Shanti said, “This story used to bother me, because I didn’t agree with it. But now, after what happened to me, I’m changing my beliefs about why bad things happen to people.” It took a year and a half of story after story for Shanti to come to this conclusion. Some people say that’s too long. The fact is, Shanti’s entire worldview is changing, and it will take time as she experiences life alongside the stories taking root in her heart. Today, every time she’s tempted to go back to her old way of thinking, a story will pop into her head that will remind her of Truth.

Shanti and I continue to meet every week. Recently, studying the Bible had become a little difficult for her, and she found herself failing asleep while reading. I suggested she craft a story for each section she reads as part of her quiet time, and then telling

that story to herself throughout the week. At first, this seemed silly to her. Now, she is coming every week with a new story that she has crafted. Shanti has finally incorporated storying into her life.

EXPERIENCING THE BIBLE

I remember someone snickering three years ago when we said we were moving to the IT part of town to story with IT professionals. People would comment, “Why them? They’re literate. They want answers, studies, an in-depth study on the original languages, and tables and charts.” This was true about some people. Some did want a study that gave them all the answers. Some wanted to go back to the original Hebrew and Greek text. Some wanted fill-in-the-blank worksheets and textbooks.

But some wanted freedom to experience and live out the story themselves without getting all the answer in one sitting. They wanted to live it out until the answer came through the experiences themselves. Those who were willing to try storying received something they never could have received through a workbook.

I’m reminded of the story of the blind man in the Gospel of John. The man was asked to explain how it came to be that he was healed of the blindness he had from birth. He didn’t know; all he had was his experience: “All I know is that once I was blind, but now I see.” Rejected from his place of worship, Jesus found him and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

The Son of Man was a story the blind man had heard all his life, and now he wanted to experience it. “Show him to me,” he said. Jesus replied, “I AM he,” and the man fell down and worshiped him.

Once the blind man met the Son of Man, an entirely new depth of worship was revealed to him. As Jasmine and Shanti met with Jesus through these stories, they’ve begun to experience him in new ways as well. Slowly but steadily, their worldviews have been expanding and deepening as they apply each story to their own lives.

I am amazed at how far they have come and the things they are now willing to do.

I’m amazed at the ease in which they retell stories after hearing them only once.

I'm amazed at the deep truths and personal doubts that they're willing to explore during the discussion times.

I'm amazed at how sometimes they both speak up at the same time when asked who will tell the story the following week.

I'm amazed at the friends they've known for so long, with whom they've only shared superficially until they began telling stories.

The theology they have learned along the way is what the Holy Spirit has deemed necessary for them to learn at this time in their

lives. They are now capable of learning a story and asking the Holy Spirit to teach them through

The theology they have learned along the way is what the Holy Spirit has deemed necessary for them to learn at this time in their lives.

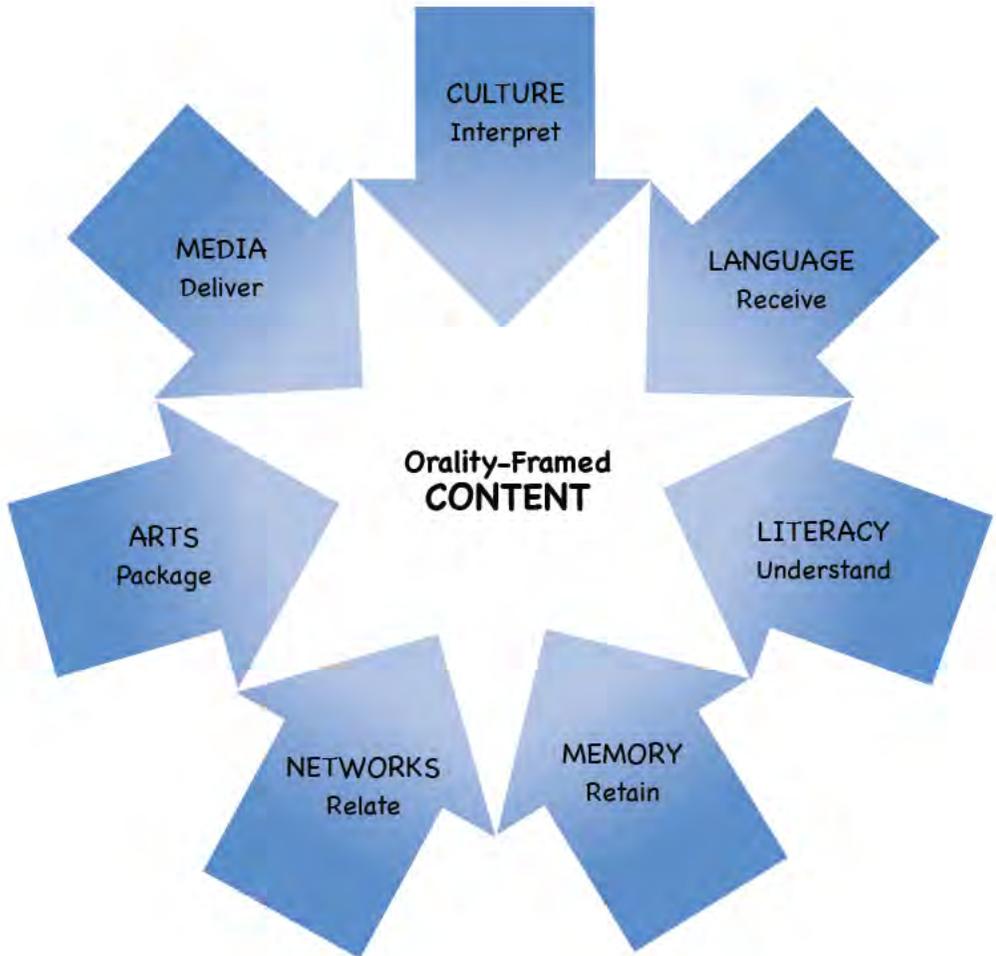
the story. So even better than them learning a set of theological principles, they've learned how to extract good theology from the word of God, and to live it out.

My relationship with these two women is changing. Soon, I will move to another country. But I'm confident that they have the tools to continue on this journey to a deeper relationship with Jesus.





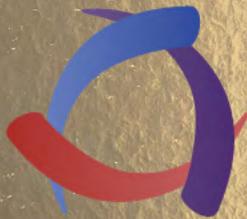
SEVEN DISCIPLINES OF ORALITY: A Holistic Model



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.

SAVE THE DATE

**2013 International Orality Network
Annual Conference
September 16th - 19th
Mid-West**



**International
Orality
Network**

www.internationaloralitynetwork.org



ISBN 962-767323-4

PRINTED IN HONG KONG