A man with a beard, wearing a brown head covering and a matching robe, is looking down at a smartphone held in his hands. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and the texture of his clothing against a dark background.

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Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

**Scalable Experiments:
Bible Translation, Church Planting, Disciple
Making in the Digital Era**

**Gravelle • Arlund • Moon • Taber • LeFever • Evans
Terry • Rye**



THE LOGO

- ... a movement
- ... reaching the unreached
- ... engaged in all domains—including Church, Business and Education
- ... continuous
- ... multi-generational
- ... Spirit-led

Our new logo expresses the multi-disciplined and multi-faceted nature of the orality network.



... **BLACK** represents the lack of light (*lack of the knowledge of our Triune God*) among the people groups.

... **SILVER** represents the message of bringing the Gospel through oral teaching.

... **RED** represents the blood of Jesus. It is the act of salvation represented by Christ's blood/sacrifice.



... **GOLDen** globe symbolizes the utmost value of people everywhere. We recognize people groups—not political boundaries.

The choice of the side of the globe represented is in recognition of our emphasis on the 10/40 window where most oral preference learners live.

These elements represent the ethos of the International Orality Network.

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The Word Became Fresh

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Cover Photo

The Levant Arab peoples include several clusters of Arabs: Jordanian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Arabic Jewish, Chaldean, and Syrian Arabs. Levant, meaning East of Italy, covers a geographical land from Eastern Mediterranean to Greater Syria. Levantine Arabic is considered a language with urban and rural dialect distinctives. Daily oral Levantine Arabic usage has witnessed the pre-printing era, the printing age, and now welcomes the digital era. Cover Photo courtesy of A. Steve Evans; also know as 'babasteve' on the popular photo sharing site flickr.com.

The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain
with a word
him who is weary.
Morning by morning he awakens;
he awakens my ear
to hear as those who are taught.

Isaiah 50:4 (ESV)

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 provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement are welcomed.

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Book Review



Editor's Notes

Samuel E. Chiang

In the inaugural issue of the *Orality Journal*, we noted that the “Gutenberg Parentheses” is now here. We might recall that academicians have labeled the period from the fifteenth to the twentieth century the Gutenberg Parentheses which was anchored to the printing press. Thus, it would appear that there is a vacuum, an interregnum.

Filling the Vacuum

The business sector has been quick to fill in the interregnum and have in fact started to label this era as the rise of the “digital” era. Googling “digital” yields 6,870 search results in 0.44 seconds. Clearly, “digital” is nascent in its usage. But is it fitting? Could it be used to describe the next chronos period?

In a book published by Harvard Business Review Press¹, noted speaker, author, and businessman Jonah Sachs seized the opportunity to describe this compound word:

digit + oral = digital

Sachs suggests that in oral traditions, “ideas begin in the mind of a creator, but their path to their audience is far less prescriptive. Instead of being processed through an elite device that replicates and delivers them directly, orally transmitted ideas must replicate themselves, passing from the mind of one listener to the next.”²

In fact, Sachs further asserts how ideas get transmitted is through “meme”, which is commonly described as a “unit for an idea, behavior or style that spreads from person to person within a culture.”³ This unit of information might mutate and the core message will be forgotten—or it may survive even though it might have been tweaked or adjusted. The best unit of information survives because it is memorable, compelling, and adaptable.⁴

Unsurprisingly, Sachs came to the conclusion that the “memes” which survive are stories, and that each one of us hold a worldview which is a collection of stories.⁵ Establishing the “oral” tradition of the second half

of the word “digital” is not difficult, but what about the first part of this compound word?

Digit, amongst various meanings and usage, can denote part of a limb (finger), a number (in mathematics or science), or a unit of measurement. Sachs captures the meaning of digit well in the context of social networks. In the swamp of indiscretion, the messages sent through social media may get adjusted, tossed, twisted, rated, commented, shared, and perpetuated. Like the oral era, “ideas today are never fixed; they’re owned and modified by everyone. They move through networks at the will of their members and without that activity, they die.”⁶ (Sachs is not shy to suggest why the “broadcast” era is not working.)

Conversely, in the twenty-first century, with social octane through networks and fuelling through 24/7 technologies, each powerful story may go viral with digital platforms sustaining and immortalizing the story.

From an idea-transmission perspective, and how a story gets moved along, a powerful combination of the spoken and hearing (oral) catalyzed with the technology that tethers social networks together, and ‘digital’ was birthed.

Rise of the Digital Era

One doesn’t need to go far to taste the digital era. Ample antidotal experiences affirm the emergence of this era. For example, some time ago Sunday School teachers in the Philippines initially complained about kids in classes who were being disrespectful by sending SMS messages during teaching sessions.

In fact, some teachers were so ill-at-ease about this that they thought the kids were bullying the teachers through SMS messaging. While some of their suspicions might be true, little did they realize that the kids were talking about what they were learning in the class. The kids were passing on stories they were learning and the stories were alive because they were passing them on. My reinforcement of this story is also digital.

Another example is a group of congregants in a church in the United States who were really enjoying the sermon preached by the pastor. However, one

of them opened his iPad to check on a small detail of the sermon during the worship service. To this man's surprise, the pastor had spoken the entire message from "Sermon Central." As good as the message was, the digital story that got passed along was not the sermon, but the pastor who had taken the entire sermon from someone else. My reinforcement of this story is also digital.

Or who can forget Mitt Romney, 2012 U.S. Presidential candidate saying, "They brought us binders full of women" or "Oppan Gangnam style," the signature line from PSY, the Korean megastar's hit song with over a billion views on the Internet. The oral-visual effects were self-reinforcing and passed along and sustained on multiple platforms. Both items quickly went viral, with the video story of PSY continuing unabated.

Finally, I shall not soon forget the retired Bishop William Tuimising from Kenya who was addressing participants at the launch of the East Africa Orality Network. As he took his place at the podium, he jovially asked everyone to take out their mobile phone and switch them to 'on', noting how many people actually have the Word of God in digital form on their cell phones. The bishop read from his cell phone and provided a sermon. Participants not only SMS messaged a portion of his message, but also spoke of his avante garde method of keeping the cellular device in the 'on' position when most pastors would insist otherwise.

In this issue, we examine powerful experiments which are working and are scalable. Gilles Gravelle leads off with the implications of social networks in the work of Bible translation in the digital era. Pam Arlund looks at church planting through orality. Jay Moon describes one of the disciplines of orality and the use of powerful rituals in discipleship. Clyde Taber follows with calling the Church to consider visual media in the context of storytelling. Marlene LeFever continues in her column of how an oralized curriculum is working in India, and Steve Evans joins us with a column to remind us to "Mind the Gap." We are pleased to have the veteran storyteller extraordinaire, J.O. Terry, describe ten mistakes people often make. Tara Rye concludes with an insightful book review.

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. This journal is online in PDF and also in audio format. It is available bi-annually, with provisions for printed editions. 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.

As a preview, our next issue fully features “The Seven Disciplines of Orality” and is due out in September 2013; we will also introduce ‘laboratory’ section to journey along those who are experimenting and implementing orality. We welcome submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement for future journal publications. We also welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions! Send your feedback to: oralityjournal@gmail.com.

On the journey together,

Samuel E. Chiang
From Manila, the Philippines

¹ Jonah Sachs, *Winning the Story Wars: Why Those Who Tell—and Live—the Best Stories Will Rule the Future*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2012.

² *Ibid*, 17.

³ See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meme. Accessed January 7, 2013.

⁴ *Ibid*, 17.

⁵ *Ibid*, 21.

⁶ *Ibid*, 19.



Story Proof: The Science behind the Startling Power of Story

Reviewed by Tara Rye

Reviewed by Tara Rye, who is currently researching biblical storying while working on her Doctorate of Educational Ministry at Southwestern Theological Seminary. She is passionate about communicating the word of God in a way people will understand. She is a published author, an active speaker, and has served on short-term missions in five countries.

Haven, Kendall. Story Proof: The Science behind the Startling Power of Story. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2012, pp. 164. \$23.61. Kindle Edition. ISBN-10: 1591585465.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Writer and storyteller Kendall Haven seeks to inspire, teach, and lead with the power of story structure. With over thirty years of storytelling experience, he has spoken to audiences around the world. He has published thirty books and numerous articles.¹

Haven recognizes the power of story and sets out to prove its effectiveness through rigorous tests of science. Haven began the process of analyzing data from sixteen fields of scientific research: neural biology, developmental psychology, neural linguistics,

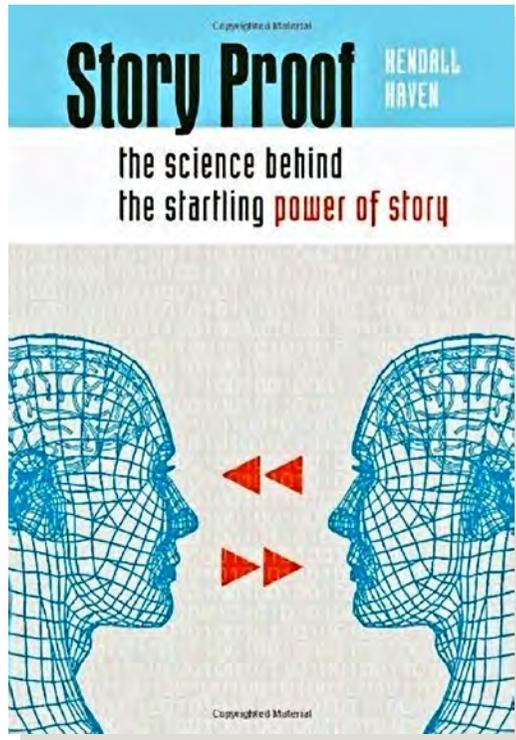
Prolific writer and expert storyteller, Kendall Haven intermingles science and story in such a way that the two become one. Haven seeks to inspire, motivate, teach, and lead with the power of story structure.

clinical psychology, cognitive sciences, information theory, neural net modeling, education theory, knowledge management theory, anthropology, organization theory, narratology, medical science, narrative therapy, and, of course, storytelling, and writing.² According to Haven, our brains are hardwired to "automatically think, understand, and remember through stories."³ He says that "applying the science of story is the key to the art of effective communication for anyone who needs to inform, inspire, or educate."

BOOK SUMMARY

In Story Proof: The Science behind the Startling Power of Story, Haven seeks to (1) define story since it can be such a nebulous concept and (2) prove the value of story to benefit anyone wanting to effectively communicate, motivate, or create a sense of belonging in a community (p. viii).

Haven writes that the human mind relies upon story structure as the "primary roadmap for understanding, making sense of remembering, and planning our lives" (p. vii); thus, his goal is to prove that stories are the "bedrock of management, leadership, education, outreach, and general communication efforts" (p. viii). The book is about "story", not about aspects of story. The reader waits expectantly through research data, anecdotes, scientific definitions, explanations of brain mapping, evolutionary processes, and nearly eighty pages before Haven finally provides his definition for story as, "A detailed, character-based narration of a character's struggles to overcome obstacles and reach an important goal" (p. 79). He emphasizes that dictionaries use



a plot-driven definition, while story is a character-driven narrative.

Story Proof is an inclusive look at the role of story in effective communication. It includes both the oral and print aspects of communication. Utilizing five elements that provide story structure (character, intent, actions, struggles, and details), Haven proves that story structure is not hard to learn and if the reader applies these principles, communication will become more effective (p. 75-76). He utilizes quantitative and qualitative research, along with anecdotal examples, to demonstrate the power of story.

Haven confesses that he is not an unbiased researcher, but challenges the reader to examine the scientific proof that substantiates the power of story.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part, *Story Smarts*, examines arguments for the power of story, as well as how to define story and know the mechanics behind the brain's development of story. Haven states, "Stories are our universal storehouse of knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, passions, dreams, imaginations, and vision" (p. 13). The universality of these qualities is what enables a person to draw into the redemptive value of story (p. 80).

The second part, *Story Proof*, utilizes anecdotes that provide evidence for the value of story. Here, Haven draws the reader into the drama of story. Some of the stories include a high school music teacher, a corporate lecturer on knowledge management, a corporate staff developer, and a primary grade storytelling program leader.

Ultimately, each person described finds success because the power of story proves to be a connector to the content and people. "A well-chosen story creates relevance and context" for each person differently, with the end result of people working together in community (p. 84).

Essentially, Haven's research demonstrates that using stories improves comprehension, logical thinking, meaning, enthusiasm, literacy, language mastery, memory retention, and more.

CRITICAL REVIEW

For anyone seeking to communicate as an educator, minister, pastor, leader, manager, or friend, *Story Proof* provides insight into the research and value of story. The reader will quickly recognize that



story is a method proven to benefit both the teller and hearer alike.

The section debunking the myths of story strengthens any storyteller. According to Haven, people often view information presented in story format with suspicion (p. 15). Yet any good storyteller will show you that a story can influence the hearer at the deepest level without ever pointing a finger since "we remember stories best" (p. 123). Story structure is quite effective in communicating principles and precepts related to a given subject and provides a flexible framework to communicate truth or fiction (p. 123).

A word of warning: although Haven remains unbiased as he examines story through the sixteen venues of science, his scientific lens compels him to communicate through the vocabulary and mindset of his expertise. The biblical worldview reader must remember that Haven seeks to provide a scientific framework for story and that his usage of phrases such as the "evolution of story" and "mind mapping as a part of the Darwinian development of the evolution of the mind" do not deter from the facts imparted about the effectiveness of story (18%, p. 24). The reader might consider mentally inserting the word "creation" and "Creator" in place

of words suggesting evolution or the evolutionary process.

The scientific evidence supporting the value of mind-mapping through story is also supported from a biblical worldview. Consider Dr. George Hunter's statement:

When someone uses storying, he or she is on solid and useful ground. The Bible, after all, is not a series of theological abstractions or even a treasure of texts to be memorized. Its framework is the Grand Narrative of God's redemptive involvement with the human race, and most of the episodes in that Narrative are micro-narratives—from the story of Abraham to the parables of Jesus. When we learn and tell the Story and the stories, we more vividly recall the texts, truth-claims, and teachings.⁴

According to Haven, "Story is the way of structuring content in order to engage, enhance memory and meaning" (p. 15). This process of mental-mapping provides a useful tool. What better context than through the word of God? Because storying allows the hearer to experience the Story personally, the hearer



will remember and reproduce the story of the gospel from his or her own “heart language.”⁵

Because "the brain converts raw experience into story form and then considers, ponders, remembers, and acts on the self-created story and not the actual input experience" (p. 24), biblical teachers need to incorporate aspects of storying into the presentation of God’s word;

this creates an atmosphere for spiritual transformation in the individual and the community. Moreover, Haven reminds the reader that story structure builds community, which also prepares the hearer for life change. There are, in fact, authors who write from a biblical worldview who support the effectiveness of story as well.

Christine Dillon's *Telling the Gospel through Story: Evangelism that Keeps Hearers Wanting More* provides insight into the conversation of story. She illustrates how story makes it easy to open the door for conversations on spiritual matters and deals with the myth that stories are only for children.

Max Lucado's *God’s Story, Your Story: When His Becomes Yours* demonstrates how personal stories mesh with God's redemptive story, emphasizing the healing side of God's story.

Doug Pagitt’s *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* prepares the ministry leader to communicate in a method which gathers the community into dialogue that is both real and relevant.



John Walsh's *The Art of Storytelling: Easy Steps to Presenting an Unforgettable Story* provides best practices for story presentation and structure,

supporting Haven's theory that the use of structure will increase comprehension and meaning.

Jerry Wiles shares in *No Greater Joy: Sharing Your Faith through Stories and Questions* that stories bridge the barriers to the gospel message.

CONCLUSION

Without a doubt, Haven provides the reader with an essential tool to understand the science behind story. He also provides the structure with which to craft a great story and challenges the reader to develop the art of story in his or her own unique way. Truly, all communicators need to rethink their perception of story, for the science behind story proves powerful (p. 16).

- ¹ Kendall Haven, My Story: Bio and Awards, sec. 3-4. Accessed November 28, 2012 from www.kendallhaven.com/bio.htm.
- ² Kendall Haven, Applying the Science of Story to the Art of Communication, sec. 2. Accessed November 28, 2012 from www.kendallhaven.com/bio.htm.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ George Hunter, Email dialogue. January 11, 2010.
- ⁵ Avery Willis, *Following Jesus Series*. Internet Media Overview download. Accessed January 1, 2010 from www.fjseries.org/low/storying.html.



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From Rural to Hi-Tech Communities**



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