Frequently Asked Questions

This "People Ask" section (also called Questions or FAQs) on this new site stays in process. We already have a wealth of important questions and answers to include, ones that we have collected since the inception of Simply The Story.

Below are some of the questions with answers and we will be adding more. After you spend time surfing this site, feel free to visit the Resources and Help section. Here is your chance to help people! By God's grace we will be able to responsibly and clearly respond to your area of interest.

Please email us.

Questions

1. Aren’t stories just for children?
   - Answer: Jesus taught in stories to people of all ages mixed together. Children flocked to Him. On this site you will see testimonies of children AND academics all being spoken to deeply by the Spirit of God while they investigate stories of the Bible.

2. Wouldn’t it be safe to say that teaching Bible stories is more appropriate for uneducated or illiterate people than it is for educated people?
   - Answer: Practically speaking, how can I use story?

3. What ages can learn STS stories and use questions to teach?
   - Answer: Why does it take 5 days of training just to learn a story?

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   - Answer: Why do you set up 5-day workshops? That is a hardship to have to leave my work and family that long.

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   - Answer: What is the difference between STS and other ministries that use story?

6. I use story. But my preference is to not impose my ideas on others, so I don’t manage discussion of the story. Isn’t it better just to let the Holy Spirit teach through the story?
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7. If Simply The Story is so simple, why does it take multiple workshops to be certified to teach this to others?
   - Answer: If I can’t go to a workshop, how can I learn how to tell stories the STS way?

8. If I can’t go to a workshop, how can I learn how to tell stories the STS way?
   - Answer: I am not able to memorize, so wouldn’t telling stories by memory be too hard for me?

9. I am a shut-in. How can I use STS beyond personal devotions?
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10. I am not able to memorize, so wouldn’t telling stories by memory be too hard for me?
    - Answer: How can I use STS to teach the 6 days of Creation in a half hour (first) day of a Bible club.

11. I am a shut-in. How can I use STS beyond personal devotions?
    - Answer: I like STS, but my pastor says it is not for him because he is commanded to preach the Word not to lead people in "interactive discussion" of the Word. What can I say to him?

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    - Answer: Without the written Word how can the integrity of the Scripture be maintained?

15. I like STS, but my pastor says it is not for him because he is commanded to preach the Word not to lead people in "interactive discussion" of the Word. What can I say to him?
    - Answer: What about the Epistles?

16. Without the written Word how can the integrity of the Scripture be maintained?
    - Answer: What about the Epistles?

17. In a workshop, how much time will be spent on a general overview of orality proper (i.e. convincing people that stories are necessary)?
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18. How specific would this training be to my country which is semi-literate? The last story training I attended was led by a person from a country which is even more oral than ours. I am interested in how to practice oral strategies in my country within our cultural norms.
    - Answer: How specific would this training be to my country which is semi-literate? The last story training I attended was led by a person from a country which is even more oral than ours. I am interested in how to practice oral strategies in my country within our cultural norms.
- Wouldn’t it be safe to say that teaching Bible stories is more appropriate for uneducated or illiterate people than it is for educated people?

   Answer: Literate and non-literate followed Jesus. While many of the highly educated and religiously educated people didn’t get a message from the stories, the STS Bible method makes the stories clear to everyone. The testimonies located in many places on this site show that more than just the uneducated gain greatly from STS Bible stories. For example, one testimony states, “Exploring these Bible stories using STS methods helped me discover more than I have ever before found in these stories.”

- What ages can learn STS stories and use questions to teach?

   Answer: We continue to see children ages 5-10 and up repeating 10-verse stories accurately after hearing them told with expression and actions. Young children can learn to ask a few questions and talk about the stories they tell. Most of the young children we work with have a difficult time remembering individual stories. They do easily remember the stories as a whole. But, we are seeing those who use the STS method telling stories in order and talking about the stories they tell. We also teach young children to share their stories in creative ways. Some students tell a story to others and talk about it with them. Often, the story is told in a story during a time of STS ministry.

- Practically speaking, how can I use story?

   Answer: We describe knowing a story the STS way as having the story “in your heart pocket.” People love to hear a story. Whether you serve in ministry or just mingle with people in the marketplace of life, you can tell a story.

   Throughout this site are testimonies of people using their STS storytelling skills to evangelize and disciple others. Some testimonies are seen on Witnessing, Evangelizing, and Prisons and many are on the Pick Your Spot selections on the home page.

- Why does it take 5 days of training just to learn a story?

   Answer: You’re right to notice that! It doesn’t take five days to learn a story. It is accurate that we offer five-day workshops to provide attendees with the five immersive days so that they can practice and talk about the twenty stories. In the five days we also provide the forum and assistance to train others.

   We also offer a two and a half day training to help people to become good storyteller-teachers. Oh, and by the way, the number of stories is twenty stories. That is the number of stories that can be repeated and talked about. With review after the workshop, attendees can “own” those twenty stories.

- Why do you set up 5-day long workshops? That is a hardship to have to leave my work and family that long.

   Answer: If no one in a particular area is a certified STS instructor, we need to bring a team to that area to first plant STS ministry there. We also offer a schedule that is several very-long days and then the rest of the 35 hours is completed in evenings. See Hosting and Workshop Description for more details.

   A percentage of the attendees interested more in becoming a storyteller-practitioner come for only half of the 35 hours. They then, after some practice and maybe one more local workshop, are selected to become instructors. Those selected usually travel to another workshop or two in order to solidify their training and leadership skills. We offer as a gift on our site our Simply The Story Handbook. It is downloadable. The last chapter in that handbook gives more details on all of those workshop options. One other way to learn some of the vital STS skills is through Practitioner Audio Training.

- What is the difference between STS and other ministries that use story?

   Answer: The foundation of all the story groups is much the same, learning and telling Bible stories. Probably the biggest difference between STS and other story ministries is the way STS gives the skill of inductive Bible study, oral style.
We also teach how to lead and train others. Much of what describes us is in Design of STS and Story Organizations and the matrix linked from that page show some details about a few of excellent story training organizations. To hear ... who lead various story ministries or those who use a different method of story in ministry, check the podcast story4all.

- I use story. But my preference is to not impose my ideas on others, so I don’t manage discussion.
- Answer: This is a good goal, to not impose your ideas on others. We would agree with that. But we do encourage the storytellers we train to consider themselves teachers.

In STS training, we promote the use of story to reach oral learners. But as passages such as Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Peter 4:11, for example, show, one of which is teaching. We see oral communicators carrying out that role when they tell Bible stories STS style.

Let me give you an example of what that means: After an STS workshop in Africa, one attendee told his story to our leader there and me.

**By Foot, By Camel, By Airbus**

I used to be a businessman in Nairobi. God called me to go to the mission field, but I kept making excuses.

Then one day I got a phone call that my shop had burned down. You know—I didn't even go look at it. I just left and went to the mission field.

I've made friends, but that's it! They do not want to hear what I have to say. To get here for this workshop, I walked a day, rode a camel for a day and then rode one more day by Airbus.

We find this African evangelist's observation to perfectly describe what we see as central to the effectiveness of STS. The story is not just a tool for sharing information, but an instrument for personal spiritual growth.

Wonderfully, most of the time, listeners discover even more truths, truths new to the storyteller. That is when we know the Holy Spirit is present and teaching through the teachers and to everyone.

By the way, our East Africa leader told us that after the workshop the messages began coming back from this young evangelist who reported, “The training made a major difference in my life and ministry. The people in the village are coming to Jesus.”

As well, this evangelist now serves as one of the STS team instructors. He travels that hard way to come serve in his region, but he does it because he believes in STS. He has scheduled a workshop in his location which a Kenyan team is due to come help him lead.

One of the key parts of what we teach in

**STS is listening and responding**. Storytellers are teaching what they have learned. But the storytellers also listen to what the people themselves say and respond in a way that helps them discover the truths of the story.

- If **Simply The Story** is so simple, why does it take multiple workshops to be certified to teach this to others?
- Answer: “Simply” The Story means that “only” the Bible story is used. It does not mean that this new skill is simple to learn.

Attendees who have grown up among oral communicators find it easier to absorb the concepts of STS than attendees whose primary language is not oral. Attendees who are not used to listening to Bible stories then have to learn the concepts of STS.

In STS, all attendees gain the ability to study and discuss, yet while doing these things, they discover deep spiritual truths. To gain all of the skills of STS for oneself and to learn how to train others in these multiple skills requires time and practice. An instructor needs to have answers to the questions that arise on issues of oral learners and the apologetics for STS.

Multiple skills are used in STS. People must first learn how to carefully listen or read Scripture and to recognize their own responses to the story. They then need to be able to use Bible stories to help listeners understand and respond to the truths of the story. Only then can they be effective in leading others to discover these truths for themselves.
Lastly, people need to learn how to take those various observations from within the story and make personal applications...

Even the skill of how to lead a wide variety of people in discussion involves both new information and practice.

See what is involved in certification and a testimony of one.

- If I can’t go to a workshop, how can I learn how to tell stories the STS way?
  - Answer: A sample of the Practitioner Audio Training (PAT) is available on our site. More stories of PAT can be purchased. This audio how-to of STS, some stories and sample interactive studies of the stories are excellent tools for learning STS. The written Simply The Story Handbook is available free as a download on this site. Combined, these two resources can help you to learn STS.

- I am not able to memorize, so wouldn’t telling stories by memory be too hard for me?
  - Answer: The wonderful part of STS is that the learning of stories becomes easy. We actually show people how to learn a story in a way that is easy to remember.

- I am a shut-in. How can I use STS beyond personal devotions?
  - Answer: When you have been touched in your devotions by something special in a story, you can ask the Lord to show you how you may share this with others. You may ask a few questions. Or maybe while on a phone call you could share short a piece of a story and then ask a few questions?

**Sample Conversational Use of STS: Woman Healed**

Whether writing or speaking, to be most effective we recommend using conversational style. For example, you might want to talk about Matthew 9:20-22.

For that story you might write or say some, or even all of this:

I was reading the story in the Bible about the woman who had hemorrhaged for twelve years.

So in this story I was reading about, Jesus was surrounded by a crowd of people when He was on His way...

“"The woman came behind Jesus and touched the hem of His clothes, because she was saying, ‘If I could just touch His clothes, I would be made whole.’"

"But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her, He said, ‘daughter, be very comforted; your faith has made you whole.’ And the woman was made whole from that moment.

And that’s the end of this little part of the story that impressed me.

So I was thinking about where a woman who had constant bleeding, who had spent all of her money on doctors, would be in the social scale? What do you think?

And what about what this ill lady thought to herself, “If could just touch His clothes, I would be made whole.” That’s odd? What might have prompted her to think that?

And another thing. When she touched His clothes, Jesus turned around and when He saw her, He called her “daughter.” Wow. And everybody was crowding around, called this socially-low person “daughter”? That must have surprised a lot of people.

Now that made me think of something else. Did the story say the woman grabbed or pulled on Jesus’ clothes? You see that too? She just touched His clothes! Jesus was walking in a crowd, she touches Him, and then He turns around and talks to her.

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So what happens at that moment to the direction Jesus was going? Well, based on that fact, that Jesus stopped and looked, ... What other reactions might Jesus have had when this woman touched His clothes? I had to think about that for awhile.

Yes. He really could have not noticed her touch … or noticed it and just ignored it and kept going … maybe noticed her touch and criticized her, or even something else.

So I was thinking about how Jesus did stop and as the story says, “when Jesus sees her.” All that makes me wonder if we should be seeing anything else, say for instance anything about Jesus maybe?

How about this question? When Jesus tells the lady to “be very comforted,” might that give us some indication of how she was feeling BEFORE He said those Words? What do you think that could show us, about the lady and maybe about Jesus?

Then Jesus says, “Your faith has made you whole” and the woman was made whole from that moment … Wow! I think we might see a lot there. What do you see?

Well, that is what I might write in a letter. Maybe to some people I would only write the introduction and small part of … like a conversation, I could then write back acknowledging their responses, and then send on a few more of the questions.

And if I had a chance to talk on the phone to say some of this, I would wait for the person to whom I was speaking to respond. Maybe a conversation would develop and then I would be able to respond back to what the other person would say.

I put it in my mind that I am just discussing Scripture as I would speak in a conversation. I have certain things in mind that I would like to share, but I sincerely listen to what others say and respond to them.

Notice that after I spoke the introduction and told the small part of the story, that all the way through what I wrote … sure that the person has heard that part of the information from the story. They have to hear the information TWO times.

Even those familiar with the story may not ever have noticed some of the small details in the story; so they also need to hear it twice to make sure they can think about that part of the story.

We call what the person who answered your questions found, “spiritual observations.”

Ok. Now you have written some or all of those questions (or have talked with someone about the questions) and those questions will probably have uncovered some really interesting observations in the story.

It is now the time that you can use some of the STS style questions to help uncover spiritual applications. These will help people use what they discovered in the story and apply the findings to themselves.

Briefly, you go back to something significant covered in your letter’s questions, or something in the story that took on … conversation. To discover applications, only ask questions that are based on those discoveries, one finding at a time.

You can ask or write general questions after your first mention a finding:

It seems obvious in this story that this woman is not high in society or rich! I think we would have to say that the ... an illness that made her an outcast (and well, just being a woman), all that puts her pretty low on the social scale.

Do any people today fit in that kind of category? What must that be like? Are people pushed down today?

Remember how it was written years before that the promised Savior would come and bring healing in His skirts? And ... that she would be healed? Was that information reliable? Where might we look in order to find that kind of information?

Also I am wondering about today? How could anyone touch Jesus’ clothes?

Remember how Jesus stopped for the woman and spoke to her fondly? Could Jesus’ response show us anything about His character? How might that help us today, to know things about Jesus’ character?

So, you go through each observation you saw in the story, such as:

- How the lady had to make her way through a crowd that did not welcome her.
- That she did so little to actually get her healing.
- That according to Jesus’ statement, her faith is what made her whole.
- That her faith was not a blind faith, it was faith in the information she had read or heard and
Also you could remind people how Jesus stopped and focused just on her and made her whole.

Maybe ask, does this story show us anything about Jesus and His ability and who He cares for and who He might be?

The topics in the story you first bring to discussion should be what was truly meaningful to you as you meditated on the story. Also you can bring topics in conversation that the Lord showed you are useful and meaningful to the person with whom you are interacting.

As much as possible, word your questions as if you also want to know this information as opposed to asking questions that insinuate that you know everything and that those to whom you write or speak must find YOUR Answer. It's not that you don't know the answers to many of the questions you ask, but you are allowing people to process and discover truth for themselves.

This is a way you can minister from where you are planted. Use a short piece of a story, ask a lot of questions to help people make observations, to help people apply to themselves various parts of what they saw in the story.

We teach this way of asking questions in workshops and you can experience some of these kinds of questions on the Pick Your Spot Practitioner Audio Training. On Outreaches you can see some true life samples of stories being used conversationally. Also some more good examples are found on the home page Pick Your Spot, “Personal Evangelism Made Easy.”

- How can I use STS to teach the 6 days of Creation in a half hour (first) day of a Bible club?
- ANSWER: One way to cover a long passage using STS is to tell the first part of the story in a short introduction. Then you can use the story as a backdrop for answering questions about the Bible.

Perhaps for the Creation story you could tell just Genesis 1:24-28 passage? Using the STS presentation, as suggested in the workshop, you can cover much of the content by asking questions that take a learner through the passage chronologically which helps them discover spiritual applications.

- I like STS, but my pastor says it is not for him because he is commanded to preach the Word not to lead people in “interactive discussion” of the Word. What can I say to him?
- ANSWER: It is always good to hear of pastors who are commitment to the Word of God. Surely, we wouldn't want to have a pastor that would be uninterested in sharing the Bible story with their congregation.

Other pastors have arranged for some of their people to learn STS for short term mission’s trips. We teach the church staff there to stay in one passage at time, to cover just as much information as can be remembered, and to ask questions that help people apply to themselves what they see in the story.

- Without the written Word, how can the integrity of the Scripture be maintained?
- ANSWER: We too are very concerned about keeping true to the Word. As quickly as possible we are recording Bible stories in sets of up to 70 stories, with introductions, in order to give an anchor to the Bible stories that are being learned.

As much as we are able, we format recorded stories, God’s Story and New Testament, if available, onto solar-powered players and distribute those players to people active in ministry who attend STS workshops and to all who graduate from STS Oral Bible Schools.

- What about the Epistles?
- ANSWER: We encourage the use of STS for investigating all passages of Scripture, including the Epistles, Poetry and Prophecy. Notably stories and passages with visual images are easier to remember than are the lecture and non-picture passages.

The center of STS is to stay in one passage at a time, to cover just as much information as can be remembered by you as the presenter and by the people you teach. Then questions are asked that take a learner through the passage chronologically which helps them discover spiritual applications. If a passage is very hard to remember, sometimes a teacher will read it all the way through out loud.
For more on use of Epistles in STS see the downloadable gift

Whether the Scripture being taught is story, poetry or a teaching passage and it is told or read by individuals.

- **In a workshop, how much time will be spent on a general overview of orality proper (i.e. content)**?
  
  **ANSWER:** The STS workshops are chiefly practical. We teach hands-on using oral methods! Though we give OT and NT examples of the biblical precedent for oral teaching. Those orality presentations need to discover, the will stay connect during the teaching, understand well and be to share what they learned with others.

  We then present an example Bible story and discussion STS style to show how this method can be used. After this, we begin to unpack how an STS presentation is formed … including another sample story.

  Next all the attendees gather in small groups. There, with the guidance of an instructor, participants

  Mixed in with these various hands-on opportunities, the whole group is taught and shown how to minimize

  We also show how to use oral methods to present non-story passages such as those found in the Epistles and

  So, as you can see, this is a very hands-on, practical workshop. You will walk out with a basic understanding

  Attendees receive resources. With practice they can become highly effective storytellers. We also equip

  **How specific would this training be to my country which is semi-literate? The last story training I attended was led by a native who spoke only English. I am interested in how to practice oral strategies in my country within our cultural norms.**

  **ANSWER:** STS training will fit the need of your country. This STS style of learning and teaching others is truly cross-cultural, with indigenous leaders carrying the knowledge further. We started in the Fall of 2006 using the foundation of storying. From there its unique design developed which is to teaching literate and non-literate people to “go deep” in the Word, yet use oral methods.

  Testimonies of those trained in STS describe everything from transformation of their personal Bible study to explosions in ministry effectiveness.

  STS has been tested and validated to become an effective tool in 115 countries in Asia, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. We teach orally and do not feature Western culture. The director of Simply The Story, Dorothy Miller, is in daily communication with indigenous, national, directors world-wide. The development and ongoing shape of STS is heavily influenced by these multi-cultural liaisons.

  However, the universality of STS is mostly due to its adherence to the communication style of the culture.