Frequently Asked Questions

This "People Ask" section (formerly Known as Frequently Asked 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 ask more. 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?

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

4. Practically speaking, how can I use story?

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

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

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

8. I use story. But my preference is to not impose my ideas on others, so I don’t manage discussion. How can I use STS beyond personal devotions?

9. If Simply The Story is so simple, why does it take multiple workshops to be certified to teach this to others?

10. If I can’t go to a workshop, how can I learn how to tell stories the STS way?

11. I am not able to memorize well, so wouldn’t telling stories by memory be too hard for me?

12. I am a shut-in. How can I use STS beyond personal devotions?

13. How can I use STS to teach the 6 days of Creation in a half hour (first) day of a Bible club.

14. I use stories a lot, 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?

15. Without the written Word, how can the integrity of the Scripture be maintained?

16. What about the Epistles?

17. In a workshop, how much time will be spent on a general overview of orality proper (i.e. convincing yourself that it is a useful tool for teaching)?

18. How specific would this training be to my country which is semi-literate? The last story training I attended was led by a Canadian who had worked with more oral culture than ours. I am interested in how to practice oral strategies in my country within our cultural norms.

Questions & Answers

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.
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 received and heard stories, the message was more open to them. The testimonies located in many places on this site show that more than just the uneducated gain greatly from STS Bible stories. "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 younger ones need to hear stories again before they can tell them accurately. When they tell a story during a time of STS ministry, they often will tell the story to others and talk about it with them.

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 market place of life, you can tell a story.

Throughout this site are testimonies of people using their STS storytelling skills to evangelize and disciple others.

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 train leaders to learn STS stories and how to teach others using discussion. 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 STS Way® handbook includes 20 stories they can repeat and talk 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 the seed of STS. 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. Then, after some practice and maybe one more local workshop, some attendees 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.
We also teach how to lead and train others. Much that describes us is in Design of STS 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, and 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...

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. [This is riding on top of a bus!]

We find this African evangelist’s observation to perfectly describe what we see as central to the effectiveness of STS. Wonderfully, most of the time, listeners discover even more truths, truths new to the storyteller. That is when we know that the Holy Spirit is present, and He is teaching through the teachers and to everyone.

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 are prepared spiritually with personal understanding of the story to help lead a productive inquiry into 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... their unique areas in which we are able hand off skills which they have never before have had an opportunity to acquire.

In STS, all attendees gain the ability to study and discuss, yet while doing these things, they discover deep spiritual... STS training includes handing off the skills of training others. That training of trainers is a giant step in itself.

To gain all of the skills of STS for oneself and to learn how to train others in these multiple skills requires time and... to discover what those in the passage experienced and learned (or did not learn) and what is seen of God in the story.
Lastly, people need to learn how to take those various observations from within the story and make personal applications of those observations.

Even the skill of how to lead a wide variety of people in discussion involves both new information and practice with that information. See what is involved in certification and a testimony of one [journal to Discovering Story](#).

- 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 one part at a time, and that makes it easy. We have many examples of this. Bible Translator Discovers “Remembering.”

- 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 to share that with others. 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 to attend to the sick.

“The woman came behind Jesus and touched the hem of His clothes, because she was saying to herself, ‘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. ... 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.
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?

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 ... 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 ... asked many questions such as “What do you think?” He gave people the time they needed to think and discover the truth.

This is a way you can minister from where you are planted. Use a short piece of a story, ask a lot of questions ... observations, to help people discover how those observations can be applied to them, to discover spiritual applications.

We teach this way of asking questions in workshops and you can experience some of these kinds of questions on the [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](#).

- **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 ... as it is in the Bible. The hunting for treasures you do afterwards would be done only in the short section you told.

  Perhaps for the Creation story you could tell just Genesis 1:24-28 passage? Using the STS presentation, as suggested ... you spend most of the time developing will be understood, remembered and easy for even children to pass on to others.

- **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 ... from the pulpit using STS, while others have encouraged their church staff to use in for youth or in Sunday School.

  Other pastors have arranged for some of their people to learn STS for short term mission’s trips. We do feel comfortable ... of communicating, after which we patterned STS, to be just one of the many ways God demonstrated how to deliver His Word.

- **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录制 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 ... 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.

  The center of STS is to stay in one passage at 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 though the passage chronologically which helps them discover spiritual applications on what was seen in the story are asked that help people apply to themselves various parts of what they saw in the story.

  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 interpersonal communication, the will stay connected during the teaching, understand well and be able to share what they learned with others.

- In a workshop, how much time will be spent on a general overview of orality proper (i.e. conviction of the need for orality)?
  - ANSWER: The STS workshops are chiefly practical. We teach hands-on using oral methods! Throughout the training, we teach orally and do not feature Western culture. We give OT and NT examples of the biblical precedent for oral teaching. Those orality presentations, that lay the foundation for what we do in STS, take about 20 minutes.
  
  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 think through, prepare and present a story for ministry then everyone contributes to the interactive learning and exploration of a story in a large group.

  Mixed in with these various hands-on opportunities, the whole group is taught and shown how to minister to groups and the unique design and overlooked advantages of oral communication.

  We also show how to use oral methods to present non-story passages such as those found in the Epistles and Psalms. We show how to present stories in dramas and song. Discussion on the use of worldview, story selection, and topical teaching is covered.

  So, as you can see, this is a very hands-on, practical workshop. You will walk out with a basic understanding of the process. You will also have some skill at telling Bible stories and be able to share deep truths in an oral discovery style.

  Attendees receive resources. With practice they can become highly effective storytellers. We also equip attendees with coaching to become an expert in STS. Attendees who present stories in the workshop will receive individual coaching, feedback and reinforcement. Those who design presentations and plan stories in the marketplace of life when you only have a short time. We provide coached opportunities to practice.

- How specific would this training be to my country which is semi-literate? The last story training I attended was led by a team from a country with a much more oral culture than ours. 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 resonates with cultural norms worldwide. The last story training you attended was led by a team from a country with a much more oral culture than yours.

  STS started in the Fall of 2006 using the foundation of storying. From there its unique design developed which is to teach 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 proven to become an excellent tool that truly crosses cultural boundaries. 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 of the Bible. As Proverbs 22:16 says, "A person's speech reveals their motives, even hidden motives."

  The Bible was written using orality as the communication style. The biblical examples of orality can be found throughout each of the biblical books, illustrating the biblical tradition of using oral methods as the teaching method. The Bible is a story book, which is why it uses oral methods as the primary teaching style.