What is STS?

**STS-What & Why:**

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What is STS?

**STS is “Listening and Responding.”**
Tell a Bible Story & Ask Insightful Questions

The definition of *Simply The Story* (STS)

is “Listening and Responding.”

When people learn how to carefully listen to God’s Word and they discover how to respond to what God says—lives are changed.

When storyteller/teachers learn to listen well to those they teach, and storytellers are alert and prepared...

Eric serves as a leader in an international Christian pro-life organization.

On Eric's second day of *Simply The Story* workshop, he rather seriously approached an instructor...

“Sure,” replied the instructor. Eric’s question actually revealed the heart of STS.

Eric asked, “How can what you teach in STS change our devotional life forever?”
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The instructor’s response? “It has!”

We teach storytellers, “If the story you want to tell has not yet impacted your life, you are not yet ready to tell it.”

How rewarding it is for us as STS instructors to experience the thrill of discovery in Bible stories as we are teaching and coaching others in the methods of STS!

Our major focus in STS is to teach people how to prepare and share Bible stories and passages so that others can and do train others to minister and to train yet others.

The origin of STS is found on the links to the left. Those links also show the definition of oral learners, the need for oral learners, the reasons behind the design of STS. The results and spread of STS show just how powerful God’s Word is—when understood.

On this page we show the format of presenting stories the STS way.

Before presentation, a Bible story is studied and questions are prepared according to Simply The Story guidelines. (“Preparation” is taught in depth in workshops and the concepts can be found in the Simply The Story Handbook available on this site for download on Resources.) Then a two-phase presentation takes place: first, telling the story, and second, discovering the spiritual treasures.

Phase One: The story is presented three times allowing the listeners to become totally familiar:

1. The storyteller tells the story.

   (The first telling introduces listeners to the story and allows them to see the story in their minds and
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1. The storyteller asks one volunteer to retell the story, or for listeners to retell it to each other.

   (Listeners pay close attention to the retelling by their peers to see if they get it "right," which helps seal the story into their memories.)

1. The storyteller leads listeners through the story.

   (This is just one more retelling of the story, but this time the storyteller enlists everyone's help to remember.)

As well, the brave volunteer need not be corrected for any errors made, since the third telling by the storyteller will naturally reestablish the story correctly.

Phase Two: The storyteller helps listeners discover the spiritual treasures in the story. This is done in two sections.

1. First, the storyteller leads listeners to Spiritual Observations through questions. (This is when listeners are invited to respond to questions, the listeners share what they learn spiritually about each character in the story and about God.)

2. Second, questions are used to lead listeners to discover and share Spiritual Applications. (Each observation found is mentioned. Then, based on each observation, possible applications to people today are discussed.)

STS training equips people to:

- Dig deeply and accurately into Scripture.
- Form questions that invite participation.
- Guide successful discussions,
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- Give room for the Holy Spirit to show treasures to everyone.

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**Teacher Listens to Student:**

**Both Hear From Word**

(Excerpt from new, STS Handbook Edition #5)

One of the many stories we explore in STS is the 23rd Psalm. Most who know the Bible, even a little, are familiar with it. Even though we have memorized the words, going through it slowly, and asking questions that help us to deeply hear what God gave us in that Psalm, can be amazing.

Sometime back, Ramesh, our director in the Buddhist world, told me that he had been teaching the 23rd Psalm the STS way. He would try to do STS with a Psalm. So I asked, “Will you teach it to me?” That day became a time I hope never to forget.

Look in this report for my slowness to listen to the story and listen to the storyteller. And as well, look at the way Ramesh made himself hold back and let me discover. He would listen to me and then give a clue to bring me closer to discovery.

He did ask questions about the whole story, but one particular thread of information Ramesh followed still stands out today. I will bypass the many questions he asked that developed the whole story and just include here that one thread.

Ramesh asked, “At first, how does the sheep refer to the shepherd?”

I gave the answer I had learned years before. “MY shepherd. That shows us that we can know the Lord Jesus in a personal way.”

But Ramesh would not allow me to jump ahead like that. In STS we first listen carefully to what the story says, and only after that do we make application of the information to ourselves.

Ramesh forced me to slow down and listen to what the story said and to look at this familiar passage more carefully. He kept making me listen to the story.
I agreed to listen, thinking I could check his technique. Frankly, I was wondering what my student would be able to show me in a passage that I knew so well, had taught many times, and even written about in articles.

“This is a sheep talking, is it not?” asked Ramesh.

I nodded in agreement.

“Well, how does the sheep talk about the shepherd? How does the sheep refer to the shepherd?”

I asked, “Do you mean how the sheep calls the shepherd ‘he’?”

“That’s right,” responded Ramesh. “But don’t you see where the sheep sees the shepherd?”

“Uh? What?” I was not getting it.

“Where is the sheep in relation to the shepherd? See it?” Ramesh was pressing intently, as he wanted me to see something.

“Umm, I guess if the sheep is being led, that puts the shepherd in front of the sheep?”

“YES! That’s it,” Ramesh said. “And now go on in the story to the Valley of the Shadow of Death part. How does the sheep refer to the shepherd?”

“He?” I answered.

“Oh! Look again,” prompted Ramesh. “The story says, ‘and I will fear no evil for who is with me?’ What did the sheep call the shepherd?”
“Wait,” I blurted out. “It is ‘Thou!’ Wow. There is a change! I had never noticed that before. Now the sheep is talking TO the shepherd, not about the shepherd! That is rich.”

“Yes. And keep looking. Do you see where the shepherd is? What changed? Look at it!”

“Look at what?” I asked.

“Look at what else changed. Look at it. Before, the shepherd was in front of the sheep. Now where is the shepherd?”

“Okay, now I see it,” I burst out. “First the shepherd was in front of the sheep, now he is with the sheep.”

“Yes! At first he was in front, and now he is beside,” beamed Ramesh. “But that is not all. Keep looking.

“I see that! Over the sheep! The shepherd is over the sheep.”

“Keep going,” Ramesh encouraged. “The story says, ‘Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.’ The sheep is saying where else he feels the shepherd’s presence to be. Do you see that?”

“Yes I do. That is amazing.”

By now Ramesh was beaming. “The shepherd is in front and beside and over and behind. He is all around.”

From there, since we were at the end of the story, we both went to the applications. How could we not? 
Post Script.  

Sometime later in the office, the staff was talking about the mistakes we were all making as we worked in this ministry, and I heard the first statement: "Go ahead. Don't worry. I'll cover you. I will make sure no one sneaks up behind to hurt you."

Then that Psalm story came back to me. "Oh my! That's the 23rd Psalm! 'God has our backs covered' is today's way of saying 'surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.'"

Hmm? Teacher listens to student—both hear from a familiar passage.

Interchanges such as these, where indigenous believers are teaching leaders from Europe and the West, are becoming more common. Interactions such as these are happening in countries such as India, Togo, Mozambique, Niger and the Philippines, where indigenous instructors have been coming to indigenous instructors to be trained in STS.

D. A. Miller USA

We thank you for investigating STS. We encourage you to look into some of the other methods of learning and delivery of Bible stories to find out what best suits your needs and goals.

On the link, Story Training Organizations you will see a listing of various story methods and organizations that feature use of story for oral learners. Each group using story has specific goals and distinctives as you will see in the matrix link on that page.