Design of STS

STS-What & Why:

What is STS?

Results of STS

Need for STS

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Decidedly Biblical

The design of *Simply The Story* (STS) holds the Word of God in the highest regard. The various topics on this very full web page describing STS can be accessed directly using the links below.

Combined, the individual topics show the choices we have made in STS to maintain biblical integrity and most effectively train people to use story for evangelism and discipleship.

All who are ministering using the Word of God in story form are seeing some positive impact. In general, users of story vary in style. Below are some of the distinctives of *Simply The Story* and some of the reasons why we have chosen the methods we use.
Biblical Accuracy  |  Chronological Impact  |  Cont
ext Matters
Drama Speaks
Jesus Model  |  Joy of Discovery  |  Level Playing
Field
Oral Training
Stories Reach Hearts  |  Story Crafting  |  Topical
Teaching
Value of Discussion
Top

Biblical Accuracy
Speaking stories and passages from the Bible to those who cannot read is taken very seriously in the design of STS.

The methods we use to train people to prepare and share Bible stories are oral in nature, yet the methods teach accuracy.

We know those who cannot read are placing great trust in those of us who teach them Bible stories.

Unless non literate people have an actual recorded Bible, they have no way to check the accuracy of the stories we tell. But, from those of you who do read, we welcome scrutiny.
Design of STS

Our desire at STS is that all stories we tell and record and the oral strategies we employ will be examined by the same yardstick that the Bereans used to measure the words of the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:11).

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

When Christians repeat God’s Word in story or otherwise, or when we teach others in the use of story, we need to hold ourselves to this Berean standard.

Our chosen verse at The God’s Story Project and Simply the Story is Psalm 96:3, “Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.” How can this be done? Psalm 119:130 tells us that, when God’s Word enters us, it gives light to us and gives understanding to the simple.

God prepared His Word to reach all people. We want to trust His Word, use it, and see even the most simple and non literate people of the world understanding it.

We encourage those who are blessed with the skill of reading, and who have more than one Bible version, to look at those versions to find a word selection that is best fitted for the story. In fact, it will happen. Some content differences will affect the way a story is told and understood.

We recommend in such cases that the storyteller should look at the passage in those multiple versions to find the best selection.

Again, we teach storytellers to ask questions and lead the group to discover only information that is found within the Bible. The Bible is the only infallible message from God. All else written pales in comparison to God’s Word.

Context Matters (below) does show how Scripture outside a story may be needed and is used in the STS style of preparing and sharing stories.

At first, when learning the added tool of STS, those accustomed to using proof texts from throughout the Bible are overwhelmed. But as they learn and practice, they discover that many times, when God’s Story is done slowly and the story is listened to well, it is amazing how much treasure can be mined from just one story.

Biblical Accuracy | Chronological Impact | Context Matters
Drama Speaks
Jesus Model | Joy of Discovery | Level Playing
Field
Oral Training
Stories Reach Hearts | Story Crafting | Topical
Teaching
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Top

Chronological Impact
As we explain in the Origin of STS, the first glimpse we had of the strong power of story came as we watched the impact of our flagship production, God’s Story: From Creation to Eternity. But more was discovered from God’s Story. The importance of presenting stories in chronological order and of starting at the beginning of the Bible stood out as well.

For a long time, the teaching emphasis in most of Christianity has been on New Testament information. This is true in the local church, in the Sunday school and in the teaching emphasis in most of Christianity.

Furthermore, people need to know about Creation, Jesus’ part in Creation and that God planned salvation before He made the world and that He created the earth and everything and God’s concern that He has for the world. That was the reason why we decided to have Jesus come and live among us, as one of us, and then to be crucified and rise again to provide salvation for us.

That is one of the reasons God’s Story video spends the first 17 minutes of its 80 minutes covering Creation and the Fall in the Garden.
Ramesh is Director of The God's Story Project (TGSP) in the Buddhist world and has helped orchestrate and record God's Story in 21 South Asian languages. He presides over 843 cell churches in his country.

Some time back, I called Ramesh on the phone in hopes that I could hear about his latest ministry trip. When we connected, he said, “I'm sorry, I have to tell you something. It's about my mother-in-law.”

Ramesh said, “She is not. We have tried and tried to tell her, but she will not listen.”

I asked him if he had ever shown her God's Story. He responded, “No.”

I blurted out, “Why not, Ramesh?”

He said, “She is a Hindu cult leader and lives in a far village. When we talk to her about Jesus, she says, ‘You have Jesus. I have Buddha, end of story.’ We have tried for 14 years and she won't believe. So I never thought about showing her God's Story.”

“Okay mom, I will,” he responded. But his abrupt response and tone indicated, I will do that to show respect to you, but it will not work.

Two days later Ramesh contacted me to say, “Thank you very much for your prayer and as you asked, I showed my mother-in-law God's Story in the hospital bed. The room had six patients and their caretakers, and some visitors. The room was soon crowded.

“I asked her if she could watch a movie and she said ok. I didn't watch the DVD player, I just watched her face. After a few minutes, she said, ‘Stop the machine. You never told me that your God made my god! Why didn't you tell me this before? Now I understand!’

“She prayed to trust on Jesus, and so did two others in the room! The next day she was released; we took her home, totally healed.”

Ramesh later wrote to explain in more detail about what happened when he went to the hospital. As well, he told his view why his mother-in-law had never understood the Gospel before, even though they had tried many times to convince her.

“We attempted to share with her many time (I have been married for 15 years), talking about stories from the Bible... how I had been discipled, mentored by my mother who also been led to the Christ by western missionary in our place.

“My mother, she only heard the stories from the NT and was mentored by topical studies of the word of GOD. She always quote me the stories from the New testaments and I knew only this is the way to tell the people about Jesus.

“The way to witness to some one became in capsule form (automated programmed). For the people we prescribe these capsules and may be yet is not the time. BUT I never thought. Am I communicating the gospel to him/her in the way they understand?

“The answer from my mother in Law used to be the same always, ‘All the gods are the same, good karma will lead you to the ... any other gods she was worshiping until she heard the story started from Genesis. She was cult leader in her village.

“So we learnt that we need to present the gospel in way that they understand, she now has a very strong foundation, she knows all about the story of Creation and how I was discipled... that Jesus is a creator GOD who was in the creation with HIS father and came to the earth in the fulfillment of the time.

“Now, as we present the story, we present the whole story in a way they understand the head, not only the tail. Hindu and Buddhists must understand the real story that the Bible tells the old story from the very start.”

We believe that since the early part of the Bible is in story format, covers Creation and God's plan to send a Savior, it makes sense that the story format is needed. We have seen the value of these stories and do tell stories about Creation and minister with stories in chronological order.

We continue in TGSP to include God's Story: From Creation to Eternity in our STS workshops and follow up, as it does provide that vital chronological information.

Some of the varied ways stories can be presented in order can be to ...
Design of STS

1. Pick a book, such as Genesis, Judges or Acts and go through its stories.
2. Go through the book of Acts and insert some of the Epistles at the point when these churches were established.
3. Go through the Bible chronologically, picking major stories throughout. (See STS 296 Chronological Story List)

Biblical Accuracy | Chronological Impact | Context Matters
Drama Speaks | Joy of Discovery | Jesus Model
Field | | Joy of Discovery
Oral Trainings | Story Crafting | Topical
Stories Reach Hearts | | Topical Teaching
Teaching | Value of Discussion | Top

Context Matters – Use of Introductions

When a story is told the STS way, often an introduction is first given. This is how we help put a story into context. The introductions are to be as short as possible, because introductions are documentary in style, so they are harder to remember. As well, there is more than enough information just inside one story to fill the time available to tell a story.

Purposes of Introductions:
1. Contextualizing. To understand Bible stories correctly, many times the setting (what has happened before the story takes place) needs to be understood. Understanding the context helps to make Bible stories come alive. The essential information needed to help listeners best understand a story can be told before the story is told.
2. Terms that may not be understood by the listener are explained.
3. To add brief information needed to understand observations that the storyteller plans to introduce through questions. As an example, if a story is about the influence of a person and the storyteller wants the listeners to think about the influence of Jesus on his disciples, the storyteller needs to explain that the disciples learned how to pray and how to love. As an example, you may ask the group, “Who did Jesus influence?” Then explain who the disciples are. As an example, you may ask the group, “What did Jesus influence?” Then explain that the disciples learned how to pray and how to love.
4. If stories are being told in order, before you begin the current story, you can ask someone who was in attendance when the previous story was told to restate some of the observations the group uncovered. Allowing those who are being taught to review that previous story empowers them to speak God’s Word.

Introductions are formulated last during the preparation process, since the storyteller knows by then what needs to be introduced, if anything.

When STS records stories for non-literates, or stories for our STS Practitioners Audio Training, we record introductions as well to give the non-literates the ability to understand and teach the story in context.

Introductions are vital to provide context.
Drama Speaks

In STS workshops and the STS Handbook, we teach the storytellers how to tell their Bible stories using actions, expressions and voice inflections so that the story can be seen and heard.

From the beginning, we emphasize that any emotions or actions shown must be justified from the text. STS workshops and the STS Handbook include training on how to use actions, expressions and voice inflections to tell Bible stories.
To “show” a story, these are some of the skills we teach and encourage people to use.

We demonstrate actions that can show fear, greed, aggression, flight, surprise, bravery, wisdom, depression and other emotions.

Emotions can be demonstrated even through slight gestures. Then we have learners practice what they have seen and heard.

Where the storyteller stands, looks or gestures can establish the location of people, crowds, or places mentioned in the told story.

As an example, when storytellers are speaking a person’s quotes, by slightly repositioning their bodies, the action of speaking may be translated to the listener as the character being heard. For instance, healed people may look amazed and slowly move their newly healed body, or they may become excited and jump for joy. Hesitations in speech, and also hesitations in movement, add realism and drama to storytelling.

We always give these words of caution: “If you find that those to whom you tell the story come to you afterwards and say, ‘That’s not the way you would have acted if you had been in that situation,’ rethink your presentation. Storytellers are not the feature; God’s Word is the feature.”

Too much movement by a storyteller can take away focus from the spoken words; people begin to watch the storyteller more than listening. It is best to make small movements that just illustrate the words you speak.

What you want people to say is, ‘That story spoke to me,’ or ‘I am that person in the story.”

Toward the end of each of our workshops, we give opportunities for everyone to design and present dramas. To keep the stories silent and the drama silently enacts the story, we have one person tell (or sing or chant) the story accurately, but with an expressive voice.

We do not have various people speak the parts of the characters in a drama because it is more difficult to have many people trying to remember the story so they can tell it to others than when they hear a story told by one expressive storyteller. As well, when these new “actors” forget their lines and start to make up spoken lines, the accuracy of God’s Word is diminished by nervousness, those words people do make up are said in jest, and a precious story from God’s Word becomes a comedy.

Worldwide, this type of drama is a loved part of the workshop experience. We do dramas toward the end of our workshops. By this time, even other parts of the workshop experience that normally do not show emotion become creatively dramatic. Humm? Maybe this is the joy of the Lord showing up?
Jesus Model

How did Jesus communicate? Yes! Very often Jesus spoke in parables and told stories. Could He have communicated any other way? Of course not! Parables and stories were the language of the day. Jesus was a teacher of the Jewish people. Since He communicated to them through stories, we can only assume He used stories to reach us today.

Just as Jesus told stories both long and short, so we encourage the use of different length stories. Some of the sample stories we tell are only a few verses long, short stories, so to speak. Most are 6 to 14 verses long and some cover a whole chapter.

Jesus very often used another tool of communication. Again and again, Jesus gave His disciples and others a chance to respond in their own words. Jesus never gave a direct answer three times! All of the other times, Jesus responded by asking a question or telling a story or parable.

And usually, after telling a story, Jesus asked a question and invited discussion. For three years Jesus continued to train His disciples by encouraging them to listen to His Word, to think and believe, and to apply the wisdom.

So Jesus led by example in the use of stories and questions, as a way to witness and disciple.

Joy of Discovery

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So Jesus led by example in the use of stories and questions, as a way to witness and disciple.
If you were out walking, and as you traveled along, you noticed something of value off to the side of the road, you probably would think, Wow, a valuable treasure on the ground! So you would pick it up and no doubt say, Oh, boy, I just found a treasure!

You might hurry back to a friend to show him your treasure. You offer your friend some of the treasure and say, “Here. I want you to have some of the treasure I just found.”

If you handed off some treasure to your friend in that manner, would he be happy to receive the gift?

Sure. That person would be happy to be given a gift.

But, you could also have shared it this way. You could tug the sleeve of your friend and whisper, “Hey. Come with me. I ... just take a walk.” Then you could take him on the same walk where you left the treasure off to the side of the road.

You could draw your friend nearer and nearer to the spot where you found the treasure and ask, “Do you see anything interesting? Do you see anything there?”

As you draw closer, when that person finally looks down and notices the treasure, he most happily picks it up.

If you asked your friend, “Did you enjoy the treasure the first time when I just handed it to you?” he will probably say “yes” or nod in agreement.

“Good! But how did you enjoy the treasure when you discovered it yourself?”

Probably your friend will say, “I liked it better when I discovered it myself.”

You would just have allowed your friend to experience the joy of discovery by allowing him to be part of discovering it for himself.

Being given a treasure has value for sure, but when treasure is not just handed off to you and you discover it for yourself, it has the most value.

As you teach, besides lecturing and handing people truths and insights from the Bible, you can also allow people to discover truths for themselves through well thought out questions.

This simple “Joy of Discovery” illustration shows the difference between two ways of sharing biblical information. Giving people information has value, but giving them the experience of discovering truth has value.

But, as we teach in STS, you can involve learners in the pursuit of information by almost invisibly leading people to discover truth for themselves.

Although you may lead listeners close to a truth through questions, learners will remember when they had that “Ah ha!” moment and the strongest impact in learning from Scripture is when people have the experience of discovering for themselves.
Sometimes a sports example is used to explain fairness. We refer to “a level playing field.” That is when one team's side of the field is equal to their opponent's side of the field, and an unfair advantage is gained. Fairness requires a level playing field.

We at STS could try to convince people through lectures or reports that STS offers a level playing field for learners, but only when those from both groups experience this equality of learning, that this amazing discovery is truly believed.

Level Field in Action

In a village in Nepal, where many people, both trained pastors and villagers, gathered for two days of STS Bible study, they all were discussing the second of two stories in the Bible about Moses when God provided water from a rock.

Suddenly, they saw how Moses revealed a change of heart, a heart now of pride and self sufficiency, when he said, "Must we bring you water from the rock, you rebels?"

One leading pastor confessed, "We have been holding ourselves up as the source of all information and doctrine like we were the authority, why don't I repent now?" Then other pastors said the same. The training stopped while repentance took place.

At the end of two days of this STS discussion style of Bible study, an elderly lady, a leader, stood up. "I know now that God would speak directly to me out of his Word." For one example of how non literate people were reached see Listening and Responding.

Listening and Responding

People of all ages, socio economic backgrounds, education, and theological training gathered around Jesus. The people who listened and responded experienced a life change. This listening and responding is the heart of what we teach in STS.

The Holy Spirit teaches those who listen well; God honors those who respond to what they have learned.

As well, we teach how storyteller-teachers need to be listening and responding to those they teach when a story is told and discussion is led.

In fact, Simply The Story is uniquely defined as Listening and Responding.

Respect and Unity

The Bible does encourage education in the Word of God, and respect toward spiritual leaders. At the same time the Word of God acquired respect that springs up as people from a rainbow-wide spectrum of learning styles come together in a workshop.

The main time during the workshop that the discoveries of spiritual alikeness and capabilities occur is when people listen and respond and prepare and share the same Bible story.

To promote that kind of discovery, STS instructors welcome youths and just "regular folks" to their workshops. We love those who have formally trained and those with a background of Christian influence or those who know Christian terminology will be able to answer.

By gathering this seemingly disparate group of people together, staff instructors can show all in attendance how STS is uniquely defined at a time and of asking questions that help people find truths in that story, everyone learns and everyone contributes.

Everyone loses!

In Christian settings, discussion style teaching of the Bible does take place. But too often, the questions asked by those with a background of Christian influence or those who know Christian terminology will be able to answer.

When the style of questions pulls on information outside the story, an unfair advantage is given to those experiences few, who will probably answer most of the questions. Those in the study who do not have the outside information cannot respond correctly, so they will feel demeaned.
And the storyteller-teacher, who does not form questions that can be answered from within the story by all present and who does not use questions that prompt new discovery loses the joy of helping people experience the joy of discovery.

And sadly, all lose the chance to be taught freshly by the Holy Spirit.

Of central importance in the design of STS and the workshops we lead, is showing how to develop questions and a learning environment that promotes this equality of interaction.

**Oral Training**

When we first began teaching STS to others, we used whiteboards for lists and attendees took notes. We presented our ... gave them a few basic questions to help open up discussion on the story, questions that were the same for every story.

We soon recognized the need to show people how to investigate the stories more deeply for themselves. Over time, we ... find spiritual treasures and to form the kinds of questions that would get others to discover treasures for themselves.

From the beginning, we broke attendees out into small groups to learn stories, so our workshops have always been hands-on experiences. These small group periods have grown to become a central part of what people experience and love in workshops.

But still, in our early workshops we largely used literate methods to teach oral strategies. Soon the Lord impressed us ... methods and become comfortable in using oral styles to teach. How could we teach others what we ourselves could not do?

We began incorporating more and more illustrations in our workshops, which enabled us to use less and less lecture.

To everyone’s surprise, we began asking all of the attendees to “Put away your pens and notebooks!” In all of our workshops (unless all of the attendees were non literate) some of those in attendance thought we were joking.

Unbelievably, some cry and at times we have been close to physical confrontations with a few when we suggest to them that they try a way of learning that is new to them. Letting go of the familiar can be scary.

**Teachers Must Expand Skill-Sets**

One workshop attendee, a highly educated seminarian and career missionary, told me that he was going back to a South East ... a full STS workshop. He explained, “I will be modifying the schedule some and we will be allowing them to take notes.”

I asked why he wanted to change the format. He replied, “These people are all literate; they are Bible school students! They can learn that way.”

“And,” I asked, “after graduation, the people these graduates will minister to, are they literate?”
After a significant silence, the missionary replied, “No, the graduates will be ministering to villagers, to non-literate people.”

“So,” I responded, “you are struggling with incorporating oral strategies into your teaching skills, and you are not sure how to make this happen?”

This man instantly responded with, “I must make the change. In fact, although those in Bible schools are literate, most have come from oral learning communities.

“However, the ‘good’ Bible school training done throughout this country is highly literate, so the implication has been that Christianity is best taught and learned through the vehicle of highly literate communication.

“These Bible school students will benefit from seeing me, a credentialed Westerner, using oral methods.”

Using oral methods in our workshop has become our strategy. Attendees who are new to oral ways of learning have the opportunity to do more than study a new style—they experience it.

Early in their workshop experience, some attendees, particularly those new to oral strategy, struggle with JIT. Those who make the attempt to embrace something new are able to add STS and oral ways of learning and teaching to their skill sets.

**Use of Illustrations**

We believe that the use of illustrations to convey ideas must be central to our workshop trainings. Not only will non-literate learners benefit, but the highly-literate learners will also understand the content at a deeper level.

Awhile back, one of our highly-literate-thinking instructors expressed his discomfort at using “so many” illustrations. He felt that in order to teach clearly, one must just tell people what they need to know.

We often consult our national leaders when new ideas are proposed. We try to stay objective, so we stated the question to our leaders: “Would it be possible to shorten the schedule by cutting out some of the illustrations?”

Our leader shouted, “Don’t you dare! If you have to shorten the schedule, take out the lecture if you have to take out something, but don’t you dare take out one single illustration!”

Recently, a leading bishop in Kenya who has become an STS instructor made this statement. “It’s hard for me to believe that it wasn’t an African who wrote these illustrations; they are African.”

If an African leader’s perception of the STS workshop illustrations is that “they are African,” we believe that we have met our goal of thinking as oral learners!
Again and again, we see the deep spiritual treasures in a story being within everyone’s reach. The healing and bonding that happens when the non literate, and the educated and non educated, when they find treasures together, is precious to experience.

For those new to Christianity, the most commonly used teaching styles to introduce them to Scripture are expositional and discussion teaching. In these teaching styles, they struggle to understand in-depth biblical information because of the way that information is packaged.

These kinds of less literate learners either drop out of those teaching sessions or they are perceived by leaders as less capable, instead of adjusting the method of presentation, they are given simplified, actually dumbed-down, biblical content.

The concept that those who are not alike in educational backgrounds can study and discuss God’s Word together, and that they all can learn and contribute worthwhile discoveries can be difficult to fully fathom.

We must ask ourselves if we have moved the spiritual pursuit of the things of God solely into an intellectual activity. When, through stories, we reference large amounts of information are perceived by most as more spiritually capable than less literate learners.

Somewhere over the years, have we slipped into thinking that Christianity is just the housing of knowledge, just a cognitive pursuit rather than a spiritual adventure?

God made us as body, soul and spirit. Taking time to listen well to a story and to discover how much those in a Bible story are like ourselves is a powerful way of bringing spiritual truth to our minds and hearts.

Stories allow us to sense truth, as well as to know in our minds the things of God. When, through stories, we experience how much we need Him and how very far we fall short of His goodness and glory, the Word most deeply impacts our lives.

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**Story Crafting**

Some who minister with Bible stories use the tool of “story crafting.” This is the taking out of some information or insertion of information to help listeners understand the story.

The rationale behind “story crafting” is the desire to make stories easy to remember and to understand. Some examples include:

- Omitting large chunks of information (such as the description of Goliath’s armor and weapons).
- Leaving out large sections of a story.
- Explaining story information is sometimes done inside the story while the story is being told.

Also, in story crafting, the explaining of story information is sometimes done inside the story while the story is being told.

Realistically, if someone wanted to tell the story of Joseph’s life, it would take a long time to tell all 21 chapters of the book of Genesis. So how can the Joseph story be told in an accurate way, a way that can fit in a reasonable time frame, AND be remembered?
Most likely, people will not be able to story-tell 21 chapters all at once, nor would that length of a telling fit into the time frame available in most forums.

We generally do not favor the telling of a long (perhaps no more than 25 verses) story all at once as the excessive chunking would lead some users of story crafting to only focus on the obvious and to not explore the story deeply, consequently; the spiritual wealth a story contains is missed.

In a case like the Joseph story, some users of story crafting would solve the length problem by presenting a much longer version, and then in the beginning of each regular gathering, give a brief introduction to the story they will be telling.

In STS, we have recognized that, if we say, “This is the Bible story,” people will trust us to tell the story as the Bible tells it. So, if our storytellers say, “This is the Bible story,” we want them to tell all that is in that passage.

But those problems still need to be addressed: the problems of stories that are too long for the allotted time to tell and effectively discuss and the problems of stories that contain information that probably wouldn’t be understood.

We in STS have found solutions to these challenges with which we are comfortable, solutions that also preserve the information contained in the Bible.

For instance, in order to cover the complete Joseph story, one could tell it in short sections.

Or a lot of information in the Joseph story could be condensed and put into an introduction. Then, just before a story is told, a reference to that introduction would be made.

In STS, we select stories and passages on their “tell-ability” and as well, select what section of that story we will tell.

In one way, we do change stories in STS, because we do teach people to tell stories conversationally. This means storytellers must select words that both respectfully and clearly represent the more literate style of the written Scripture.

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**Not Memorizing, It’s Conversational “Remembering”**

During STS workshops, when we first explain this conversational method, some of those who treasure God’s Word show panic on their faces. Recently this happened with a Filipino whose mother tongue is Cebuano.

When I sensed his concern, I asked, “You love God’s Word and do not want to change a single word of it, right?”

He took a deep breath of relief, thinking I now understood his position. “That’s right!”

Then I innocently asked, “So then, you tell the stories of the Bible in Greek and Hebrew, right?”

“What? No! I don’t speak those languages. I tell the stories in Cebuano, my language, just as it is written in our Bible.”

“Oh,” I responded, “I am so glad you do not want to change any of the words of God. But I have a question. Do the words of the language in your Bible look or sound like Greek or Hebrew?”

“No,” he answered. “They sound like Cebuano!”

“No, you say? Then what is the same in your Cebuano words that is the same as the original words that the Holy Spirit inspired?”

“Oh,” the Filipino burst out. “It is the content. I get it. I get it! I can speak the words naturally, the way people would hear them if they were hearing the story for the first time!”

“Do you do it?” I asked. “But, before a story is actually told for ministry purposes, through prayer and careful consideration, you decide how you will tell it, but for sure, no content is added, and no content is taken away.”
So in summary, in STS, we are wary of taking on the responsibility of making decisions regarding what Bible information should be taught. We celebrate those who translate Scripture and lead literacy programs, so that the time can come that some people will be able to read a book or photocopy it and determine what it says for themselves.

In an STS presentation of a story, we feel comfortable calling it “a Bible story” when we use introductions to explain the story and provide context that helps the audience understand the significance of the story. We pay attention to narrative continuity, and select lengths of a continuous story that can be told and discussed in the time available.

One long term missionary describes his change in mindset: “My Change in Mindset” He tells about his own difficulty in memorizing a crafted story, and his surprise discovery of how he could “remember” a precisely correct story.

- **Biblical Accuracy**
- **Chronological Impact**
- **Context Matters**
- **Drama Speaks**
- **Jesus Model**
- **Joy of Discovery**
- **Level Playing**
- **Field**
- **Oral Training**
- **Stories Reach Hearts**
- **Story Crafting**
- **Topical Teaching**
- **Value of Discussion**

**Topical Teaching**

If I saw a beautiful butterfly and I wanted to know more about that butterfly, I might catch it and bring it down. Then I could examine it and count all the wings, and count all the legs, and count all the wings and legs in a pile, and all the little legs in a pile. And then I could stand back and say, “Ahh, isn’t that beautiful!”

“Ohhh no!” you say?

“What’s wrong?”

“Oh. Right! It’s dead. It’s not flying. I agree. You’re right. It has lost its beauty. It doesn’t fly anymore. I’ve taken it apart. What was beautiful was how it all fit together when it had life, and could fly.”

Stories in the Bible are like that. If we say, “Ahh, that’s a beautiful story; now let’s analyze it.” Then we take it apart and create lists and piles. Is the Bible topical? Is there one book on prayer, another on faith, another on the attributes of God and so on? No? Then why do we talk about the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Is the Bible topical? Is there one book on prayer, another on faith, another on the attributes of God and so on? No? Then why do we talk about the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John?

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Oh yes, another question. How many Gospels are there?

Yes, four. Four separate accounts of Jesus’ life. I have a good idea. Let’s collate the stories so we can put them in lists or piles of similar parts, we often lose the beauty and the flow that originally drew us to that story.
Design of STS

As well, those 80% in the world who need the story format to be able to remember the biblical information can barely understand the topical presentation. And for sure, over half of the world has no other way than story to remember the teaching.

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Top

Value of Discussion

Discussion has three types of participants, the person up front who is leading the discussion, the people involved in the discussion and the Holy Spirit who will have time and opportunity to use the story to speak to all of the people involved.

Have you ever heard anyone preaching or teaching information from the Bible or telling things about God, and you wish you had the opportunity to ask questions to know if what they were saying was true?

No matter what you are wondering about as you hear a teaching, the lecture style does not provide the opportunity to ask questions, because you’re just listening. You just listen, and figure they do know what they are saying, but you do not understand it.

Or you walk away thinking that they don’t know their material or wishing you could challenge them, because maybe you’re familiar with the Bible and what they’re saying, you believe is not true.

Discussion brings accountability to those people who are talking about things that are not true, as it allows you, as a listener, to ask questions to find out how and where the speakers found the information they are teaching.

Discussion also allows listeners to get questions answered when they are not understanding something. As a leader and a communicator, when you finish to teach and people leave after you have taught, do you know whether or not they really understood what you were saying? Not usually.

You, as a communicator, walk out and you think, “Hey, I wonder if they understood what I said. I don’t know if they understood, I don’t know if they’re going to remember, I don’t know if they got it.”

Because when you’re just lecturing and they are just listening, you have no way to measure the listeners’ understanding.

As well, discussion allows the ultimate teacher, the Holy Spirit, to move in people’s lives. As they listen through discussion, they are able to apprehend truth directly from God. Many times during the discussion time, these new truths will be shared out loud by the participants.

Articles on Worldview, Story Selection & Culture are yet to be included on this link.