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Simply The Story (STS)
Oral Bible Schools (OBS):
Need, Design, Starting and
Brief Results
Audio Interviews
Oral Bible Schools

Special: Simply The Story (STS)
Oral Bible Schools (OBSs) -2014 Update

Need for Oral Bible Schools

Question: If someone becomes a believer in Jesus and is not literate, where could that person go to Bible school? Right! Nowhere!

Actually, there is some help available. Dotted around the globe, there are schools that do teach students Bible stories and encourage the telling of those stories to others. The STS-OBS also teach Bible stories and encourage the telling of stories to others, but in addition, these schools teach how to glean information from the stories and how to teach others deeply from them.

STS-OBS began in July 2009, all because a Filipino Christian touched by STS workshop training felt the call to start an OBS in the Philippines. This Christian had a vision of an OBS that taught Bible stories to students who were not literate, to teach students who were literate, and to teach students who were not literate and were also literate. But this Christian’s idea prompted us to set up some pilot STS-OBS whose curriculum was to teach only Bible stories and encourage the telling of stories to others. More schools followed, each STS leader learning from what their co-workers in other countries were discovering.

Now ... praise God, Simply The Story Oral Bible Schools are springing up in various nations.

Design of STS Oral Bible Schools
Twelve students, hosted locally, shepherded by national STS instructors, learn Bible stories and study them oral style. No faculty—no campus—locally supported.

The students, who are a mixture of non-literate, semi-literate and preferred oral learners, learn how to dig deeply into the stories to discover treasures and how to teach others through discussion.

After trying different models, we settled on one that saw the most success. The students attend two weeks of school, then go home for two weeks, and then return to school for another two weeks. This schedule allows the students to learn about 15-20 stories in that two-week period, and then they go home and have the time to solidify the stories in their minds and deeply place the stories, as we say, “in their heart pockets.”

As well, that time home allows students to keep tending their ministries, homes and fields, making the school time away from their villages much less of a hardship.
Then the students come back to their schools and learn more stories.

Most graduates know close to 200 stories, which they then carry everywhere in their heart pockets. The

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**Starting an STS-OBS**

Local pastors and Christians who have seen the value of STS arrange for a school in their region. After

The selected students, their church, family or village provide the students' food.

As possible, STS headquarters in USA endeavors to pay for solar players with recorded Bible stories, God's Story and a New Testament (as available). Those players help non-literate and semi-literate students learn and review the stories.

When recorded stories are not available, headquarters assists in the recording of the stories.

The school begins when local STS instructors lead a 5-day STS workshop in which they teach the twelve

The believers who host, often pastors, serve as spiritual guides and problem solvers. For the schools where

Although we originally anticipated that most students would be single, young and non-literate, the population of the schools so far has been two-thirds married, two-thirds semi-literate and an average age of 37 years old.

During each of the two-week sessions of school, weekends are generally used for practical use of story

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**Brief Results of STS Oral Bible Schools**

In-depth reports found on OBS Results.

**India**  
(One School) This pilot school ran for six months straight. Students learned an average of 40 stories and worshiped and prayed a lot. The students used stories in practicals as part of their school experience and by God's grace led hundreds to Jesus.

Learning of stories was not dominant, and the leadership who oversaw them was not highly skilled in STS.

**Kenya**  
(Seven schools initially began in 2010.) These schools were established after our Africa director gleaned a lot of knowledge in other countries. Part way into their operation, outside observers visited the some of the schools. See the findings documented on this site. In April 2011, more observers came to Kenya to join a graduation celebration of this first Africa OBS.

To give a glimpse, they learned 120 stories in four months!

**Nepal**  
(One School) Tamang people. Of twelve students who started, eleven stayed in school the whole time. Their four months of actual time at the school took six months to complete due to strikes, holidays and farming needs.

As a result of telling their stories and people saved, the Tamang students planted six churches near the school and seventeen churches back in their villages.
A local Nepali pastor who had been involved for 19 years in trying to disciple the Tamang said, “Never did I think they could know deep things in the Bible like this.”

**Philippines**

(Two Schools) As explained, the first try at a school saw poor results due to the school’s providing job training. The ... results. Their graduation is due at the end of November. An outside team is traveling there to examine the results. See [Philippines Results](#) for most current posted report.

**Zambia**

(One School) “We managed to bring the oral school to the end with the total of ...!”

### My Best Day Ever!

A missionary in Uganda who uses STS, traveled to Kenya to investigate the Oral Bible Schools. He, an... With only these three sitting and talking to some of the Oral Bible School students, the students felt the freedom to share some amazing personal stories. Our leader reported, “Of all I have seen so far in Simply The Story, I call this ‘my best day ever!’”

Five of the many stories told to the visitors by the students:

A lady said, “My sister died this morning. The family is there, but I had to make a decision. My sister is with Jesus.”

Another female student shared, “None of the other students knew about me when we all started the school. I didn’t let any... and decided to wait a day to join the grieving family so that no school would be missed, is highly unusual.

Yet another student told this. “I am a single mother. To take care of my children, I do any jobs I can find, field work, house work─whatever is available...

“Then again I was shocked. I came to find out that these five days were the beginning of a two weeks on and two weeks off schedule. The time to keep going. But you know, again I felt the Lord lead me to commit to the school and somehow it would be ok.

“Let me tell you what is happening. I now go to school for two weeks and keep learning more and more stories. And when I go home, plenty of good work is waiting for me and I am making enough to easily pay my bills and take care of my children.

Our leader told us, “While we talked with the various ladies in this school, the husband of one of the women students mentioned...

One of the students in the men’s school told a story to the visitors that meant a great deal to them. “No one knew when I... my grandfather died. I went to claim my inheritance. But my relatives said, ‘You don’t get anything. You’re not a son.’”

“Well, I got mad and I fought them and that’s when I got hit on the head with the machete.

“So, even though I was at this school learning Bible stories, inside I was angry and just waiting for the chance to go back and fight them for my inheritance.”

The student spoke with intensity. “Now one of the stories we did was about the children of Israel after they had victory... God was not in that plan!

“So I went back again to my village, but people didn’t trust me─well not at first. They said, ‘You’re coming back to... You know what I am doing now? I’ve been going back and using my grandfather’s house to tell Bible stories to everyone!”
Fruit Bearing, First OBS Graduation in Africa

As God told us in His Word, there is a time to plant and a time to reap. The celebration of the first STS OBS graduation in Africa proved to be a time of reaping!

We are transcribing some of the many heartwarming testimonies told to us at this Kenya celebration and hope soon to start posting them on our web site. For now, do enjoy the video testimony Ann Kavuo.

Any day when this plucky five-foot, 65 year-old widow can’t get a ride to school, she walks 10 kilometers to get there. (In many cultures, non-literate people often carry Bibles and put pens in their pockets so they look “educated” and can gain credibility.)

Ann’s comment may reveal even more. Could it be that her perceived “need” to carry her Bible to give her credibility has driven her to carry it even when it is not needed? Could the very act of carrying the Bible be the reason she is able to spontaneously testify? Could the act of “need” be a driving force for her to share her story?

Keep looking on our “What’s New” corner on the web site for more OBS audio and video testimonies.

Seventeen leaders from outside Kenya, representing eight countries, came to observe this celebration and to listen. They were encouraged by the 80 students from among the current 120 OBS students. All met together in this first ever, momentous occasion.

Some of these students had never been out of their villages, so the fellowship of these believers and joy echoed loudly through their singing. Their praise melted our hearts.

How Schools Operate

The OBSs have been in session in Kenya for two months to one year. The students from Vihiga, the first school to complete the full year, made up the graduating class. Most students are men; a few schools are mixed and one trains all women.

The schools scattered throughout the southern part of Kenya operate two weeks on and two weeks off. Some students commute by walking, others by motorcycles or bicycles, and a few by school bus. The twelve students per school learn Bible stories and passages and discuss them STS style.

About two-thirds of the students actively serve as pastors or on a church staff. Nearly half of the students have been to church planting schools and even more have been to Bible colleges. The students’ commitment to arrange for a school, and the self-support of the students create ownership and fosters responsibility.

Of the 120 students who began attending these OBSs only four have dropped out! One student was dismissed after the first week because he was needed in his village, and one left because of sickness.

So far, leaders in Kenya and other African nations of Ethiopia, Sudan, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Tanzania and more are discussing what they are seeing in Kenya to see how they can utilize the Kenya model to set up OBSs in their countries.

Because these schools are largely student-supported, only people hungry to learn Bible in an understandable and practical way are able to attend. It is those who are committed to becoming strong leaders and church planters who are self-supporting.

TGSP (the ministry that developed Simply The Story) covers the cost of sending the overseers to the schools—their bus fares, and food (and lodging if the overseer travels). Overseers for the schools are selected from the growing pool of qualified STS instructors in Kenya. We have found that the deeper the STS training skills and Bible knowledge, the better the result.

None of the instructors are paid STS staff, and as rural pastors, they live on meager incomes. But, when these volunteers are away from home, a small honorarium, as needed, may be given to them by The God’s Story Project (TGSP).

After the initial two weeks together, the students organize their own study schedules. However, at the end of each two weeks of classroom study, the supervisors teach their students how to train others as STS practitioners.

During the students’ year of learning stories, they study together for two weeks. Then they go back to their villages as they study for two weeks at home also enable students to tend their fields and flocks or maintain whatever means of income they have. For the first week of a new school, a qualified STS overseer leads an STS workshop. That training is followed by one more five days of each week, the twelve students per school learn Bible stories and passages and discuss them STS style.

Overseers for the schools are selected from the growing pool of qualified STS instructors in Kenya. We have found that the deeper the STS training skills and Bible knowledge, the better the result.
Interaction With The Graduates

We sat and talked with ten of the twelve members from Vihiga, the village that hosted this first graduating class.

The other absent student was on a month-long suspension. His classmates, all who serve as pastors, decided that this was the best course of action for him.

The ten graduates with whom we conversed told us why they first came to the school and why they committed to the year-long term.

A new crop of students has already started a second OBS in Vihiga.

One of the challenges the men named was the distance some of them had to travel to attend school and another was that there were not enough schools for everyone. “Why don’t you make the schools larger so more can attend?”

“Humm,” I mused, “Good questions. I am wondering why Jesus didn’t think to have more than twelve disciples? He could have trained a lot more people at once if He had thought to have a larger school.” The students all laughed.

“But if there were a lot more students than twelve in a school, what would happen to accountability among your ranks?” I suggested. “You live in different villages, and stepped out of the boat to see if the OBS was really from God. Those in the boat were all blessed when Peter and Jesus came to that boat and only then did the contrary wind stop.”

I wanted the students to solve the problems of schools being too far away and the need for schools to accommodate more students. “You live in different villages, and stepped out of the boat to see if the OBS was really from God. Those in the boat were all blessed when Peter and Jesus came to that boat and only then did the contrary wind stop.”

All ten graduates stated that they wanted to start assisting in workshops so they could become certified instructors and then move on to become overseers. “We want to help lead a school like the one we have just experienced.”

Future Plans, “We Want to Go There!”

The majority of the students in all ten schools expressed their interest in learning to teach and in becoming certified instructors.

When the Kenyan STS instructors met before this graduation celebration, they looked at the map being prepared for the district of Kakamega. We first met instructor “A” in Nairobi in 2008. He works in the north. His testimony shows the difficult ways that he has to travel every time he comes to Nairobi which is in the developed Southern part of the country.

So as you will see on the STS-OBS map of Kenya, the instructors mapped out places in the northern part of Kenya where they plan to travel. Hopefully, prayerfully, by God’s grace these motivated instructors, who are willing to make the hard treks to the north, will be able to establish more schools. Already school number eleven in Kenya is about to begin!

More Results of OBS and listing of OBS in Session