STS-What & Why:

What is STS?

Results of STS

Need for STS

Design of STS

Impact of STS

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Simply the Story: Fits the Need for Oral Strategy
Need for STS

Jesus told His followers to go to all the world and to disciple those who become believers. We want to assist followers of Jesus in this assignment.

We do this by providing a study and teaching concept that gives a deep understanding in the Word of God and empowers and encourages learners to easily pass on that information to others.

The vast majority (80%) of the world cannot or does not prefer to learn from reading. Most of the Christian discipleship, and even evangelism strategies use literate methods of communication. Importantly, the concepts we use for Simply The Story employ methods that are readily understood by oral as well as literate learners, so this very big gap is filled.

The unique components of Simply The Story involve discussion and discovery. STS is relational. Together, learners are involved in the discovery process; they engage and take ownership of the biblical insights gleaned.

True Observations, Wrong Conclusions

If I wrapped a gift and sent it to someone, and later it came back to me unopened, should I assume that the person who should get it opened it? I spent a lot of effort to send that present! But maybe, just maybe, the recipient did not know how to open the package?

When we share the gospel with people in our home area or in another country, and they do
not seem interested and do not respond, should we assume that the gift of the gospel was refused because the recipients were not interested?

We have been saying in missions that some places are "hard ground," when in reality, many times, it is just that the people simply cannot understand the gospel in the way we have packaged it for them.

Too many times, systematic theology and topical teaching were the styles of presentation used to teach the Bible to the world of oral learners. An overwhelming number of them rejected the information because they did not understand it.

Instead of considering using a new strategy to present Scriptural truths, the literate style of wrapping the message was...

Literacy in the USA

What would you guess the literacy rate is in the USA? The published literacy rate for the USA is 98%. Interestingly beside that rate, there is a note saying, "85% functionally literate." Hmm? I wonder. What does "98% literate" mean then?

A literacy survey done by the US government in 1992 showed surprising results. In addition, another similar survey was done in 2012. It is amazing to note that many highly educated people prefer oral communication. Some describe oral communication as the "air we breathe." How many times have you heard, "Tell me a story" or "Tell me a joke or hear it told?" Yes, hear it told. This is an example of the added attraction of exchanging information in person.

So, if the percentage of people in the USA who cannot or do not prefer to learn from reading is as high as 87%, what must those in Canada and developed Europe, do?

In some countries the literacy rate, those who can read and understand what they have read, is as low as 2 or 3%! So in those countries lower the standard of literacy in creative ways such as, "If you can sign your name, you are literate." The Encyclopedia Britannica will not even publish literacy rates. This is because they know that what is submitted to them is much too high, having been misrepresented to make the country's citizens appear more literate than they really are.

Those who cannot read do not live in the world of notes and outlines, of definitions and concepts. They live in the world of oral learners, helps participants discover truth for themselves, and overrides the easy way of just giving the "right" answer.

For example, to help listeners discover "why" Abram told Sarai to lie and say, "You are my sister," it is better...
Need for STS

You could ask, "What in the story was Abram's fear as they traveled to Egypt?"

"So by what Abram asks Sarai to say to the Egyptians, what does this show us Abram wanted to happen?"

This way, by the use of several questions (the answers for which can be seen in the story), the "why" can be discovered.

In view of how we have seen the way oral communicators do NOT learn, let us see how they best do learn.

How Did Jesus Communicate?

Considering that at least 80% of the world cannot or does not prefer to learn from reading, I wonder what God has done to communicate with humankind? Humm? How did Jesus communicate? Yes! He largely used parables and stories.

Ah! Maybe Jesus did not graduate from Torah school? He was just a carpenter! He only knew how to tell stories.

No? Oh I know! The people of Jesus' day were not very literate, maybe only as much as 11% literate, so Jesus had to speak... Did Jesus ever use stories when He spoke to them? Yes. He did. And they understood the message, and some even believed.

Note also the Bible's format. It is 75% stories, 15% poetry and 10% expositional. What do we predominantly use in Christian teaching? In many circles of Christianity, expositional teaching has been the dominant method utilized.

Most Effective Way to Replicate and Change Lives

We would assume that teachers and pastors want their biblical information to impact as many lives as possible.

To impact lives, information must be understood and retained.

To teach in the most effective manner possible, perhaps it is time to examine our current strategies.

Let me ask you. What do you remember from Sunday's sermon--the three points that started with the letter "C," or the story that was used as an illustration?

Oh. You took notes so you can remember? Well, you can answer as soon as you go find your notes. They are probably in the drawer with the rest of your notes!

Now, let me ask you this: No matter how true the information is that we heard, if what we learned cannot be recalled without consulting our notes, how can we share it with others and how can it be life-changing?

The STS style of staying in one biblical passage or story at a time, and the involvement in discovery, firmly places the "why" easy and natural for non-literate and literate learners to repeat and pass on the newly found information to others.

Because STS teaches how to dive into the story deeply, to some, STS looks like "inductive Bible study, oral style." But in STS, the "why" of a passage is discovered, not the "what." That is why it is not unusual to see the ability to tell a story reach six generations in one year.
Now That I Know the Stories

[For security, we will make up a name for this man and his people group. Let’s call him “Ben” and his people “Farrite.”

The story of how the Farrite people discovered the Gospel through God’s Story demonstrates the power and critical importance of “story.”

These 1.5 million Farrite people live in a closed country, are nomadic, are Muslim, have no written language and, until a few years ago, had only one known believer!

Ben, the one Farrite believer, had left his homeland and gone to India to work. While there, a member of a large missions organization had led him to the Lord and then discipled him for four years.

A Western missionary had done a case study as he wanted to take the message of the Bible and the good news of Jesus to this group. This missionary took aside this only Farrite believer, and one SIL worker (a Wycliffe trained translator). Together they took on the project of translating the 12,000 word script of God’s Story which is an audio/video collection of stories that give an overview of the Bible.

It took the team nine months to record the believer speaking the Farrite version of God’s Story. The God’s Story Project studio staff then disguised the narrator’s voice for his protection and produced the program.

Even though Ben had been a believer for five years and had been discipled for four years during that time, he had not yet been able to explain his conversion to anyone.

After completing God’s Story in his mother tongue, this one believer returned again to his people—and led his aunt to the Lord. Then Ben led six more to Jesus!

Ben reported, “Now that I know the stories, I can explain what happened to me.”

Within one year of completion, through the radio broadcasts, video and cassette copies being given to the nomads, and through the witness of the one believer, God gave birth to a measurable, worshiping church of 45 Farrite believers!

[One must wonder. What was the content and design of the material that was used to train Ben for four years? Did you notice? His statement was, “Now that I know the stories I can explain what happened to me.”

Whatever his training has been, it did not equip him to evangelize his family and people. But notice, when the Bible stories within God’s Story equipped and empowered Ben this time to reach his people...