Training Info:

Workshops

Oral Schools

Practitioner Audio

Certify Leaders

After A Workshop

Multiplication Strategies
Workshops

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**Regional Empowerment**
New Program from The God’s Story Project  
(update 9/3/11)

**God’s Word, Understood**

We see Kenya rising as a poster child country. There is no doubt that evangelism and discipleship results are leaping in Kenya from the effective oral training of Simply The Story (STS) being used to teach the Bible.

But more than that, onlookers are seeing **Regional Empowerment** as a financially efficient strategy where just a few STS trained believers can completely change the face of a country that before had very little Christian activity. Already, mission workers have become inspired and encouraged by the success of **Regional Empowerment** in Kenya. We are helping these mission workers to utilize this strategy in their countries of interest.

**What Spurred The Development of This Program**

In 2006 an East African man watched our 80-minute film, *God’s Story: From Creation to Eternity*. This chronological storytelling overview of the Bible touched him, so he contacted us at The God’s Story Project (TGSP). He said, “We need this. How can I help get *God’s Story* produced in Swahili?”
He confided, “Kenya is supposed to be 80% Christian. Don’t believe it! Our Christianity is a mile wide and an inch deep. ... The seminary-trained pastors often preach over the people’s heads, so again (maybe with eyes open) the people sleep.”

(Happily, we now do have Swahili as one of 400 languages of God’s Story, and it is very successful at communicating God’s Word. This man’s report matches many we have heard first-hand while ministering in Africa and Asia. To continue counteracting the gap and dearth of Biblical understanding, in 2007 TGSP developed a new training program to add to its flagship tool of God’s Story. With this new tool called Simply The Story (STS), we teach oral learners how to deeply study and share the Word of God. Resulting from almost five years of handing off STS, literally hundreds of thousands of pastors have deepened their understanding. This rapid multiplication occurs because of the integral part of the STS workshops that trains people in STS to train others in STS, and then be 3rd generation and so on. We have frequent reports of STS multiplication to the 5th generation within one year!

Country That Demonstrates Regional Empowerment

From the many five-day STS workshops held in Kenya over a four year period, a core of 32 active STS instructors began serving as unpaid volunteers in leading workshops in Kenya and surrounding countries.

Some of these 3rd and 4th generation leaders are bishops and many are pastors. The congregations of these pastors are now called 4th and 5th generation! The congregations of these pastors and those to whom they tell the stories are the 5th and 6th generation. This core of instructors also acts as supervisors of Oral Bible Schools. As well, in response to many invitations, these instructors are using STS to minister in a wide variety of venues including private and government schools.

Regional Empowerment combines all of the above uses of STS and more into one effective and efficient program. Described next are some of the STS outreaches in this empowerment program.

Oral Bible School (OBS)

In 2009-2010 we planted pilot Oral Bible Schools in five countries. An OBS consists of twelve students who meet together for six months to learn and discuss Bible stories and passages. Most schools meet for two weeks on and two weeks off for a year.

In the first two weeks, students are trained in the STS process of preparing and sharing Scripture. After that, in each week they learn to accurately tell over 200 Bible stories and can teach deeply from them using an oral style of discussion.

In Kenya, by the time the first OBS students graduated, a total of ten OBSs were meeting. Students cover their own costs. In other OBSs, we found that local churches supported the students as they learned STS.

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For example, Africa Inland Mission (AIM) stands as one of the two oldest denominations in Africa. In May 2011, we inaugurated the first OBS for AIM. Note in Clouds Without Rain, one of the short videos linked in the right side of our web site pages, what the chairman of the executive board of AIM, Meshack Chenze, says.

“In Africa, things come and they go. All make promises, but most are like clouds in the distance that promise rain. The AIM came to the inauguration from throughout Kenya in May to find out how they too could start a school in their areas.

School Ministry

Currently, trained STS instructors minister regularly at seven Kenya high schools! Prompted by the very positive response from those schools, we decided to combine our already successful outreaches in Kenya into one efficient plan for meeting the need and interest in Kenya to learn how to study God’s Word orally.

That principal helps oversee a chain of 52 high schools! Each visit would be three days long. The student population averages 700 in these live-in schools.

Becoming Highly Efficient

Prompted by that school request and the interest in the OBS and workshops, we decided to combine outreaches.

As funds arrive, our current goal is to use the core 32 Kenya STS instructors to empower new leaders and to minister in 27 OBSs. Ministering in schools and the pastor training will take 9 months. The one-year OBSs would finish later.

We are implementing this plan in Kenya now! But, in any country, STS leaders can do the same program.

Regional Empowerment can be started right now in many countries where STS is planted. We can use trained instructors in the country to combine all five of these outreaches in order to efficiently deploy leaders and maximize use of their time and TGSP funds.

TGSP’s responsibility in Regional Empowerment is to help national STS leaders orchestrate these five ministry uses of STS and to provide minimal funding. STS leaders will handle the same program as their local denominations. To be eligible for Regional Empowerment, a region must be within a day or less commute by bus of three qualified STS instructors, at least one of whom has full certification.

How Regional Empowerment Begins
The initial invitations to come to a facility and train are usually generated by relationships, word of mouth, attendance at an STS workshop or visit to the STS web site. We respond as instructors and funds are available.

First Team Visit

First, an invitation to minister at a “facility” comes to TGSP. Among what we classify as facilities are schools, orphanages, prisons or any substantial population of children (20 or more) who are 10-years old and upward.

When an STS team within traveling distance is available and funds are designated for this, the empowerment program can begin.

The next part of setting up empowerment is that the pastors and or Christian workers local to the facility need to commit to continue ministering in the facility using STS and will be hosting the ongoing OBSs once one is planted in the region. The STS team is joined by local pastors and Christian workers (at least six and a maximum of thirty workers).

During the first visit, the STS team ministers using the God's Story video or DVD (if a projector is available). Facilities often select Friday, Saturday and Sunday for their three days, but details such as this are decided locally.

On this initial visit, the STS team spends time introducing STS to the local workers and discussing the workers' roles in the empowerment process. Typically, many youth respond spiritually as Bible stories are discussed, so afterwards many counselors are needed.

If the youth respond positively to the three days of interaction around the Bible stories, the STS team will commit to return the following year to train more workers. An STS bookmark is given to each youth. This bookmark carries the basics of the STS style of investigation and provides a sample interactive story to give them the framework to use STS as they study their Bibles and the written conversational Bible stories the team gives to the youth.

Local Commitment Determines Next Step

If the facility management commits to implementing an STS follow-up program in the facility of at least one hour weekly and funds are given to the facility, STS training supplies are also given. Depending on the facility size, one or two solar-powered audio-players with God's Story are given, along with STS Practitioner Audio Training.

During the first visit, local pastors and workers are able to observe the results of STS in the lives of the youth.
Multiplication Strategies

At the end of that first three-day time of ministry and short time of teaching STS, the local pastors and workers are ...

This elected leader has two responsibilities. One is to oversee the loaning out of TGSP material for the past ...

The other responsibility of the elected leader is to arrange a three-day STS workshop that will precede the ...

During the second time of ministry at the facility, the pastors and leaders who show readiness will assist in the ...

At the end of this second three-day visit, added TGSP material, as needed and as available, is left behind.

Third Team Visit

On the third and last visit by the STS team, a two-week stay is involved (ten working days with the middle ...

Also ministry is done at the facility, and some of the core local leaders take a main role in STS ministry of ...

OBS students observe and assist in the ministering as they are needed and ready to do so. Then, during ...

At the end of this first two weeks of OBS foundational training, each student OBS story student plays a role in ...

During this third time of ministry in the facility, up to ten audio players, and DVDs as deemed appropriate ...

Oral Bible School Operation

For the next eleven months of the OBS, school is in session for two weeks and then students have two weeks ...

At the half-way point in the school, the overseer comes for the full two weeks that the school is in session.

...
Results

Individual parts of the Regional Empowerment program are currently in action in various places around the world. The Regional Empowerment program effectively ties together the travel and times of training so that the efforts of the volunteer instructors and the funds spent will most effectively be used.

Based on current responses by the youth in the schools, during each three-day visit, 4% of the students would accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior and who assist in the counseling become totally convinced of their own need to learn the STS way of sharing Scripture.

Pastors who have been assisting the STS teams in the schools represent an average of ten different villages. We have heard many comments from the pastors such as, “They will say, ‘It’s still talking to me! Do you have more?’ We also have heard the youth say, ‘It’s not over when we get home! They follow the teachings of God and make the decisions of God through these sessions!’”

In Africa, STS is called a “bush fire.” Numerous countries report five-generation replication in one year! Those who attend are not only those who are unsaved. Missionaries who have attended have reported that people like to attend because they love the way the Word is presented. They will not leave the meeting saying, “I didn’t learn anything!” God’s Word—understood—does the work!

Outside observers attended the first OBS graduation in Africa in April of 2011. They represented ministry leaders from mission organizations in at least 15 different countries. Their purpose was to observe first-hand the results in evangelism and discipleship these students were seeing.

Mission leader Ted Olsen, head of Dawn Ministries International, was one of the observers in attendance. He commented on the high quality of the leaders in Kenya, leaders who are being produced through STS training.

We are praying that as Regional Empowerment goes into action in each location, the following numbers will be impacted during the first year:

Approximate Number of People Impacted During the First Year:

1. A minimum of 25 leaders and pastors, who have demonstrated their commitment to evangelize and to disciple, will have learned a wealth of Bible stories and will have been trained to teach solid, understandable, provable truths from Scripture.
2. By God’s grace, at least 2,500 people, some believers and some unsaved, over a year from beginning will have been exposed to Bible teaching they can understand. The average person who has attended the early morning meetings will have experienced nine days of interactive Bible study led by the STS staff.
3. Twelve students will be receiving Oral Bible School training. Wonderfully during the full school term, the students learn the Word of God, experience in leading STS workshops so they can continue to train others in inductive Bible study, oral style.

The cost to TGSP, or to a donor wishing to support a Regional Empowerment in one location, is $2,525. God’s Word, Understood. 2,525 People are touched and local leaders are empowered to continue to effectively evangelize and disciple, all without any added outside support.

Conclusion

Our prayer is to hand off this successful way of empowering others and to see much of the work in missions move from one generation to the next with those who are literate and with those who are not. We pray that literate will want to learn and that illiterate will want to learn, whether literate or not, to know they are capable of learning and discovering the deep treasures the Bible contains.
We love seeing people learn to depend on the Holy Spirit to show them how to use God’s Word to verify what God wants them to do. Thankfully, we are seeing this oral presentation of God’s Word reaching Muslims, animists, cultural Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and secular humanists. As J. Vernon McGee used to say, “God always puts the cookies on the bottom shelf.”

Areas For Prayer

We do encounter pastors who prefer to have their flocks stay dependent on them as the spokespeople for God. So they are not open to others taking on this role. This is an obstacle when leaders will not embrace STS, or stand in the way of others who want to learn STS.

The strong belief among most oral learners (and those who teach them) is that to really know God you must learn about Him using literacy style methods. We see this as being in bondage to one style of communicating Scripture.

After We’re Gone, Results Continue

From what we have already seen occurring, this is what we expect to see after STS teams complete their training:

1. Deepened skills of all STS team instructors who minister and plant STS. As well, we have learned that those we teach to help STS teams function properly. This gives these volunteers much needed blessings.
2. We are finding that many of those youth who are ministered to in the facility are forever changed. Not only are some staying and becoming part of the staff but they are also taking an active role in times of Bible reading. We have also observed that many of these youth share the stories they learn with their families.
3. The facility managers/principals are blessed. Many have commented on the changes in those they oversee. Whether prisoners or youth, these changes have been very positive. Those who invite the STS teams to come and minister tell of changed lives and more cooperative “populations.”
4. Pastors and workers who learn STS attest to the way the people to whom they minister respond so well to STS. These workers experience a Great Commission fulfillment explosion.
5. The students in the OBSs become pillars in their churches and are seen as needed “teachers” by those they serve and those they serve under. Students currently in OBSs are committing to setting up new OBSs in their regions after they graduate. Among graduates thus far, we have seen an average of 4 of the 12 graduating students continuing on to become STS team instructors. Many of the graduates have been returning to the churches to serve as pastors, Bible teachers, church planters or evangelists.

We are climbing this mountain range of misconception one peak at a time. But through the work we are doing, we are seeing changes in thinking. This strategic plan of Regional Empowerment is working in Kenya. We pray that Kenya will be seen as an example that those working in the rest of the world can and will follow.