Training Info:

Workshops

Oral Schools

Practitioner Audio

Certify Leaders

After A Workshop

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

God’s Word, Understood

We see Kenya rising as a country. There is no doubt that evangelism and discipleship results are leaping in Kenya from the effective oral training of Simply The Story 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 whole nation 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 highly successful at communicating God’s Word because it is oral story-style in design.)

This man’s report matched many we have heard first-hand while ministering in Africa and Asia. To continue counteracting this 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 Biblical depth in their parishioners. These pastors also report an increased number of people being saved and attending church. This rapid multiplication occurs because of the integral part of the STS workshops that trains people in STS and then trains those people to train others. These people become leaders who teach others to teach others.

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 called the 2nd generation. Their members are the 3rd generation. Those who hear the stories are the 4th and 5th generation. The congregations of these leaders are called the 5th & 6th generation. The congregations of the 3rd and 4th generation leaders serve as Oral Bible Schools. The congregations of the 4th & 5th generation and those to whom they tell the stories, the 5th & 6th generation.

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 the students prepare to teach Bible stories to the people of their own village.

In Kenya, by the time the first OBS students graduated, a total of ten OBSs were meeting. Students cover their own costs. In many places, the men utilized these cooks as listeners. After the two weeks were over, everyone returned home for two weeks.

Then, for the next two week session of school, a new shift of volunteer ladies came to do the cooking. But the first...
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 the School Ministry.

That principal helps oversee a chain of 52 high schools! Each visit would be three days long. The students loved it.

Becoming Highly Efficient

Prompted by that school request and the interest in the OBS and workshops, 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.

As funds arrive, our current goal is to use the core 32 Kenya STS instructors to empower new leaders and to minister in OBs and workshops 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 Regional Empowerment in Kenya now! But, in any country, STS leaders could do the same program.

Regional Empowerment uses the oral method of Simply The Story and combines workshops, leadership development, ministry to high schoolers, pastor training and establishing of Oral Bible Study clubs in the schools.

Regional Empowerment can be started right now in many countries where Christians have been trained through programs initiated by TGSP. 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 outreaches and to provide minimal funding. STS leaders must periodically be present in their local churches to train leaders and carry on the church plant.

How Regional Empowerment Begins
The initial invitations to come to a facility and train are usually generated by relationships, word of mouth or 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, children’s homes, orphanages or prisons with a 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 ... will be referred to as “youth” although those in a facility may be students, orphans or prisoners (youth or adult).

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 interactive teaching and dis...<br><br>On this initial visit, the STS team spends time introducing STS to the local workers and discussing the workers' roles in ministry...

If the youth respond positively to the three days of interaction around the Bible stories, the STS team will commit to... facility. Each time ministry takes place, the STS team hands off some of the how-to of STS to the youth in that facility.

An STS bookmark is given to each youth. This bookmark carries the basics of the STS style of investigation...

**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...

Audio Training

During the first visit, local pastors and workers are able to observe the results of STS in the lives of the youth.
At the end of that first three-day time of ministry and short time of teaching STS, the local pastors and workers are encouraged to help organize a core group of at least five leaders.

This elected leader has two responsibilities. One is to oversee the loaning out of TGSP material for the past three months. The other responsibility of the elected leader is to arrange a three-day STS workshop that will precede the second time of ministry.

During the second time of ministry at the facility, the pastors and leaders who show readiness will assist in the STS ministry. New pastors who are new to STS, and who attended the workshop, may join in the time of ministry and counsel if they show readiness.

At the end of this second three-day visit, added TGSP material, as needed and as available, is left behind. The local, elected leader arranges for the OBS. Often, some of the pastors and leaders in the core group also make up part of the student body of the OBS.

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 two weekend days off).

Also ministry is done at the facility, and some of the core local leaders take a main role in STS ministry of story presentation. These new storytellers are assisted and fine-tuned by the STS team.

OBS students observe and assist in the ministering as they are needed and ready to do so. Then, during the first two weeks of the OBS, up to ten audio players, and DVDs as deemed appropriate, will be given. These audio players will help the local pastors and workers have ongoing ministry by locals in the facility proves to be a natural outcome.

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 off. Toward the end of each two-week session all students take a test to assess their understanding and depth of spiritual discovery in the stories. Overall, the overseer assists and encourages as needed.

At the half-way point in the school, the overseer comes for the full two weeks that the school is in session. For a week or more, some of the students become observers and attend the class to observe and assess what happens in the class. If possible, the observers will be part of large teams that are sent to the areas where the local students live. The observers assist in the assessment of the students' understanding of the stories and will provide feedback to the students. The observers also assist in the assessment of the teachers and will provide feedback to the teachers. At the end of the school, each student is given a solar player and a God's Story flip chart. Each student also receives a solar player and a God's Story flip chart. The solar players are used by the students to supplement their ministries while at home for the two weeks. Also at this time, two Oral Bible School Operation

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Multiplication Strategies

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 pastors say, “I’ll take the truck back, but I want to come back!” After hearing the word, they walk out still talking about the story and what it means to them! God’s Word—understood—does the work!

In Africa, STS is called a “bush fire.” Numerous countries report five-generation replication in one year!

Outside observers attended the first OBS graduation in Africa in April of 2011. They represented ministry in 15 different countries, both from the area and beyond. They were there to observe the student graduates and to find out first hand about 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 is put into action in each location, the following numbers will be achieved:

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 take to the streets, back home to the villages and towns where they live. Some of these people will receive 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 Bible stories and 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 the hands of missionaries to the hands of local believers.
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 spokespersons for God. So they do not embrace the STS strategy and create real teams to minister to their people. 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 use STS will in turn teach others to use STS and see people saved and lives changed 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 of them saved, but they are also learning to read their Bibles, which in many cases is their first time 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 others, 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. An amazing number 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 throughout the world 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.