Training Info:

Workshops

Oral Schools

Practitioner Audio

Certify Leaders

After A Workshop

Multiplication Strategies
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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 Christianity in an area. In the area of Nairobi, there was little or no 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. 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 knowledge of God’s Word. This rapid multiplication occurs because of the integral part of the STS workshops that trains people in STS multiplication. Multiplication to the 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 leaders have now become 4th and 5th generation. For example, in one congregation, a pilgrim from the Philippines was trained as a STS instructor in Kenya. He then returned home to the Philippines and trained other Kenyan instructors. Then these Kenyan instructors returned home to Kenya and began leading workshops. The congregations of these pastors then became 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 two-week block of school, students 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 an OBS in Kenya, 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. Before that...
For example, Africa Inland Mission (AIM) stands among 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, STS teams could come and minister through stories three times in every one of their schools over a period of nine months.

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 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 train additional instructors. We are implementing this plan in Kenya now! But, in any country, STS leaders can 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 Clubs. STS teams are currently being done in multiple countries where Christians have been trained through programs initiated by TGSP.

**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 are responsible for leadership and financial responsibility once leadership and financial responsibility are gradually handed off to local nationals. 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.

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**How ** **Regional Empowerment** Begins

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Multiplication Strategies

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, orphanages, prisons or orphanages 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 be initiated.

The next part of setting up empowerment is that the pastors and/or Christian workers local to the facility need to commit to continuing to minister 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). Facilities often select Friday, Saturday and Sunday for their three days, but details such as this are decided locally.

During the first visit, the STS staff ministers using interactive teaching and discussion of various Bible stories. The God’s Story video is shown (or broadcast in audio if a projector is not available).

On this initial visit, the STS team spends time introducing STS to the local workers and discussing the workers’ roles in the empowerment. 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 continuing to minister in that 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 investigating Scripture. For them 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, STS training supplies are given to the facility. Depending on the facility size, one or two solar-powered audio-players with God’s Story are given to the facility. (These players are also formatted with available recorded Scripture, STS Practitioner Audio Training and sample interactive Bible stories.) In some facilities, where electricity and a projector or DVD player are available, a God’s Story DVD and STS interactive stories on DVD are given as well.

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 left with a core group of pastors and workers in a facility. In order to help the local pastors and workers in that facility, a team of trainers is sent in for STS teaching and training.

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. Those 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, and the team, can then determine the amount of TGSP material that the local pastor has available for use in that facility.

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). At the beginning of the stay, the team has meetings with the OBS students who participated in the previous workshop and who have been using STS and pursuing STS skills using the training material.

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 remaining two days of the team's visit, a review of the first 20 STS stories learned and the STS process is done with the twelve OBS students.

At the end of this first two weeks of OBS foundational training, each student OBS story student is given their own solar player. God's Story flip charts are given to the OBS students to share. They use the charts in ministry during the two weeks they are at home. These elaborate charts come in nice carrying cases. The charts, along with the audio version of God's Story on their solar players, transform the students into low-tech mobile, movie-theaters!

During this third time of ministry in the facility, up to ten audio players, and DVDs as deemed appropriate, will be given to the local pastors and workers. This is to help the local pastors and workers have on-going 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 the school, the overseer comes for the full two weeks that the school is in session.

At the half-way point in the school, the overseer comes for the full two weeks that the school is in session. This allows adequate time for the Overseer to come, the students to be able to house people from afar who want to attend, those attendees may be asked to bring their own food.
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 the challenge to become believers 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 stories where a new believer will lead another who accepts the challenge and so it begins and the church 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.

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 area, the following numbers will be experienced:

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 and remember.
3. Twelve students will be receiving Oral Bible School training. Wonderfully during the full school term, the students learn the basics of inductive Bible study, oral style, 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 TGSP to local church leaders who can continue the work.
Multiplication Strategies

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. Often this can lead to people breaking the cycle of dependence on wealthy nations and gaining confidence and local ownership of teaching.

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 refuse to 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 can take their skills back to instructors from using STS and seeing 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, they also take a deeper interest in the Scripture and their 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 children, the facility managers/principals find the people to whom they minister responding so well to STS that they experience a Great Commission fulfillment explosion.

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. We pray that other countries will follow our example of Regional Empowerment and experience similar results.

Regional Empowerment is working peak by peak, country by country. We keep on praying and working until we have one peak a day and one country at a time.