

STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

Be true to the Bible story when you tell it. Do not embellish the story. The Bible story you tell, will be the oral Bible the listeners hear and learn.

Be yourself as you tell the story. God created you very special. Therefore, use your uniqueness and be natural.

Seek to improve your storytelling. Gradually add some new techniques to improve your storytelling. Also, gain new insights as you listen and observe other storytellers.

Here are some suggestions on storytelling techniques.

1. **Storytelling adventure**

- Take your listeners on a storytelling adventure, without embellishing a story.
- **Example:** For the story of Jesus calming the storm, tell the story in such a way that the listeners mentally visualize the disciples on the boat terrified as the waves hit against the boat. But, Jesus was asleep on a cushion at the stern of the boat. So the disciples woke Jesus up to save them from the storm.

2. **Eyes**

- Look at your listeners' faces, especially their eyes, as you tell the story. An exception is when you are using the **Storytelling V** in a dialogue. (Read section #6 on **Dialogue**.)
- Stand where you can see all the listeners and observe their reactions as you tell the story.
- Direct your eyes to show a character's social position in the story.
Examples:
 - Look upward (praying to God, speaking to someone in authority, etc.).
 - Look downward (God speaking to man, ruler speaking to servant, etc.).

3. **Facial expressions and body position**

- Show the mood of the character through your facial expressions.
- Use body positions and hand gestures to express the character's attitude.
- **Examples:**
 - **Happiness:** smile on face, eyes alert, body relaxed
 - **Sadness:** frown on lips and forehead, shoulders hunched downward
 - **Anger:** stern look, clenched fists, body rigid
- Do not let your gestures distract from the story.
- **Example:** Waving your hands too much and constantly walking rapidly back and forth, can distract the listeners from giving their full attention to hearing the story.
- Avoid having your back to the listeners. Listeners need to see your facial expressions and people who have difficulty hearing will read your lips.

4. **Voice**

- Use a conversational tone.
- Speak loud enough so all your listeners can hear you tell the story.
- Speak slow enough to be understood. Speaking too fast will lose the listeners' attention.
- Use tones to reflect a character's attitude: sadness, happiness, bewilderment, anger, etc.
- **Example:** For the story of Jonah, the captain went and woke him up. The captain asked Jonah, "*How can you be sleeping during this terrible storm?*" (Speak the captain's question with firmness, authority and a strong tone of voice.)

5. **Pause**

- Use a pause after a phrase to give emphasis on that particular phrase.
- Use a pause between an action or a change in location, so your listeners can catch up to that part of the story before starting another part of the story.
- **Example:**
 - For the story of the creation, pause between the end of one day's creation and beginning the next day's creation.
- Pauses can serve as oral quotation marks.

- Example: ■ For the story of Jesus talking to Peter after His resurrection: Jesus asked, PAUSE. *Peter, do you love Me more than these?* PAUSE. Peter answered, PAUSE. *Yes, my Lord, you know that I love you.* PAUSE.

6. Dialogue

- Limit a dialogue to two characters at a time.
- Tell who is speaking and to whom he is speaking before each dialogue exchange.
- Example: After Jesus' resurrection, Peter and six other disciples went fishing. Jesus appeared and prepared breakfast for His disciples. After eating, Jesus spoke to Peter.
Jesus asked, "*Peter, do you love Me more than these?*"
Peter replied, "*Yes, my Lord, you know that I love You.*"
- Use the **Storytelling V**. What is the **Storytelling V**? During a dialogue, remain in one location, but turn slightly to the right as a character speaks to someone. Then turn slightly to the left as the other character looks at the speaker and responds. Continue this movement throughout the dialogue.
- Keep the same position for each character throughout the dialogue.
- Example: For the story of Jesus talking to Peter after His resurrection:
 - Turn slightly to the right as Jesus looks at Peter and says, "*Peter, do you love Me more than these?*"
 - Then turn slightly to the left as Peter looks at Jesus and responds, "*Yes, my Lord, you know that I love You.*"
 - Continue this movement during the entire dialogue.
 - Be careful to always look in the same direction when Jesus is speaking to Peter, and when Peter is speaking to Jesus.

7. Names of the characters

- Limit the names of main characters in the story. Too many names distract the listeners.
- Change pronouns to proper names for main characters.
- Give role, position or relationship for minor characters.
- Example: For the story of David and Goliath:
 - Main characters: David, King Saul and Goliath
 - Minor characters: David's father, the enemy (Philistines), David's brothers

8. Scenery

- Stay within the vision of your listeners as you tell the story.
- Visualize stage scenes for the area where you will tell the story. Then within your stage mark off scenes for locations, people and events.
- Walk to that area (scene) when telling that part of the story. Or, look at that location when telling that part (scene) of the story, especially if you are sitting as you tell the story.
- Always keep the same location for a scene throughout the telling of the story. Confusion results when you switch locations, especially to deaf people.
- Examples:
 - For the creation story, decide where each scene is located on stage: water, land, etc. Be sure to put the fish in the water and animals on dry land.
 - For the story of Jesus and His seven disciples after His resurrection, decide where each scene is located on stage: the disciples fishing in the boat, Jesus standing on the shore, eating breakfast, and Jesus speaking to Peter.
- Some people are very expressive and walk around as they tell the story. Other storytellers remain still, using their facial expressions and slight hand motions as they tell the story. Be yourself.

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