

STORYTELLING: A SOURCE FOR REDUCING BIBLICAL ILLITERACY

A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
BY
JACLYNN KRUM FRISCH

WINEBRENNER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FINDLAY, OHIO

AUGUST 2010

Copyright © 2008 by Jaclynn M. Frisch
All rights reserved

STORYTELLING: A SOURCE FOR REDUCING BIBLICAL ILLITERACY

A PROJECT REPORT

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JACLYNN KRUM FRISCH

APPROVED BY:

Project Chairperson

Date

External Reader

Date

Writing Stylist

Date

Doctor of Ministry Director

Date

WINEBRENNER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FINDLAY, OHIO

JULY 15, 2010

CONTENTS

AKNOWLEDGMENT.....	vii
DEDICATION.....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Content of Problem.....	2
Statement of Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Research Methodology.....	6
Research Questions.....	7
Significance of Study.....	8
Assumptions and Limitations.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	11
Organization of Study.....	12
CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS..	14
Introduction.....	14
Biblical Authenticity.....	24
History of Biblical Storytelling.....	28
Jesus as Biblical Storytelling.....	34
History of Parables as Biblical Storytelling Tool.....	37
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE AND OTHER SOURCES.....	41
Introduction.....	41
History of Storytelling.....	43
The Art of Storytelling.....	49
Learning Styles.....	58
Conclusions.....	60
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES	62
Introduction.....	62
Observations.....	66
Field Notes.....	72
Survey.....	73
Interviews.....	74

Testing.....	76
Case Study.....	79
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	82
Introduction.....	82
Results.....	84
Lack of Knowledge of Old Testament.....	84
Lack of Retention.....	86
Better Retention When Combining Words and Pictures.....	87
Increased Retention Using Storytelling.....	89
Historical Success of Storytelling.....	91
Data Analysis.....	92
Memory.....	92
Learning and Storytelling.....	94
Developmental Stages and Storytelling.....	97
Visual Images and Storytelling.....	98
Influence of Storytelling.....	100
Biblical Storytelling as Community.....	102
Historical Biblical Storytelling.....	104
Biblical References and Storytelling.....	107
Need for Biblical Storytelling.....	110
Relating as a Storyteller.....	112
Conclusion.....	114
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	116
Introduction.....	116
Summary.....	117
Research Questions Answered.....	120
Findings.....	122
Conclusions.....	125
Proposal.....	128
Recommendations.....	130
Home.....	131
Church.....	133
Community.....	135
Conclusion.....	137
APPENDIX A.....	139
Questionnaire (Teen Biblical Survey).....	140
APPENDIX B.....	142
Pastoral Interview.....	143
APPENDIX C.....	146
Genesis Cue Card.....	147

Genesis Outline.....	148
APPENDIX D.....	151
Pretest/Posttest GENESIS.....	152
Pretest/Posttest EXODUS.....	153
Pretest/Posttest LEVITICUS.....	154
APPENDIX E.....	155
Bible Jeopardy (GENESIS – DEUTERONOMY).....	156
APPENDIX F.....	158
Storytelling Curriculum Manual.....	159
References.....	303
WORKS CITED.....	305

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project began years ago as a means to an end, the end being a doctorate degree – the Holy Grail. But during the course, things changed and I became seriously ill. I was diagnosed with a very rare disease called Ehler’s Danlos Syndrome. This sickness has taken its toll on my mind and body. I have had many surgeries in the last few years to spare my life. I’ve had a few heart obstacles and several strokes. Because of this, what started out as a short yet intense academic path became a long and difficult emotional, physical, and spiritual journey. It took more years than typical to accomplish this task; a task that I had thought was completely out of my reach once I became sick. But God is still God and He sits on the throne. Through the encouragement of my husband, the unlimited support of my widowed mother, the patience of my children, and the never ending grace from my God and my Savior Jesus Christ, this impossible task has been accomplished. I have never felt so overwhelmed, so loved, so unconfident, yet as hopeful as I do now knowing this project is complete.

A gratitude that goes beyond description is due my husband for all the time and patience he has so mercifully given me. And a special “I’m sorry” to all my children as they made accommodations while mamma was always working on something. I love each of you and admire you for your selfless acts of kindness and encouragement to keep me going to Capture the Prize!

DEDICATION

I grew up in a wonderful Christian home. My parents taught me the Scriptures and instilled in me a desire to spend the rest of my life serving God. I felt their love and encouragement every day of my life. They cheered me on through high school and college. Then my father went home to be with Jesus. Neither my mom nor I felt much like continuing on the path of life without him. But my godly mother leaned on God and kept going in that strength that comes only from him. Even alone my mom continued to be my biggest fan as I went on to graduate school and chose careers as both counselor and youth pastor. She walked me down the aisle and stood as my matron of honor as I married the man of my dreams. She stayed in the delivery room as I birthed my biological children and in the court room as I birthed my adopted children. I have always sensed her support in double portion as she tried to reflect both her feelings and my father's.

The decision to go back to school for a doctorate degree was a difficult one. I was now a wife and mother and so much of my time and energy had to go toward other important everyday tasks. But yet again, it was my mom who spoke into my life, assuring me that I could do it. She gave me the confidence I needed to continue. Therefore, it is with so much love and gratitude that I dedicate my Doctor of Ministry degree to my parents Bill and Connie Krum. "Dad, you are forever near and dear to my heart. Momma, you are the example I strive to follow. Thank you for my life and the heritage you have given me. I love you both so much."

ABSTRACT

Over a period of several years I noticed that biblical illiteracy has been on the rise among the younger generation within my church. I started to notice it while I was teaching the high school youth group when basic questions about the Bible and the stories it contains could not be answered. I wondered if I was the only pastor noticing this increasing phenomenon. Further study was needed. Several local pastors were contacted and asked if they too were experiencing biblical illiteracy in their churches as well. The answer was surprisingly, yes. The question became what could I do to address the dilemma of biblical illiteracy within my church?

God has placed the solution to this dilemma in his word. He has commanded in the book of Deuteronomy to tell the stories of the Bible to our children again and again, when we lie down and when we rise up. We are to tell the stories of the Bible at home and on a journey. We are to be storytellers to our children. Storytelling has been a part of biblical history from the beginning. Moses was the first to put God's Word into writing. Even so, not everyone possessed a copy of God's Word. Therefore, the law had to be handed down and taught verbally. People were taught the Bible by telling the stories again and again to their children. The purpose of this study was to form a plan of action for telling God's story to the teenagers at Calvary Bible Chapel.

Qualitative research was done utilizing questionnaires, recorded observations, interviews, surveys and field notes. This research led to the development of a storytelling

program that could be used to teach young people more biblical truths and to experience better retention of what has been learned. Pre- and post-tests were administered to a group of students before and after the curriculum was taught. Story time was done at a daycare, and interviews were conducted.

It was noted that during the teaching of the curriculum, the students were more attentive to and interactive with, the storyteller, and after the curriculum was taught, students were better able to re-tell the stories of the Bible from memory. Research had shown that information is best stored and remembered if it is paired with something else, such as the pictures on the cards. In this case, the results of this study supported this finding in the research.

Most everyone enjoys a good story including young people. God, by his design, has already planned for the relaying of his word by commanding that the stories be told and retold. When the stories of the Bible were told, with the help of picture cards, students were more able to retell the stories with accuracy and enthusiasm. The dilemma of biblical illiteracy was addressed utilizing God's Word, and the results of this solution proved to be positive.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

“In stories lie man’s wisdom and knowledge, and sense of beauty and wonder.”
(Eileen Colwell, 1966, 208)

Introduction

Her hand is raised high and waving in the air as she makes grunting sounds. She is trying to get the teacher’s attention. She knows the answer to the question the teacher has posed to the class, but so do the others who also have their hands raised and waving. She wants to be the one the teacher calls on. She wants to give the correct answer and impress the teacher with all of her extra knowledge. Her excitement escalates as the teacher calls her name. Enthusiastically she answers the question. After patiently listening to a response which included every possible tidbit of information, the teacher asks the next question. The words are barely out of the teacher’s mouth and once again all of the children’s hands emphatically wave. She can only hope the teacher will call on her again.

The stereotypical child slouching in the chair, head down, eyes averting the teacher’s gaze so as not to be called on, is nowhere to be found in this classroom. Before the teacher can call out a name, the announcement is made that class time is over. This is the writer’s memory of children’s church. She grew up hearing the stories of the Bible. These stories stirred her to excitement, and that excitement settled into a lifelong commitment to read and teach God’s Word.

Thirty years later the writer is now the Bible teacher with a classroom full of young students. The atmosphere in the classroom is different from what she remembers. Basic biblical teaching and learning has changed within her church. In general, the children no longer exhibited enthusiasm, the curriculum material was dry, and the teachers appeared unmotivated. The honor of being messengers of God's Word was now seen as a chore, and the adventures of the Bible stories were replaced with the generalization of principles. Over the years the milieu had progressively become stagnant. The changes occurred slowly and thus were unnoticed. The writer had been unaware of them herself until she was teaching a group of young people about the Old Testament. One day the class was playing Bible baseball, much like was done when she was a child and she noticed there was no excitement, there were no hands waving frantically, there were only groans. A young teen, church-raised since he was a small boy, was at bat. He was thrown a simple question: "What is the second book of the Bible?" He was stumped. He quickly conceded failure. When he was given the answer he asked, "Exodus is a book of the Bible?" The writer was certain that he was momentarily confused. She assured him that he knew about Exodus, the book about Moses. He replied, "Who's that?" Reality hit her like a stray foul ball. Something had changed within her church. Something had changed in the teaching and the learning of the Bible stories.

Context of the Problem

The writer was the youth pastor at a mid-sized, non-denominational church in Northwest Ohio established in 1951. Calvary Bible Chapel (hereafter, referred to as CBC) is a 59 year old congregation, steeped in tradition and proud of its heritage. It started with 15 people and has grown to over 400 members. For over 25 years there was

no formal youth department, only parents and volunteers who invested in young peoples' lives. In 1980 the first youth pastor was hired and a formal youth department was established. The youth pastor stayed ten years and then relocated to another state leaving the position of youth pastor vacant. After years of progress the youth were left again to fend for themselves. The writer was appointed youth pastor in 1997. Since then there have been significant changes both positive and negative. Negatively, parental involvement ceased and the length of time devoted to the telling of Bible stories diminished. Positively, attendance grew as teens came from the surrounding community, activities increased, contemporary worship began and, more emphasis was placed on prayer. The youth group soon became an entity of its own, establishing its own board and working out its own fiscal budget. Eventually, a youth center was built that was used for bi-weekly services separate from the adults and for weekend activities.

In the ten years that the writer had been a pastor observing the various phases the youth group cycled through, she began to see a negative pattern emerging. The overall knowledge of the Bible appeared to be declining. Displays of biblical ignorance became a common occurrence. The writer consulted a fellow pastor about the dilemma she was noting, and to the writer's surprise, this pastor too had noticed the same phenomenon happening in his youth department. Great concern was raised at the possibility that teens participating in youth groups, some of whom had been raised in the church, could not recognize or name the books of the Bible, and retell the more popular stories such as the account of Moses and the Burning Bush. It bothered the writer that some teens thought that Noah and the Ark, and Jonah and the Whale were fairy tales in the same category as Cinderella and Peter Pan. The writer began to question what had gone wrong and if the

youth department had lost the ability to effectively teach so that teens could learn and remember God's Word.

Statement of Problem

Biblical illiteracy had become a dilemma within the writer's church body. But what could be done to tackle such an issue? As youth pastor could the writer possibly make enough difference to correct this dilemma? Could the writer create a curriculum to present biblical truths in such a way that the students could retain the information and thus increase their biblical knowledge?

Questions such as these demanded the writer's immediate attention. After several years of trying new things, it appeared the teens still did not want to learn. The writer had shortened and rearranged the time allotted to Bible reading during youth meetings. She added games and interactive conversation, but still the teens lacked enthusiasm for the Bible and were unable to recall the information from week to week. This was unacceptable. An answer had to be found or it was feared that the writer would have to resign her post and admit failure. The writer was a fired up youth pastor determined to accept the challenge and make a difference. She sought the Lord with a desperate heart. As she had learned as a child, the solution for every dilemma can be found in the Word of God.

The Lord directed the writer to the book of Deuteronomy. She read and re-read God's command to the people regarding the communication of his word to the younger generations. The words jumped off the page and the answer became clearer:

And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are

getting up again (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, [New Living Translation hereafter NLT]);

“Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are getting up again” (Deuteronomy 11:18-19, [NLT]).

In the days of this command, ordinary people did not possess a written copy of the laws of God, so for this order to be obeyed the Bible had to be taught by word of mouth. For the perpetuation of God’s words to the people, they could not depend on reading for themselves. The adults of the community were assigned the monumental task of communicating God’s law to the children of the land. They were to discuss, share, and tell the stories of the faith. This oral tradition of biblical times, much like storytelling today, was an essential means for passing on spiritual information trans-generationally. Reading these passages led the writer to prayer and thought. Her heart was filled with a new desire to communicate God’s Word to the teenagers in her youth group, and have it retained in their minds and in their hearts. The major problem then appeared to be how could oral tradition and biblical storytelling successfully address biblical illiteracy among the teens in the youth group at CBC?

Purpose of the Study

In his Word, God emphasizes his plan for his people to pass on the biblical stories and truths from generation to generation. This command was to ensure that the people would maintain a continual relationship with God and his laws. When the stories were not being passed down and the law was lost, the people, as a nation, fell away from God. It was the writers concern that this was what had happened to the youth group at CBC as well.

The purpose of this study was to create a plan of action for telling God's story to the teenagers at CBC. This plan would need to satisfy biblical mandate and adhere to scientific and educational curriculum without being too difficult to implement. The writer's goal was to develop a program that would be teachable and retainable, would provide every student with a basic knowledge of the individual books of the Old Testament, and would offer a comprehensive understanding of the Old Testament without overwhelming the student.

Research Methodology

This was a qualitative research project in which the writer was actively involved in an inductive process to gain understanding. She utilized the grounded theory method for this project, where a theory is formed from data that is obtained (Merriam 1998, 71). The writer systematically collected and analyzed the data through several methods.

1. Interpreting Questionnaires – The questionnaires used were designed to gather specific information from the participants (Meyers 2000, 55). The answers from them were collected and coded.
2. Recording Observations – The writer observed participants in their own familiar environments believing that keeping the environment familiar would lead to more accurate, usable and reliable information. The writer noted the observations in a journal for later referencing.
3. Conducting Interviews – The writer used a conversational interviewing process from the point of view of the participant to glean personal opinion and information (Marshall 1995, 78). The writer listened for the assumptions and predispositions of the subjects in connection with this study (Nester, 2001, 68).

4. Comparing and Contrasting Surveys – Surveys were designed and each interviewee was given the same questions to ensure uniformity. The writer’s aim was to obtain information which could be analyzed so that patterns could be extracted and comparisons made (Bell 2002, 13).
5. Reviewing Field Notes/Journaling –Activities, interactions, behaviors, and conversations were documented. This was in an effort to capture details that could later be reviewed.

Research Questions

Questions this research project sought to answer are the following:

1. What different learning styles do people use while taking in information that is being presented for the purpose of learning and retention? Different learning styles needed to be examined to help uncover clues about student learning and retention of information.
2. How does storytelling effectively match with people’s different styles of learning? Different techniques and components of storytelling needed to be gathered to determine whether they correspond with individual learning styles.
3. How does the Bible suggest and model storytelling as a significant means of teaching God’s truths? The Bible is an historical and spiritual source of information regarding story-based communication that could be studied as a reference for establishing a modern storytelling template.
4. How can storytelling be incorporated into a successful means of teaching students the basic truths of the Word of God? As children are awakened by the

wonder of a biblical story, a teller can refer that wonder back to God in a way that will increase learning and retention.

Significance of Study

The research accumulated for the purpose of answering the above questions led to the development of a storytelling program. The writer did not create a new theory of teaching, but a new curriculum format that can be used as a tool to increase the opportunity for people to utilize storytelling as a means of making others more aware of biblical truths and as a means of eliciting better retention of what has been learned. This program can be used as an effective teaching tool for combating biblical illiteracy within CBC's youth department, and could prove to be useful in other departments of CBC such as the children's department and the adult education department. In the future, the program has potential to be presented for use by individual families to help parents teach the Word of God at home, to facilitators to help bring biblical awareness in community after school programs or bible studies, and to churches or Christian schools to help teacher's present basic biblical information in a class room setting.

The writer's ultimate goal was to create a viable program for Christian education that could be marketable to any denomination of Christianity to utilize within a home, church, or community environment to provide a detailed overview of the Old Testament. Eventually, the writer would like to see this program also include the New Testament.

Currently, the program consists of a series of manuals that have a detailed curriculum for each unit. A unit has been created for each book in the Old Testament – Genesis through Malachi. The first manual includes the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch (see Appendix F). The curriculum includes an historical background and a

scriptural reference outline for each story covered in the unit. For each unit, or book of the Old Testament, there is a flash card made up of symbolic pictures that will solicit learning and memorization. If this work were published, it would also include corresponding activities and notes to go along with the flashcards for classroom instruction. Later, the writer plans to make the flashcards into a Bible story game for family fun and learning.

The writer's intention is to make biblical storytelling an alternative technique for effective teaching of the Word of God. Parents, teachers, educators, and pastors will find this program easy to use, and students will find it fun to learn. The overall benefit of a program like this is that each participant, including the teacher or presenter, will have access to a simple yet comprehensive knowledge of the books of the Bible and an awareness of the main stories in each book.

The writer believes that this program can help God's people, individually and collectively, to fulfill God's mandate to diligently teach children God's word and thereby pass down his truths through the generations. This program uses the Word of God as the source of the curriculum and a person as the vehicle through which the information is relayed. This program would require that the teller would take the time to be acquainted with the material and motivated to become skilled in presenting it.

Assumptions and Limitations

The writer believes the Bible is the inspired Word of God. It "is a remarkable collection of 66 books, united by a common theme, and like a tapestry it weaves together the story of God's redemption of the human race" (Lutzer, 1998, 167). It is this assumption that led the writer to storytelling as a means of conveying God's Word.

The assumption is also that storytelling, being the method of choice for passing on God's Word at the time of the mandate found in Deuteronomy, could also be an effective method of teaching God's Word today. The writer realizes that knowledge of one's audience and knowledge of the latest technology is more available, but even Jesus, who came several hundred years after Deuteronomy, used the story telling method to teach his audiences. The question can be raised of whether or not storytelling can be a relevant and effective communication tool as from the time of Christ. This program holds the view that storytelling can be modernized through technique and technology, but its core remains unchanged.

One critical limitation to this curriculum is the teller. A teaching program, regardless of the material, is only as good as the one presenting the information. The curriculum is designed to be easy to use, but the material itself cannot instill passion or provide skill to the one telling the stories. One way to minimize this limitation could be to offer a training or workshop presenting helpful strategies for becoming a successful storyteller.

Another limitation is the short amount of time spent in the classroom with teens. Teaching adolescents for only one or two hours a week in a church setting may not be enough to begin the process of biblical learning. The verses cited from Deuteronomy mention that Bible teaching is an ongoing process from childhood through adulthood. It is unrealistic to assume that a child of any age will become biblically literate just from attending an occasional church service or Sunday school class. Regardless of this limitation, the writer assumes that any amount of time will be worth the effort.

Another limitation is the generalization the writer makes in the applicability of the program to settings outside of the writer's research population. A pre-test was completed using the non-random population of the youth department of one non-denominational congregation. Granted, although there is a wide variety of churched and unchurched from a range of backgrounds included in this sample, all are from only one congregation. The primary concern was to address the dilemma of biblical illiteracy within the writer's church; therefore, the sample came directly from the effected group.

Other people in settings with different participants, who may use this program, may discover more shortcomings and limitations. Ultimately, the goal of this program is to successfully pass on the spiritual heritage that God has left with us in his Word. Doing this as a team and through the process of storytelling is one way of accomplishing this goal.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this project, these terms and phrases have the following meanings:

1. Adolescents and or Teens – Adolescents in this project consisted of a group of both junior and senior high school boys and girls ranging from 12 to 19 years of age.
2. Biblical Illiteracy – The lack of basic knowledge of the Bible, its books, its stories, and its message.
3. Non-denominational – To be completely independent from any other denominational title. It is not a statement of doctrine.
4. Oral Tradition – Transferring information using mainly speech.

5. Storytelling – The art of transferring information or experience which includes the components of the story, the teller, and the listener.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this project has been divided into individual chapters representing all the major components of this study. Chapter One has been an introductory chapter stating the problem, the purpose and the significance of this study.

Chapter Two is an examination of the biblical and theological foundations that support the premises behind the project. The emphasis placed throughout the Word of God on teaching future generations a biblical heritage and truth through oral tradition and storytelling is discussed. Next, how Jesus modeled storytelling is explored. Finally, the historical setting and how teaching God's Word was accomplished throughout Jewish history is reported.

Chapter Three is a review of the literature and research done on teaching, storytelling, and learning styles and how each builds upon the other in the process of developing a program that will best meet the need for ultimate learning and retention in adolescents.

Chapter Four is a description of the methods and procedures that were utilized during the research process. In Chapter Five, the data collected is coded and patterns revealed. An extensive analysis of relevant data will also be identified in this chapter.

Chapter Six is the summary, findings, and conclusions drawn from the information and data gathered throughout the project. Recommendations of how this biblical storytelling curriculum can be used within the home, the church, and the community conclude this last chapter. Finally, the Appendix contains the first curriculum

manual created as a result of the research. Included in this manual are the flash cards that visually support each unit covering the first five books of the Bible; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

And did they tell you stories 'bout the saints of old?
Stories about their faith?
Stories like that make a boy grow bold,
Stories like that make a man walk straight.
(Rich Mullins: "Boy Like Me/ Man Like You")

Introduction

The words of the above song can be heard in the writer's head - a song heard many times. The lyrics tell of a man who wonders if Jesus grew up as he did. The man compares all the things that Jesus might have experienced as a boy with his own experiences. He wonders if those commonalities will help him in his walk with Christ. The chorus emphasizes that the singer and Jesus have an important experience in common. Both boys grew up hearing the same Old Testament stories. This makes the man feel closer to Jesus and encourages him to continue in his pursuit to become a man like Christ.

This song reminds the writer of her own childhood as she listened to the stories that her parents and Sunday school teachers told about the heroes in the Bible. She wanted to grow up to be a Bible hero too. It was a great childhood dream.

The writer realizes she was not the only one to have learned Bible stories at a young age; nor is she the only one to have repeated these same stories to her own children. The hope is that these children will in turn tell their children. The desire is for

this cycle to continue as more people hear and repeat the stories from God's Word. The writer's proposed curriculum will make it easier for these stories to continue being told to future generations.

God mandated that children were to hear the stories about him and his works in order that they may know and live by God's law "From generation to generation each person knew that the stories they heard about Abraham, Moses and the rest was also their own story" (Drane 1983, 21). The law required that the parents explain all of their knowledge of God to the children. Stories provided one of the most significant ways of sharing God, for one can know him better by discovering his stories (Shaw 1999, 78-79). The telling of the stories of God to the young would help ensure morality and success in the community. It would also instill an awareness of God's hand in their lives and encourage faithfulness to God. God instructed the people that in order to guarantee the survival of individuals, families, and the nation as a whole there must be frequent stated reminders of God's grace and intervention. The requirement was to tell the children about all the Lord had done for them throughout their history. This custom was to endure much like a mark branded on their hand, or a badge worn on their forehead (Exodus 13:8; Deuteronomy 4:10; Joshua 4:6-21; Psalms 77:5; Deuteronomy 6:20-25).

A similar command is recorded by Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 [NASB])

This idea of one's all consuming love for God, leading to an obedient obsession to teach God's word, resulting in one's life becoming an outward billboard of God's truth, was such an important message that God had Moses to repeat it in Deuteronomy 11:18-21:

You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens remain above the earth. (Deuteronomy 11:18-21 [NASB])

The command is clear in both of these passages: love God so much that every day in all you do you teach children God's Word. This intensity of love or total heart devotion that Moses talks about is the prime motivator that can cause one to tell others, especially to children, the truth of God (Baker 2000, 118). It is essential that a person experience this kind of love before teaching it to others. The truth of God must capture the heart of the teller first. Once a love for God and his word is embedded in the heart, a person then cannot help but speak God's truths to others. And if those listening are convinced that the teller believes in the story he is telling, they will then more readily accept the stories as truth (Haven 2000, 11).

God knows humans well, for he created them. He sees that the whole heart must be involved in something or someone for it to work successfully. An old saying speaks of this; be careful of what you set your heart on, for it might come true. It is the heart that often controls how people spend time and energy. God mandated that love for him is what should consume the heart. Love is the most powerful force in the world. John Maxwell, a well-known pastor, teacher, and author tells a story about an eighty year-old woman who smoked for fifty years. She tried many times throughout her lifetime to quit,

but each time she gave up and went back to smoking. One day she decided to quit, and she did just that. What was the difference this time? A seventy-nine year-old gentleman had asked her to marry him, but he would not go through with the wedding until she quit smoking. When asked about the situation, the woman said, “Will power was never enough to get me to off the habit. Love made me do it” (Maxwell 1987, 127).

God clearly communicates that loving him is essential, but it is not all that is required. The family and the community must take the responsibility of making sure this love and obedient life are communicated directly to subsequent generations. Educating others in a consistent manner involves the telling and displaying of God’s truths. The future of Israel depended on teaching the commandments in the home and in the community. The directive insisted that truth was to be communicated while sitting, while walking, while lying down at night, and while rising in the morning (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:18-21).

During the time this order was given, ordinary people did not own copies of the law. Documents were few and hard to come by, so people would write down certain parts of the law on the doorposts of their home and tie them to their arms and foreheads so as never to forget them (Halley 1965, 151). Mezuzahs, small boxes filled with written portions of the Torah attached to the door frames, ignited curiosity. When children would ask the meaning of the boxes, the Hebrew parent would answer with scriptures. Everyday life created teachable moments when children were open and inquiring. These moments were satisfied by telling the children the stories of God’s acts in their lives (Shaw 1999, 80-81). They talked about the law constantly to keep it foremost in their minds. The entire law was engraved on stones and exhibited in public places (see

Deuteronomy 27:1-10 and Joshua 8:32). The law of God was so important that it consumed their lives as a community, as families, and even as individuals. It was part of everyday life.

As exhibited by Moses and other biblical storytellers, the teaching of God's truth was not to be monotonous and dry. It was exciting and life applicable. The Bible tells of various methods used to bring to the children and to the community the important commands of God. They were to experience the commands first hand and share that experience. They were to exhibit them as living and active testimonies to his truth whether at work or at play. They were to write them so they could be read, reread and remembered. They were to discuss, share, and tell stories of faith not just at home but with everyone on the street or in the marketplace. Telling the stories and also living the stories helped seal the truth in their minds and hearts.

Storytelling is a universal and indispensable means of communicating. Humanity survives by the hearing and telling of stories (Graves 2008, 8). People receive stories more fully when they are presented in a variety of sensory modes (Lipman 1999, 47). Communication experts have concluded that human learning is about "89% visual, 10% auditory, and 1% through other senses" (Maxwell 1987, 176). God designed us to learn best by receiving and experiencing with all of our senses. Thus, God's formula for biblical teaching, as described in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:18-21, included visual reminders, verbal speaking, and hands-on experiences to affirm God's truths. As Moses communicated it, the formula infers that continual reading, hearing, discussing, and doing of God's word produces successful transference of the message of God.

In Deuteronomy 11, Moses instructed the people to “talk of them” when referring to the writings of God. Moses did not use the Hebrew words for teach or for preach. Instead, he used the word that simply means “talk.” No formal lecturing, no rigid routine or structure and not only on the Sabbath either: “But, talking that takes place naturally at all times of the day, every day” (Swindoll 2001, 4).

The phrase Moses used that is translated in English as “diligently teach” is rooted in the Hebrew word, *shaman*, which means to point, sharpen or pierce. The particular form of this verb intensifies the action. The flavor of Deuteronomy 11 is, “You shall intensely sharpen your sons” (Swindoll 2001, 3). This is not the typical Hebrew word used to mean teach as we think of teaching today. This teaching has a different element to it. It is not limited to intellectual or educational instruction. The communication is literally to pierce the mind and soul of the listener. The information is to penetrate deeply and take root within the heart of the listener. This requires more than speaking or reading aloud. Reciting words is not enough. Telling a story creates a more vivid and powerful image in a listener’s mind than other means of delivering the same material (Haven 2000, xvii). This kind of teaching is not passive but aggressively active. Therefore, the transfer of truth takes an investment of time and effort.

It is clear that the way of teaching God’s words as he intended is different than today’s commonly practiced way of teaching. The ancient Hebrew form of teaching could be described more like our present day storytelling. In the words of the longstanding pastor Charles Swindoll, “Parents were to pass down an awesome and healthy fear of God, an attentive ear to His voice and a life of obedience. And they were to do that through storytelling” (2001, 3). To teach, the ancient Hebrew would use

storytelling skills to relay intricate details of truth and combine that with symbolic illustrations to make these truths applicable to everyday life. For example, people would build a stone alter in specific places where they had an encounter with God. Throughout the years they would use that physical reminder as a means to tell the story of what God had said or done. For example, the pile of rocks that was placed by Joshua and his men at the location of the crossing of the Jordan River stood as a milestone of remembrance for all who passed by throughout the generations to come.

God's words were and are the source of the truth that need be told. The Bible at its core is a story (Alexander 1999, 18). It is a true story that spans most of the ancient world. It is a storybook unlike any other, for it is a collection of stories that reveal the larger unified story of God. The stories are filled with passion and drama. They are the kind of stories that "stay with us throughout our lives" (Wolpe 1993, 81). They are amazing stories filled with special effects, starring characters battling evil villains, overcoming life circumstances and even falling in love.

Many of the stories of the Old Testament are part of the storytelling tradition. They were told long before they were written (Rock 2001, 12). The Old Testament is full of battle and adventure and tells the story of a relationship between a people and their God. As the stories unfold, we learn of how God became a living reality in the life of a chosen people (Drane 1983, 12-13). The Old Testament as a whole is considered one of the greatest stories ever told. It was given to humanity in a narrative form. Even the writings of the law took place in the midst of the unfolding story of God redeeming his chosen people (Miller 2008, 33). Some of the individual stories of the Old Testament, such as the tale of the flood, have transcended into cultures in every nation. There are

similar accounts from many civilizations. Even the people of the Old Testament stories are mentioned in the records of other nations (Gordon 1993, Introduction). The events reported in scripture have been told and retold across the world for centuries (Richards 1991, 8). All of this confirms the Bible as a source for retelling the history of God's people and his plans for their lives.

The Bible is a powerful spiritual tool with stories that address a person on every level. They speak to the mind, the body, the emotions, the spirit, and the will (Miller 2008, 33). It is also a remarkable piece of literature. It contains historical reporting of an event (Luke 2:1-7), historical events in poetic media (Judges 5:15-18), personification (Isaiah 55:22), historical allusion through fable (Psalms 80:8-12), and imagery and symbolism (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7). The best way to read, understand and repeat God's Word is to learn to recognize its form. One must properly distinguish among the narratives in the Bible so as to decipher the meaning proper to each kind. For example, it is important to recognize parable as parable, an historical event as an historical event, allegory as allegory, personification as personification, and imagery as imagery. The identification of style helps to accurately represent and illuminate the passage.

In the Bible are a number of literary genres which include "poetry, legislation, didactic, apocalyptic and narrative" writings (Larsen 1995, 37). Larsen proposes that narrative is one of the chief literary forms in the Scripture. As humans, virtually all of our convictions, whether of spiritual nature or not, are rooted in narrative (Goldberg 1982, 12). Narrative, in its simplest definition, is story that tells about something that happened and has a beginning, tension, and resolution. Narrative in this definition constitutes 77% of the Old Testament as well as a majority of the New Testament (Larsen 1995, 37).

Larsen continues to conclude that there are basically four kinds of biblical narrative or stories: “1) direct narrative; 2) dramatic narrative; 3) descriptive and 4) commentary” (Larson 1995, 37). The individual narratives of the Bible come together to make one complete story: “a story that encompasses all that is good and all that is bad within human kind, and points to a God of unfailing forgiveness and everlasting love” (Rock 2001, 12).

There are examples in both the Old Testament and the New Testament of inspirational storytelling. Jeremiah 36:2-6 demonstrates how precisely inspired storytelling works. In this passage there “is precious information given here because it is the only description in the Old Testament concerning the actual mechanics of recorded prophetic literature” (Guest 1988, 252). God was the storyteller, and the prophet became the story keeper: “First there was Jeremiah who received the Word of God. Then there was Baruch who recorded it and read it. Then there was Micharah who repeated what he had heard in such an inviting way that others wanted to hear” (Guest 1988, 255). When Baruch read God’s story, Micharah became so excited by what he heard that he ran to the officials and important people of the city to share the words of God. Micharah is a wonderful example of a godly storyteller. He accurately retold the exact story he heard from Baruch who had written exactly as Jeremiah spoke it, who spoke it exactly as he had heard it from God. This passage shows the various ministries of communicating God’s Word. People can read Jeremiah and know that they are reading the words handed down to Jeremiah by God. They are reading what Jesus read and what the apostles studied. This is an example of how storytelling is a magnificent and accurate way to hand down information.

In the New Testament, Jesus is a prime model of a storyteller. He is the center of God's story. He is the climax; everything written in the Bible led up to his entrance. When he came to this earth he took center stage. He became the living story of God. God told Jesus what to say, and Jesus in turn spoke it. Jesus was an eloquent storyteller, but he also became the subject of which subsequent stories would be told. The apostles and disciples accurately recorded Jesus' words as well as the experiences they had with him. Thus the storyteller also became the story.

All of this makes the Bible one of the most profoundly unique pieces of literature that has ever existed. According to Christopher De Hamel, published researcher of the history of the Bible, "The Bible is the most successful book ever written. For well over 1,000 years it has been the most widely circulated of all written works, and it has affected the culture, language and art of more people than any other book has done" (DeHamel 2001, Front flap). It is believed that the Bible has become the most translated, the most analyzed, and the most studied book in the world's history (Bates 1964, x). Despite this, there are still many who know little of what is in the Bible. It is apparent that there has been a failure to teach and to tell the stories of the Word of God. Storytelling is a vital and commanded way to perpetuate the learning of scripture. Although the Bible is a source of ancient literature, it "has an immense trove of narrative and story, and we need to turn to it afresh and consider its optimal utilization in the communication climate of our time" (Larsen 1995, 30). It is through the woven stories in the Scriptures that one can discover his/her own story for how to live.

In order to fully receive the Bible as God's story for mankind, one must accept it as a whole. For example, the story of Jesus cannot be understood outside of the previous

storylines – creation, establishment of Israel, etc. - and the storyline that follows – the church, the second coming of Christ. One story opens into and becomes complete as the next story unfolds (Wright 2007, 14-15). To never hear the stories is to never gain the full understanding of God's story for man.

Biblical Authenticity

In most of the literature studied the assumption has been that a story being told changes and grows as it passes through generations and across cultures; people would listen to the storytellers and then repeat the stories as they remembered them. But each telling of the story differed somewhat. Therefore, the story would change many times in the telling (Breneman 1984, 3). With this being the norm, we could assume that biblical oral tradition also has endured the same element of change. But that cannot be if the stories that have been told for generations and that have been written down are indeed the infallible and inspired Word of God. So the unique aspect of biblical storytelling is that it has stayed accurate to the central core of the story.

Many biblical critics, as well as believers, have spent years testing the accuracy of the historical references in the Bible. Lee Strobel, one of many critics turned believer, summarizes various sources of evidence that support the truth and accuracy of the Bible, therefore, making it a reliable source of information (Strobel 1998, entirety). Scientists, archeologists, and historians have repeatedly verified overwhelming amounts of biblical accounts--just to name a few, the ark of Noah, the destroyed land of Jericho, and the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls.

The Bible is more than just a piece of inspiring literature or an historical artifact; it is in fact a supernaturally inspired revelation. With God as its author and the Holy

Spirit as its chief scribe, the Bible can contain no errors. Christian theology is founded on the belief that the Bible to be the infallible, inspired Word of God and that it is worth listening to what its pages contain. Infallible means more than being free from error; it means it is unable to fail or be false. For example, it is possible for an historian to write the past events of Israel and for the account to be accurate but not necessarily to have any inspiration from God. The Bible is different – it is not only accurate, but it is divinely inspired by God himself. This unique characterization of being both accurate and inspired makes the Bible worth telling, thus categorizing it as an invaluable teaching tool.

Elizabeth Achtemeier puts it best when she says, “The Bible is a multifaceted collection of books assembled from many different times, places and groups representing thousands of different experiences and witnesses to God’s revelation” (1989, 32). Even though the Bible is made up of many stories from many different times, it comes together to make one inspired story: God’s story.

Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, wrote, “All scripture is inspired by God, and it is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that a man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (3:16-17 [NASB]).

Theopneustos, the Greek word for “inspired,” means “breathed out,” or, in other words, God breathed out and the result was Scripture (Lutzer 1998, 38). The mouth that spoke the words that created the world is the same mouth that produced the Scriptures. So, metaphorically speaking, the Bible is the breath of God.

The New Testament is not the only place where we see God taking credit for the Scriptures. In Psalm 33:6 is the expression “breath of His mouth.” This is the Hebrew equivalent of “God breathed.” God the very creator of the universe wrote the Scriptures

through man. The Bible, being the inspired Word of God, does not just mean that God approved of the authors but that these authors actually wrote God's words. God revealed his truths to men: "His ideas became their ideas and they actually recorded what He wanted us to know" (Lutzer 1998, 38). There are some people who believe only the writers' thoughts were inspired not actually their words. Of course, the Bible represents God's thoughts, but these thoughts were obviously communicated in words, and thus the exact sentences were under the supervision of God. Biblical inspiration was not mechanical but intellectual and verbal. The writers were inspired in their thinking and in their feelings as they wrote. Ralph Earle in his *Story of the New Testament* suggests this equation of inspiration: "They [the writers] thought the thoughts of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, and have recorded these thoughts for us" (1968, 13).

Jesus, during his ministry on earth, taught that the written word was infallible. In fact, Jesus so literally accepted the law as directly from God that he believed the Old Testament to the letter. In Matthew, Jesus shared his opinion when he said, "Do not think that I came to abolish, but to fulfill. For surely I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17-18 [NASB]). Christ, of all people, knew first hand that men, even the writers of the Bible, were fallible, but he still affirmed that what these men wrote was infallible. It had to be that way if God were to use humans to give us the scriptures (Lutzer 1998, 38).

Christ expressed his acceptance of the infallibility of God's Word when he validated Moses' writings. Jesus said to the religious leaders of the time, who were having difficulty believing that Jesus was who he said he was, "For if you believed

Moses, you would believe Me. But, if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:47 [NASB]). Obviously, the crowd to whom Jesus was talking knew exactly who Moses was. Thanks to the childhood training in the court of Pharaoh, Moses was able to write down and preserve the books of the law, the first five books of the Bible. These pieces of religious literature were the main source of information for every area of living. The leaders whom Jesus was addressing had been formally trained in all of Moses' writings. It would be appropriate to assume that these men were very familiar with the Old Testament stories and writings. They had based their entire existence as a nation on these written words. Consequently, they strongly believed that the writings of Moses were from God. So Jesus was basically saying that if Moses is credible in their opinion, then Jesus is God's son. Jesus was claiming that the proof of his deity was recorded and validated in the writings of Moses. Jesus was not saying this because Moses (although he was a righteous man) was perfect but because God, who truly authored those books, was perfect. Therefore, Jesus was holding firmly to the truth that the Word of God, in its entirety, is indisputably infallible and inspired.

Jesus gave credibility to the words recorded in Scripture to be accurate and. Through Jesus' defense of the Old Testament, he established the necessity of not only accepting God's written words as truth but also of communicating them to the generations to come. Although for some it may be a difficult task, one must decide whether to accept the authenticity of God's Word or not. Otherwise, studying and telling God's stories will become a job of sorting what is cherished as fact and what is dismissed as fiction.

History of Biblical Storytelling

Moses made God's words known to the people of Israel. As intended, God's command to pass on his stories, his laws, and the experiences of his people was taken literally. Throughout Israel's history and on through today, Jews have held to the tradition of biblical storytelling.

Historical Israel was not a paper civilization. There were no copy machines, printing presses or even conventional pen and notebook. For us today, reading, writing, and recording history in a lasting form that can be referred to again and again in an unaltered state is common place. It is hard to imagine what life would have been like without these conveniences. For the stories in the Bible to come together in written form, the authors had to hand print each word; thus, there was no way that each household could have a copy of the biblical scroll (Nelson 2002, 80). Instead, thought and history were handed down mainly by the spoken word (Daniel-Rops 1962, 309). The stories were passed orally. The people told stories not only as entertainment but as a way of passing history and beliefs to the next generations (Embry 1995, 20).

It is recognized by historians and theologians that Israel's history was preserved by word of mouth. The beginning of biblical history was transmitted orally until Moses, approximately 600 years later, wrote it down (Nelson 2006, 62). The stories about the patriarchs went from one generation to the next until living tradition became written tradition. The Old Testament existed in spoken word long before it was ever put in writing. It was first written down in part under Hezekiah and Josiah, and then more completely in the fifth century BC when the scribe Ezra is said to have dictated it. Years before they were penned, the prophesies of Jeremiah were verbally recited (Daniel-Rops

1962, 309). The Bible, piece by piece, was eventually collected and transcribed by those called scribes (Drane 1983, 17). The role of scribes first showed up in the Old Testament while the Jews were in captivity. They were men who helped the priests write down the records, stories, laws, and traditions of the Jewish nation. As time passed, these scribes became known as teachers. Because their jobs as copyists made them so familiar with the words of the law, they became interpreters of difficult passages. It was a natural progression for them to then become the rabbis. Rabbis were considered the authorized teachers of the Jewish religion (Nelson 2002, 54). Even when the holy text was written down, the habit of oral tradition was not lost. The rabbis taught by word of mouth, and their sentences were handed down word by word in the same fashion as the days of old.

True Israelites attached more importance to the education of the law than to anything else (Daniel-Rops 1963, 128). As moral law and religious law merged into one, it became a family duty to teach children the law. Because this was a direct order from God, it was taken seriously. Parents, grandparents, and members of the community all had a role in passing on a godly heritage to the children of Israel. At the earliest time of life it was on the mother's knee that a child heard the amazing stories from God of faith and obedience. As the child was weaned, the father then took a primary teaching role. It was a father's responsibility to bring his entire household to religious truth. He was obligated to teach by both word and example (Ward 1987, 151).

By the middle of the 5th century BC religion and history were taught simultaneously through storytelling. These topics were made fascinating by way of the storyteller. Their lessons were taught through exciting recounts of miracles, by games of question and answer, and by visible reminders (Nelson 2002, 332). They explained the

meaning of the great feasts to them and showed them how each of the customs that they observed had holy significance (Daniel-Rops 1962, 128). Even a simple pile of rocks became an object lesson for the retelling of the crossing of the Jordan River. Fathers told their children of all the wonders that God had done for his people. The Scripture was the foundation of all morality. Therefore, to study and learn it was to grow spiritually (Ward 1987, 150).

In the Old Testament times, reading and writing were privileges left mainly to the scribes and leaders. Children did not formally go to school and books were not readily available. Thus, it was through spoken narrative that children learned. They were taught at home with no structured curriculum. The goal of most Israelite parents was to have their child “increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:53 [NASB]).

By New Testament times, 1st century AD, the Jews had adopted a more formal approach to teaching. They established classrooms and had qualified teachers to instruct the children in the town (Nelson 2002, 332). A formal school was a new concept in Jesus’ time. When a school was begun, it was connected with a synagogue (Daniel-Rops 1962, 129). The rabbi Simon ben Shetach opened the first *beth ha-sefer*, or “house of books,” in Jerusalem. His example was followed by others, and little by little whole systems of public instruction came into existence. About thirty years after the death of Christ, around AD 64, the high priest Joshua ben Gamala established what would be considered as the first educational legislation (Daniel-Rops 1962, 129).

After a formal education system was set up, religion and history were still the primary curriculum. A wise and respected rabbi would have a school and spend his days

teaching and discussing the Scripture. Young students were sent to listen, learn and discuss. The rabbis would tell stories to explain the teachings and tradition (Embry 1995, 18). The teachers were highly regarded in the community, for it was believed that the instructor was “the messenger of the Almighty” (Daniel-Rops 1962, 129).

Schools had become established parts of the community and parents were obligated to send their children to primary school. Whether poor or rich, children were taken to school at age five. The boys would go to the synagogue and learn to recite Scripture. The principle task of the children as they sat around the feet of the master was to repeat by rote the sentences that the teacher said aloud (Daniel-Rops 1962, 130). For training their memory, pupils were made to learn immensely long passages by heart, and these had to be repeated without omission and without adding or changing a single word (Daniel-Rops 1962, 130). Since all of the texts learned by heart were taken from the Scriptures, the student’s mind was filled with biblical facts and sentences.

The girls would be taught by the women on how to fulfill the role of wife and mother in accordance with Jewish law and tradition. Although the female children were not sent to synagogue, their training as chief home-maker was not taken lightly. The activities that marked out family devotion to God in all the rhythm and activities of everyday life were of primary importance. The young girls simultaneously learned spiritual and household responsibilities (Ward 1987, 93-97).

The teaching of a typical Hebrew boy was not easy but was of utmost priority. Along with all of his household duties, he had to become wise in Scripture. This was a tedious undertaking. At age five he would begin the sacred studies. At age ten he would learn tradition. At age thirteen he would know the whole law of Yahweh and practice its

requirements. And at age fifteen he would begin the perfecting of his knowledge as a man (Daniel-Rops 1962, 132). A child's life was consumed with the Torah, the holy law of God. It was a common saying in ancient Jerusalem that "a child ought to be fattened with the Torah as an ox is fattened in the stall" (Daniel-Rops 1962, 130). The Scripture was used as the basis for all learning. Everything a child learned including language, grammar, history, geography, and the alphabet were studied in the Bible. Words were made with each letter of the Hebrew alphabet and were arranged so that a child could form them into a little story that could be easily memorized (Daniel-Rops 1962, 130). The rabbis would use mnemonics, parallelism, repetition and alliteration to teach the children the law. They believed that it was in the Bible that the finest knowledge was to be found. First century Jewish historian Josephus boasted, "should anyone of our nation be questioned about the laws [Torah], he would repeat them all more readily than his own name" (Ward 1987, 151).

After primary school, secondary school was a consideration for the most intelligent pupils. This higher education for the Jews was also religious in nature. God's law was central in their learning. Special schools were set aside for the serious students of the law. The Bible tells us that Samuel established a school for prophets (I Samuel 19:18-21), and Paul studied at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Paul evidently went to school and learned about the Torah like other Jewish boys. He wrote to Timothy that he was taught the holy lessons from his childhood on up through the years (II Timothy 3:15). Unlike other nations, in Israel knowledge was not sought after for its own sake but for the purpose of using God-given abilities to their fullest.

Not all of the New Testament Christians came from a Jewish background, so not all were schooled in this manner. It was imperative that the Gentiles hear the truth of God as well. Therefore, it was practical to hand down the information orally by telling the story of Jesus' life, teachings, death and resurrection. Just as in the tradition of Judaism, Christianity was also begun as a narrative religion and it is this narrative foundation that makes it strong (Alexander 1999, 46). Before a pen was ever set in motion to write the Gospels, "memories of Jesus depended upon witnesses, those who experienced him firsthand, and upon those whom the witnesses had told – in other words – oral tradition" (Merrill and Christon 1993, 58). Stories of Jesus, certain events in his life and ministry, and a collection of his sayings were passed on by apostles, teachers, believers, and their listeners. Each of the writers of the gospels had grown up under the influence of Jewish tradition where the teachings of the rabbis were preserved and transmitted by word of mouth, so their memories were probably well trained to be accurate and precise (Merrill and Christon 1993, 58). The writings of the gospel were all written within a time frame close enough to the actual time of Christ that confirm the accuracy of written biblical accounts. After years of verbally passing on the stories, if even one detail would have been changed when put into written form, there would still have been live witnesses that would have challenged what had been written (Strobel 1998, 38-71).

Michael Goldberg, in his book on theology and narrative, quotes theologian Richard Niebuhr:

The preaching of the early Christian church was not an agreement for the existence of God or an admonition to follow the dictates of some common human conscience, unhistorical and super-social in character. It was primarily a simple recital of the great events connected with the historical appearance of Jesus Christ and a confession of what happened to the disciples. (Goldberg 1982, 148)

To put it in paraphrase, the early church was established and perpetuated through the means of historical storytelling. As Christianity spread, more stories of faith and miracles were added later by both Jews and Gentiles. These came together in written form and made up the remainder of the New Testament.

Jesus as Biblical Storyteller

Jesus was raised as a Jewish boy, so there is every reason to believe that he was trained in the Scripture in the traditional way (Wright, 1979, 316-325). Jesus was brought up before school was formalized, so he probably learned from the written Torah and oral tradition. The Bible tells us that he went to the temple to learn and discuss Scripture when he was an adolescent exactly as a Jewish boy his age would be expected to do. Jesus, of course, went further than the expectations, and he was able to teach the Scripture with wisdom beyond his years. This came not from his Hebrew upbringing but from being the very son of God. The Bible goes on to tell us that Jesus grew up obeying the Scriptures and his parents. This infers that he continued being schooled in his home and in the synagogue, as was the custom, and that he accomplished these successfully. We have no more information available to us regarding Jesus' childhood, adolescence, or young adulthood. We must, therefore, assume that it was passed in tradition just like the other Jewish boys, teens and young men his age.

Jesus was experienced in the oral tradition style of learning. When Jesus began his ministry, he chose to follow the tradition of storytelling as his method of teaching (Leeming, 1997, 115). When he spoke in stories he was not engaging in a new method of teaching but was following the main practice of the Jewish culture (Bausch 1984, 18). He proved that storytelling is a powerful medium. He utilized allegory, parables, hands on

illustration, and short story to get his message out to the people. He used these same techniques when he taught small intimate groups, large masses, children, adults, those learned and those with no knowledge at all. Jesus held to the law of God as Moses presented it in Deuteronomy chapters six and eleven: “teach your children.” Jesus had no children of his own, but he took the initiative to minister to children. Jesus’ tenderness toward children is one of His most precious qualities. There was no condescension on Jesus’ part. On the contrary, he spoke to children as if they were valuable treasures with great ability to learn and respond. He recognized their capacity for faith. He invested in the lives of children, and he personally took the time to teach them the truth.

Not only did children learn from him and his style of teaching but so did adults. Jesus, the master storyteller, understood his audience and paid attention to their needs, making the teaching process more successful. He spoke their language, paid careful attention to their learning abilities, and offered them first hand illustrations and examples. He taught truth outside of the box. He was not confined within the synagogue walls or limited to the words on a scroll. Take for example the instance with Zacchaeus. Jesus recognized that Zacchaeus needed a bit more attention than other listeners, so Jesus established a connection with him that opened the door of learning (Tolbert 2000, 28).

When Jesus spoke, he used words that came from the depths of his human heart and from the most intimate experience of his oneness with God. He mesmerized multitudes of people with His storytelling skills. People gathered along the shore, made camp on the mountain, or followed down the road side just to hear him speak.

We do not know what Jesus’ ministry would have been like had he not have used storytelling as a way to teach. We do not know what kind of influence Jesus would have

had on the disciples if he had only taught them inside a temple for three years. We do not know how people would have responded if Jesus never demonstrated truth with acts of compassion. What we do know is that Christ did choose to utilize storytelling as a primary method of teaching and that it worked. One of the reasons for Christ making such a lasting impression upon both young and old is because of the method of his teaching accompanied with his spirit of compassion (Bixler 1932, 126). He talked God; he walked God; he lived God!

Jesus was a relevant hands-on storyteller. He utilized stories which were full of things that people of his time could relate to. He spoke of things familiar such as, sheep, grapevines, and sowing seed (Hoffman 2000, introduction). He made God's words relevant to everyday living. It is probable that if Jesus were to walk the earth today, he would tell stories about cars, cellular phones, superstars, and video games. He would work in AIDS clinics and walk the inner cities, inviting the homeless to dinner.

In the Deuteronomy accounts of the Old Testament, God specifically asked for his people to take the opportunities in life and use them as spiritual teaching moments. Times of waking up, walking down the path, and bed time, were all opportune times to share God's stories. In the New Testament, Jesus lived out this instruction from God and he mastered the concept of teachable moments. Jesus used situations such as missing lunch, stormy weather, the death of a friend, as moments to instill the truths of his Father.

Jesus also used his environment to maximize his storytelling opportunities. He taught in homes, on boats, up hillsides, down beaches, across lakes, and at funerals. Jesus was aware of his surroundings, and if there was someone to listen he would tell stories.

Jesus' ministry as both teacher and storyteller is worth emulating (Bixler 1932, 126). We can study how and what he taught. He used words and illustrations that were deep yet understandable. Jesus often used parables, that is, stories with a meaning, to explain what loving God really means. His stories often had hidden meanings that encouraged learning and insight. Jesus did not always spoon-feed the meanings of his stories to people. Instead, sometimes he encouraged the listeners to figure things out on their own by saying, "If you have ears, then hear" (Matthew 11:15; 13:9; Mark 4:9; 7:16; Luke 8:8; 14:35). He was thought provoking and interactive in his teaching skills.

History of Parables as Biblical Storytelling Tool

Jesus used parables as an effective vehicle of communication. Parables by definition are "short narratives about human nature, used to illustrate a moral point or answer a question" (Leeming 1997, 354). They are short fictitious stories which deal "with a religious principle or projects a moral attitude" (Breneman 1984, 16). The parables of Jesus are described as "brief analogies, examples and narratives related by Jesus to his followers to demonstrate theological and/or moral lessons" (Leeming 1997, 355). His parables encouraged listeners to examine their way of living and to explore a more authentic lifestyle.

The Hebrew word for parable is *marshal* which means "be like." And the Greek word for parable is *parabole* which means "placing one thing along side of another for purposes of comparison" (Larsen 1995, 144). Some theologians suggest that in a parable it is the two ways of life that are thrown alongside each other – the conventional way, and the way of God. This tension in having to choose which way to live is similar to the

difficult choices one has to make in real life. The result in presenting this tension is an upset in the conventional way of looking at things. To quote storyteller Susan Shaw:

A parable begins in the ordinary world with its conventional standards and expectations but in the course of the story a radically different perspective emerges and disorients learners. As competing viewpoints interact, a tension is created that finally results in a redescription of life in the world. (1999, 165)

Basically, a parable, no matter who tells it, is a story with two meanings. There is the surface meaning of what actually happens in the story, and there is the underlying meaning. The most common definition preachers give is, “parables are earthly stories with heavenly meanings.” A favorite definition is one given by Walter Wink. He says, “Parables are tiny lumps of coal squeezed into diamond condensed metaphors that catch the rays of something ultimate and glint it at our lives” (Larsen 1995, 143). We can see by all of these definitions that a parable is more than just a simple communication style; it is a well thought-out and purposeful teaching tool.

Jesus was not the first biblical character to use parables as a way to teach.

Parables were utilized in the Old Testament. The story told by Nathan in II Samuel 12:1-4 is our earliest biblical example of a parable:

Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said, "There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him. (II Samuel 12:1-4 [NASB])

Nathan spoke these words to King David after the king had taken Bathsheba and killed Uriah. This story, as it was told, burned deeply in David’s heart and brought him to repentance. At first David heard the story at the superficial level: a story about a man and

a lamb. Yet with a little nudge from Nathan, David was able to comprehend the ultimate message of the story, and it convicted him. That is the power of a parable.

Jeremiah as well liked to use parables in his messages to the people of Israel. Jeremiah depicts Israel's love story with God through a story of a devoted young bride willing to weather the heat of the desert to follow her lover. In Jeremiah chapter eighteen he tells another parable comparing Israel to a marred vessel in the hands of a potter who is able to break and remold the vessel as he wishes. The deeper message of both parables encouraged Israel to draw closer to God.

Isaiah was another excellent storyteller who utilized parables. In chapter five of the book he authored, he talks of a lover who meticulously cared for his vineyard, but in turn, the vine produced only bad fruit. God reveals the spiritual meaning and calls Israel the vineyard.

Yet another Old Testament parable can be found in Judges Chapter nine. Jotham tells a parable to an entire crowd of people gathered by a tree. He spoke of trees electing a king. The people listening were the trees who picked a king and they had chosen poorly as the story depicted.

Telling stories that have deep spiritual meanings has been a teaching method for thousands of years. But none have mastered the art as well as Jesus. Perhaps parables were the "most remarkable ways in which Jesus taught" (Hoffman 2000, front flap). He told seemingly simple tales that revealed a deeper and more complex meaning that penetrated the hearts and minds of men, women and children. His parables were vivid word pictures, and their influences have resounded down through the ages (Leeming 1997, 354-355). He revealed God's compassion for the lost in the parables of the coin,

the sheep, and the prodigal son. He emphasized the need for God's Word in the parable of the sower. He described loving others in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus put thought and effort into his teachings. He combined truth with compassion. His stories were like fine threads woven together to make a beautiful tapestry. He told His stories and illustrated them with actions. That is what made him the greatest storyteller who ever lived. He took his job as teacher of the word seriously.

The emergence of the early church followed Jesus' storytelling pattern. Many of his teachings were preserved in parable form and circulated orally before they were written down and included in the New Testament (Shaw 1999, 43).

The entire Bible is a book of stories to be told. Each book, chapter and verse builds upon another to tell the story of God and his relationship with humankind. It is an excellent source for the understanding and the continuation of the tradition of storytelling. Nearly all of its content, From Genesis to Revelation, flows by narrative, but it is Jesus who perfected the form. Jesus is the chief example of the powerful of how storytelling can influence the world around us.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND OTHER SOURCES

“Whether you realize it or not, you are a storyteller.”
(Martha Hamilton 1996, 3)

Introduction

“Once upon a time” is a phrase familiar to most. Stories have been a part of human existence since the creation of man. One of our defining characteristics as human beings is our need to tell stories and to pass those stories along from one person to another throughout the generations (Leeming 1997, viiv). This has formed us into a story-shaped world. Experienced storyteller and author Kendal Haven summarizes the results of living in a world influenced by stories:

Stories pass on wisdom, experience, information, and facts. Stories shape beliefs and values. Stories are building blocks of knowledge, the foundation of memory and learning. Stories model effective use of words (language). Stories create empathy and connect us to our humanness. Stories link past, present, and future by teaching us to anticipate the possible consequences of our actions (cause and effect). (2000, 16)

Storytelling is as old as our world. Stories and storytelling existed long before the printed page. Storytelling, literally, the live, oral presentation of a story to a listener, is the oldest of all human art forms (Haven 2000, 215). As far back as the beginning of human history, we find tribal storytelling. The first recorded stories were 6,000 years ago (Breneman 1984, 13). Historical evidence indicates children and adults have gathered around storytellers to hear stories (Livo 1987, ix).

Without storytelling, humans could not have communicated complex information. Therefore, storytelling is not merely characteristic of the human condition, but “it is absolutely necessary to the existence of human culture” (Crawford, 2004, 2). Storytelling is not bound by any one civilization, continent or race. Stories have been transmitted orally in virtually every culture on earth communicating knowledge from one generation to the next. According to Stuart Gordon, stories have been used as a way humans explain to themselves who they are, how they and the things around them were created, and how they related to the world and the people in it (Gordon 1993, i). Stories that have transcended the elements of time and culture have given insight into the origin of social institutions, laws, traditions, and codes of conduct.

Stories have been bridges connecting a people to their cultures and roots. Stories are life’s history and meaning. William Bausch, in his book *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*, concludes:

Individuals, families, and communities also have their identifying stories that link them to who they are, to their culture. They tell the story over and over again of their spouse’s death, what happened in our town twenty or thirty years ago that people will never forget. A region or a nation has a story concretized in a shrine, state, museum. A person without a story is a person with amnesia. A country without story has ceased to exist. Humanity without its story has lost its soul. (1999, 33)

People have always liked to tell stories and listen to them. In ancient times, listening to tales was a favorite pastime. For centuries it was the storyteller who gave pleasure to untold multitudes (Colwell 1966, 10). It was the “storyteller who performed an important function for society in reporting news, sharing experiences, teaching, and transmitting ideas and values from one generation to another” (Breneman 1984, 5). The stories were told to convey knowledge, so the storytellers were given the significant task

of relaying important information. Some societies even treated storytellers with special reverence. It was believed that the storytellers had a special power that enabled them to transfer such knowledge. This rendered the storyteller and the story itself valuable commodities within the community (Leeming 1997, 4). Some members of the audience would try to mimic the storyteller and memorize the story to later retell it accurately.

History of Storytelling

The telling of stories was the method of educating and passing on history and tradition. Long before the invention of writing, audio/visual recording devices, or personal computers, stories were communicated orally. Through most of human history many people could not read, so storytelling became a common part of life. Storytelling existed across all continents, in every nation, and among all races. Overall, from 4000 BC to the AD 1500's the primary mode of communication was in oral form (Miller 2003, 83).

The early Greeks and Romans used storytelling as a way to make sense of the world around them. They would tell tales of their heroes and gods (Shaw 1999, 42). They would tell stories to keep alive the deeds of mighty heroes and to explain natural wonders (Colwell 1966, 10). During the Middle Ages, the occupation of storyteller was one of honor. In Africa, storytellers, called griots (gree-ohs), would memorize stories about the history of the people and retell them. As the griot would grow older, he would train younger griots and would pass the stories down to them. In this way, the history and wisdom of the African family was never forgotten (K-12 Online Curriculum 2004). In Europe, minstrels would set stories to music as a way to entertain people. Churches and cathedrals would hire artists who created elaborate stained glass designs for the windows.

This way people could see depicted in the glass the stories that were being told. There are records of thousands of storytellers in Europe in the middle Ages. If there were thousands of storytellers then it seems reasonable to assume that there were hosts of storytellers who preceded them and who followed them, all “telling tales, sharing their imaginations, emotions, experiences, sorrows, stories of common people, takes of heroes, insights of the infinite, and intimate yarns of animals” (Breneman 1984, 14).

In fourteenth century England when pilgrimage was common, there would often be a storyteller along to help the pilgrims to pass the time. There were also singer-storytellers called bards that told of past leaders and their great deeds (Shaw 1999, 45-46). While the crusaders moved across Europe and Asia, the chief of song and the ollamhs were telling their tales. Their role shifted from the kingly courts to the public square so the stories shifted from royal stories to tales of the common people. Throughout Europe and the Middle East, “French troubadours, Muslim rawis, and Russian skomorokhi all wandered through their countries weaving stories and entertaining the public” (Shaw 1999, 46). In North America, the Native Indian peoples utilized storytelling to create an awareness of community and spirituality. They would gather cross-legged in circles while the teller told of their ancestors (White 1982, 17). These stories brought order to their universe for them.

Then came the Age of Enlightenment and storytelling was pushed aside. People still longed to be entertained and desired more knowledge, but now they had new and improved ways of attaining both. Books, art, and theatre were tools of enlightenment, and everyone who was anyone was utilizing those tools. The printing press was a critical invention. It put life into bound copy that could be passed along. As the world developed

its ability to record information through print, we became a print culture in which “reading, essentially a rational activity, dominated” (Larsen 1995, 14). The danger in a print culture is that oral tradition loses much of its resonance. This is exactly what happened.

By the late 18th century oral tradition as entertainment and education was dying out. The National Council of Teachers of English summarizes this shift in history:

Once upon a time, oral storytelling ruled. It was a medium through which people learned their history, settled their arguments, and came to make sense of the phenomena of their world. Then along came the written word with its mysterious symbols. For a while, only the rich and privileged had access to its wonders. But in time, books, signs, pamphlets, memos, cereal boxes, constitutions – countless kinds of writing appeared everywhere people turned. The ability to read and write now ruled many lands. Oral storytelling, like the simple minded youngest brother I the olden tales, was foolishly cast aside. Oh in casual ways people continued to tell each other stories at bedtime, across dinner tables, and around camp fires, but the respect for storytelling as a tool was almost forgotten. (Geisler 1997, 33)

The last of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries have brought rapid changes in communication. Technology introduced the inventions of radio, television, computers, cell phones, internet and satellite. Recent years have seen a media explosion of national and international capability to connect people to a world of information or to other people across the globe. Before these inventions, storytelling was one of the main ways people conveyed information. Due to the widespread use of mass media, “the storyteller’s role as the major means of imparting and preserving records [has] diminished” (Breneman 1984, 5). Stories are no longer just heard but can be experienced through many different media.

Few countries and cultures still exist where majorities of people are illiterate. In these places, where literacy has come late, storytelling is still a major source for imparting information and for instructing the masses directly; it remains the primary mode of narrative transmission (Leeming 1997, 7). The writer’s personal experience, for

example, indicated that for the peoples of Guatemala and Haiti who live in isolated villages and in primitive conditions, literacy is the least of their worries. In such cultures, oral tradition continues much as it has for centuries.

Immediate mass communication and self absorbed entertainment is what our society has currently prioritized. This has led to an “individualistic, decentralized, effervescent future, living at the speed of light” and “a future of generalized functional illiteracy, historical and cultural amnesia, and spiritual impoverishment” (Larsen 1995, 14). Gradually, at least in developed countries, the status of the storyteller has declined to that of an entertainer, and the task of preserving history passed to the scholar.

In recent decades, however, storytelling has been rediscovered as an art form and as a professional tool. Doug Lipman, expert storyteller and teacher, reports that “people are performing stories in theatres and on radio and television, as well as for business luncheons, libraries, schools, and religious organizations. Others are using storytelling as a tool in their various kinds of work, as therapists, teachers, community organizers, lawyers, healthcare workers, sales personnel, public speakers, business managers, etc” (1999, 11). This has created a revolution in culture and language. Some suggest this revival in storytelling is a reaction against television and computers because these devices lack personal contact (Bausch 1984, 10).

Books, magazines, TV shows, commercials, and movies that are now on the market center on real life. Reality is the hot ticket. Portraying people’s lives in every detail, watching their stories as they unfold, is the curiosity craze of the day. It seems that today’s network programmers have added many shows that highlight life. Publishers have created magazines devoted to revealing people’s stories. Storytelling is back with

renewed fervor and is recognized by a growing number of people as a significant means of sharing experiences, teaching, and entertaining (Brenaman 1984, 6). It is the desire of this writer to see a renewal of storytelling hit the religious realm as well, re-opening a door for the telling of God's stories.

The longevity of oral tradition is a testimony to its power (Leeming 1997, 8). People are drawn to it. However, the influence of storytelling is not always for the good. Currently, the stories being told, the narrative that is being presented, and the oral tradition being passed down are not always the ones that will preserve history and build community. Sometimes, they are ones that will destroy it. The bombardment of violent images has desensitized audiences. More and more often in our society, "truth is whatever gets the most applause" (Larsen 1995, 126). Thus, we have drifted farther and farther from real truth. What we are learning from page and stage is not often accurate or beneficial.

Throughout recorded history, it is evident that when the individuals of a nation turn to materialistic values as their basis for truth, then the moral fiber of the nation as a whole declines. A nation is only as strong as the individuals comprising it, and those individuals are only as strong as their moral fiber (Langdon 1962, 9). Individuals have lowered standards of truth and, thereby, the moral fiber of our nation as a whole has weakened. History has taught that the people who thrive in a value-based culture are those who have a positive environment of mutual care and respect. With this information, it could be entirely possible that if people live out their values, speak them, display them, and walk them out in their actions and decisions just as the ancient Hebrew people were instructed to do, then humans could create a better world (Tillman 2000, 35).

It has always been that community shapes the values and behaviors of individuals. Community has done this through its stories, rituals and attitudes (Blair 2001, 27). It is the passing on of the stories of experience that help individuals as well as communities discover who they are, where they come from, what they are here for, where they are going and what they must do (Gordon 1993, Introduction). Story has always been used to provide the connections between the present, and the past thereby, allowing people to come to terms with their lives and their roles in the world (Scheub 1998, 13). This developed sense of belonging and continuity creates a sense of empathy and establishes a feeling of involvement with others.

The current atmosphere in our society, with its intense curiosity of extreme reality has provided the perfect conditions to rekindle biblical storytelling. Biography, E!, Survivor, and *People Magazine* did not create the idea of putting emphasis on real life stories about people; the Bible did. It is obvious a solution to appease people's curiosity for real answers and to restore community values is to return to the tradition of storytelling. Story creates community and community creates story. Storytelling is a communal experience for it involves at least two people in each other's presence, each paying attention to one another and each affecting the other in exploring human condition. There is the element of personal interaction that comes with storytelling. The result is that stories and community emerge together.

Stories help shape identities; therefore, stories become a vital role in the guiding of the development of the community's life. A value-based Christian community is a community that is "experiencing God and interacting with a tradition that includes stories of God's actions in history" (Shaw 1999, 73). This community is then sustained through

its experiences with the stories of God. As the Christian community lives out its own story, it gives rise to other stories which continue to shape the evolving identity of the community. Without stories, the Christian community will cease to exist.

The Art of Storytelling

In order for this project to be a potentially successful solution to the problem of biblical illiteracy, the art of storytelling needs to be revisited and relearned. Storytelling is a powerful tool for learning values, traditions, and boundaries because the stories bind information and understanding together. Not only is content present in storytelling, but there is application as well, thereby making storytelling effective.

Storytelling is an integral part of everyday life. What people think, say and do in some sense or another utilizes storytelling or narrative. For instance, people dream in narrative, they remember, communicate, anticipate, hope, believe, doubt, plan, criticize, invent, gossip, learn, hate and love in narrative (Larsen 1995, 30).

Most everyone tells stories because everyday life is full of stories to tell. Typically, if something funny happens on the way to work a person will tell someone about it. It is in human nature to share. Storytelling can be as simple as one sitting in the living room and sharing the day with a spouse; lounging around a campfire and relaying a story to a group of friends; or telling a child the experience of his/her birth or growing up years. On the other hand, storytelling can be as complex as reciting a memorized work and standing in front of an audience full of strangers.

Storytelling is the “intimate sharing of a narrative with one or many persons” (Larsen 1995, 8). It is opening up and using your voice and body to relate information to others. According to The National Storytelling Association, storytelling is “the art of

using language, vocalization, and/or physical movement and gesture to reveal the elements and images of a story to a specific live audience” (Haven 2000, 215).

Through the process of storytelling there is a transfer of imagery. Before the story is told, the storyteller has mental images or memories of the story and sees, hears and feels the events. After the story is told, the listeners have created their own mental images of the story. They see, hear and feel the events of the story, too, but not necessarily in exactly the same way as the teller does (Lipman 1999, 19).

There are three key ingredients involved in storytelling. There is the story, the storyteller, and the audience or the listener. These three together form the essential elements of the storytelling triangle (Lipman 1999, 17).

The story is the first component of this triangle. A story is a narrative account involving four essential elements – characters, conflicts, struggles, and goals:

Characters are the central element of any story. The goals of these characters are what the story is about. The conflicts block those characters from their goals and their struggles to reach those goals are the engine that drives every story. (Haven 2000, 17)

Another definition is from storyteller Annette Simmons:

Story is a reimagined experience narrated with enough detail and feeling to cause your listener’s imaginations to experience it as real. (2007, 9)

This definition includes the relational aspects of the storytelling process: the relationship of the teller with the story, the story with the listener, and the listener with the teller – all the components of the storytelling triangle.

All stories have a structure. Most stories fit into a simple pattern of introduction, initial incident, plot development, climax, and conclusion (Breneman 1984, 27). The introduction usually provides information about the setting and answers the questions of

when, where, who, and sometimes what. In the initial incident, the problem is revealed and the action is set into motion. This is “the first event in the story which causes the plot to begin to unravel” (Breneman 1984, 27). The plot develops and runs through sequences of events. These incidents lead to the major climax, which provides the intensity of the story. The interest and suspense builds progressively as each event leads to another until the peak reaches the highest. This is the climax. In other words, a story tells about something that happened starting with a point of tension and leads up to the resolution of that tension (Larsen 1995, ix).

Stories are presented in either first person or third person. Both perspectives can be quite successful for storytelling. The narrator, or storyteller, can be the character in the story or can be the observer relaying information to the listener. More often than not, it is better to follow the cue of the author and tell the story from the point of view contained in the story’s original form. Stories also have moods (Breneman 1984, 27). The mood sets the feeling of the story. Sometimes a story is sad, foreboding, mysterious, happy, etc. Whatever the mood is, the storyteller needs to reflect it as the story is being told.

Once the story has been selected and studied, the storyteller then decides what will be the most effective way to tell the story. The storyteller is the second component in the triangle. The storyteller is a person engaged in relationship with the listener, not performing a script, but creating an experience full of character, emotion, and event (Shaw 1999, 20). In simplest of terms, a storyteller is a person who invites another to enter into the experience of a story (Miller 2003, 33-36).

There are some essential elements for successful storytelling that the teller needs to abide by: identification with the story, a clear picture of events, and a desire to share

the story with others (Colwell 1966, 203). Moreover, the ultimate goal of a storyteller is to tell the story so simply and directly that it appears as if the story is telling itself. The emphasis should be placed upon the story rather than upon the storyteller. The teller simply is the vehicle through which the meaning of the story comes to the listener (Baker and Greene 1987, 61).

The job of the storyteller is to bring words to life. Storytelling utilizes the medium of oral language. To be effective, the storyteller must capitalize on the strengths of oral language and compensate for its weaknesses. Some storytellers are less effective than they could be simply because they do not apply the concepts of oral language to storytelling (Lipman 1999, 21). The elements of oral language open the door for all sorts of expression that the written language cannot offer. There are additional elements such as tone of voice, gesturing, posture, facial expression, and other forms of expression that bring dimension to the story (Lipman 1999, 21). A good storyteller can use the mind, the face, the voice, and the whole body to communicate information in the storytelling process.

A storyteller can use the mind. This is the active intellectual processing of a story before and during the telling. A storyteller does not have to memorize a story but rather remember it. This is a subtle yet distinct difference. A storyteller becomes familiar with the story. This requires attention and commitment. Repeated reading and studying of a story helps the teller understand the story's meaning and essential transferable components. Reading the story repeatedly will also help the story become a part of the teller. Then, the storyteller uses the mind to memorize the story or become so familiar

with it that it rolls off the tongue easily. It is the familiarity that makes storytelling look so easy and natural.

A storyteller can also use the face. The expressions on the storyteller's face are an important part of telling the story. The raise of an eyebrow, the twitch of a lip, or the tilt of the head can communicate moods and emotions. Every muscle of the face can move and contort to mean something; therefore, in order to be successful, the expressed emotion must match the emotion of the story and the characters within the story.

Different facial expressions can do more than just display emotion. They can also be used to portray different characters in the story. It is almost as if each expression is like a mask depicting a uniqueness of a character. The mouth and the eyes have many variations and are probably the most effective tools for communicating with the face. It is said that the eyes are the windows of the soul. Maybe this is true, but, certainly, the eyes are portholes of emotion. There are two basic kinds of eye focus during storytelling: direct eye-to-eye contact when the storyteller looks directly into the eyes of the listener(s), and indirect eye contact when the storyteller looks around or over the audience (Hamilton and Weiss 1996, 165-166). Maintaining direct eye contact is most effective for maintaining focus for both the teller and the listener. A teller can also use character-to-character eye contact when the teller will pretend to look at another character in the story. By looking at the imaginary character, the audience is better able to visualize the story. There is also the technique of space visualization. This is when one looks into space, usually over the heads of the audience, and imagines a mental picture of what is taking place in the story. This eye contact is often used for effect. This technique can help the listener to create mental images of what the storyteller is communicating. Space visualization can also be

used to suggest reflection, daydreaming, or inner thoughts. Although this is a useful form of eye contact, the teller should not focus on space for a long period of time so the audience does not get distracted.

A storyteller can use the voice. Voice flexibility is a great tool. It helps the audience recognize the progression, transition, rising action and climax of the story (Breneman 1984, 7). Tone of voice, to the combination of vocal inflection, volume, and timbre can be used to more effectively convey the meaning of the story (Lipman 1999, 22). Inflection is the rise and fall of the voice. It is important for a storyteller not to speak in monotone. Monotone is when everything is spoken in the exact same way. After speaking in this manner for a while, an audience will lose interest. The volume of the voice is the loudness or softness of the teller's voice. Volume can be used to indicate emotion, setting, and events. Enunciation, projection, and speed are also factors in using voice as a communication tool (Reid 2003, 3). The teller should not mumble or be difficult to hear. The teller should not rush the audience along yet should also not take too much time, thereby creating boredom. The idea is to change speed at appropriate times in the story. Slowing down can suggest sadness, suspense, fear, or doubt and speeding up can suggest excitement, nervousness, and joy.

A storyteller needs to use the whole body. The teller works to keep the body alive and active to all whom the story involves in an attempt to develop a more intense mental imagery for the audience. Statistic reports conclude that "the verbal components of an orally presented message carry less than 35% of the meaning; more than 65% is carried on the nonverbal level" (Breneman 1984, 73). Whether the storyteller is conscious of it or not, he/she is constantly interacting and communicating nonverbally with the audience.

Therefore, it is better to be aware of the nonverbal, and to control the message of the nonverbal. The nonverbal can be formally defined as human communication that goes beyond the spoken or written word. Nonverbal communication involves everything else but the voice. There are seven dimensions to the nonverbal; “body motion, physical characteristics, touch behavior, paralanguage (vocal qualities), proxemics, artifacts, and environment” (Breneman 1984, 73). Nonverbal is what the face and body communicate. For example, to emphasize an idea in the story a gesture can be used. A gesture is a movement of the body. There are three basic types of gestures: descriptive, directive, and emphatic (Shaw 1999, 25). Descriptive gestures can be used to demonstrate such things as height or size: for example, holding a hand waist high in reference to how tall something is. Directive gestures are used to direct the attention of the listener: for example, pointing or swooping an arm to the left as a reference to a location. An emphatic gesture highlights a point or an emotion such as shaking a fist or shrugging shoulders. The teller can use arms and legs to act out or express integral elements of the story. The teller’s movements should become part of the story and when done well can add to the effectiveness of the storytelling experience. Practicing and perfecting these techniques can help make most anyone into an effective storyteller.

The way a storyteller communicates is influenced by the audience, for it is the audience that makes up the third element of the storytelling triangle. The audience is any one person or group of persons engaged in the listener role. Kendall Haven, in his book on the effectiveness of storytelling, states, “Directed interaction between the teller and audience is an essential element of the storytelling process” (2000, 216).

The teller must define the telling process based on the age, the size, and the critical determinacy of the audience. For example, a teller can tell the same story in many different ways depending on whether there is only one listener or one hundred listeners gathered for a funeral or a night of entertainment, whether there is a microphone or not, or whether there are only children, adults, or a mixture of the two. The possibilities for variation in an audience are innumerable. Consequently, the composition of the audience helps determine the avenue the storyteller takes.

The audience should be in the forefront of the storyteller's mind when picking and telling a story because the storyteller will have a relationship with the audience. Sometimes this relationship might be old and familiar, and other times this relationship has just been established as the story begins. The audience will also have a relationship with the story (Lipman 1999, 17). It is the role of the storyteller to help create this relationship, and it is the intention that this relationship be positive. The storyteller tries to influence the direction of this relationship, but, really, the storyteller can do nothing more than prepare, suggest, offer hope, and pray that the relationship between the listener and the story will be effective. Listener participation in the storytelling experience increases the effectiveness. Engaging the listener can be done through many means: from the simple act of personal eye contact, to discussion or question/answer, to active role play. Determining the avenue will help draw the listener personally into the story.

No matter how interesting the series of incidents are that make up a story, most listeners become bored just hearing relayed information. Without the development of visualization, the storyteller becomes nothing more than a relater of information.

Visualization is when the storyteller creates vivid mental images and then projects those images to the imaginations of the audience. One storytelling handbook states:

Gesture and conveyed feelings become completely natural as the teller ‘lives’ the story with the audience. Through voice and action the storyteller conveys the characters, setting, action, feelings, and mood of the story and creates in the listener’s mind a mental image , a moving picture of the story. (Kinghorn 1991, 2)

A good teller can create a moving picture of each scene to flash through the listener’s mind as the teller unfolds the story. Visualization causes a “reliving of the story by the teller to the extent that the things being talked about, though they may have occurred hundreds of years ago, seem to come alive now for the audience as it hears the story” (Breneman 1984, 62). In storytelling, the bridge between the teller’s images and the audience’s perception is the spoken word and its partners are gesture, posture, and expression. The storyteller utilizes the whole body to capture the audience and make them feel as if they are there as the story continues. By piquing their interest, the audience becomes more involved in creating the pictures of the story. In actively visualizing the story, the audience is more likely to remember the character, recall the sequence, and relate to the moral of the story (Isbell and Raines 2000, 8). The successful storyteller is actually drawing a word picture for the audience. The more descriptive the word picture, the more perfectly the picture is emblazoned in the hearer’s mind.

Humans experience the world through the five sensory channels; scent, taste, sound, sight, touch. Learning is linked to our sensor intake (Simmons 2007, 86-88). Recent neurological research has shown that memory is dependent upon sensory details. In other words, the greater the number of specific sensory intake related to an idea or an event, the easier and more likely it is to recall the idea or event (Haven 2000, xix). The storytelling process by design should create multi-sensory details for the listener. Thus,

storytelling intentionally uses sensory language in order to instill a desired pattern of associations.

A good storyteller will stimulate the audience through one or more of their senses. The teller can directly reach the audience visually and audibly - in other words, they can see the teller and hear what the teller says. Nevertheless, the audience can also be indirectly stimulated in other sensory areas by imagery. Imagery is created by words that have the power of producing imagined sensations in the hearers (Breneman 1984, 61-63). Because the teller stimulates the various senses of the listener, storytelling can be an effective teaching tool. Most people learn best by doing and participating through all of the senses (Dryden 1999, 222). People use a variety of the five senses when processing information. This is called sensory perception. The audience perceives, or takes in information, by using one or more senses to understand and remember what is perceived (Tobias 1994, 89). In turn, each person tends to view the world in a way that makes the most sense to that person as an individual. Perceptions shape how people think, make decisions, and define what is important. Individual perceptions also determine a person's learning strengths or learning styles. Because most learning occurs through the senses, storytelling can reach every individual or every learner in his or her area of learning need.

Learning Styles

People learn in different ways. The way in which an individual learns best is that person's learning style. Individuals with different learning styles are so diverse in the ways in which they process information that they might as well be speaking a different language. Researchers and educators refer to a learning style depending on whether a person most often relies on his/her eyes, ears, or sense of touch (Bradway and Hill 2004,

6). For most individuals, one of these three styles will be the strongest: visual learning – learning mainly through seeing things; auditory learning – learning mainly through hearing things; and kinesthetic learning – learning mainly through handling things (Simic 1992, 86-87). Some research refers to kinesthetic learning also as haptic learning from the Greek word meaning “moving along” (Dryden 1994, 12). There is some research that also includes a fourth category of learning style called verbal/conceptual learning – learning mainly through communication or discussion (Lipman 1999, 44). In simple terms, a person may be a looker, a listener, a mover, or a talker. People will favor sight, sound, muscle movement, feeling, words, and ideas to present and receive experiences and information. Most people combine all the learning styles with varying emphasis on different senses. For one person, listening to lectures combined with discussion could be the ideal learning environment. For another, it could be reading. And yet, for another, it could be visual aids, outlines, and video tapes. The number of possibilities is endless.

Visual learners, or lookers, rely on the sense of sight when absorbing information. They learn best when they can see pictures in their minds. They learn by seeing, watching, and making strong visual associations (Tobias 1999, 89). For example, if they see something, such as printed directions, pictures, lists or maps, then they can better understand. They comprehend better when they read what is in a book rather than hearing someone else read it to them (Simic 1992, 87-88). They are naturally drawn to sights of familiar objects (such as the red house next to the big tree) and quickly interpret and remember visual clues such as motion, color, shape, and size (Bradway and Hill 2004, 7).

Auditory learners, or listeners, rely on the sense of hearing when absorbing information. They learn best by listening to verbal instruction (Gurian 2001, 298-299).

They can give an answer after only listening, never having taken a note or cracked a book. They prefer sounds and words to information taken in by either sight or touch. They comprehend better when hearing a recording of a book rather than reading along in the text.

Kinesthetic learners, or movers, rely on both touch and movement when absorbing information. They learn best by handling, touching, and manipulating things (Simic 1992, 87-89). They become physically involved with what is being learned. They utilize a hands-on approach to learning. The information that movers take in through the sense of touch translates into gross motor movement that is, large muscle activity involving the arms, hands, legs, and/or feet (Simic 1992, 88-89). They comprehend better by taking notes, doodling, or experimenting. If they have to sit still, their bodies seem to go to sleep.

Verbal conceptual learners, or talkers, rely on discussing and brainstorming while absorbing information. They like to talk things out. They comprehend better by communicating and asking questions. Having to be quiet will make learning difficult for them. They need to engage verbally during the learning process.

Conclusions

To sum up this chapter, storytelling has been an effective means of communicating over the centuries. Records through the ages and in various countries of today rely on oral tradition. Essential ingredients and common techniques make storytelling an effective tool for communicating. Storytelling utilizes both voice and body and can be a full sensory experience for both the teller and the listener. Because people are able to remember better when information is presented in a variety of sensory modes,

storytelling can be a great teaching device. Story based learning gives parents, teachers, and other instructors the freedom to select activities that best fit a students learning needs.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

“So we’ll live, and pray, and sing, and tell old tales...
as if we were God’s spies...”

King Lear V, III

Introduction

As a teen, the writer spent the summer months with her older sister who lived in Illinois. While there, she attended a Bible study with her sister. The teacher had a unique way of teaching the Bible through visualization and kinetic motion. She would display a cartoon picture of a Bible character holding or doing something symbolic as a visual clue to what the class had been learning about a particular Bible passage or story. The following week the members of the group were called upon to act out what they had learned the prior week. This action re-enforced the information for the students and confirmed for the teacher the effectiveness of her teaching.

The writer remembers her sister’s name being called and her sister standing up confidently in front of a group of people. She marched, pointed, and used her hands to make exaggerated gestures in order to recite the exact details of what she had learned from God’s Word. Even though the writer was too young to participate in the class, she was riveted to what was happening. She spent the remainder of that summer helping her sister learn the movements based on the visual cue cards so that she could better learn and memorize the Bible. The writer soaked it in, and still to this day she remembers some of

the motions that trigger memories of the details of some of the biblical stories. This was the beginning of a love affair with God's Word. She was consumed with a desire to learn it and then to teach it in a different way, a way that would allow people to see, to hear, and to participate in learning in order to retain the information more efficiently.

Many years later, as an adult, the writer's church was offering a one-year study of the Bible in a series entitled "Bethel Bible Study." This was a visual and auditory learning system resembling what she would consider storytelling. She signed up and made the one-year commitment. A licensed trainer taught the class. She had been teaching this same study for over a decade. Although she was a veteran instructor, she did not seem to be aware of the classroom dynamics. The listeners experienced an unexpected discomfort in the overall atmosphere of the classroom. At first the class was held in the church fellowship hall. The students were seated at long tables in rows, but complained that it felt too formal and institutional like. After rearranging the tables into a square and each person sitting in such a way so they could see all the other participants, the group complained that this was too much like a meeting. Soon the class ended up in the home of the instructor. The classroom was now a family room; tables and chairs were replaced with couches, loveseats, and recliners, and the instructor became a friend.

After observing this long process of settling in, the writer realized that people enjoyed the comfortableness of being part of a "family," learning and hearing God's word in a setting more conducive to storytelling. In the first situation, the classroom structure did not fit the style in which the curriculum was to be delivered. In the second situation, the square table structure created the atmosphere of business and discussion which again did not accurately fit the teaching approach of this curriculum. It was not

until the members of the group felt like family (instead of students or business colleagues) that learning began to take place in accordance with the curriculum format.

After reformatting the environment of learning, another dilemma became apparent as the students now began the curriculum presentation. The “Bethel Bible Study,” was such that each week the students would be presented with a card. On this card was an elaborate picture that symbolized various important details of biblical concepts or doctrines. The students would study the pictures as the teacher would explain. This teacher, although she loved the Word of God and knew her material, would drone on while reading from her notes. The writer would see people nod off or whisper among themselves. She even found herself unable to keep focused on the instructor. It was not because she did not want to learn, nor was it because the information was not good. The pictures were incredible learning tools that the class enjoyed. What was missing was the instructor’s mindset. She mistook herself for a “teacher.” The dilemma became that the teacher taught, but the students did not learn, or at the least, did not seem to enjoy learning. If the teacher could have changed her thinking and chosen to be a storyteller, the information and the pictures might have come alive to the students, and the probability is that learning would have increased.

The writer had a chance to interview informally a few of the participants in this Bible study. One couple expressed their feelings of success in learning due to the symbolic pictorial stimulation, but they could not remember much of what was presented verbally. Another member stated similar feelings. A young woman in the class treated it as if she was in college, and she elected to put everything to memory.

The writer met with the instructor and shared with her the project ideas regarding storytelling as a way of teaching biblical principles. The instructor was gracious and allowed the writer the opportunity to use the “classroom” to conduct her first storytelling experiment. She gave the writer three separate times to “teach” the week’s lesson in a storytelling fashion. The writer studied the picture and all its symbols. She connected them with the Scripture they represented, and put them together in a story format. The writer then presented the exact curriculum that the instructor gave to her, only she did it through storytelling using the pictures only as reinforcement to the story. The writer has no quantitative statistics or researchable results, but all the people in the room, including the instructor herself, excitedly reported that they “got it.” In one way or another, all expressed their personal joy in being able to grasp the information and understand it more fully.

The week after the writer was allowed to teach, the instructor called up volunteers to quiz them on their retention of what they had learned. There was a significant, although statistically immeasurable, increase in retention and in ability to retell the story. It was then that the writer knew for certain that she wanted to seek God about writing a storytelling curriculum. Presenting the Bible to others in a similar way that the patriarchs and even Jesus had communicated became a personal and spiritual goal for the writer. She desired to design a simple yet thorough way of organizing each book of the Bible, making it possible for any willing individual to become a storyteller and bring the stories of the Bible to life.

The intent for this project was not only to create a storytelling curriculum but also to determine if such a curriculum could be successful in reducing biblical illiteracy

among the teens at Calvary Bible Chapel (CBC). This required some form of research and testing. For the purpose of this project the writer used qualitative instead of quantitative research. She used a logical systematic process of collecting and analyzing data and presented the results in a narrative. The writer, through observation, interviews, case study, pretest/posttest, documentation, and data analysis, shows the need (and potential successfulness) for a biblical storytelling curriculum. Both the writer (as the researcher), and the participants (as the subjects) played active and subjective roles in gathering the data. Personal interaction and interpretation were necessary in this qualitative research for gaining inductive understanding.

Although the nature of qualitative research is personal and informal, it proved to be accurate and reliable. Most of the data was gathered on location in the environment in which the activities commonly took place. The writer was the primary data collector. She did not try to prove or disprove the theory of biblical illiteracy, nor did she try to prove that storytelling could be the only solution. In actuality, the project began to take clearer shape as the data was increasingly collected.

Observations

As discussed in chapters two and three, the research that had been conducted both biblically and secularly appeared to indicate that storytelling has been, and will continue to be, a viable and productive way of teaching. However, reading the research was not enough; observation was necessary.

Disciplined observation can be defined as “the intentional systematic investigation and description of what takes place in a social setting” (Ammerman 1998, 199). Thus, a social setting was needed in which to observe. One day while visiting the

local library, the writer saw an advertisement announcing “Story Time for Children.” This was the perfect opportunity to observe and to collect data in a natural setting. Bogden and Biklan state that qualitative researchers “assume that human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs, and whenever possible they go to that location” (1998, 64). That is exactly what the writer did.

Story time at the library in a local neighborhood was made up of children ages one to five years and their parents or guardians. The writer assumed incorrectly that this would be a wiggly and fidgety waste of the storyteller’s time. She was surprised at what she saw. Once the storyteller began her tale, all eyes were on her. She held a book in her hand but never seemed to look at it (at least if she did look the writer did not notice). It was as if the pictures in the book were there only for the children. As the writer looked around, it was not only the children, but the adults who were captivated by the story. Even the writer got lost in the telling of the tale. As the observer, the writer was the primary data collecting instrument. She used her own insight to understand and interpret the significance of the words (and even the gestures) of those she was observing. Because this observation was part of the academic research, the writer had to observe both personally and professionally.

This storyteller was as effective as she was exciting; perhaps that was why the audience seemed so captivated. On the other hand, perhaps it was the story she told that captivated the audience. Maybe this was an audience full of easy going, low energy, and highly disciplined children with incredible attention spans. Credence had to be given to all these possibilities. Thus began the journey to various library story time programs throughout the area. Each library was set up similar in appearance and in the structure of

the program. The children were of different ethnic and socioeconomic classes. The storytellers and their stories varied. Their techniques and vocal qualities were different as well. Some tellers were old, some were young, some were animated and others were not. Of course, there was the occasional whiny child or discontent toddler, but overall, the results were the same. The audiences were captivated and responsive.

Observation had thus far consisted of watching others in the role of storyteller. Further information required observation from a different point of view. Becoming the storyteller would give the writer the opportunity to relate to the story and the audience in a new capacity. She contacted a day care facility associated with her church. It is a licensed facility with five separate classrooms differentiated by age. One classroom is infants through eighteen month olds, the next classroom is eighteen month through twenty-four month olds, and another classroom is two year to three year olds, then a classroom for three year to four year olds, and finally a classroom for those that are four to five year olds. She was granted approval to come into each classroom (excluding the infant class) one time per month for six months to do a ten minute story time.

The classrooms had an area set aside for the purpose of gathering the children together for story time. In some classrooms the designated space was more formalized than others, but all were comfortable and familiar to the children. The environment for the story telling was safe and free of obstacles.

Each month the writer came at a different time (never around naptime or lunchtime). Each month she tried different techniques. First, she read directly from a Bible book and held up the book in turn as she read. The next month, she held up a Bible book and told the story without ever reading a page. Then she told a Bible story with no

book. The following month she told a Bible story that had actions to go with it. Next she told a Bible story with interactive questions along the way. The final month she had the children help her tell a Bible story.

The writer was pleasantly surprised to see that every classroom loved story time. When they would see her enter the building, they would scream with excitement, “The storyteller is here! It’s story time!” It seemed (and the teachers confirmed) that no matter what story was told, they enjoyed it. Each time the writer returned, she would question them about the story that had been told the month before. At least one child, usually more, could retell the story at the next visit after a month had gone by. It appeared that the story times that were most effective involved hearing the story, seeing a visual clue, and/or participating in a kinetic movement. The kids enjoyed being a part of the story, and the teachers were amazed at how attentive a group of small children could be, and at how much information the children were able to retain. This was just the encouragement that was needed to motivate the writer to develop a biblical teaching program that utilized storytelling techniques, supplemented with visual stimulation.

The writer also decided to be an inside observer within her own church. Being the youth pastor made it was easy to have access to the teens and their class time. There are advantages and disadvantages of being an inside observer. The advantages come in knowing something about the people being observed and what things mean to them; that knowledge can help with interpreting the information. She knew what activities and interest they had and thus was able to use illustrations and examples that would capture their attention. For instance, to emphasize the Bible story being told, a clip was shown from a popular movie that many of the students had seen. The disadvantages come in

reading too much into what is observed (Ammerman 1998, 199). Because the writer knew them, it was hard to be completely objective in her observations. For instance, when a sixteen-year-old girl did not answer a question she was certain to know the answer to, it was assumed to be due to the fact that she had broken up with her boyfriend that day and was exceptionally quiet.

The writer attended and taught youth group with the focus in mind to observe their knowledge, retention, and overall understanding of the Bible. This meant that for several months the writer could not change the teaching techniques or let on to the fact that they were being observed.

The writer was initially going to choose a small sample of the teens to observe and to survey later. The difficult task came in deciding which youths would be chosen for this sampling. There are those teens that came from religious homes, those who attended Sunday church services in addition to youth group, and those who had never before attended church or youth group. Some teens were shy, some funny, some distant, and some vocal. Those who are most vocal do not always represent the entire group (Ammerman 1998, 199). Because the group was so diverse, the writer chose to use the entire youth group as the source for the study instead of a smaller sample group.

The youth class on Wednesday evening was set up so that it ran the same way each week. Class time was from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. The first fifteen to twenty minutes was free time. During this time, the teens talked and mingled. Because learning has an emotional component to it, a person can learn better when the learning environment feels safe and supportive (Blair 2001, 30-32). The room was set up to have a relaxed atmosphere with a pool table, foosball table, air hockey table, café style seating in one

section, and living room style seating in the other section with couches and beanbag chairs. They would gather and play enjoying their time together. The next thing on the classroom agenda lasting twenty to thirty minutes was an activity that required everyone's participation. This consisted of a planned game, a movie clip, or various other related things. Again, the kids seemed to enjoy these activities. Immediately following was "Bible Time" when the kids were gathered together and were required to pay attention and listen for fifteen to twenty minutes while the Word of God was presented. This is when the writer saw the teens begin to disengage. The energy and attention levels dropped significantly. There was very little participation or dialogue between the teacher and the students. The teens were easily distracted. It was as if they were in school mode. They appeared as disinterested in bible time as they would be if they were in their least favorite class at school. The remaining ten to fifteen minutes of class time consisted of prayer requests, praise reports, and prayer. At this time, the energy and interest levels would pick back up. These last activities were well received. The students would actively participate sharing with one another their joys and concerns.

During the months, it became clear that unless the kids were involved in some kind of activity (even as simple as talking, reading, or pointing to a picture), then they were not mentally present. They appeared to disengage cognitively and spiritually. The biblical portion of the class became a time when the kids would groan and begin whispering among themselves. The teens were routinely bored and distracted. The writer would purposely ask questions regarding things that were discussed in the previous weeks and consistently the teens would stare at her as if they had no idea what she was talking about. There appeared to be absolutely no retention. Not only was there no

retention, but there appeared to be no desire for retention. Remembering what had been taught about the Bible the week before was not a priority.

Field Notes

During the writer's observation of the youth group, she took many field notes. The field notes consisted of written notes concerning what had occurred in the specific settings being observed. She tried to "capture what [was] going on in a given setting at a specific moment" and document "activities and interactions, behaviors, and even non verbal clues" (Meyers 2000, 39).

A particular field note stood out. Although the responses of the teens were often humorous, they were also sometimes sad because of the reality of the biblical illiteracy of this group. Many had heard Bible stories before, but very few actually believed the stories were true. One Wednesday night class there were thirty eight teens in attendance, and it happened that a discussion began on the validity of the Bible and its stories. The group was asked how many had heard such Bible stories such as David and Goliath, Jonah and the whale, and the crossing of the Red Sea. All of the teens in the room raised their hands. Then they were asked if they believed that the miraculous events of these stories had actually taken place. Had David actually killed a giant? Had Jonah actually been swallowed by a fish, and had the Red Sea actually split open to let people cross through it? Four kids boldly shouted out, "No way!" The others in the class would partially raise their hands and then put them down again, wavering on whether to commit to actually believing or not. They were then asked if their friends had ever heard of these stories. They collectively agreed that most of their friends had probably not heard of these stories, but if they had it was in the same context of hearing about fairy tale stories.

Many of the teens at the time stated that they too put these stories in the same category as “Cinderella” or “Snow White.” Finally, they were asked if they would want any of their friends to know that they believed that these stories were real and had actually occurred. The immediate reaction of the students consisted of raised voices shouting things like, “Absolutely not,” “Not on your life,” and “You have got to be joking.” Essentially, not only did these teens have a difficult time believing in the stories of the Bible, but they were also faced with the peer pressure not to believe in these stories.

Survey

Observing produced more curiosity. The writer wanted more information from the youth group to see if her suspicions about the pervasiveness of biblical illiteracy among them were correct. At this point in the process she decided to conduct a survey because, according to Bell, “the aim of a survey is to obtain information which can be analyzed and patterns extracted and comparisons made” (2002, 13).

The writer created a biblical literacy questionnaire (Appendix A). Questions were created regarding common people, stories, or concepts taken directly from the Word of God. There were no questions based on doctrine or denominational affiliation. These questions were created to test for simple biblical exposure. The questions were not meant to intimidate or trick the test taker. An open-ended question format was utilized. There were no true or false, yes or no, or multiple choice questions in order to eliminate the chance of correct guessing which would skew the results. Open-ended questions would be more difficult to score because answers would vary individually and the correctness of the answers would be subject to the interpretation of the scorer. Therefore, the writer purposely scored loosely, counting as correct anything that was relatively close to the

biblical answer without straying from the truth of the Word of God. Open-ended questions and the loose scoring would be appropriate because the writer was not trying to determine if the participants were biblical scholars but if the participants had an awareness of some of the basic facts, stories, and concepts of the Bible.

It was imperative that everyone be given the same questionnaire in “as far as possible the same circumstances” (Bell 2002, 14). One Wednesday night the teens were asked to complete a survey before class started. They were told to do their best but not to share answers. They were told that their answers would not be read aloud or shared with anyone in the class. This test would have no grade and would have no impact on their participation within the youth group. They were told that the information would be coded, interpreted, and used in a research study. All agreed. The survey was passed out, taken, and immediately collected. The kids seemed to have a good time taking the survey. Some were even willing to share their answers after the papers were collected. Several of the teens wanted to know what the “correct” answers were. The writer chose to read the questions aloud and explain the answers. This was a profitable experience, for it led to good discussion and stimulated interest among the teens to know more about the Bible. Thus, the survey not only helped in the research but also operated as a door of interest in the lives of the teens for the Word of God.

Interviews

The writer now realized that she could be onto something of value that might help reduce biblical illiteracy. Before the writer could present a solution to a potential problem, she had to make sure that there was enough proof that a problem existed in more than just her own church youth group. Observation and survey led to the need for

interviews in order “to get data from the point of view of the participant” (Meyers 2000, 61). The interviews were consistent in the details of the wording of the questions, but they were more like conversations than formal response interactions. Nevertheless, the interviews were more than just mere chatting. The interviews had direct purpose and consisted of one-on-one interaction (Ammerman 1998, 199). The writer contacted several pastors in the local and surrounding area by using the phone book as a source for the names and numbers of various churches. The writer called the church offices and asked to speak to the pastor. The writer spoke to pastors from varying denominations and congregational sizes. Some were senior pastors, others associates and some were youth or children’s pastors. The pastors were both male and female. Each interviewee was friendly, open, and was cooperative. The writer did not encounter anyone who was unwilling to participate.

As each pastor was contacted, the writer shared that she was a doctoral student working on a Doctor of Ministry project. She explained that this involved creating a potential solution to solve the possible dilemma of biblical illiteracy within the Christian community, particularly with teens. To avoid any miscommunication, biblical illiteracy was defined as the lack of basic knowledge of the books and stories of the Bible as a whole. The writer then asked each pastor for permission to interview him or her and to use the information given for public reading. The writer assured them they would only be referred to by title and/or a coded initial; no mention would be made of names or location of churches. If they agreed (which all did), then the writer followed with a small interview questionnaire (Appendix B).

Testing

Based on all the information gathered thus far, the writer created a simple biblical storytelling program (Appendix C). She wanted to test her new program on subjects. Again, she chose the youth group as her preliminary test group. The youth group consisted of twenty five to fifty adolescents between the ages of twelve to nineteen. Some were regular church attendees, but many were not. Several came from the area schools brought in by friends or the draw of the sports program. The attendance varied weekly, so there was no assurance that each teen would hear each lesson. Many came and went on a regular basis. This group of teens would not statistically meet the definition of a random sample. However, this was a diverse group of both rural and urban adolescents. Caucasian, some African-American, some Biracial, and few Hispanic teens made up the group. They came from different socioeconomic backgrounds and had various familial structures; some from two parent homes, divorced homes, single parent homes, adoptive homes, and foster homes.

The class was informed that for the next year they would be subjects for a research project. It was communicated to them the goals of this project as well. They were excited and wanted to know if they were going to be famous or have their names in a book. The writer assured them that they would remain anonymous because anonymity, as well as confidentiality, and voluntary participation were essential components to this project. They were told that the writer would be teaching a new curriculum that she had written. There was placed a large white dry erase board behind the writer. The teen students were exposed to a collage of pictures. The writer explained that each week they would be looking at a specific picture from the collage, and that each one would have his

or her own index card sized copy of the pictures. Each week the class would go through individual pictures from the cards in chronological order. They would be told a factual biblical story that was associated with each picture. (At this point, to have a better understanding of what and how the teens were taught, it might be helpful to read the first lessons of the book of Genesis from the curriculum that was tested on these subjects in the Project Manual in Appendix F).

In order to have some hands-on definitive evidence that biblical literacy was indeed decreasing due to the teaching of this curriculum, different methods of testing were developed. For the books of Genesis and Exodus, the writer used a pre-test/post-test format. Before the writer began teaching the curriculum and before any picture cards were passed out, each teen in attendance was given a Genesis pre-test to determine what basic knowledge each had of the stories contained within this particular book of the Bible (Appendix D). The pre-test was given the first week in a group setting with each teen receiving a pencil and the test. They were instructed that they needed to put their names on them. The writer explained that they would not be judged by what they knew or did not know, but that this was just a tool to measure learning. They were told they did not have to take the test; it was voluntary. All of them willingly participated. They were asked not to share answers. The atmosphere was light and happy; there seemed to be no test anxiety among the teens. They were relaxed in a familiar environment. As each person finished, his or her test was collected. Over the next two weeks, if new teens came in who had not taken the pre-test and had not already heard a Genesis lesson story, they were asked if they wanted to participate in the testing and, if so, they were escorted to a comfortable corner across the room away from the group and given the pre-test. When

the tests were collected, the writer documented on the tests when the new teens came in on the teaching so that when their pre-tests and post-tests were compared, she would be able to interpret more accurately their learning based upon what they were actually taught in the curriculum.

When the Genesis lesson stories were complete and each picture on the story card was presented and associated directly to the story it represented, a post-test was given to each teen who participated (Appendix D). The same format was used to administer the post-test that was used for the pre-test. The tests were collected and sorted. Pre-test and post-tests for individuals were paired together before scoring. The same process of pre-test/post-test was used for Exodus and Leviticus.

The writer chose a different testing format for the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Instead of a pre-test/post-test, a more informal way of measuring the level of learning was chosen. After teaching the entire picture story card for Numbers and each biblical narrative that went with the pictures, the teens participated in “Bible Jeopardy” (Appendix E). It was set up to be an imitation of the television show. There were five categories with five point levels for each category (100, 200, 300, 400, and 500). The game was held in the youth room, but the chairs and couches were set up differently. A large game board was at the front of the classroom. Instead of everyone being scattered in various places, they were gathered in closer proximity. They were told that there was going to be a jeopardy game as a way of measuring how much information was retained from the lessons over the book of Numbers. The teens expressed excitement, and there was an atmosphere of competitive fun. To start the game, the writer read a question from the first category worth 200 points. The adult leaders were the hand judges. As a question

was read, whoever thought they knew the answer to that question would raise their hands. The first hand raised was the person called upon. If that person answered correctly, he or she was given the points and the privilege of picking the category and point level of the next question. If that person answered incorrectly, the next person to raise a hand was given the opportunity to answer and so on. Learning of the book of Deuteronomy was measured the same way.

Case Study

It was not the original intent of the writer to include a case study as part of the research collection. In the course of completing the process of writing and presenting this research project, the writer was given the opportunity for securing an in depth study of a single individual.

One particular teen, a male who had been raised in the church since birth, was part of the youth group while the writer was in the role of youth pastor. He had been a member of the youth group before the writer began this research project and he was a participant during the time period that the writer was experimenting with the proposed curriculum. He sat through all of the lessons regarding the first five books of the Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy. He had been given the biblical literacy survey; he had taken all pre/post tests; he had played in “Bible Jeopardy;” and he had been given an individual flashcard for each of the five bible books.

He was like many of the other teens in the youth group at the time – he came regularly to all the services and extra outings, but he showed little excitement for learning God’s Word. Having had continued exposure to the church setting, he had some

awareness of overall Bible stories, but he had not scored well on the biblical literacy survey when it came to specific knowledge or comprehension.

During the time that the storytelling curriculum was being taught, this young man took an active role in each lesson – answering questions and volunteering for activities and review. He showed marked increase from his pretest scores to his post test scores. Overall, he was a successful example of a study subject showing an increase in biblical literacy after experiencing the storytelling curriculum.

It was not until a few years later that the writer was given the privilege of interviewing him as a case study. Due to tragic circumstances, the young man (now an adult), visited the writer in her home. At this visit, he had brought his Bible and was sharing with the writer his gratefulness at having her as his youth pastor while growing up. From inside his Bible he pulled out a well-worn flashcard. It was from the Genesis portion of the curriculum which he had been given as a teen. The writer was surprised that he had kept it for so long. Curiosity and an opportunity to include a case study as part of the project prompted her to ask him some questions. She pointed to one of the visual icons on the flashcard and asked if he still remembered what it stood for. He began to retell the story of creation and the general details of what was made on each day. He continued to tell the stories found in the book of Genesis as he pointed to each illustration on the card. The writer sat and listened to his recitation and only interjected an occasional comment or question. When he had finished, the writer complimented him on his biblical knowledge and retention. The writer inquired as to whether the young man had kept any of the other Bible book flashcards and if he still remembered their stories as well. He

expressed that he did. Time was of the essence so the writer was unable to further explore his knowledge of other biblical stories.

This case study presented a new and continuing research option available to the writer, that is, longevity case studies. In the future, the writer plans to continue making contact with past participants of this study and interview them in regards to long-term Bible story knowledge and retention.

Collecting the data, regardless of the method, was a very positive experience. The writer was relieved that she did not run into any obstacles or hindrances. All of the subjects were cooperative and friendly. Surprisingly enough, the writer did not have one-person drop out or complain about the information gathering process. She realized that because the process of collecting information was based completely on how persons reacted or what persons said, the data could be biased. There was the possibility of people lying or giving false information. There was the possibility that the writer, as the information gatherer, might misinterpret a person's response. Regardless of these limitations, the writer felt the information gathered was relevant and appropriate for further analysis. After utilizing various methods and procedures, it seemed time to begin coding the information, configuring results, and analyzing data.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

“An old story – the glory of it is forever.”
Virgil

Introduction

While sitting in an undersized chair engrossed in the story, the writer found herself enraptured by the ups and downs and the twists and turns that the story took as the inflections of the teller’s voice would indicate. As the teller made eye contact with each child in the small crowded area, the writer noticed that the teller’s eyes were no less riveted on her than the eyes of a four year old in that room. The writer came into story time as a professional observer and at some point (I am sure it was toward the beginning) she was swept away by the story. Actually, it was not only the content of the story itself, but the way the teller made the story come to life that captured her. The writer left the story time feeling a bit silly and wondering who might have noticed that she had been so intensely captivated by the teller. She was reassured that there were probably other adults who came to story time not for the children they escorted there, but also for themselves.

This event triggered the writer’s memory back to a time earlier in her career as a child therapist. She had been asked to attend the yearly Ohio state convention for therapists. She attended many classes but had signed up to go to an extra exhibit during the lunch break because it sounded like something that might be interesting. It was a

storytelling demonstration. A veteran storyteller told a story to an audience of professional adults.

After hearing him perform at lunch, the writer wanted to hear more. She stayed late to attend another one of his workshops. He was an average sized man and not very attractive. But when he began to speak, everything changed. As the story came out of his mouth, it was as if his face transformed and each character came to life as he unraveled his tale. As he spoke in a high pitched voice and coyly batted his eyes, it was as if a beautiful princess emerged. When he cackled and hunched his back, an evil witch came to life. And in a simple switch of his tone and the straightening of his shoulders, he looked like a handsome young prince. He was a master storyteller. He showed his skill during a performance when he enhanced a familiar story with spoonerisms. For example, he told the story of “Dincerella and the Prandsome Hince” (Cinderella and the Handsome Prince). This story lasted approximately 15 minutes. His words were silly and backward making people laugh. His talent was such that despite the added obstacle of having to decipher his words the audience was enthralled. When he had finished, the writer found herself clapping uncontrollably. He had completely captured her attention and had taken her on an incredible adventure.

At first the writer thought it was the tricks the teller played by scrambling his letters, but that is not what she remembered most. She had heard the story of Cinderella dozens of times before, but this time it felt as if she had lived it. The writer so enjoyed the story time that she made a beeline to the front of the auditorium and bought his tape. From repeated use, the tape has worn out.

In that experience, the writer was not a researcher, a therapist, nor a doctorate student. She was just a listener. She had experienced firsthand the wonder of storytelling. This memory confirmed to the writer that storytelling was indeed a powerful tool of communication.

Results

For the previous chapters, the writer collected biblical and secular research regarding storytelling. She also conducted various methods and procedures for gathering additional data about storytelling. In all of the experiences and in all of the readings for this project, the writer noticed common components. These components seemed essential in the process of communicating for the information to become learnable and retainable. In order to organize these commonalities, the writer developed a coding system. Coding is the assigning of a designation to various aspects of the data obtained (Merriam 2001, 64). As the collection of data became more complete, a simple coding system began to appear and the codes represented the phenomenon that developed. The coding system was based on the writer's perception of people and things, sequences of events, and how changes occurred. The writer noticed that patterns regarding biblical knowledge, retention, learning, storytelling, and memory began to emerge.

Lack of Knowledge of Old Testament

During the interview process, the writer paid close attention to the comments and inflections of the interviewees. It became clear that the majority of the pastors interviewed gave direct or indirect reference to feelings of frustration regarding congregational knowledge of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. Some pastors thought that this lack of knowledge may be due to the idea that the Old Testament is

more difficult to preach or less often preached. The pastors agreed that major Old Testament stories were relatively known by most people within the church, but they were not always known or remembered accurately.

The questionnaires completed by the youth department, when read and coded, displayed a lack of knowledge of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. The answers that were given on the surveys reflected an overall lack of general knowledge. Very few knew the books of the Old Testament. Some knew the major names (like Moses, Noah, and Jonah); but did not know any details about these individuals. Many had heard stories from the Old Testament, but the facts were either skewed or compromised by combining elements from other fairy tale stories. For example, some of the answers in response to the questions about Moses were interspersed with pieces from the movie *Prince of Egypt*.

By request of the participants and for discussion purposes only, the “correct” answers to the questionnaires were reviewed after they had been collected. One teen shared that he thought he had heard about the Jonah story on television during “shark week.” He said a suit of armor was found in a shark’s belly. He thought that could have been Jonah. After explaining to the youth that Jonah came out of the fish’s belly alive, and that Jonah lived before the time period of suits of armor, the teen smiled and said, “Oh yeah.”

The time the writer spent teaching the storytelling curriculum to the youth was fun but sad. The teens were willing participants. They were actively involved in story time and blurted out questions and comments freely. This assured the writer of their comfort level during the storytelling process. They would say what they were thinking or express what they believed to be true. They would make funny remarks that sadly

showed their lack of knowledge. For example, while talking about Moses and the burning bush, one teen said, “How did Moses know it was God speaking?” Another kid blurted out, “Duh, who else could talk through a bush?” Another example came when teaching about creation. One girl raised her hand and said, “Didn’t God have to create two earths because the first one was destroyed in the Ice Age?” It was during these times that the writer came to realize the pronounced lack of biblical knowledge among the teens.

Lack of Retention

Throughout this project, the writer was able to interact with many people in various ways. During these interactions, the writer discovered an overall trend for a lack of remembering or retrieving biblical information.

During the interview process, the pastoral interviewees verbalized hints of frustration in regard to what congregation members remembered from biblical teachings. This information led the writer to conduct a spontaneous experiment within her own church. It was informal in nature but the information gathered is worth sharing. Throughout the week following a particular sermon, the writer asked a variety of congregation members what the sermon had been about that Sunday. There was an array of responses, but the majority could not recall any details of the sermon they had just heard. Some would only say, “Um.” Others would hesitate and make an attempt to answer. Some would repeat one sentence they remembered hearing the pastor say, some gave the title of the sermon, some interpreted what they got out of the sermon, and some honestly admitted, “I don’t know.” Few could recall the actual sermon.

The writer wanted to further observe this frustrating dynamic, this time focusing more specifically on adolescent participants. This time the writer waited until after a

Wednesday night youth service and asked if they could tell her what the lesson was about. There were few who could accurately recall any details of what was just taught. The writer tried this experiment several more times periodically following a Wednesday night meeting. The lessons that were most commonly remembered were those that used a movie clip or some other form of interaction that reinforced the message.

The writer went back through the biblical questionnaires that were given to the youth group. This time she looked mainly at the forms that were filled out from kids that had been churched for more than six months. Because many of them had attended the same church the writer attended and had actually been taught by her, the writer personally knew what degree of biblical information had been presented to them. These teens, which had more exposure to biblical information, did not score significantly higher than those that had not been churched. This led the writer to the assumption that biblical retention is an overall problem.

Better Retention When Combining Words and Pictures

During her various storytelling observations, the writer noticed that although children and teens seemed to be more attentive to the vocal variations and intonations of the storyteller, they still had a tendency not to engage completely. But, when the storytelling involved pictures, the audience seemed more involved. For instance, the children at the libraries seemed to stay captivated by the combination of the words of the teller and the glances at the pictures in the book being read. As the writer observed the children, she could actually see their heads go back and forth from the pictures to the storyteller's face.

While storytelling in the daycare setting, the writer found that the times she used pictures or visual props seemed to be the time that the children were most attentive and appeared to have the most fun. They would point at the pictures during special times of the story relating what they saw with what they heard. For example, the writer told the story of Noah and showed pictures of animals. The children would shout out the animal they saw and say, "That was on the ark with Noah."

However, it was while presenting the storytelling curriculum with the teenagers that the writer observed this phenomenon the most. During class time, each teen had an individual picture card. There was a dry erase board behind her as she taught. She would refer to, or sometimes complete, a picture on the board while she told that particular story. The teens would give spontaneous feedback each week during story time about the picture and/or the story. Sometimes they would be so intrigued with the next picture on their card that they would want the writer to continue and to tell "just one more story" before ending class.

The post-testing procedure was enlightening. While the teens were trying to come up with answers, they would ask if they could look at their picture cards to help them remember. On some occasions, if they seemed to be struggling with an answer, the writer would give them an extra chance to come up with an answer by holding up a picture card for 30 seconds. The reference to the picture usually produced a correct response. Sometimes the writer would tell them that they could not refer to their picture cards for help on an answer, and they would be disappointed. While conducting the "Jeopardy" style question/answer method of post testing, the teens would often give their answers by describing the respective picture. For example, the 300-point question for the book of

Numbers was, “This proved Aaron was the high priest.” One unexpected teen whom the writer thought had not ever been listening in class shot his hand up and said, “It was that stick thing with flowers on it in the picture.” The answer was correct. The writer asked him how he remembered such a hard question, and he said it was easy because he remembered the pictures on the card. Another time, when the class was reviewing the book of Deuteronomy, a teen raised her hand with confidence and stated that the entire book was about Israel looking back at the past and looking forward to the future. The writer asked how she knew that, and the student gave a look and flippantly said, “Because of the big eye on the picture card.”

Increased Retention Using Storytelling

The pre/post-test processes revealed an increase in knowledge after being presented with the biblical storytelling curriculum. The amount of information and the increase in the number of correct answers were remarkably higher in the post-tests. During the Genesis portion of the storytelling curriculum, the writer made a significant research mistake. Embarrassingly, there were certain teens that the writer had assumed would not increase in knowledge no matter what was being taught. They were teens who seemed to be at church only for the social aspect or because their parents had forced them to come. The writer was certain their responses would hinder the test results. Also in the class were others who were very enthusiastic about being part of a study. The writer was excited because the students were going to put forth concentrated effort in listening and retaining what was being presented and would help the test results. Then, there were all the teens in the class that were somewhere in between these two extremes. The writer was not sure how they would fit into the test results. When it came time to look at the post-

testing, the writer was shocked. It was difficult to distinguish the teens by their answers. There was such improvement from the Genesis pretest to the Genesis post-test that the writer could not tell which papers were from the assumed “bad” kids and which were from the assumed “good” kids. The writer was ashamed that she had tried to classify the teens. Without subconscious tester bias keeping her blind, the writer realized that every teen could possibly benefit from this storytelling curriculum. For the next few Bible book picture cards that were studied (Genesis – Deuteronomy), the writer willingly put aside personal assumptions and consciously treated the entire class equally as potential learners. Again, the teens, in the post-testing process, showed remarkable ability to learn the Bible.

While writing, typing, and editing this portion of Chapter Five, much time has gone by since the storytelling curriculum was taught to the youth group. The writer sat reading and re-reading what she had written and wondered if the storytelling had truly been successful. A teenager came to the door right at that moment. He was one who had sat through the storytelling project. The writer decided to do an impromptu study. She asked him if he remembered anything from when he was in the youth group during the storytelling of the books of the Bible. He said, “Oh, you mean those picture cards?” He said he remembered. The writer asked if he would be willing to do a little test to see if he did indeed remember. He agreed. The writer pulled out the Genesis picture card and showed it to him. He rapidly went through each picture retelling the stories of Genesis. The writer showed him Exodus. Again, he breezed through it. His confidence grew as he continued telling the stories. Soon he became animated and excited. He wanted to continue through the cards. He was able to connect all but a very few of the pictures with

the corresponding stories. When the writer would give him a word cue to go with a picture he would instantly say, “Oh yeah” and go right into telling the story. This was a profitable experiment that corroborated the overwhelming evidence that there was increased retention after using a storytelling curriculum.

Historical Success of Storytelling

This category of coding came mostly out of the research. The writer had read of cultures throughout history that utilized storytelling as a form of communication. The Bible itself became a primary focus of the success of storytelling. Not only is the Bible set up in story format, but it also intimately records the telling of these stories as the means in which the information it contains was preserved. For the Bible, storytelling is both the means and the method.

The writer’s observation and experience with storytelling surprised and overwhelmed her. She felt like she had found a magic key. The writer had seen the miraculous way that people’s ears were opened and their brains turned on to learning. But she could not explain what she had discovered. The writer knew the Bible said storytelling was the way to reach the generations. She believed this to be true by faith, but she did not understand it by logic. That led the writer to do a bit more research of the data available on how and why the human brain so willingly consumed and retained information when presented in a storytelling format.

Data Analysis

Memory

The human brain is amazing. It is the key to learning and memory. It has one hundred billion neurons; that is as many cells as there are stars in the Milky Way, and it has one hundred trillion connecting cells (Gurian 2001, 18). It is through the interconnections of these cells that the brain processes and stores information. Information comes into the brain through one of the sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. This is the first step in learning. The information must then be stored, for nothing can be learned without tapping into some form of memory.

The brain is like a highly efficient microcomputer that stores experiences and knowledge in complex categories and networks within its cells. This enables everyone to have a tremendous ability to retain information and to remember it when it is triggered with the right association. A person can remember a piece of information that has been received if it is associated to something that is already known or remembered (Dryden 1994, 118).

Memory is a complicated and multi-departmental operation. The brain's memory system is like a storage unit; its storage depots can be compartmentalized into short-term memory, active working memory, and long-term memory (Levin 2002, 94-95). Short-term memory allows for very brief retention of new information (approximately two seconds). It serves as one of the brain's relay stations. The active working memory is utilized when a person temporarily holds in the brain all the different components of what one is trying to do at the moment. It is not as brief as short-term memory or as permanent as long-term memory. Active memory will retain information for as little as a few

minutes or as much as several hours. Long-term memory is the warehouse of permanent knowledge. It is the brain's hard drive. It is seemingly limitless, utilizing an elaborate filing system. With a system this intricate, the challenge is to store information systematically, that is, to put it somewhere we are most apt to find it later.

As data enters the brain it can immediately be sent to active memory, or it can be forgotten quickly in short-term memory. Choosing one of these options has to be done quickly, in less than two seconds, unless there is an extension. One can extend the life of data in short term memory. Whispering the information under your breath, forming pictures in your mind's eye, or if it is visual information it can be put into words, thereby, lengthening the amount of time that the information is retained in short term memory (Levin 2002, 94-95).

Once the decision is made to place information into long-term memory, one can later access that information through two primary channels: recall and recognition. Recall is the process used to excavate an entire chunk of knowledge. Recognition is when particular information triggers a knowing of having encountered that information before (Levin 2002, 95). Most people have been in the humiliating situation of wanting to remember something but not being able to bring it to the surface. This is a frustrating experience. There is really no use in taking in important information if it cannot be accessed when the information is needed or wanted. This is where storytelling can be of use in the recall and recognition process of memory.

Stories help tie content together, pairing information and aiding in the inherent functions of memory. Memory is basically story based. The way in which one understands information is to correlate the story being heard with one that is already

known (Larsen 1995, 14). It is helpful to form memory pairs between words and their meanings, for example, tying song titles with their melodies or events with their dates. Pairing occurs when two pieces of information are associated together and are stored in long-term memory together (Levin 2002, 95). When one half of the pair is come across the other half will then come to mind. Storytelling connected to illustrations, or word pictures, can be another useful way of pairing, especially since many people perceive their world through one mode, like sight or sound, and store their memories principally as images in that mode (Lipman 1999, 47-55).

The brain is capable of sorting and storing virtually every major piece of data it takes in, and it stores this data by making great use of patterns and associations. Because the brain has billions of active cells that can combine into an unfathomable number of connections that store information based on associated topics, memory is based on association (Dryden 1994, 7). The more one can work with the brain's own memory method, the faster and easier one will learn.

Learning and Storytelling

Memory stored is not equivalent to learning. Once information is presented, there is an opportunity for learning to occur during the memory storage process. The brain has an almost inexhaustible capacity to learn (Nummela-Caine and Caine 1991, 9). The human brain has a set of exceptional learning features: the ability to detect patterns, to make approximations, to self correct, to learn from experience by data analysis and self-reflection, and to create. In order to optimize the brain's learning capacity, connections need to be made. Research of the brain has established that "multiple complex and concrete experiences are essential for meaningful learning and teaching" (Nummela-

Caine and Caine 1991, 5). In essence, this means that people learn from ongoing experiences. Throughout life, people learn by absorbing and using different bits of information they pick up from the surrounding world (Bradway and Hill 2004, 5). Simply put, the brain processes information all the time. In fact, there is strong reason to believe that the organization of information in the story form is a natural way for the brain to process (Nummela-Caine and Caine 1991, 4). Brain researcher Geoffrey Caine puts it this way:

Many people assume that learning takes place primarily through memorization of facts and specific skills. Almost ignored is the immense capacity of the brain to deal with and instantly remember the moment events that constitute life experience. Even more neglected and under stressed, is the innate predisposition of the brain to search for how things make sense, to search for some meaning in experience. This translates into the search for common patterns and relationships. It is a matter of finding out how what is being learned at what the learner already knows and values and how information and experience connect. (Nummela-Cain and Caine 1991, 4)

Individuals learn by processing information in different ways. For most, learning can be strengthened when a person has a mentor (Blair 2001, 29-30). A mentor functions as a guide, a model, an advocate, or a coach. Relationship is part of the learning process. No matter the age a person is, he or she is more likely to learn from someone whom they respect and trust (Gurian 2001, 75). The confident learner is a child who has a positive sense of self-worth, most of which needs to be developed by the family and others who care for the child during his or her early years (Simic 1992, xxi). Young children learn best when they learn from someone to whom they are intimately attached. For instance, if a child is securely attached to a caregiver – mother, father, grandparent, or teacher – the child will learn more. This learning includes not only what the caregiver is teaching but also total learning competency (Gurian 2001, 75). Learning is best achieved when

bonding occurs between the teacher and the learner. Thus, bonding acts as an almost magical way to ensure good learning. Although bonding may take more time and energy, it will provide a more profound learning experience for the young person. One of the gifts of storytelling is the special bond that connects the story and the listener (Isbell 2000, 8). Thus, with a story based curriculum, the storyteller becomes a teacher because a relationship begins to develop with the listener. This makes a story based curriculum ideal for both home and church settings where continuity of relationship is more likely.

Storytelling can be a vital tool to help communicate with listeners of all ages; helping them solve problems, and giving them opportunities for growth (Flora 2007). Through stories and interaction the teller reaches beyond the surface child and speaks to the inner child (Baker and Greene 1987, xii). This connection prepares the listener for learning and increases the potential for greater understanding.

Although learning is a processing of the brain, there are other essential components of learning as well. Educators have observed that action is necessary for true learning to occur (Blair 2001, 47). Action combined with reflection leads to even deeper learning and understanding. For example, a child learns to crawl not just by observation but also by crawling, to walk by walking, and to talk by talking. Each time the child does the action, the child lays down a new pathway in the brain (if the experience is new), or the child builds on and expands existing pathways (if the experience is repeated) (Dryden 1994, 227). Brain researchers suggest that “for good learning, the listener needs to be engaged in talking, listening, reading, viewing, acting, and valuing” (Nummela-Caine and Caine 1991, 6). Storytelling can be a successful tool integrating interaction and reflection into the learning process.

Developmental Stages and Storytelling

A storyteller, in order to be successful, need be somewhat aware of the listener's cognitive capacity and therefore, tell the stories in such a way that is appropriate to the developmental stage of the listener (Shaw 1999, 313-317). The process of learning is changing as the brain and its thought capacity continues to develop. Jean Piaget identified four stages of human cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational (1950, 131-182). The sensorimotor stage is typically from birth to twenty-four months. At this time learning takes place only through the senses. Simple cues using sight, sound, and touch can be received and associated for learning. Listening to voices reading or singing, looking at pictures and being helped to make small gestures can be ways to teach children Bible stories at this developmental stage. Preoperational development takes place from ages two through five. This child's "understanding of objects, events, and relationships depends on external attributes that the child can perceive" (Shaw 1999, 314). At this stage a child can retell short stories if the stories are told in a meaningful sequence that can be organized on the basis of what the child sees, such as color, size, shape, or use.

Bible stories can be told in such a way as to trigger these organizational patterns. For example, when telling the story of Noah and the Ark having the child repeat the sounds each of the animals makes can help with the learning process. Concrete operations develop between ages six through eleven. A child begins thinking logically and can mentally conserve, classify, associate, and reverse (Shaw 1999, 314). Capacity to predict what will happen in a story will begin at this stage. A child here will also sense value and authenticity, and make social inferences. This is a good time to teach the moral

foundations that are found within Bible stories. Formal operations begin to develop at adolescents. A significant aspect of this stage is hypothetical-deductive reasoning which allows thinking to go beyond the concrete to the abstract (Shaw 1999, 315). A child becomes capable of comprehending ideas and concepts and can make generalizations. Formal operations also bring with it the ability for a child to emotionally respond to ideas. Presenting biblical stories at this time allows a child to reflect on spiritual understanding by engaging in a new critical way of thinking. Stories can present a challenge for child at this stage to make affirmations about faith in God and create a healthy spiritual identity. The presentation of Bible stories to a child in the formal operational thought stage can help facilitate knowledge and love for God and a sense of love and community toward others (Shaw 1999, 316).

As children develop through the stages of thought they become capable of making more decisions for themselves and “they begin to subject moral and religious behaviors to critical examination” (Shaw 1999, 347). Interjecting age appropriate biblical storytelling at any stage of this process can invite children to examine the beliefs and values they hold. Childhood beliefs begin to make way for new beliefs that come out of the formation of cognitive development. For some this belief will develop into faith.

Visual Images and Storytelling

From ancient times to the present, stories and picture have been a useful combination to facilitate learning. Images, symbols, illustrations, or artifacts have served as visible reminders of the lessons, values, and beliefs of cultural groups throughout the centuries (Malphurs 1996, 115-116).

The use of pictures stimulates curiosity and interest. Consequently, the minds of those in the audience become active and ready to receive and process the message the storyteller presents (Bixler 1932, 22). Visual aids are also used to create mental images that help trigger memory and reinforce learning (Baker and Greene 1987, 111-112). As a result, pictures are a tool of storytelling that can leave a lasting impression.

Storytelling encourages listening and visualizing. It stimulates the imagination and gives cause for mental visualization (Livo and Riltz 1987, xi) As individuals listen, they create the scenes, the action, and the characters in their own imaginations, thereby, facilitating learning and retention. Sometimes while telling, it is effective to stop and allow a few seconds of silence so the listener can absorb and connect to the story. This gives pause for the audience to involve themselves in the story (Litherland 1976, 5). Through learning the stories, people can then practice visualization on their own.

God used visual imagery when he taught his people, so did Jesus. For example, God spoke to Moses and used fire in a bush to capture his attention. He used wind, clouds, sticks, birds, and more as visual aids. God provided more than one dimensional learning (Miller 2003, 103-112). Jesus wrote in the dirt, spit on clay, and broke pieces of bread to illustrate his stories. He picked off heads of wheat while sharing a story with his disciples to reinforce his message. The Bible is filled with symbols and props used to solidify a concept or experience.

Because today's generation of young people are raised in a postmodern day, they are media savvy. They respond to symbols, imagery, and sensory stimulation. They are bombarded with continuous electronic stimuli. This dilemma fits nicely into a biblical storytelling curriculum. For instance, a storyteller can utilize media as a way to highlight

a biblical lesson. Using clips from songs, movies, videos, and television can help illustrate a story. The writer once used a clip of intense fighting between two soldiers wearing old style military armor from the movie *Prince Caspian* as visualization to help the listeners understand the armor of God in the Scriptures. A storyteller can also work with sound effects, video screens, recording devices, smart boards, and amplification systems as a way to enhance their biblical storytelling presentations. Technology today is what flannel graph was to past storytellers.

Influence of Storytelling

At a minimum, a story is “a sequence of experiences with a meaningful theme” (Nummela-Caine and Caine 1991, 113). That means each of us is a living story. Blair put it eloquently when he said, “To be a person is to have a story. And to hear someone else’s story is in part to hear our own, for every story is our story” (2001, 85). We relate to others by empathizing with their stories. When a story is shared, it can inspire action, foster appreciation, expand knowledge, or provide enjoyment (Isbell 2000, 8).

One of the best ways to learn in life is to observe other people’s lives: how they lived, what they did, and what they did not do. The Bible is full of beneficial stories in which one can see, hear, and experience what people did right, what they did wrong, and how their choices affected them and others (Yount 2004). One can be inspired and duly warned all at the same time. The Bible teaches God’s story and the story of his people. These stories reiterate the messages sometimes forgotten. Biblical storytelling gives an avenue in which to encounter a variety of real people that can influence lives either by being worthy to imitate or by being an example to avoid.

From the beginning of their lives, children imitate others. They learn from what they see and hear (Simic 1992, 64). They will watch what others do, and listen to what others say. They are like sponges absorbing the environment around them. For anyone, but especially for children, to learn effectively, they have to see it, hear it, and feel it (Dryden 1994, 296). Children love to listen to stories. The more delightful the story and the storyteller, the more children will get out of the listening experience (Isbell 2000, 8). Not only will they enjoy experiencing the stories, but they also will gain many skills. Increased language and vocabulary, enhanced reading and writing, and a greater appreciation for various people groups and their culture are only a few of the added skills children experience through the influence of storytelling (Hamilton and Weiss 1996, 151).

Storytelling is also a way to create community. Our ability to communicate is one of our key human traits (Dryden 1994, 243). Stories connect us to other people, communities, and cultures (Blair 2001, 85). They allow us to discover common experiences. People form identities around happenings that they shape into stories, and sharing these creates a common link. Stories are a way in which a community and the individuals in a community express who they are and what they value. People respond to stories because they are a reminder of what is universal while at the same time celebrating what is unique. Storytelling solicits community understanding by building bridges between peoples (Leeming 1997, 8). Sharing stories, especially those of tradition and experience that come from the heart, is a great way to keep people connected (Yount 2004). Stories passed down from generation to generation and from culture to culture link people to their heritage. In other words, stories connect communities by helping

individuals understand who they were, who they are, and who they will become (Litherland 1976, 5).

Biblical Storytelling as Community

History has shown that large portions of both the Old Testament and the New Testament are rooted in stories. Scholars agree that oral tradition is an influence behind many parts of the Bible (Ultimate Bible 2002, 62). The Old Testament storybooks include Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, and I & II Samuel. The New Testament, especially the gospel are derives from oral tradition as well (K-12 2006, 2).

Even after the Word of God was written, it was still passed down through verbal commentary. Psalms 78:2-4 describes this emphasis on the communication effort to pass on the stories to the generations to come: “I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter hidden things from old – what we have heard and known what our fathers have told us. We will not keep them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praise worthy deeds of the Lord, His power and the wonders He has done” (Psalm 78:2-4 [NIV]).

Narrative was an effective avenue of communication due to its conduciveness to creating community. Being within a community is a great way to learn, for “a community of people learning together provides emotional and intellectual support” (Blair 2001, 27). Community is often referred to in a grand sense of town, village, or city. But community can be more personal; it is any person within particular vicinity having interest or religion in common. That means a church body, a neighborhood, or even a family system constitutes a community. The Bible itself defines community as two or more who are gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20). When a community reads, discusses, or examines

the Bible together, “they are closer to the way the Bible was originally written to be read” (Ultimate Bible 2002, 48).

Some critics would say that the Bible is unreliable because its beginning is in oral history. However, history has proven that “inhabitants of oral cultures have more reliable memories than those of us who depend upon filing cabinets and computers” (Ultimate Bible 2002, 63). The Israelites, responsible for compiling the majority portion of the Bible, were particularly devoted to story keeping. They valued the task of passing on the history of their God and their people. They exercised great narrative skills and developed sophisticated memorization techniques in order to accurately recount the stories of God’s faithful deeds to succeeding generations (Ultimate Bible 2002, 63). The community itself became a part in the keeping and the accurate retelling of their history until it was written down and compiled.

In Israel’s early history, boys were taught the Old Testament stories and traditions by rabbis and other male community leaders. Mothers and other mature women of the community taught the girls. Whatever the young men needed to know to fulfill their places within the community and whatever the young women needed to know to fulfill their obligations as wives and mothers according to Jewish law and custom was provided from the Word of God by oral tradition (Merrell and Christon 1993, 58).

Christian history has affirmed that within a community of faith God makes himself known. Within faith communities the interpreting of biblical stories, the carrying out of tradition and the deciding of ethical principles are to take place (Blair 2001, 28). The telling of biblical stories within a community (especially to children) will teach spiritual and moral values, will give strength of character, and will model nobility of

purpose. The spiritual and moral values that are communicated will furnish the standard for behavior. They will serve as a guide for the choices one must face in life (Langdor and Stout 1962, 11). The stories of the Bible are a vital part of one's heritage and shine as lights showing the honorable path on which to walk.

Stories shape faith because they speak everyone's language and because they translate long-lasting truths into images and symbols that can be used by the current generation that is listening to the stories. Stories shape how people make sense of life; stories give vision and purpose. Biblical stories transcend time, weaving together tradition with contemporary culture, bringing together history and setting the stage for the future (Blair 2001, 82-83).

Historical Biblical Storytelling

As discussed in Chapter two, biblical storytelling has existed since creation. In fact, it was through the inspired telling of stories that the Bible established its foundation. Storytelling and disciplined imagination, called Midrash, was used for centuries by Jewish rabbis to interpret biblical texts (Blair 2001, 45-47). They were important parts of studying the Bible. The rabbis would spend hours contemplating and discussing. Midrash was work done by the rabbis and early Christian leaders to explain biblical passages. Midrash was exercised in variety of avenues, one of which was commentary in the form of story (Larsen 1995, 79).

Jewish people believe in *Torah lo bashamayim hi'*, which means the Torah, is not in heaven. In other words, the Torah is for those on earth. It is up to the people left on earth to use wisdom and understanding in interpreting scripture – “the teller interprets while telling, and the listener interprets while listening” (Litherland 1976, 6).

Storytelling has existed since the establishment of the church. Christian storytelling is the “tradition of teaching Judeo-Christian religious doctrine through the telling of stories” (Leeming 1997, 115). Christian storytelling begins in the Old Testament and continues throughout the New Testament, and it is these stories that form the core of Christian tradition. The people of the early church did not have a complete written copy of the New Testament. That does not mean that they were without a Bible. They accepted and used the scripture of the Jews. The Old Testament was the Bible in the early church. They followed the example of Jesus and quoted the writers of the Old Testament ascribing to their words divine authority (Earle 1968, 5).

Parables and allegories were typical forms of storytelling during historical biblical times. Allegories are found throughout biblical texts. Parables are mostly in the New Testament, but on occasion, a parabolic story is found in the Old Testament (e.g. Parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7, and parable of the sheep Nathan tells David in II Samuel 12:17). Both parables and allegories are stories used to make a comparison. The main difference between a parable and an allegory is that in a parable not every detail is necessarily significant. “In ancient and medieval times, it was customary to treat the parables of Jesus as allegories” (Lightfoot 1965, 15). For example, an early church scholar named Origen, who lived in the third century, interpreted the parable of the Good Samaritan like this:

The man who fell among robbers is Adam. Jerusalem represents heaven, and Jericho, since it was away from Jerusalem, represents the world. The robbers are man’s enemies, the devil and comrades. The priest stands for the law; the Levite for the prophets, and the ‘Good Samaritan’ for Christ Himself. The beast on which the man was placed is Christ’s body, while the two pence are the Father and the Son. The ‘Good Samaritan’ promises that he will come back again so Christ Jesus will come again at the end of the world. (Lightfoot 1965, 15)

A failure to recognize this difference between allegories and parables can drastically change the interpretation and meaning of the message presented. It is critical to determine accurately the genre in which the material was intended to be received.

A primary rule in interpreting parables is to find out the central truth of the parable. The question to ask is, “What is the main lesson of the story?” (Lightfoot 1965, 16). When the main truth is revealed and understood, then all of the related truth can be evaluated within the appropriate framework. Another rule of interpretation is to understand the parable in light of the circumstances of its origin (Lightfoot 1965, 26). In other words, what is the background of the parable, the audience for whom it was given, and the context in which it occurred? Answering these questions will help in understanding and interpreting more accurately. Listening is the other rule for correctly interpreting parables (Lightfoot 1965, 26-30). Jesus himself established this rule. For instance, in Mark’s account of the parable of the sower, Jesus’ first word to the audience was “listen” (Mark 4:3 [NIV]). He ended that same parable with the command, “He who has ears, let them hear” (Mark 4:9 [NIV]). In order for his story to be received in its full effect, the audience had to be listening attentively. Understanding the type of story being told in the Bible, is critical to being able to retell accurately the stories today.

Storytelling and disciplined imagination anciently called Midrash, is still useful today in studying and interpreting the Bible. This is especially appealing to those who have been unchurched, to those who are intimidated by the Bible, and to those who are younger. By introducing with biblical stories, people can learn to connect with scriptural texts in an enjoyable yet challenging way (Blair 2001, 90).

Biblical References to Storytelling

The Bible is an exquisite book in which stories abound. Each story has a beginning, middle, and an end. Each has a plot with twists and turns, has characters, and has a theme. The stories are not presented in a detached way as a historian might collect them, but are presented in a fashion that is up-close and personal (Alexander 1999, 21).

The need for the retelling of the Bible and its stories is emphasized throughout its pages. The Bible gives examples of a multitude of different settings in which its stories can be told to have lasting effects upon listeners. These settings are relevant today and can still be viable to retell these stories.

The book of Nehemiah has a wonderful example of the importance of group biblical storytelling: “They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read” (Nehemiah 8:8 [NIV]). In this portion of Scripture, the people were assembled and Nehemiah called upon Ezra to retell the stories of the first biblical books of the law. A number of Levites stood next to Ezra as he read and they interpreted what he said so the people could understand. This practice of interpretation became an oral tradition up until the days of Jesus (Ellwell 2000, 320). The audience gathered and was willing to listen attentively to the lengthy exposition. As the tellers spoke God’s Word, the people became involved in the telling. When they heard of the full measure of God’s standards, the people became overwhelmed with grief at the extent of their sins (Alexander 1999, 337). The people shouted “Amen” and bowed down to worship. The power of the story evoked such a response. The storyteller brought the people to a place of understanding, and this in turn

brought the audience to a place of excitement regarding God's Word. It was this setting of group biblical storytelling that prompted the people to revival (Ellwell 2000, 319).

Another setting in which God stresses the importance of biblical storytelling is within the home. Proverbs 6:20-23 says:

My son, observe the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; bind them continually on your heart. Tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life. (Proverbs 6:20-23 [NIV])

The telling of God's Word within the home is intended to have the illuminating result of the child being able to apply practical wisdom as he or she matures (Baker 2000, 415).

The maturing young person may gird him or herself with the understanding that comes from these training stories and, thereby, be protected from the wickedness of the world.

Again, we also see that it is not only the hearing of the stories but also the attentive listening and following of the instructions that are revealed within the content and context of the story that become a significant part of the storytelling process.

Another example in the Bible that emphasizes the importance of the home setting in communicating the scriptures to children is found in Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" ([NIV]). The Hebrew terms for "train up" originally referred to the palate or the roof of the mouth. This phrase was used to describe the action of a midwife. Soon after a child's birth, she would dip her fingers into juice and massage it on the infant's gums and palate. The tangy taste created a sensation that stimulated sucking so nursing could begin. The word "child" in this verse is used in a broader sense to mean any one from newborn to a person of marriageable age. The meaning of the Hebrew word for old is hair on the chin,

suggesting someone approaching adulthood (Swindoll 2001, 30-32). Putting all this together indicates that a parent, in communicating the scripture to a child, wets the child's appetite in such a way that the child wants to have more of God's word. This training has the positive consequences of influencing a child long into adulthood.

In the New Testament, Jesus teaches us the important use of stories in the various everyday settings of life. Jesus used the power of stories to reach people who would otherwise seem unreachable. His stories had the power to delight, enchant, touch, teach, recall, inspire, motivate, and challenge. He used stories to make a point or raise an issue. Jesus called the stories he told parables.

The word parable is a Greek word that means 'throwing alongside.' In other words, it is the placing of one thing alongside another for the purpose of comparison (Lightfoot 1965, 13). About 35% of Jesus' teachings were in the form of parables (Larsen 1995, 144). Matthew 13:34 states, "Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable" ([NIV]). By using this form of storytelling, Jesus could teach at a number of different levels. There were layers of meaning to discover beyond the obvious for those who were willing. A parable could sort out those who came only to see miracles from those who were serious followers and wanted to understand Jesus' teaching (Alexander 1999, 562). Jesus used these word pictures to get people thinking. He aroused the curiosity of his audience by beginning a story. They would follow him all the way through often without realizing where he had led them. Then the hidden meaning of the story would be revealed and they could not contradict what he had said (Lightfoot 1965, 14). He would tell a story that was true to life using it to draw a parallel between earthly things and heavenly things.

The gospels are not the only places where storytelling is emphasized in the New Testament. Paul gives this instruction to a very young pastor just starting out in his role of ministry within the church: “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching” (I Timothy 4:13 [NIV]). The biblical command to repeat and recite the scriptures seems to be one of the main functions that was assigned to the early church in order to keep them from being overtaken by the lies of Satan. This verse recommends a public setting for the telling of the Word of God. The reading of Scripture has an element of bringing information to the hearers. The preaching of the word, which in Greek is more closely translated exhortation, focused on explanation and interpretation. The teaching of the word in all probability related to the passing on of Christian doctrine, which, as discussed earlier, probably involved storytelling. Timothy was instructed to train his people by faithfully and publically setting the Scriptures before them (Ellwell 2000, 1106-1107). It was by this sharing of the stories of the gospel that people were saved and their lives changed

From the Old Testament through the New Testament there are references to storytelling as an effective format for communicating truths to a listening audience within church settings.

Need for Biblical Storytelling

As reported by Christine Blair the author of *The Art of Teaching the Bible*, church leaders, including both teachers and pastors, realize that the study and communication of the Bible is the heart of Christian faith, but many are frustrated at how to teach it (2001). According to this same study, there are four typical problems regarding the Bible and how it is presented in churches today. They are biblical illiteracy, poor teaching methods,

lack of motivation and negligent curriculum. It is becoming more typical for a congregation, whether young or old, not to know the Word of God. Blair says that the pastors who participated in her research concluded that “people don’t or can’t interpret the biblical texts for themselves,” or they lack the motivation to try (Blair 2001, 3). Therefore, it becomes more critical for church leaders to present Scripture clearly to the congregation in which they minister. There appears to be fewer teachers and pastors willing to find the best way to get material into a student’s head. Some would agree there is a tragic trend in today’s church of placing little value on relating or adhering to Scripture. According to researcher Roland Barth, finding and utilizing a beneficial processing of communicating material is the key to effective teaching (1990, 29). A careful study was done which examined a leading publication designed for Christian leaders. It was uncovered that out of the first 434 essays in the magazine, less than 1% actually referred to the Bible or to Christian doctrine (Larsen 1995, 29).

In our century, one theologically critical school of thought after another has left little Scripture remaining in biblical teaching (Larsen 1995, 29). Any teaching can become boring or ineffective, but the worse consequence is to have teaching become frothy and lacking in biblical substance. Storytelling is not the only appropriate means by which to teach God’s Word, but it is truly one of the most valuable. For example, Bible study is good, but it focuses only on the cognitive, whereas, storytelling is a whole being experience. Storytelling can be a life changing event for some; for hearing a story is very much like living through the events that the story contains (Graves 2008, 13-18). Based on the growing need for biblical teaching, the proposed storytelling curriculum could offer an exciting, truth based solution to teaching God’s Word.

Relating as Storyteller

Anyone, regardless of age, race, or gender, can become a storyteller if he or she truly desires. The critical requirement is that a storyteller needs to relate to both the story and the listener. Therefore, to become a true storyteller, one must be willing to communicate through narrative a story (for which he or she feels passion) to an audience (whether one or many) of listeners with whom he/she is willing to connect directly.

The story is the medium for transferring information to others. As a storyteller, one can transfer this information as a beneficiary or as a helper. A beneficiary is the person for whose sake the story is being told (Lipman 1999, 114). For instance, if a storyteller can choose to be the beneficiary, then he or she is the one who is out for gain. But if the storyteller chooses for the listener to be the beneficiary, then the focus is placed on the gain of the audience. Storytelling can be as rewarding for the teller as it is for the listener (Flora 2007). In choosing to be a helper, the storyteller has agreed to put the beneficiary's needs, not his or her own needs, first (Lipman 1999, 114-115). Thus, the relationship to both the story and the listener has begun to be established.

A storyteller is only as good as the story he or she tells. Without the story, there is nothing. The storyteller must find a story he or she truly wants to tell. If the teller is disconnected to the story it will show in how it is told; even body language will reflect it (Flora 2007). If the teller is not committed to the story neither will the audience be committed to it, and little transfer of information will occur. A storyteller should choose a story he or she loves or believes in. Maybe it is one that will make people laugh, think, or give a shiver down the spine. If it is a good story to tell, the storyteller will feel like he or she can't wait to share it with someone (Hamilton and Weiss 1996, 5).

One of the crucial elements to emerge as the teller shares a story is what the story means to the teller. If the storyteller has not established a connection to the story, the telling will lack some component of its potential power (Lipman 1999, 92). Before the story is told, a storyteller should develop mental images of the story to see, hear, and feel the events of the story about to be told. The passion of the teller to relay the story will emerge. After the story is told, the listeners will create their own mental images of the story. They will see, hear, and feel the events of the story as well.

Although the job of storytelling is not to impose interpretation on the listeners, it remains important that an interpretation is available. If the storyteller remains unfocused about the story's primary means, the resulting lack of clarity will make the listeners less able to attach their own meanings to the story (Lipman 1999, 90). When a story is told with clear intention, new meaning can flow out of the teller's own meaning.

There is a spectrum of techniques for expressing the meaning of the story. A brief statement before the story is told can be made. This is usually not intrusive. A disadvantage of making a statement is that it may prevent audience members from opening themselves to their own interpreted meaning of the story (Lipman 1999, 94). Another option is to include a statement of meaning within the story itself. Yet another alternative is to wait and make a statement of meaning after the story has been told. The benefit of this last alternative is that this avoids shutting down the audience before the story begins. But the downside is that the audience may feel as if you have "tricked them into entering an open, trusting, story-listening state, only to sneak in a moral" (Lipman 1999, 94). A final technique is to incorporate the meaning into the action of the story.

When choosing the Bible as the source of the story to be told, deciding how to translate the meaning also becomes important. Although the Bible is very capable of speaking for itself, in many religious settings it is expected that the storyteller will make some statement of the story's meaning or at least make mention of the story's theme. The theme of the story represents the author's message. It is crucial that when telling a biblical story to "let the story itself carry the message through character and plot, without commenting on or referring to the theme as such" (Breneman 1984, 26). Especially in biblical stories, the lesson of a story may have stronger effect on an audience if it is allowed to stand on its own within the context of the story. The power of the Bible story will do the affecting.

The storyteller takes the story and breathes life into it. Anyone who is willing to take the time to find the right story and who has a sincere desire to share the story can be a successful storyteller (Baker & Greene 1987, 43). A storyteller is much like a gardener who plants the seeds and provides the water and access to sunlight that the seeds require. But the gardener can never force the seeds to grow. The storyteller shares the information, planting it in the hearts of the listeners, but he or she cannot force the audience to respond to the story. When a plant sprouts or a listener takes the story to heart, both the gardener and the storyteller can rejoice in the mystery of the process.

Conclusion

Through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and data analysis, the writer has come to believe that first there is a problem of biblical illiteracy within her own church; within the surrounding local churches and possibly within the church as a whole. Secondly, biblical storytelling may be able to help solve this dilemma. Everything she

has seen, heard, researched, and discovered has lead her to the conclusion that a story based curriculum that teaches the basic stories for each of the books of the Bible starting with the Old Testament should be developed. A passionate storyteller and a willing listener are the critical components for this solution, with the Bible as the focus.

Jesus painted a delightful verbal picture of the role of the biblical storyteller. He said, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasure as well as old” (Matthew 13:52 [NIV]). The privilege of telling the wondrous stories of God’s Word is as great as being a rich man living in a house full of treasures. Surely, the stories of his word are more valuable than all the earthly treasures a house could hold, and sharing those treasures with others through the art of storytelling is a glorious duty.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Give them stories... give them wings.”
(Colwell 1967, 9)

Introduction

“Miss Jackie is here! Miss Jackie is here!” These words would buzz about the hallways as the writer entered the day care facility during her storytelling experiments. The excitement in the building was comparable to that at a feast set within a medieval castle filled with long tables surrounded by seated nobles waiting to be entertained by the enchanting tales of the court minstrel. The same eager anticipation could be felt each time the writer entered the day care facility. Knowing that the children looked forward to hearing the stories and engaging in relationship was evidence to the power of storytelling. It was a joy for the writer to look into the eyes of these young children as the truth of the Bible began to unfold for them. It was almost as if she could see the wheels turning and the switches flipping.

For some of these children at the daycare facility, it might have been the first and only time that they would hear Word of God. This was not only the case for the writer and her experiences with teaching children and youth, but could also be the circumstances for anyone sharing the stories of the Bible. The transferring of God’s word from one generation to the next is a critical task. It is much like a relay runner handing off the baton to the next runner. The technique and timing of the transfer is repeated until

increased skill is learned. The runner becomes well acquainted with the baton, studying its every intricacy, much like the storyteller handles the Word of God. In order for the transfer to be successful, the runner, like the storyteller, must have the attention of the one to whom it is being passed. After receiving the baton, the next runner can then take off with the intention of passing the baton to the next runner in line, much like the listener can do with the story being passed on to his or her care.

Choosing to be a storyteller has many rewards including the effects the story has on the teller and the effects it has on the listeners. Maybe that is why Jesus chose to be a storyteller. He told stories as a way to teach, to reveal, and to engage with others. When crowds of people would gather around Jesus, He would tell them stories to help them think about the right things (Butterworth 1994, 3).

Summary

“That which comes from the heart goes to the heart.”
(William Wadsworth)

As one of the oldest and most persistent arts, storytelling underscores how basic yet how significant it is in establishing the foundation of human history (Larsen 1995, 14). Anyone wanting to effectively transfer the truths from the Word of God can consider storytelling as an appropriate means.

Each person is a potential storyteller, for all can retell their own experiences, their stories, to another with enthusiasm, conviction, and a wealth of details. Storytelling is a part of everyday living, and the stories told bring people together for a shared experience whether it is in the home or in the community (Lwo 1987, xi-xiii). Stories are an integral part of family life. They have been used to pass on family history, to teach lessons, to

initiate new members into the family, and, of course, to put children to sleep at night. Stories become part of the glue that holds a family together, that defines a family. Stories are what make one family different from all other families. Storytelling increases the amount of communication within a family, and creates a sense of togetherness (Hamilton and Weiss 1996, 154). Storytelling is also an integral part of community. Stories are used to entertain, to maintain tradition, and to increase knowledge and communication. Storytelling is a way of keeping alive the cultural heritage of a people (Baker and Greene 1987, 1-4). For instance, historically the Hebrew people had a unique passion for storytelling (Larsen 1995, 13). Their literature was mostly religious in nature being based primarily on the first five books of the Bible written down by Moses (Nelson 2002, 341). The majority of the people had no access to the written Word of God; thus, with painstaking detail, the Jews would relay the words of God through storytelling. Over the centuries, the story of God was told and retold. In each generation the stories affirmed the life and identity of the people and held together the community (Blair 2001, 12).

God commanded Moses to be a storyteller, and he in turn commanded all who believed in God to be storytellers as well. According to what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6:1-5, God's reasoning for the perpetual telling of his word was so that children would learn how to live and, thereby, lead long and successful godly lives. With people living according to God's law, society in general would be a less immoral and violent place to live.

Children are increasingly affected by violence, growing social problems, and a lack of respect for each other and the world around them (Tillman 2000, ix). Many specialists and theorists speculate that a probable solution lies in an emphasis on teaching

values to children. According to research, law enforcement leaders have concluded “that intervening early in children’s lives is the best way to prevent violence and crime”

(Washington, D.C. 2007). Social science and neuroscience studies have also confirmed that in the first few years of life:

Children’s intelligence and emotion, and even their ability to feel concern for others – a prerequisite to ‘conscience’ – are being permanently shaped. Therefore, to teach children while they are still young is a vital component in shaping a healthy society. Providing families early access to morally sound educational programs is one of the proven steps to dramatically reduce school and youth violence and crime. (Washington, D.C. 2007)

The Bible offers a complete curriculum of moral code within its stories. Thus, the Bible can make a positive impact on society. It contains the stories of God and the experiences of the men and women as they are recorded in both the Old and New Testaments. Their experiences help people interpret their own lives and to understand God’s work within them (Richards 1991, 7). Young people, as well as adults, can comprehend how the Bible stories express the human condition and yet can still offer hope and answers through the God who creates and cares for humans. God’s Word speaks powerfully to the young and to the old by capturing vital truths and bringing them to life in such a way that they can be understood and experienced (Richards 1991, 7).

In Isaiah 55:11, God promised to bless his word by using it to do his work. God says that his word “will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” ([NIV]). It is not a coincidence that the very heartbeat of Christian faith, the Word of God, was given in the form of a story. The story of his Word reveals what is going on in the world, who the real power in the universe is, and what it is that he has done, is doing, and is going to do. The story reveals the purpose

and direction of human history and the persons we are to become. The Bible stories take root in our lives and the Bible characters become our companions.

The Bible is written in such a way as to stir mental pictures that help one remember more. Douglas Stuart, the author of Old Testament commentaries, depicts it this way: “The Bible is packed with stories that the mind’s eye can follow, poetry that conjures up images in our heads, parables for multitudes, analogues, and other literary forms that turn on the visual imagination or memory” (1988, 28). Children, and adults as well, enjoy and remember the stories and symbols that are contained within the pages of the Bible (Blair 2001, 46). Thus, teaching the Bible in a storytelling format is a reasonable choice for parents, teachers, and all who interrelate with children because it connects one’s personal stories with the stories of the Bible and creates an atmosphere for which learning and remembering can occur.

Research Questions Answered

In chapter one, the goal was to answer several research questions. The questions were based on the writer’s personal desire to combat the dilemma of biblical illiteracy within the youth department at Calvary Bible Chapel. A closer look was taken at the format in which the Bible was being taught. In order to be successful, the writer determined that the collection of research and data regarding learning and recall, as well as storytelling and historic Bible teaching was necessary. The writer’s goal was that in answering the research questions, she could present a more effective way of teaching the Bible.

1. **How do people learn?** In Chapter Three, the main styles in which people learn were examined. These styles of learning were broken down into four main

categories: auditory learners, visual learners, kinetic learners and mixed learners. Most people can be categorized into these main styles. Although everyone is different, people still have a tendency to favor one style of learning over another. That does not mean that a person learns through only one style. A person can learn from each style, showing particular preference or success using a main style. Understanding the different styles of learning can be helpful in better teaching the Word of God. Chapter Five discussed the magnificence of the human brain and how it functions to retain information within its memory system.

2. How does storytelling fit into people's style of learning? In Chapters Three and Five, the art of storytelling was looked at. Its history, components and, success as a learning tool throughout the ages were reviewed. Storytelling has a rich heritage and has been utilized as a means of teaching and communicating for thousands of years throughout the continents of the world. Storytelling uses techniques that will attract the attention of all people and to every learning style. Storytelling includes the use of varied vocal tones and volumes for the auditory learners. Storytelling includes the use of facial expressions and gestures and can include the use of visual aids each of which appeal to the visual learners. Kinetic learners can become physically involved in storytelling by sitting, standing, hand motions, turning pages, holding flash cards, or drawing pictures. Storytelling can be a good teaching tool because it can meet the needs of listeners with different preferences or combinations of learning styles.

3. How does the Bible suggest and model effective storytelling? This was discussed in Chapters Two and Five. Jewish history is alive with storytelling. The information shared showed that the Bible commands the words of God to be passed on

throughout the generations by means of storytelling. The Bible is full of examples of successful storytellers. For this project, both an example from the Old Testament and the New Testament were examined. Old Testament storyteller Moses was studied for how efficient he was at passing on God's commands to an entire nation of people. The New Testament example was Jesus, the perfect storyteller. He used the art of storytelling as his main form of communicating his message to large masses, to an intimate few, or to individuals. Jesus instructed his followers to continue sharing the message in his example.

4. **How can storytelling be utilized to communicate effectively the Word of God?** How storytelling could be used effectively in different formats was explained in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Six discussed several recommendations regarding the use of biblical storytelling by Christians to teach young people and, potentially, people of all ages the truths of God's Word. A Bible storytelling curriculum was provided as a manual to be used in a variety of venues. This manual also includes flash cards and suggested storytelling techniques that can be used to teach the first five books of the Bible (Genesis – Deuteronomy) in such a way as to promote interaction and recall among the listeners (Appendix F).

Findings

“To be a person is to have a story.”
(David Larsen 1995, 144)

Becoming the storyteller for both the daycare children and the youth was an unexpectedly wonderful experience for the writer. Hearing the children clamor with joyful excitement and seeing the youth respond with curious anticipation created a feeling

of magic within the writer as if she held a key that unlocked a long sought after treasure. She soon discovered that God's stories are gifts and the sharing of them makes for special moments which will never be forgotten. According to storytellers Livo and Riltz, the telling and listening of stories stimulates interest, emotional and language development, and the imagination of those involved (1987, xii).

Humans need to tell stories. Storytelling is the one "characteristic [that] defines us more clearly than the opposable thumb" (Association National 1991, 14). Storytelling is an important life skill. But "let no one imagine that storytelling is easy" (Colwell 1966, 27). Sharing stories is sharing life. This study has revealed that for humans telling stories is a multi-purposed discipline. Bible stories are used to entertain, inform, teach, establish moral precedents, record history, remind of genealogy, and to lay down laws (Association National 1991, 15). God's Word provides the means to meet all the purposes of storytelling.

The task of using the Bible as the source for storytelling is a challenge in today's world. Essentially, one must like the story to expect to cause another to like it (Breneman 1984, 17). The very opening of God's Word and the speaking of its truths requires love and commitment to the text and to the one who wrote it. Having a submissive and humble spirit before the authority of the inspired text is a prerequisite to obtaining any real understanding of the text (Larsen 1995, 39). One must prayerfully solicit the guidance of the Holy Spirit to appropriately handle the Word of God.

Throughout the preceding chapters, the act of storytelling was discussed including techniques such as tone, volume, eye contact and animation. Non-verbal communication, such as gestures and visual aids, help fill out storytelling, making the stories more

teachable and memorable and the way in which a storyteller communicates plays a significant part in whether the transfer of information is successful. In the appendix a list of common problems of delivery a storyteller may encounter and their solutions is provided (see Appendix F).

It became apparent to the writer during this study while listening, observing, and interviewing that there is a biblical illiteracy problem among the young people at CBC. It was also discovered that there is the potential problem that biblical illiteracy goes beyond the confines of this project. This study did not ascertain the reason for the growing biblical illiteracy. Regardless of knowing the cause, hope presented itself in the face of this dilemma. It became clear that young people are capable of learning and retaining biblical truths.

Getting a message across effectively involves communicating in a way that will allow people to form mental images. Young people do not typically learn or remember biblical stories as a chronological sequence of events. They learn more effectively through meaningful encounters with stories, people and teachings of faith (Pardy 1988, 146). Unless what is said is clear and vivid enough so that the learners can somehow see what is being said then the learner will not likely remember the information long enough for it to do any good (Stuart 1988, 28).

It is an immense, yet privileged task to be the one who passes on the truth of God's Word to the next generation. Therefore, a teller must not only have a relationship with the story but also with the listener. It is in this relationship that a storyteller can connect with the listener to better ensure the comprehending and the receiving of the message that was delivered. According to Michael Gurian, the author of *Boys and Girls*

Learn Differently, there is a simple list of ways to bond with young people to enhance learning: “1) Be genuine; 2) Call the child by name; 3) Learn about the child’s world, personal life, and personal interests; 4) Smile, laugh, and make eye contact; 5) Respect the child and the child’s opinions; 6) Personally disclose; 7) Listen; and 8) Admit mistakes” (2001, 83). The research showed that people, especially children, learn better when they are bonded with the one teaching them. It is necessary to understand the way in which someone learns in order to understand how to motivate and interest him or her (Blair 2001, 34). The teller often becomes the mentor. A mentor is someone who will bond with the person and act as a role model.

Conclusions

“Stories are love gifts.”

Lewis Carrol

The telling of a story is not just the transference of words, but it is a sharing of experience. Recent years have seen a renewal of interest in storytelling. It seems that there is a current longing for this form of sharing of experiences. For example, television’s soap operas have avid followers involved in the stories of the characters. It is common to hear people make comments like, “I have to get home to watch my stories,” in reference to watching their favorite soap. Today, although soap operas are still popular, there is a new format of storytelling in television programming called reality TV. No matter the time of day, while flipping through the channels, one will inevitably find a reality show. Reality television is nothing more than storytelling –the telling of one’s story to an audience of listeners.

This renewed interest in storytelling has the power to shake the world of Christian communication as well. God's Word is intimate in its sharing of experiences with real life characters. God's Word is still as interesting and relevant as it was in the days of Moses. It still has the power to save and transform lives. Marion Pardy in her research made this statement regarding the transforming power when people connect with the story of God's Word:

In the biblical understanding... people come to know the Lord in the midst of historical experience, by reflecting on the activity of God there, by entering a relationship with God and God's people and by their lived response to that relationship. But their knowing is informed by and interpreted through the story that has arisen from the previous knowing of God's people, and is shared by the hopes they have in God's promise for their future. From a biblical perspective then, Christian religious education should be grounded in a relational/experiential/reflective way of knowing that is informed by the story of faith from Christians before us, and by the vision toward which that story points. (Pardy 1988, 116)

Taking advantage of the culture's growing interest in storytelling could, in turn, increase people's interest in hearing God's story. This would require using the Bible as the source for storytelling, for the Bible is indeed God's story. With the increased interest in hearing God's Word, the chances of people's lives changing increases. The Bible gives a personal knowledge of God rather than a general knowledge about God. This deep knowledge leads the listener into love, devotion, and obedience to God (Blair 2001, 19). The goal of teaching the Bible is to help individuals grow closer to God, to be inspired, and to be transformed. The penetrating power of God's Word brings people to a vulnerable state to respond in faith. Thus, hearing the Bible is integral to the spiritual life of individuals and, therefore, to the community.

The Bible is a terrific source. It is the inspired Word of God and, therefore, needs nothing added to it except the enthusiasm of the storyteller. The book can tell itself. Janet

Litherland, in her book *Storytelling from the Bible*, expounds on the tendency to overwork Bible stories: “Ministers seem to want to explain stories, to grind them in, to be sure their congregations understand. Many times in doing this, they impose an understanding or interpretation, robbing their listeners of the opportunity to think or reflect” (1976, 6). That is how a storyteller differs from a minister. A storyteller does not need to interpret or explain. Litherland adds, “The storyteller serves the meal, but each listener takes something different from the plate” (6). The stories provide the means within themselves to allow the listener to interpret the story. In biblical storytelling, “we are not trying to link doctrines to abstract ideas, we are trying to link the great truths in our faith with the sights and sounds of daily life” (Richards 1991, 11).

One of the best ways to motivate people to learn is to give them information that can be applied to life. Bringing the stories of the Bible into everyday life is a powerful thing. For example, when a child is afraid, there is the opportunity to hold him or her close and to share a Bible story which builds trust in an all powerful God. When someone has an outburst of anger, Bible stories can be shared to help explore his or her own feelings and learn Godly responses. When someone makes a mistake, another story from the Bible can explore similar flaws in Bible characters that can help people find better ways to live (Richards 1991, 10). Biblical storytelling can be a wonderful way to teach. Not only will listeners learn about the Bible, but they will also learn lessons about life and will experience the power in the words of God. Ultimately, the goal in biblical storytelling is to enable listeners to become the most they can be intellectually, socially, and spiritually (Wolpe 1993, 183, 224).

Becoming a biblical storyteller is a fulfilling endeavor. Through storytelling, we can help others learn about themselves and about the world around them, and best of all, we can be there for the experience (Cullum 1999, x). Watching young people brighten and become engaged while hearing the stories of God's power, seeing them come alive while hearing the stories of God's forgiveness, or sensing their comfort while hearing the stories of God's love can bring an indescribable joy to a storyteller's heart. Those who participate in biblical storytelling will receive personal satisfaction and growth in the process (Breneman 1984, 112).

The veteran preacher and writer, Charles Swindoll tells of a wonderful story that clarifies the amount of influence a Bible storyteller can have:

A story is told of four men arguing over the best translation of the Bible. The first man liked the KJV because of its beautiful, eloquent English. Another insisted that the NASB was best because of its accuracy to the original text. A third preferred Moffat for its quaint, penetrating words and captivating phrases. After pondering the issue, the fourth man said, 'Personally, I have always preferred my mother's translation.' Tolerating the other's chuckles, he responded, 'Yes, she translated it. She translated each page of the Bible into life. It is the most convincing translation I ever saw.'" (Swindoll 2001, 20)

As this study demonstrates, the most powerful method of teaching God's truths is to live them and share them with those to whom they come in contact.

Proposal

-
 "Teaching is our ministry.
 Jesus is our model.
 People are our passion.
 Transformed lives our product.
 And heaven our goal."
 (Lavern Tolbert 2000, 13)

One of the best ways to remember things is to associate them with pictures whether they are literal pictures on a paper or pictures etched in the imagination of your

mind. By remembering what is pictured you can recall more accurately. The Bible storytelling curriculum that has developed from this project combines both the influence of words well spoken and the association of symbolic illustration. There are individual cards included in this proposed curriculum that contain a series of simple pictures depicting the stories a particular book of the Bible contains.

The idea is that once listeners hear the important information pertaining to that book of the Bible as relayed through storytelling, they will associate it with the pictures on the card. At any given time one can either look at the cue card or visualize the pictures and be able to recall the details of each story told, thereby learning and remembering the Bible as a whole in small, digestible pieces. This curriculum combines the art of biblical storytelling with the effective learning tool of visualization. The young, the old and all those in between, can benefit from illustrations because pictures are a universal language. Therefore, all should be able to learn from using this proposed curriculum.

The level of simplicity and diction are the only parts of this program that would need adjusted to fit the age appropriateness of the audience. But of course, because they are biblical stories, the details and facts of the story would always remain constant. There is a theology called Narrative Theology that believes “that the use of story is part of the rehabilitation of the Scripture, a way of salvaging the Bible without making the Scriptures binding” (Larsen 1995, 37). That is not the approach taken in this storytelling curriculum. Although narrative is the main format utilized, the details of Scripture are maintained within the storytelling process. There is no adding, subtracting, or even interpreting of the Scriptures. The foundation of the curriculum is to pass on the stories of

the Bible in truth and in Spirit. This requires that authenticity of the Scripture be cherished and preserved.

Recommendations

“If anyone speaks, he should speak as one speaking the very words of God.”
(I Peter 4:11a [NIV])

History and research suggests that storytelling is a successful source of trans-generational teaching and communicating. Therefore, the program presented here utilizes storytelling as a technique to decrease biblical illiteracy and, at the same time, increase biblical understanding and remembering.

Because this program is easy and versatile it can be used anywhere by most anyone. It was specifically designed to address the problem of biblical illiteracy with the youth group of Calvary Bible Chapel. There are many other avenues in which this program was successful. During the process of researching, this storytelling manual was used as a curriculum for the children’s program within CBC, and was used in the home of the writer as a family devotional. With very little modification, the program was used to teach an adult Old Testament class of both mature Christians and new believers as well. Experimenting with different ways to utilize this program led to ideas and recommendations regarding the various venues in which this program might be helpful: three of which are the home, the church, and the community.

Home

“Christian faith is hearing, telling, and living a story.”
(Mike Graves 2008, 13)

Gordon Dryden, author of *The Learning Revolution*, said, “Youngsters are their own best educators, parents their best first teachers and our homes their best schools” (1999, 229). The home is an excellent environment to combat the rise of biblical illiteracy among young people. It is a long known fact that children take their cues from parents. As parents become more aware of how they influence their children, they can examine ways of changing their behavior so that it is more in line with the beliefs and values that they want to pass on to their children (Simic 1992, 66).

Although the home appears to be the perfect environment in which to correct the problem of biblical illiteracy, it would be foolish to assume that every home is made of parents who regard the Bible as a vital source for knowledge. Many homes do not see the need to tell God’s stories. It is also important to realize that even in Christian homes reading the Bible is often not a scheduled priority. Whether in a Christian home or in a non-Christian home, time can be a critical element that hinders parents from taking an active role in a child’s life. According to Fast Facts, half of all parents either don’t have enough time or wished they had more time to read to their kids, help with homework, or pursue other educational activities (Yount 2003, *Group Magazine*). The busier and more complicated life becomes, for both parents and children, the harder it seems to be to designate family time.

After setting time aside, sometimes parents will find it difficult to engage in intimate communication with their children. Without a book to rely on or instructions to follow, a parent may feel uncomfortable. But parents can practice storytelling without

any assistance. Every parent has a rich source of stories from their own life. One can start by telling the children about events in his or her own childhood such as the first day of school, scary adventures, practical jokes, vacation escapades, how their ancestors came to this country, or how the family got its name. The children will learn about the parent, and will also be discovering their heritage and building links with their past (Hamilton and Weiss 1996, 155). In telling children their stories, parents will find that a new intimacy develops. This opens a wonderful door for learning to share Bible stories as well.

Storytelling within the home setting can become a key component in bonding with children, in educating children, and in sharing with them God's word. It would be easy to make storytelling a natural part of a family routine. For example, stories can be told at the dinner table or at bedtime, during long car rides, or when extended family gathers.

Parents often stress to their children the necessity of good grades, how to become successful in business, and the importance of social skills. Emphasis is not always placed on instructing children in biblical ways (Wolpe 1993, 3-4). In raising children, nothing can equal the spiritual and moral values that can be taught by parents at home. Langdon and Stout in their book make comment on the importance of parents teaching their children about the Bible:

Parents who teach their children moral and spiritual values and help them to learn to love them and to live them, are giving them that which goes far beyond any material gift they might ever receive. They are giving them the real, the lasting, the substantial. (Langdon and Stout 1962, 117)

The biblical storytelling curriculum that has developed out of this project will certainly meet the standards for sharing God's Word within the home. No matter the setting, whether formal or informal; no matter the time, be it in the car rushing to do errands or sitting quietly at home; and no matter the number of children, whether it be

one young child or a large family gathering of both young and old, this program can be successful. The way it is set up allows it to be used in different formats. Parents can follow the instructions and use the flash cards and Scripture references as an outline to read directly or parents can use the flash cards as a beginning point from which to tell the Bible stories in their own ways. Alternatively, parents can tell their personal stories and utilize the cards as visual aids to tell stories of biblical characters to underscore a moral lesson from their own stories. These are just a few examples of how this curriculum can be used within the home environment.

Church

“We have the most profound story of all time and yet
we are lulling today’s generation to sleep.”
(Mark Miller 2003, 26)

The church is another prime environment in which to combat biblical illiteracy. Pardy, a proponent for Christian education, discovered in her research that young people learn religion better within a church community environment. “The nuclear family and the church community become essential ingredients for the religious development of children,” she says (Pardy 1988, 111). It seems foolish to think that there could possibly be biblical illiteracy within the very institution that upholds the Bible. But it is no different than the many students who graduate high school and still cannot read or write. Illiteracy is illiteracy no matter where it is fostered.

Oftentimes in a church there is good sound biblical teaching as most of my interviewees reported. However, to become deeply aware of the Bible and its stories there requires an active role on the behalf of the congregation. A person can go to school for

twelve years and never learn the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and a person can go to church for years and never learn the basics of the Bible.

In her studies, Pardy came to three conclusions regarding Christian education for children within the church setting:

- 1) There is a need for more integration in home and church, Christian education activities including corporate worship;
- 2) Any Christian education program is strengthened by adult, as well as children's groups;
- 3) The starting point in Christian education is the life experience of the individual. (Pardy 1988, 115)

According to her first conclusion, the church and the home need to combine efforts in teaching the Word. It was discussed in previous chapters that this is not a new suggestion but one that the Bible also taught. The biblical storytelling curriculum proposed by the writer can bridge this gap between home and church learning. Pardy's second and third points include adults becoming involved in children's programs and sharing their own experiences. This too fits well into the proposed storytelling based program.

Churches can utilize the proposed storytelling curriculum as they would use other curricula with which they are more familiar. This program can be appropriate for a Sunday school class, a child's Sunday worship service, a mid-week children's program, or a special Bible study. Varying emphasis can be placed on different components of the program to customize it for such an event as Vacation Bible School. The curriculum can be shortened or expanded to fit the time restraints of various schedules. No matter what format, this program can be adjusted to fit each unique situation.

It was previously discussed how this storytelling curriculum can be used in the home and now how it can be used in the church. This promotes carryover. If the home or the church is using this program, the child can use the visual aid flash card as a bookmark to keep in his or her Bible. That way as the child learns each component of the collage, he

or she will be able to practice recalling the story that coincides with that pictorial symbol. Whether the child is learning the stories at home or at church, he or she will be equipped to share what he or she is learning, enabling open communication and cooperation between church and home.

Good biblical teaching is based upon the ways in which adults and children learn best (Blair 2001, 45). Up to this point, it has only been discussed how the church can use this program to teach young people. However, children are not the only ones who can learn well from a story-based curriculum. There is a myth in our society that once one is an adult, one stops learning. Such as the common adage falsely states, “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” Research shows that adults are very capable of learning new things and that learning does not necessarily decline with age. Christine Blair in her work suggests that the “role of symbol, story, and imagination is so important in adult learning and study of the Bible” (2001, 45). Because of its format, this storytelling curriculum makes an appropriate option to use within the church for adult classes as well.

The church is the perfect place to share our own stories and to share the stories of God’s Word. No matter the age, “sharing stories can enliven our common experience of prayer, worship, preaching, fellowship, witness, and service,” declares expert in the field of narrative preaching, David Larsen (1995, 32).

Community

“If you are breathing, you are a storyteller.”
(Annette Simmons 2007, 9)

History has shown that storytelling has been a way that communities have communicated and taught. Based on history and more current research, community is

another environment within which biblical illiteracy can be combated. The proposed program can use storytelling as a way to teach the community the knowledge of God's Word.

Child experts Margorie Simic, Melinda McClain, and Michael Shermis say, "Children naturally look to important adults in their lives as models of what they should do. They want to please and imitate important adults" (1992, 16). Within a community there are many children who look to adults for leadership. It could be a coach, a babysitter, a tutor, a Cub Scout leader, or a mom whose house is where the neighborhood kids hang out. If these children are to know God's Word, it will take adults telling the stories of faith and demonstrating biblical truths as opportunities arise. As leaders in a child's life, adults can pass on the rich heritage of the stories that so warmly and ably illustrate the Bible's precepts (Malphurs 1996, 104).

We are living in a world where the time has come when "the Christian communicator must seek to utilize the powerful resources of biblical narrative as never before" (Larsen, 1995, 3). There are millions of people who do not know the truths of God's Word. This program is designed to encourage people to become accomplished Bible storytellers. After school programs, volunteer story time at the library, babysitting, car pooling, or even waiting in long lines, are all opportunities for one to practice biblical storytelling within the community setting.

Conclusion

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,
a workman who does not need to be ashamed and
who correctly handles the word of truth.”
(II Timothy 2:15 [NIV])

The scope of this study was to address the biblical illiteracy of the youth group at Calvary Bible Chapel. The story-based curriculum birthed from this project was designed to use within the church setting for a particular adolescent audience. While researching and developing, it became clear that potential benefit could also be derived in using this program in an array of other settings to audiences of varying ages.

The Bible itself declares that storytelling is one way to conquer the devil and open up doors for evangelism. It is written that the blood of the lamb (the sacrifice of Jesus Christ) and the word of testimonies (the stories of individuals living in Jesus) will destroy Satan (Revelation 12:11). As Christians there is vital power that comes when mouths open to speak the stories of the Word of God, and the stories of lives changed through Jesus Christ.

God’s stories are told because they affect the listeners by bringing life through the hearing of truth. It is at this time the invitation is presented to explore your own ability to connect with the continuity of human tradition and experience by engaging in the storytelling experience (Breneman 1984, 112). It is hope of the writer that others will discover the sheer joy of participating in God’s command to communicate spiritual stories and combat biblical illiteracy through this storytelling curriculum in whatever setting and to whatever age of listeners is available.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE
TEEN BIBLICAL LITERACY

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

(Teen Biblical Literacy)

Name ----- Age-----Gender-----

1. Do you attend church regularly?
2. How long have you attended church?
3. Does your family go to church?
4. Did/do your parents ever tell you Bible stories? Please explain.

5. Did/do you ever hear Bible stories at school? Please explain.

6. Did/do you ever read Bible stories?
7. How much do you feel you know about the Bible overall?
(nothing) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (everything)

8. How often do you talk about the Bible?
(never) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (always)

9. How well do you feel you live by the Bible?
(terrible) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (great)

10. Do you think that parents should teach their children about the Bible?
11. Name as many books of the Bible as you can;
Old Testament

New Testament

12. Do you believe the stories in the Bible are factual and true or that they are like fairy tales? Please explain.

13. Who wrote the Bible?
14. Are there any errors in the Bible? Please explain.
15. How was the world created?

16. How long did it take for the world to be created?
17. Who was Noah?

18. What was the Tower of Babel?

19. What did Joshua do?

20. Who was Samson?

21. Who was Abraham?

22. Name the 10 commandments.

23. Name any king of Israel.
24. Name one of the miracles of Moses.

25. What happened to Jonah?

26. Who was Isaiah?

27. Who was Jesus' Mother?

28. Name three miracles Jesus did.

29. How many disciples did Jesus have?
30. How did Jesus die?

21. What happened three days after Jesus died?

22. How did Paul come to know Jesus?

23. What is salvation?

24. What is eternal life?

25. What is sin?

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW
PASTORAL INTERVIEW

APPENDIX B

Pastoral Interview

1. Do you have an education department? How is it run?
2. Do you use a curriculum?
3. Do you have a Sunday School program? How is participation?
4. Do you have a Bible study during the week? How is participation?

“For the next six questions please answer using a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being the worst and 10 being the best.”

5. Rate the Old Testament biblical knowledge of the adult population of your congregation.
6. Rate the Old Testament biblical knowledge of the young adult population of your congregation.
7. Rate the Old Testament biblical knowledge of the high school population of your congregation.
8. Rate the Old Testament biblical knowledge of the junior high school population of your congregation.
9. Rate the Old Testament biblical knowledge of the elementary population of your congregation.
10. Rate the Old Testament biblical knowledge of the pre-school population of your congregation.
11. What style of teaching is used for your adult classes?
12. What style of teaching is used for your young adult classes?
13. What style of teaching is used for your high school classes?
14. What style of teaching is used for your junior high classes?
15. What style of teaching is used for your elementary classes?

16. What style of teaching is used for your pre-school classes?

For the next six questions please answer using a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the worst and 10 being the best. Rate the knowledge of the basic Bible stories of the adults in your congregation.

17. Rate the knowledge of the basic Bible stories of the young adults in your congregation.

18. Rate the knowledge of the basic Bible stories of the high school students in your congregation.

19. Rate the knowledge of the basic Bible stories of the junior high school students in your congregation.

20. Rate the knowledge of the basic Bible stories of the elementary students in your congregation.

21. Rate the knowledge of the basic Bible stories of the pre-schoolers in your congregation.

“For the next six questions please answer using a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being the worst and 10 being the best. Biblical literacy is defined as a basic knowledge of the Bible , its books, its stories, and its messages.

22. Rate your satisfaction with the biblical literacy of the adults in your congregation?

23. Rate your satisfaction with the biblical literacy of the young adults in your congregation?

24. Rate your satisfaction with the biblical literacy of the high school students in your congregation?

25. Rate your satisfaction with the biblical literacy of the junior high school students in your congregation?

26. Rate your satisfaction with the biblical literacy of the elementary students in your congregation?

27. Rate your satisfaction with the biblical literacy of the pre-schoolers in your congregation?

28. In your experience, does your congregation have good memory retention of what they are taught during church services? Please explain.

29. With biblical literacy being defined as the basic knowledge of the Bible, its books, its stories, and its messages, do you think your congregation has a problem with biblical illiteracy? Please explain

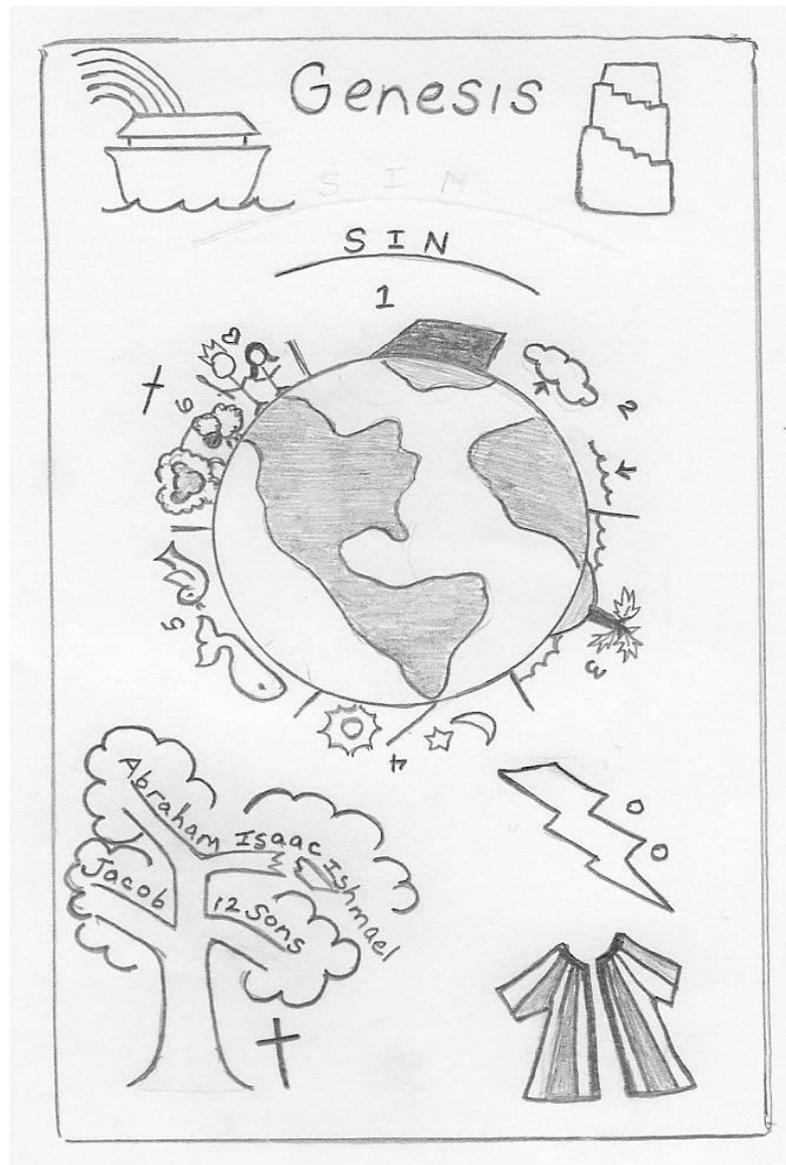
30. Would you consider a different storytelling approach to teaching if it was available to you?

APPENDIX C
CURRICULUM GUIDE

APPENDIX C

Biblical Storytelling Curriculum

(Genesis Cue Card)



Biblical Storytelling Curriculum

(Genesis Manual)

(Above is the Genesis cue card to be used as a tool in this Biblical Storytelling Curriculum. It is a collage of small pictures brought together as a whole to tell the stories of the book of Genesis. On the backside of the card, the individual pictures are explained in regards to the story it tells. The manual will provide pages for each book of the Bible depicting each picture from the collage and elaborating on the corresponding verses. Below is an example of the Genesis portion of the manual. There is no script to read or book to page through. There are only scriptural references that make up the overall outline of the story. The teller can choose several different ways to relay the information that is laid out in the manual.)

GENESIS: Written by Moses

God created the earth

Gen. 1:1

Trinity

Gen. 1:1-2 God created the earth

Holy Spirit moved over the earth

John 1:1 Jesus was there as a participant

Gen. 1:26-27 All three of the God-head participated in creation

Day 1

Gen. 1: 3-5 God created day/light and night/dark

Day 2

Gen. 1:6-8 God created water above and water below

Day 3

Gen. 1:9-13 God created land and plants

Day 4

Gen. 1:14-19 God created sun, moon, stars

Day 5

Gen. 1:20-23 God created birds and fish

Day 6

Gen. 1:24-25 God created animals

Day 6

Gen. 1:24-26 God created man and woman in His image
 Gen. 1:28-31 God gave humans rule over earth and all in it
 Gen. 2:22-25 God created the institute of marriage

Christ Prophecy

Gen. 3:15 Christ will come as the son of a woman

Sin

Gen. 2:16-17; Gen. 3:6-7; Gen. 3:22-23
 Sin came into the world through humans
 disobedience to God.

Noah

Gen. 6:1-7; Gen. 6:11-13; Gen 6:17
 Why flood came
 Gen. 6:8; Gen. 7:1; Gen. 7:6-7
 Why Noah was saved
 Gen. 6:14-15; Gen. 6:18-22; Gen. 7:2-4
 The ark and the animals
 Gen. 7:10-12; Gen. 7:19-24
 The flood
 Gen. 8: 1-3 Rain stopped
 Gen. 8:16-17; Gen 8:20-22
 Out of ark
 Gen. 9:1-5,7 A new start
 Gen. 9:6; Gen. 9:5-6
 Why make a sacrifice

Rainbow

Gen. 9:9-17 Promise from God

Tower of Babel

Gen. 11:1-9 Built tower, new languages established

Sodom and Gomorrah

Gen. 18:20; 19:15, 23-26, 29
 Lot spared, city destroyed

Family Tree

Abraham Gen. 12:1-4 Call from God
 Gen. 15:5 Covenant
Ishmeal Gen. 16 Son by servant
 Gen. 21:8-10, 14-21
 Sent away, God saved
Isaac Gen. 18:10-15

Prophecy of birth

Gen. 21: 1-3 Birth of Isaac

Gen. 22:2-3, 8, 10-13

Test of sacrifice, ram provided

Gen. 24:4; 24:15, 57, 63-66

Jacob

Gen. 25:23-34 Jacob and Esau born

Gen. 27:1-40 Jacob tricks Esau and Isaac:

Gen. 28:10-15 Dream of ladder

Gen. 29:16-30 Marries Leah and Rachel

Gen. 32: 24-29 Wrestles and renamed Israel

12 Sons

Gen. 29: 32 Reuben

Gen. 29:33 Simeon

Gen. 29:34 Levi

Gen. 29:35 Judah

Gen. 30:6 Dan

Gen. 30:8 Naphtali

Gen. 30:11 Gad

Gen. 30:13 Asher

Gen. 30:18 Issachar

Gen. 30:20 Zebulun

Gen. 30:23-24 Joseph

Gen. 35:16-18 Benjamin

Joseph

Gen. 37:3-4 Coat of colors

Gen. 37:18-24 Thrown into the pit

Gen. 37:28-36 Sold into slavery

Gen. 39:1-20 Potiphar's wife and imprisonment

Gen. 40:9-13; 16-23; 41:1-7, 14-25-32

Interprets dreams

Gen. 42:3-8; 43:19-23, 26-30; 45:1-15

Reunited

12 Tribes

Gen. 49:2 Jacob want to bless sons

Gen. 49:3 Reuben

Gen. 49:5 Simeon and Levi

Gen. 49:8 Judah

Gen. 49:13 Zebulun

Gen. 49:14 Issachar

Gen. 49:16 Dan

Gen. 49:19 Gad

Gen. 49:20 Asher

Gen. 49:21 Naphtali

Gen. 49:22 Joseph

Gen. 49:27 Benjamin

Gen. 49: 28 Tribes

Gen. 50 22-23 Ephraim and Manasseh

APPENDIX D
PRETEST/POST-TEST
GENESIS - LEVITICUS

APPENDIX D

Pretest/Posttest

(Genesis)

1. What is the book of Genesis about?
2. Who wrote it?
3. Who was Eve?
4. Who was Noah?
5. Who was Abraham?
6. Who was Isaac?
7. Who was Jacob?
8. Who was Joseph?
9. What was the Tower of Babel?

10. What are the 12 tribes of Israel?
11. What is one story you know from the book of Genesis?

Pretest/Posttest

(Exodus)

1. What is the book of Exodus about?
2. Who wrote Exodus?
3. Tell about Moses' first few years of life?
4. Why did Moses leave the Pharaoh's home?
5. How did God speak to Moses the first time?
6. Who was Aaron?
7. Who was Miriam?
8. Why did Moses go back to Egypt?
9. Name as many of the 10 plagues as you can.
10. What happened at the Red Sea/
11. Why did people build a gold calf?
12. Who wrote down the 10 commandments?
13. What was the pillar of fire?
14. What was the tabernacle?

Bonus ?

List as many of the 10 commandments as you can.

Pretest/Posttest

(Leviticus)

1. Who wrote Leviticus?
2. Why was it written?
3. To whom was it written?
4. What is a scapegoat?
5. How did Nadab die?
6. Name one of the offerings.
7. Name one of the feasts or holidays.
8. Why did God make laws and statutes?

Bonus ?

Tithe – what is it and how much is it?

APPENDIX E
BIBLE JEOPARDY REVIEW GAME
GENESIS - DEUTERONOMY

APPENDIX E

Bible Jeopardy

(Genesis – Deuteronomy)

CATEGORIES

GENESIS	EXODUS	LEVITICUS	NUMBERS	DEUTERONOMY	COMING ATTRACTIONS
100	100	100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200	200	200
300	300	* 300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400	400	* 400
500	500	500	500	500	500

* = Daily Double – A correct answer doubles the points.

GENESIS

- a. The author of Genesis (Who is Moses?)
- 200 The number of days God created the earth (What is 6?)
- 300 He wore a beautiful coat (Who is Joseph?)
- 400 The number of sons Jacob had (What is 12?)
- 500 The reason God made different languages (What is the Tower of Babel?)

EXODUS

- 100 There are 10 of these (What are the commandments?)
- 200 The people ate this while wandering in the desert (What is manna?)
- 300 God spoke to Moses the first time through this (What is a bush?)
- 400 Moses was found here by the Pharaoh's daughter (What is the river?)
- 500 Jesus is represented in this building (What is the tabernacle?)

LEVITICUS

- 100 The one who offered sacrifices for the people (What is the priest?)
- 200 The reason Abihu and Nadab were killed (What is offering unholy fire?)
- 300 Finish this verse – “Be holy...(What is “as I am holy?)
- 400 The one symbolized by the goat and scapegoat (Who is Jesus?)
- 500 The Hebrew name for the first 5 books of the Bible (What is Pentuch?)

NUMBERS

- 100 Spoke to Balaam unexpectedly (What is a donkey?)
- 200 Symbolized God's presence during the day & night (What is cloud & fire?)

- 300 This happened to prove Aaron was the right priest (What is a budding rod?)
- 400 This act kept Moses from the Promised Land (What is hitting the rock?)
- 500 This family was swallowed by the ground (Who was Korah?)

DEUTERONOMY

- 100 Receive this if obedient (What is blessing?)
- 200 Receive this if disobedient (What is curse?)
- 300 The eye in the picture represented this (What is looking at past & present?)
- 400 Took over for Moses (Who is Joshua?)
- 500 The one who buried Moses (Who is God?)

COMING ATTRACTIONS

- 100 The next book in order to study (What is Joshua?)
- 200 Book made up mostly of songs (What is Psalms?)
- 300 Samson was one of these (What is a judge?)
- 400 The book about a queen (What is Esther?)
- 500 The last book in the Old Testament (What is Malachi?)

FINAL QUESTION

The number out of the total of spies that went into the land that believed that God could take the land (What is 2 out of 40?)

APPENDIX F
MANUAL
STORYTELLING CURRICULUM

STORYTELLING THROUGH THE BIBLE:
GOD'S WORD BROUGHT TO LIFE
(Genesis thru Deuteronomy)

By
Jackie Krum Frisch

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am extremely thankful for my family and my church family at Calvary Bible Chapel that continued to seek God on my behalf and persistently taught me the Scriptures. I am thankful for the love that God planted in my heart for hearing and telling the stories of His Word. I am thankful for readers like you who are willing to pick up this book, read it, apply it to their lives, and then get excited to tell others about the stories of God and His people.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement-----	160
Table of Contents-----	161
Introduction-----	165
Old Testament and Me-----	167
Going Forward-----	170
Chapter One Genesis-----	172
Heavens and Earth-----	173
Going Forward-----	174
Day One-----	175
Day Two-----	175
Day Three-----	176
Day Four-----	177
Day Five-----	178
Day Six-----	178
Going Forward-----	179
Day Six Continued-----	179
Going Forward-----	180
Sin Enters World-----	181
Going Forward-----	183
Prophecy of Christ-----	184
Going Forward-----	185
Noah and Flood-----	185
Going Forward-----	187
The Promise-----	188
Tower of Babel-----	189
Going Forward-----	190
Abraham-----	191
Going Forward-----	192
Sodom and Gomorrah-----	193
Going Forward-----	194
Ishmael-----	195
Going Forward-----	195
Isaac-----	196
Going Forward-----	197
Test of Obedience-----	197
Going Forward-----	198
Jacob-----	199
Going Forward-----	200
Twelve Sons-----	201
Going Forward-----	202

Joseph-----	203
Going Forward-----	205
Conclusion-----	206
Chapter Two Exodus-----	207
Going Forward-----	208
Birth of Moses-----	209
Going Forward-----	210
Moses in Egypt-----	211
Going Forward-----	211
Burning Bush-----	212
Going Forward-----	213
Meeting Pharaoh-----	214
Going Forward-----	214
Plagues-----	216
Going Forward-----	217
God's Presence-----	218
Going Forward-----	218
God's Protection-----	219
Going Forward-----	220
God's Provision-----	220
Going Forward-----	221
Uplifted Hands-----	222
Going Forward-----	222
Ten Commandments-----	223
Going Forward-----	226
Golden Calf-----	228
Going Forward-----	229
The Sanctuary-----	230
Going Forward-----	232
The Coming of Christ-----	234
Going Forward-----	235
Conclusion-----	235
Going Forward-----	235
Chapter Three Leviticus-----	237
Going Forward-----	238
Holiness-----	238
Going Forward-----	238
The Law-----	239
Going Forward-----	240
Offerings-----	242
Going Forward-----	243
The Priests-----	245
Going Forward-----	245
Unholy Fire-----	247
Going Forward-----	247
Day of Atonement-----	248

Going Forward-----	249
Passover-----	250
Going Forward-----	250
Feast of Unleavened Bread-----	251
Feast of First Fruits-----	252
Going Forward-----	252
Feast of Weeks or Feast of Pentecost-----	253
Going Forward-----	253
Feast of Trumpets-----	254
Going Forward-----	254
Feast of Booths or Feast of Tabernacles-----	255
Going Forward-----	255
Sabbath Year and Year of Jubilee-----	256
Going Forward-----	256
Tithe-----	257
Going Forward-----	258
Chapter Four Numbers-----	259
Census-----	260
Going Forward-----	261
Order-----	262
Going Forward-----	262
Korah-----	263
The Law-----	265
Going Forward-----	266
Fire and Cloud-----	266
Going Forward-----	267
Quail-----	268
Going Forward-----	269
Budding Rod-----	270
Going Forward-----	270
Serpent on the Pole-----	271
Going Forward-----	271
The Spies and the 40 Year Curse-----	272
Going Forward-----	273
Water from the Rock-----	274
Going Forward-----	275
Balaam-----	276
Going Forward-----	277
Transfer of Power-----	278
Going Forward-----	278
Conclusion-----	279
Chapter Five Deuteronomy-----	280
Going Forward-----	281
Keep and Teach-----	281
Going Forward-----	283
Look to the Past – Look to the Future-----	284

Going Forward-----	285
Reminder of the Laws-----	287
Going Forward-----	289
Blessing and Cursing-----	290
Going Forward-----	291
Open Hand and Open Heart-----	292
Going Forward-----	292
Farewell Address-----	293
Going Forward-----	294
Conclusion-----	296
Going Forward-----	297
Ending Thoughts-----	297
Letter From Author-----	298
Suggestions and Instructions-----	300
References-----	303

INTRODUCTION

I spent my life being raised in the church. Throughout my childhood I went to Sunday School, Sunday morning service, Sunday evening service, and mid-week service. If there were any extra services during the year I was there then too. I was taught the scripture and they became a way of life to me. Now that I am grown, I realize that I was so blessed. In today's world this kind of exposure to God's Word is rare.

My husband and I have worked in our church with children and young people for many years and we witnessed so many young people who had absolutely no biblical knowledge. Many could not recognize or name the books of the Bible or retell the more popular stories such as the account of Moses and the burning bush. Some thought that Noah and the Ark, and Jonah and the Whale were fairy tales in the same category as Cinderella and Peter Pan. It saddened me. But as I began to work in other ministries of the church I realized that a majority of adults had never really learned the Bible either. As I built relationships with other churches in the community and surrounding areas, it became clear that there was a biblical illiteracy problem all over. (Biblical illiteracy is being defined as the lack of basic knowledge of the Bible, its books, its stories, and its message).

I turned to prayer and scripture. The Lord directed me to the book of Deuteronomy to both 6:6-7 and 11:18-19 in regard to how to solve this dilemma:

“And you must commit yourselves whole heartedly repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them

when you are at home and when you are on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again” (NLT) at home and when you are getting up again” (NLT).

After reading these scriptures my heart was filled with a new desire to communicate God’s Word. I wanted it to be heard and retained in the hearts and minds of the listeners. It was at this point that God began to place in my heart the development of this storytelling format as a means to combat biblical illiteracy. It is my prayer that as you read and implement this book that you too will experience an overwhelming love for God’s Word and an intense motivation to pass your love of His truths to the generations before and after you.

There are many ways that you can use this book – as a devotional, a bible study, a learning tool, a curriculum, and as a launching pad to begin telling God’s stories to children and young people. This is my favorite because of the impact it can have on the world. Just think of all the changes that could take place if people started telling the next generations about the scripture. Kids all over would get excited about God. God says that His word never returns void so, who knows what kind of changes people would undergo if the Bible and its stories became an active part of their lives. And besides, storytelling is the easiest form of spreading God’s word because you don’t need a class room to do it. The verses in Deuteronomy say that we can tell these stories anywhere and at any time – on a long car ride, at bed time, on the way to school in the morning, while eating dinner, when you’re taking a walk. . . I could go on and on. Now it is your turn. Open your mouth and begin to tell the stories from the Bible and just stand back and watch the doors that God will open for you to have the opportunity to share with others.

The Old Testament and Me!

Reading and learning the Bible can be FUN! I never used to think that. Sure, some of the stories were interesting, but reading the whole Bible didn't seem like much fun. In fact, it felt more like a chore. Most every year I would make a New Year's promise that I would read the Bible all the way through. On January 1st I would start with Genesis chapter one. I would keep reading the first month or two because the stories kept my attention. But it seemed every time I came to Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy I would soon quit and never make it through the rest of the Old Testament. Sometimes I would quit completely and tell myself I would try again next year, and other times I would skip ahead to the New Testament and read that instead. I had never read the entire Old Testament. Because I had gone to Sunday School as a child, I had memorized the names of the books of the Bible, including the ones in the Old Testament. The names of these books were only names, I didn't know much about those books except some of the main stories like Daniel and the lion's den, and Jonah and the whale.

Each year brought a failed attempt to read God's Word, and it seemed to be the Old Testament that always brought me down. I'm not sure what it really was that made it so hard to read. I used to say it was boring, it was too gory, it had too many numbers, names, and battles. Usually I would end up justifying my broken promise to read the Bible through by using the excuse that the Old Testament was just too hard to understand.

One day I was cruising along reading the New Testament and I came across a speech from Jesus. He mentioned that if I love Him then I will read and follow the laws that He

gave to Moses. I wasn't sure what Jesus exactly meant so I researched a few things. What I found out made me realize what Jesus was trying to say to me.

Jesus was telling the people around Him that one way to show Him love was to read all the things that had been recorded before He was born, especially those things by Moses, because Moses wrote down the laws and rules that God had put into place for His people. God had the Old Testament written for a purpose and now Jesus was telling us what that purpose was. He wanted Christians to read it and to fall deeper in love with Jesus. Now things really didn't make sense to me. Of course, I loved God and I wanted a deeper relationship with Jesus, His son, but what did reading the Old Testament have to do with any of that. In these verses Jesus explains that knowing about the stories of old and knowing the laws and regulations are necessary if anyone is to really understand who Jesus is and why He had to come to earth to die for our sins. We can't truly comprehend all of Jesus until we read the Old Testament. Once I read this, I felt a pang of shame in my gut because I never read the books of old, those that made up the Old Testament. I wanted to show Jesus how much I loved Him so I was determined to read the Old Testament as an act of my love. I talked to God about it and shared with Him my feelings. I told God that I didn't understand a lot of it, that I thought it was boring, that I thought it was bloody, and that I didn't get much out of it. I promised Him that I would read it anyway because Jesus asked me to in the scripture. Then I asked God if He would do me a favor. I asked Him if He would help me understand what I was going to read and to help me love the Old Testament because I love Jesus. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 1) After I prayed, I knew I had to keep my promise, but I wasn't sure what God could do to help me.

The next morning I started my reading. I opened up my Bible to Genesis 1:1 and began to read. Suddenly, it was as if my eyes were opened and I could see clearly. Everything I read made so much sense. I couldn't stop reading. Every verse, every chapter, and every book came to life. God had answered my prayer. I kept my promise and read the whole Old Testament. That began my continuing love affair with God's Word. I now understand why Jesus wants us to read it as a way of showing Him love.

I realize that the Old Testament can be overwhelming. That is why I designed the picture cards. Each card represents one book of the Old Testament. The pictures on that card give an overview of every main point or story that is contained in that particular book of the Bible. I hope that whenever you look at the pictures on a card you will be able to remember what that book is about.

This book series is set up so that each chapter is dedicated to one book of the Old Testament. This particular book covers the first five books of the Old Testament. There is a corresponding picture card for that book. The readings in the chapters will cover an individual picture from the card. By the end of each chapter you will have learned the basic knowledge of one of the books of the Bible. By the end of this book you will have learned five books of the Bible. By the end of the series you will have learned about the whole Old Testament. You can take the picture cards and place them in your Bible at the beginning of each book as a way to remember what is included in that book. You can use the cards as flash cards to review and refresh your memory. Maybe you can even use the cards as a helpful tool to teach others about the Bible. Whatever the case, I hope you enjoy reading and learning the Old Testament. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 2 and Word textbox 1)

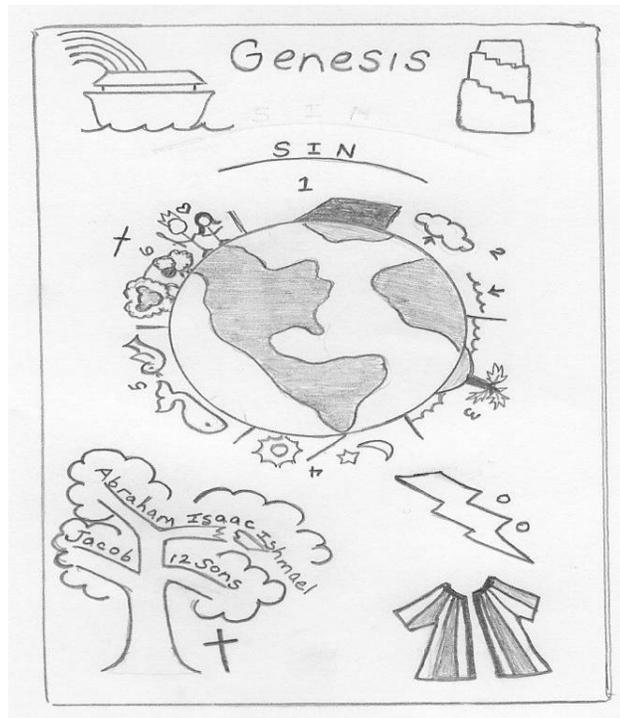
For those of you that want to go further and do some personal study and interpretation from what you read, there is a section designed especially for you. Scattered throughout the readings are inserts entitled Going Forward. You will recognize them by the arrow symbol. There will be probing questions encouraging you to look deeper into your own thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Doing the extra work is completely optional. I pray that you enjoy your alone time with God and that He grants you wisdom and insight.

➔ *Going Forward!*

Read John 5:46; 7:19; 14:14, 21, 23-24; Luke 24:27; and Matthew 5:19. Jesus did a lot of teaching in the synagogues and around the towns. He read from the scrolls aloud in the temple when He was just a boy. He loved everything to do with God and His Word. Why do you think Jesus said it was so important to know the things that had already been written by Moses and the prophets? Do you believe that the Old Testament is important today? Explain. You are about to embark on a journey through history. You will be reading and studying the same truths that Jesus read and studied when He walked the earth. Are you ready to fall in love with God in a new and deeper way as you study this portion of scripture? If you are, then take a moment to make a commitment to God to do as Jesus asked and learn the writings of Moses.

*Interesting Information textbox 1: There are thirty nine books in the Old Testament. They can be divided into four categories. The *Pentateuch* – the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy); the twelve books of *history* that tell the story of the nation of Israel (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther); the books of *poetry* express the deep emotion of the writers (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations); and the books of *prophecy* that pass on God’s message to the people (Job, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).

- *Words textbox 1: The Jewish people call the Old Testament the *tanakh*. It is a Hebrew acronym- *Torah* for the law, *Nevim* for the prophets, and *Ketavim* for the writings. TNK (or Tanakh) is the collection of all the works that make up the Old Testament.
- *Interesting Information textbox 2: It is offensive to some Jewish people to refer to the Old Testament as old because it indicates that it is no longer has relevance or that it has been replaced with something new and improved. Even though the Old Testament is old in regard to the dates it was written, it is still relevant. There is stuff in there that has not even happened yet.



CHAPTER ONE

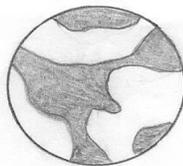
GENESIS

Genesis is a book about beginnings. It records the beginning of time, the beginning of creation, the beginning of humankind, the beginning of marriage, the beginning of civilization and government, and the beginning of the Hebrew people. Genesis also tells us about the beginning of sin and death, and the beginning of God's plan to forgive and save people from sin and death. God's plan from the beginning was to send Jesus, His son, to earth. We sometimes think that the stories of Jesus are only in the New Testament. It is true that the stories of Jesus on earth are detailed in the New Testament, but the plans and prophecies of Jesus' coming are written down in the books of the Old Testament, including the book of Genesis. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 2) (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 3)

Genesis is the first book in the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is the name given to the first five books in the bible. The Jewish people call these five books the Torah. Moses wrote all five of these books and it was his job to make sure that God's words were passed on to the next generations.

The book of Genesis starts when time on earth began and it covers 2000 years. The first eleven chapters cover four major events; creation, the fall of man, the flood, and the tower of Babel. Chapters twelve through fifty cover four major characters; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

- *Word textbox 2: *Prophecy* is often thought to mean the predicting of the future. The biblical word for prophecy is the telling of God's words and will. What makes the Bible word prophecy different is that while the future is often predicted, it is not the purpose of the prophecy. The message is always the focus.
- *Interesting Information textbox 3: Jesus is talked about in the first book of the Bible' Genesis, and in the last book of the Bible, Revelation.



Heavens and Earth

Genesis 1:1-2

It is hard to understand that there was nothing at all before God began creating. That concept is too big for our human minds to understand. Even though it is difficult to comprehend, the Bible tells us that this is true. Other people may try to explain the beginning of the world by a concept called evolution. Evolution claims that chance is how the universe came to be. You have to decide what it is you choose to believe. Either way you have to believe by faith. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 3) There is no

way to prove what happened at the beginning. You just have to believe. After reading the Bible, I find that believing in God as the creator is the best way to go.

God created the beginning of time, as we know it, when He created the heavens and the earth. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 4) These two verses say that when God first made heaven and earth it was empty. There was darkness and water. This would not have been a good place for man to live. But there was something else exciting happening in all this emptiness – the Holy Spirit was moving.

In all the years that I have been a Christian, I have discovered a very awesome truth. Something wonderful is about to happen every time the Holy Spirit begins to move. As we read the upcoming stories, we will see how many times the Holy Spirit will move upon a person's life and then that person will accomplish a great task for God.

➔ *Going Forward!*

It is sometimes easy to be overwhelmed with feelings of emptiness, wondering if there is meaning in your life. It is at these dark times that God does some of His best creating. He has a habit of taking nothing and making something beautiful. Have there been times in your life when God has taken darkness and turned it into something new and full of light? Explain. Is there a void that God needs to fill? Explain. In what parts of your life does God need to do some "creating?"

*Word textbox 3: *Faith* is believing in things that you can't see or prove.

*Interesting Information textbox 4: God created the whole universe and all that is in it just by speaking the words.



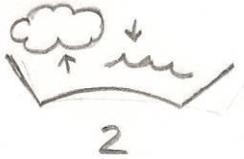
Day One

Genesis 1:3-5

God created light. This made a separation in the darkness. God approved of what He accomplished and called it a day. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 5) (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 6)

*Interesting Information textbox 5: This is the first recorded twenty-four hour period. It is literally the first day in time.

*Interesting Information textbox 6: The source of light on earth, the sun, wasn't created for another couple of days. This means that only God could be responsible for this light.



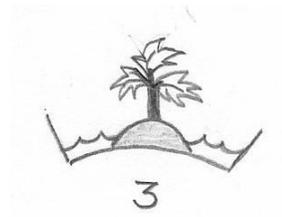
Day Two

Genesis 1:6-8

On this second day God divides the water that covered the earth. He designates some of the water to go up and some of the water to stay on earth. The water above was to protect the earth and the creations to come. This canopy of water would have made earth a paradise and protect it from ultra-violet rays. The water below would sustain life and all of earth's processes. The space in-between was the creation of the earth's atmosphere. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 4) (Note to Layout; Insert Scientific Fact textbox 1)

*Word textbox 4: *Expanse* means space or atmosphere.

*Scientific Fact textbox 1: Earth is the only planet with liquid water and an atmosphere of oxygen.



Day Three

Genesis 1:9-13

Up to this point, everything was still just water. God called for the water to be gathered up together to make room for land. Not just any land, dry land. Most people know that when dirt and water come together it makes a muddy mess. But not the way God did it. The dirt was immediately ready to support plants. That means that when God made the land He added all the right vitamins and minerals so that plant life could grow.

I remember a family vacation one summer. We took the kids to Hocking Hills State Park in southern Ohio. My parents had taken me when I was a child. The beauty of the forest and the water are overwhelming. But the caves and tunnels and rock formations are what make this place spectacular. One particular waterfall comes to mind. It was like a gigantic smooth bowl that was a single sheet of rock that hung over the side of a tall cliff and water trickled down it like a God made shower for all the creatures that lived in the woods. When God made the land, He also made all the rocks, caves, cliffs, and mountains too.

In these verses, it mentions seeds and fruit. Those are two completely different stages in plant life. That means God not only created plants, but He made them in full bloom ready to reproduce. God did more than plant grass. He created a basic law of science that proves creation. God set the rule that each plant could only produce the same kind of

plant. He set up the boundaries of species, and this leaves no room for the theory of evolution. (Note to Layout; Insert Scientific Facts textbox 2)

*Scientific Fact textbox 2: There are about 350,000 species of known known plants.



Day Four

Genesis 1:14-19

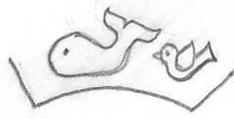
God ordered light sources into existence for many reasons. (Insert Interesting Information textbox 7) He made the sun and moon to mark the morning and the evening that make up a twenty-four hour day. These days add up into weeks, months, and years. Stars make up constellations that can be used for navigation. The earth goes around the sun and causes the changes in the seasons. (Insert Scientific Fact textbox 3) Even more amazing than all this, is that God placed all these objects in the universe in such a way that they don't collide into each other. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 1) (Note to Layout; Insert Scientific Fact textbox 4)

*Interesting Information 7: Light is energy. Almost all energy we use here on earth comes from the light we get from the sun.

*Activity textbox 1: Read Psalm 19:11 and spend time looking at the night time sky.

*Scientific Fact 3: It is the gravitational force of the moon that causes the tides.

*Scientific Fact 4: If the earth was closer to the sun the temperature would be too hot for humans to live, and if the earth was further away from the sun the temperature would be too cold for humans to live.



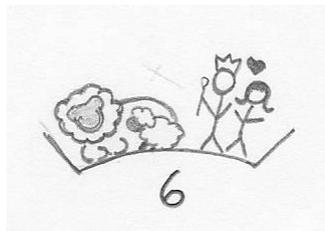
5

Day Five

Genesis 1:20-23

(Note to Layout; Insert Words textbox 5) God made an abundance of sea creatures to fill up all the waters of the earth. And He made all sorts of flying animals to fill the sky. When we read these verses, it is tempting to imagine only birds and fish, but these verses describe more than that. In fact, God even created sea monsters. We can only guess what exactly those were, but we know they lived in the water and they must have been huge.

*Word textbox 5: This is the first time the word *living* is used in the creation story. This word is translated to mean consciousness. That means there was something new added to living creatures. They were made with awareness of God.



6

Day Six

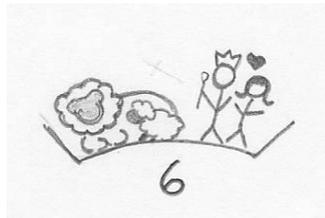
Genesis 1:24-25

Now the earth was ready to be filled. In these verses, God created all sorts of animals to fill it. Notice that God listed an order of the animals; cattle, creeping things, and beasts. Then He changed the order to beasts, cattle, and creeping things. The order of these two lists defies the theory of evolution. They say that fish swam, then crept, then

crawled, and then kept evolving. God clearly states that He made all creatures at the same time and in no particular order and no need for millions of years of evolving to get all the living creatures onto the earth.

→ Going Forward!

Read Genesis 1 again. God is amazing! He took such care in every detail of His creation. When was the last time you took a walk just to admire the beauty that God placed on this earth for you? Have you ever picked a flower and seen a bee hidden amongst its petal? Or blown a dandelion and tried to count the seeds that flew into the breeze? The process of pollination and germination are just two of the elaborate process that God established in creation. Do you have a tendency to walk through life not noticing Gods handiwork? How can you become more aware of the workmanship of the Almighty Creator.



Day Six Continued

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7; 2:18-25

Even with all the creatures on land, sea, and in the sky, creation was not complete. God made the earth and all that was in it specifically for humans. God's next creation was going to be very special for it would carry His own image. He made both male and female as part of His plan. It is good to know that all of humankind are in His image. Together, God gave them some incredible jobs. He told them to have children and fill the

earth. They were to watch over all the animals in the sea, in the sky, and on the earth. God also asked them to be in charge of the earth and to take care of it. God had made a place to live that was not only beautiful but was also a place that would provide for their every need. The world began with no need to struggle for survival. Evolution's idea of survival of the fittest had no room in the perfect world God created. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 2)

After God created, He rested. He established this seventh day as a Sabbath – a time to rest and remember. This day was just as much a part of the creation process as all the other days. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information text 8)

→ Going Forward!

Read 1:26-27. God intended for humans to be a reflection of Himself. When my children were born my husband and I would look at their little bodies and could already see how they resembled each of us in some way. When we received each of our other children we would get so excited when others would make comments about how they had a characteristic that was similar to me or Aaron. Has someone ever told you that you look like your parents? Or that your child acts like you? How did that make you feel? When God fashioned you He specifically intended for you to resemble Him in some way. How do you resemble God? Do you have His eyes that can see the potential good in everyone? Or maybe you have His hands that reach out in love to those around you. Maybe it is your laugh this is like Him? What characteristics or qualities do you possess that reflect the image of God?

Read 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; and Hebrews 4:4, 10. God rested on the seventh day.

Why did God rest? Do you believe that He was tired? Do you believe that He was lazy?

Why does God ask us to take a Sabbath, or a day of rest? What is significant about this day? Do you take a Sabbath as God commands? Why or why not? Do you live like you believe that somehow humans are better than God and don't need this day of rest? How can you incorporate Sabbath into your weekly schedule?

*Activity textbox 2: Read Revelation 4:11. List ways that you can bring pleasure and glory to God.

*Interesting Information textbox 8: God's process works. Man is suppose to work hard and rest adequately.



Sin Enters the World

Genesis 3:1-24; 2:16-17

Mankind walked and talked with God on a personal level. God had given humans everything they could possible want or need, and He gave them only one rule. He told them there was just one tree in the whole garden that they could not use for food. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 6) (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information 9) (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 3) The devil had a plan to ruin God's creation. He pulled out his best trick and went to the humans, intent on getting them to disobey God. (He tried to get Adam and Eve to doubt what God had said. (It seems that the devil still uses the same trick today) Ultimately, man and woman decided to disobey God. This disobedience, called sin, left them separated from God.

As a parent, I will often give my children a direct instruction. For example, I will not let my seven year old son ride his bike in the road because he is too small and he is too easily distracted. I caught him riding in the street. I confronted him and his answer reminded me of this story. He said he was following his older brothers, he said he didn't really go into the street because he kept turning onto the grass, he said he didn't think I meant our street, just busy streets, that he couldn't ride on. He came up with lots of reasons that he had disobeyed. He knew exactly what he wasn't suppose to do, but he had twisted my words in his mind which lead him to doubt what I had told him to do. Kids aren't the only ones who do this. Adults do the same thing as well. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 10)

Some people like to say it was only Eve's fault that sin is in the world. We have to read the whole story to understand. Eating the fruit wasn't the only sin in this story. Adam made the mistake of listening to others, of being persuaded, to follow along with something he knew was wrong. This is the definition of peer pressure. There was more sin too. When God came to confront them, Adam and Eve were too busy blaming each other and God to be sorry for what they had done. Hardening our hearts and not making things right with God piles on more sin. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 7) (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 4)

There are many consequences than come from sin. Adam and Eve became ashamed of their bodies and from then on needed clothes. They were going to have to leave the perfect garden that was their home. Adam would have to work hard to get the earth to cooperate with him and make food. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information

textbox 11) Eve was going to experience pain giving birth. But the worst consequence was that they would be separated from the presence of God for all eternity.

Going Forward!

Read Ephesians 6:12 and I Peter 5:8. How do you feel reading about how the devil tricked Adam and Eve and how he has every intentions of tricking you? What strategy does Satan most successfully use against you? Why does this strategy work? How do you respond when you are caught in sin? Do you have a tendency to blame others, or do you take responsibility for your actions? Is there any sin in your life currently separating you from God? Take the time to remove it and get things right with God so that your relationship with him may continue to grow.

- *Word textbox 6: The words *good and evil* are a Hebrew phrase that means all knowledge.
- *Interesting Information textbox 9: God planted everything in the garden for Adam and Eve, even the tree that He forbade them to eat. It wasn't time for them to eat it yet. It is like when a mom tells her child not to eat candy before dinner. It is not because she doesn't want him to have candy, it is because it is not time for candy yet.
- *Activity textbox 3: Read Revelation 22:2 and learn more about the tree of life that God planted in the garden. After sin, humans were separated from this tree. We will be able to see this tree again someday.
- *Interesting Information textbox 10: Satan, God's enemy, hates God's plans for us. He still disguises himself to trick us and get us to disobey God.
- *Word textbox 7: *Sin* is doing what God doesn't want us to do or to not do what God does want us to do
- *Activity textbox 4: Put your finger on an ink pad and transfer your print to a piece of paper. Our fingerprints are unique and we leave them behind on everything we touch. God didn't need a CSI team to find out Adam and Eve had sinned. God sees everything we do and everything we touch.
- *Interesting Information textbox 11: Work was not a consequence of sin. Adam had been working the land and naming animals before sin. The consequence was, now work would be hard. Having children was not a consequence of sin. The consequence was, now it would be painful. Marriage was not a consequence of sin. Having different roles in marriage was the consequence.



Prophecy of Christ

Genesis 3:14-15

For all people the consequences of sin became eternal separation from God, in other words, DEATH. God had made humankind so he could fellowship, or spend time with them. So sin was a tragic thing for both God and man. God in all His love and wisdom had a plan – a plan of restoration. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 8) He was preparing for Jesus, His son, to one day make a way for the forgiveness of sin so that people could be spared from death. People could have a restored relationship with God. Jesus didn't come during the Old Testament times. In fact, He didn't come for thousands of years. But God told us in the very first book of the Bible about His plans for Jesus to come to earth.

In verse fifteen, God is speaking to the devil that used the serpent to trick Adam and Eve. God says there will be enmity between the woman and the devil. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 9) Revelation 12:17 tells us that the problem between the devil and the woman will last a long time. This verse also talks about the seed of the woman and the seed of the devil being enemies. The woman's seed is Jesus, who will come crush the devil's seed. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 12) This verse says that Jesus will be bruised. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 13)

→ Going Forward!

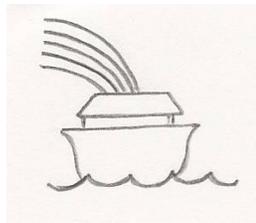
Read John 3:16. God had a plan to save His precious creation even though they had turned from Him. He made man and woman to serve and worship Him. When we sin we deny our ultimate purpose for being created. Yet God loved us enough to not leave us abandoned. He sent Jesus to rescue us from ourselves. Describe your thoughts and feelings about being rescued. What do you think the world would be like if Jesus had not died? What would your life be like if God had not had a plan for your salvation?

*Word textbox 8: The word *restoration* means to reconstruct or to bring back to a former condition.

*Word textbox 9: *Enmity* is the word used to describe how the devil feels about Jesus. Enmity means deep-seated dislike or hatred.

*Interesting Information textbox 12: I John 3:8 tells us that Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil. Isaiah 53:5 repeats the prophecy that Jesus will be bruised.

*Interesting Information textbox 13: Crucifixion is a death in which the heel actually gets bruised because of the way the person is placed on the cross with the back of the foot bearing all the weight of the body.



Noah and Flood

Genesis 6:5-22; 7:1, 13-24

Sin had taken over human kind and the earth had turned wicked. The world needed help and the Lord decided to cleanse the earth with a great flood. God would preserve a portion of His creation so that the word would not be totally destroyed.

Noah is an important man in history. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 14) He is known as only one of very few men listed in the Old Testament as

righteous. (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 6) Noah wasn't perfect, but God noticed him as a person who followed Him. God had a rescue plan for the earth that included Noah and his family.. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 15)

God had the perfect blueprints for a floating vessel, an ark, which could withstand the tremendous rain and waves. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 9) He also designed this boat to be big enough to hold two of every living thing and their food. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 16) Since there were so many animals, ventilation would be important. God even had taken care of that in His blueprints. Noah and His sons would have to follow God's specific directions for building the ark. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 17)

The time came to bring the designated animals into the ark. I can't imagine trying to collect all these animals. I sometimes have trouble enough trying to call my dog to come in from playing in the yard. But Noah had some help from God. You read in chapter 7:15-16 that the animals went to Noah by God's command. God called all the animals to come and they did. (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 7)

The rain started and lasted forty days. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 18) If you have ever lived in an area that floods you probably understand how much damage can be done by the force of water. There was so much water on the earth that things were destroyed, including all the living creatures outside the ark. That is a lot of water. (*Note to Layout; Insert Scientific Facts textbox 5) (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 19)

→ Going Forward!

Read 6:8, 7:1, and Proverbs 13:5-6. Noah was a righteous man living in an unrighteous land. I am sure it was hard for Noah to be surrounded by evil and still maintain a godly lifestyle. Our society today is similar to the time of Noah; sin abounds. The Bible says that God took notice of Noah because of his righteousness. How do you think Noah was able to be righteous with so much evil around him? How do you think others reacted to Noah's righteousness? Do you think Noah ever wanted to give in to the pressure of sin? What do you think kept him righteous? Are you surrounded by sinful people? Do you make godly decisions that separate you from others? Is peer pressure a problem for you? Explain. Noah's righteousness rescued him from the flood. The verse in Proverbs states righteousness will guard the one who is blameless. How can living righteous become a protection to you?

- *Interesting Information textbox 14: When Noah was born his father Lamech said, "This one shall give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed (Genesis 5:29)." Lamech must have known that his son was going to do great things.
- *Activity textbox 6: Make a commitment to stand up for God no matter how terrible people around you may act. Be dedicated to being righteous.
- *Interesting Information textbox 15: Stories of the flood have been found in ancient Egypt, Greece, China, India, Mexico, and Britain. That gives the Bible a lot of credibility.
- *Word textbox 9: The Hebrew word for *ark* means box or chest. This tells us the shape of the boat that saved Noah. It was designed to float not sail.
- *Interesting Information textbox 16: The ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. The ark was as long as one-and-a-half football fields, as tall as a four story building, and as wide as a city block. It was twice as long as a Boeing 747 airplane.
- *Interesting Information textbox 17: It took Noah a long time to build the ark. This gave the people plenty of time to ask Noah what he was doing and why. The people on earth had time to change their lives and ask God to forgive them, but they didn't.
- *Activity textbox 7: Look and Genesis 7:16. It says that God closed the door of the ark. It was God that tucked them in safely. Think about that for a minute and then write down your thoughts.

- *Interesting Information textbox 18: There are many people, including me, that believe that the canopy of water that was above the earth, and the firmament of water that was below the earth that are mentioned in Genesis 1:7 broke open. This would explain where all the rain came from.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 5: Mount Ararat is 17,000 feet above sea level and the Bible says that the water was another fifteen cubits (250 inches) higher than that.
- *Interesting Information textbox 19: If one or two inches of rain would fall over all the world at the same time, the atmosphere would be dry. It would be impossible to rain forty days and nights. That means the atmosphere before the flood was different. This was probably due to the canopy above the earth.



The Promise

Genesis 8:1-22; 9:1-3, 12-16

God didn't forget about Noah and his floating zoo. God stopped the rain and He began to blow the earth dry. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 10) After being in the ark about 370 days, God told Noah and the animals they could leave. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 20) Their job was to replenish the earth. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 11) Noah, when he left the ark, built an altar, and thanked God. The Lord was pleased that Noah remembered to thank Him.

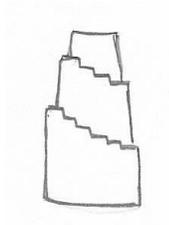
After all the rain, the earth had changed. There would be seasons with planting and harvesting. Even man's relationship with animals would change. God promised Noah He would not destroy the earth with a flood again. To seal this promise, God placed a rainbow in the sky. This way Noah (and all of us) would have a reminder of what God had said and done.

*Word textbox 10: The same Hebrew word *ruah* is used in Genesis 1:2 and in Genesis

8:1. In 1:2 the word is translated spirit, but in 8:1 the word is translated as wind. Could the same spirit that moved on the water from the beginning of creation also have been responsible for drying up the waters from the flood.

*Interesting textbox 20: Even after the dove didn't return, Noah didn't leave the ark until God told him that it was time. Being ready is great, but only go when God gives you the green light.

*Word textbox 11: *Replenish* means to fill again.



Tower of Babel

(*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 11)

Genesis 11:1-9

Unity is usually a good thing until it is used for bad. Have you ever heard of mutiny? It is when a group unites to take over whoever is in charge. The people came together and decided to form a city and construct a tower. They thought they were so smart that they could actually build a structure tall enough to reach heaven. (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 8) This tower was a symbol of their direct disobedience to God. After the flood, God gave an order to multiply and fill the whole earth. These guys decided they didn't like that idea and in verse four they made a bold statement that they didn't want to scatter all over the face of the earth. God realized He had a mutiny on His hands – the people had joined together to defy His leadership. In order to fulfill His will and stop their plan, God confused the people by giving them different languages. (*Note to Layout; Insert Scientific Fact textbox 6) (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 21) Since communication is critical in working together, their work now became

impossible. God didn't stop there; He also showed His great power by scattering the people all over the earth. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 22)

→ *Going Forward!*

Read I Corinthians 1:10, and 12:25. God requires unity amongst His believers. It is the working together and the like mindedness that brings power. Have you ever heard the old saying, "Many hands make light work?" God expects people to work together to accomplish His tasks. How well do you work with others? Evaluate your ability to be part of a team - the team of Christ? Are you one to create disunity? The people in the story of Babel came together to accomplish a great task too. But theirs was not one that was in accordance with God's plans. Have you ever worked hard on a project that was not blessed by God? How did it turn out? Has your church or your family ever taken on a project that was not something that God had asked you to do? How can you be sure that what you are doing is within His will? Anything that is contrary to God's direction is disobedience no matter how logical or pure your motive may be.

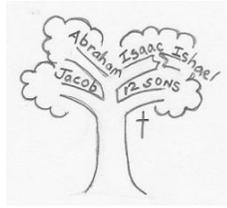
*Word textbox 11: *Babel* means to confuse.

*Activity textbox 8: Try stacking anything, cards, blocks, cups, etc... See how many you can add before the tower falls down.

*Scientific Fact textbox 6: There are over 150 significant nations and over 3000 languages and dialects.

*Interesting Information textbox 21: In this story, God uses languages to divide the people. In Acts 2 God uses language to unite the people.

*Interesting Information textbox 22: As a result of the Tower of Babel, God confused the people's languages. That would indicate that before this there was only one language. God divided the people into their own distinct groups and these groups went to live at various places on the earth. This could make a concentration for certain genes to develop. This could result in different races with more unique dominant features.



Abraham

Genesis 12:1-5, 10-20

(*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 11 and Interesting Information textbox 23)

Abraham is called the ‘father of nations.’ God spoke directly to him and made a covenant with Abraham that his seed, his children, would become God’s people. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 14) It was on this promise that Israel’s history began. God promised that He would bless Abraham and make him into a great nation. (*Note to Layout; Insert Science Fact textbox 10) The condition of this contract was that Abraham had to leave everything he knew, his family and his home. At age seventy-five Abraham and his wife Sarah began their journey. (*Note to Layout; Insert Science Fact textbox 11) (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 12)

The choice God gave Abraham was not an easy one to make. The land of Ur was well developed and Abraham’s life there would be easy. The land of Canaan was primitive and full of strangers. If he moved, life would be hard for Abraham. But Abraham obeyed God and went to the land promised him. (*Note to Layout; Activity textbox 13)

Travel was difficult. Famine came and Abraham went to Egypt to find food. Abraham put his wife and his life at risk by lying. Later, Abraham was faced with a similar crisis and he lied again. Both times God miraculously intervened sparing their lives and their future.

→ Going Forward!

Read 12: 10-20; 20:1-18 Abraham struggled with sin just like any other human being. Abraham took circumstances into his own hands. He wanted to protect himself any way he could even if it meant compromising with God. How do you handle hard circumstances? Do you try to figure your own way out? Do you seek God? Abraham sinned and learned a hard lesson. But when faced with the exact same circumstances later in life, Abraham made the exact same mistake. Do you have a tendency to fall back into the same sin? What makes that sin so comfortable to you? Can you see a deeper reason why you return to this sin? Does it have anything to do with past issues? If so, how can you work through those issues? Ask God to show you a how you can be set free from the sin that hounds you?

- *Interesting Information textbox 23: Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-18 describes Abraham as a man of faith who obeyed God throughout his lifetime.
- *Science Fact textbox 10: The city Abraham came from, Ur of the Chaldeans, was in what is now Iraq.
- *Word textbox 14: The Hebrew word for covenant is *berith* which means an agreement or a contract. But a covenant is different from a contract in two ways: 1) A covenant doesn't have a termination date; 2) A covenant involves the whole person, not just a behavior or a skill.
- *Activity textbox 11: Read Genesis 22:15-16. God told Abraham that he would have as many descendants as there are grains of sand, or stars in the sky. Take a small handful of sand and try to count the individual grains. Or go outside on a clear night and try to count all the stars you see. God's promise to Abraham was huge.
- *Science Fact textbox 11: The journey from Haran to Canaan was 400 miles. The whole trip from Ur to Canaan was probably around 900 miles. Walking would take around 9.5 million steps.
- *Activity textbox 12: Count how many steps the you take the next time you go for a walk. This may help you understand what a big deal it was for Abraham to obey God.
- *Activity textbox 13: Read II Chronicles 20:7. God describes Abraham as a friend. What characteristics make a friend? Take the time to think about how you can be a friend of God.



Sodom and Gomorrah

Genesis 18:20-33; 19:1-11, 15-17, 24-26

(*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 12) Abraham bargained with the Lord to try to save the cities that God was about to destroy because of sin. God said He would spare the cities if just ten righteous people lived there. It is sad because there weren't even ten. God sent two angels to go and get Lot and his family out of the city in order to save their lives. The Neighborhood that Lot lived in was so gross and full of sin that the people wanted to do horrible things to the angels.

Sometimes, when you are around certain things for a long time, you get used to them. If you are around people who swear, sometimes you end up not noticing that they are saying bad words. If you often play killing video games, live around violence, or constantly watch violence on television, then sometimes violence becomes what seems like a normal part of life. The word for this is desensitization. This might have happened to Lot. He was around so much sin that maybe he didn't realize how gross the sin really was. Lot hesitated to leave. Good thing the angels of God were there to help Lot escape from the sinful place he was in. This story proves God's power is greater than temptation and sin. The angels blinded the evil men so Lot would be protected and the angel grabbed Lot and pulled him out of the city. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 13)

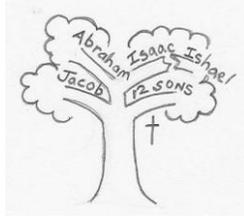
(*Note to Layout; Insert Science Fact textbox 8) (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 9)

When Lot and his family finally made their escape, they were given one rule – do not look back. Lot’s wife disobeyed that rule and suffered a terrible consequence. (*Note to Layout; Insert Science Fact textbox 9) The Bible doesn’t tell us why she looked back. All we know is that she did. (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 10)

→ Going Forward!

Read 19:15-16 and I Corinthians 10:13. Lot hesitated before leaving. The angels had come to give him a route of escape out from among the sin surrounding, yet he hesitated. What was it that was holding him back? Have you ever been in the middle of sin and temptation and God has given you an escape route? Did you take the escape? Did you hesitate? What is it in your life that keeps you staying in the same place? What is available to help you get out of what you are struggling with right now?

- *Word textbox 12: *Hospitality* means to share your home and your food with someone. Hospitality was a highly respected and expected part of ancient civilization.
- *Word textbox 13: Another word for *brimstone* is sulfur – a very smelly yellow mineral. Burning sulfur rained down on the cities.
- *Science Fact textbox 8: The area around the Dead Sea still stinks like sulfur.
- *Activity textbox 9: Take the time to thank God for all the times He has helped you overcome sin or get out of a bad situation.
- *Science Fact textbox 9: It is not an impossibility that Lot’s wife became a pillar of salt. Science says that this catastrophe could have easily been an earthquake and explosion of gasses and that Lot’s wife could have been engulfed in the rain of sulfur and salt debris. In the volcano eruption of Pompeii, there were people preserved instantly making them look like statues.
- *Activity textbox 10: Read Ezekiel 16:49-50; II Peter 2:6-8; Luke 17:28 to learn more about Sodom and Gomorrah.



Ishmael

Genesis 15:1-6; 16:11, 15; 21:9-13, 20-21

God came again to Abraham to reassure him of His promise to make him into a great nation. We don't know how much time had passed, but Sarah still had no children.

Instead of believing that God would keep His promise, Abraham and Sarah tried to make God's will happen sooner. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 28)

Abraham had a child named Ishmael with Sarah's servant Hagar. After his half-brother was born, Ishmael was cut off from his family. God did not forget about Ishmael.

Although he was not the promised son, God still blessed Ishmael and made him into his own nation.

→ Going Forward!

Do you ever find it hard to be patient? How do you react when you are told to wait?

Have you ever rushed into something instead of waiting? How did that turn out?

Galatians 5:22 says that patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit. How well do you display this quality in your life?

*Interesting Information textbox 28: Satan still uses impatience as a way to get God's people to disobey.



Isaac

Genesis 18:1-5, 9-15; 21:1-7, 24:4-7, 10-19, 50, 61-67; 26:1-11

After all these years there is still no promised child. Angels visit and remind the couple that God will keep His word and Sarah will have of child of her own. It was hard for Sarah to believe that her husband, who was ninety-nine years old, and herself, who was ninety years old, could have a baby. Sure enough, the angels told them the truth and the next year Sarah and Abraham had a baby named Isaac. Isaac brought joy to his parents in their old age. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 15) (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 29)

Before Abraham died, he wanted to find a wife for his son. Once again, Abraham trusted in God to help him. God had the perfect match for Isaac. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 30) He even provided a miraculous answer to prayer to show that Rebekah was the exact mate God intended. (*Note to Layout; Science Fact textbox 12)

Like his father, Isaac had in intimate relationship with God. But also like his father, Isaac made the same mistake of deceiving a king and jeopardizing him and his wife by lying and saying that Rebekah was his sister. Like father like son.

→ Going Forward!

Read 24:1-67 and 29:1-10. God had a mate picked out for Isaac and later for his son Jacob as well. God knew what they both needed, and in trusting God they got the women of their dreams. What are your circumstances with a mate? Do you believe that God has someone specifically for you? Are you acting like God is in control of who you marry? If you are already married, are you acting like your mate is a gift from God?

*Word textbox 15: The name *Isaac* means laughter.

*Interesting Information textbox 29: Circumcision became an outward sign of the promise that God had made to Abraham. People were circumcised to show they belonged to God. It was a physical mark of ownership.

*Interesting Information textbox 30: Picking a mate is a good thing to leave up to God. If you are not already married, begin praying now for your mate. If you have children, begin praying for their mates. Do the same if you have grandchildren.

*Science Fact textbox 12: A camel that has gone a few days without water can drink as much as twenty-five gallons of water. That can be up to 100 drawings from a well.

Test of Obedience

Genesis 22:1-13, 15-18

This is a hard story to read. It brings up so many questions. Was God really asking Abraham to kill his son? Was Abraham really going to kill Isaac? How could God or Abraham think of such an awful thing? How did Isaac feel when all of this happened? The Bible doesn't give us all the details or explanations that can answer these questions. All we know is that God asked Abraham to give up something very important to him and Abraham was willing to do it. We also know that God provided a way for Abraham to be able to be obedient and still not kill his son.

I've heard people say that Abraham knew all along he wouldn't have to kill Isaac; that he and God probably had another conversation that we don't know about. (*Note to

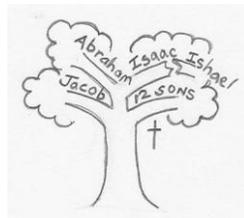
Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 24) I have no idea what Abraham knew or didn't know except what is written down in the Bible. The Bible just tells us that God asked for Abraham to be willing to put God before the most important thing in his life, and Abraham did it. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 25) (*Note to Layout; Activity textbox 14)

→ Going Forward!

Read Deuteronomy 18:19-22. God spoke a word of promise to Abraham that he would have a son. What wonderful news for him to hear. I am sure when he first heard that message from God he was so excited and went home believing that he was going to have a son soon. Little did he know that God was going to have him wait several decades. Has God ever given you a message of promise? Explain. In 2004 I wrote a note in my Bible margin next to Deut. 18 telling God that I was confused and was no longer sure if I had heard His promise correctly. The year I visited Haiti for the first time, 2001, I truly believed that I had heard God speak that he had five boys for me to adopt. I told everyone what God had told me. Here it was three years later and the boys were not home. I felt like I had misheard God or that I had never heard Him at all. I remember feeling panic and doubt as I wrote this note. As I was writing this book, and I came across my note in Deut. 18 and I had to stop and thank God that I could write a new note dated 2009 that thanked Him for the five Haitian children that He had brought home to me. I only had to wait a few years for God to bring about His promise to me, but in that little time I began to doubt and fear. What are you waiting for that God has spoken? How well are you waiting? Do you need to reaffirm that it was God that spoke

and not man? How can you be sure to differentiate between man's predictions and God's prophecies?

- *Interesting Information textbox 24: Abraham had waited a quarter of a century for his promised son.
- *Interesting Information textbox 25: God, not Abraham, is the one who ended up being the only one to give up His son as the ultimate sacrifice.
- *Activity textbox 14: Most everywhere that Abraham went, he would set up an alter as a reminder of something God had done for him. Start your own alter collection. Every time God does something for you that you don't want to forget, find a rock, put the date on it, and place it in your yard. With all God does, your rock garden is sure to grow.



Jacob

Genesis 25:21-34; 27:1-45; 28:10-15:29:9-11, 16-23, 27-30; 32:24-28; 3:10-12

God had fulfilled his word to Abraham and had given him a son. The promise of a nation had begun. God had blessed Abraham and Isaac and both had become wealthy and powerful. Like his father, Isaac also wanted children.

Isaac interceded in prayer for his wife. God heard Isaac's prayer and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. Her pregnancy was anything but normal. The two brothers fought while in her belly, and they came out fighting too. The twins were named Jacob and Esau.

Jacob and Esau were opposites. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 16) They each had their own talents. One was a momma's boy and the other a daddy's boy. This caused problems in the home. Within the family, there were problems with jealousy, deception, and competition. Unusual circumstances led to Esau whimsically selling his birthright to Jacob. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 17) Later Jacob tricked Esau

into keeping this deal and Jacob received his father's first born blessing. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 31) It took lies and manipulation on every one's part to pull off the blessing switch. Isaac and Rebekah were keeping secrets and sneaking behind each other's backs. The two boys followed the lead of their parents and resorted to lies and trickery. All this ended in bad feelings and a broken family. Jacob and Esau ended up becoming estranged for the majority of their remaining years alive. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 32)

Jacob left his family but not before his father asked him to take a wife. On his journey back to Abraham's homeland, Jacob had a dream where God revealed Himself to him. God told Jacob that he too would have the blessing of Abraham and Isaac, and that he was part of the nation that God was beginning. Back in the land of his people, Jacob fell in love with a beautiful girl. He made a deal with Rachal's father to work seven years as payment for her hand in marriage. Much like Jacob had tricked his brother and father, Rachal's father tricked Jacob and gave him Leah, Rachal's sister instead. Jacob had to work another seven years to get the right wife. (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 15)

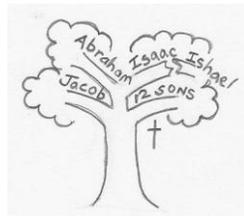
Jacob eventually left to go to the land of Canaan, the land that was promised to his father. During his travels, the Lord met with Jacob. Jacob wrestled with God. Because of this intense encounter, Jacob's name was changed to Israel. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 18) This is how the nation of Israel began.

➔ *Going Forward!*

Read 27:1-46. Marriage is a partnership. Parenting runs smoother and is more successful when conducted within a partnership. Notice in this story that the parents had

a problem, they didn't communicate. Before this cover-up, it appears that Isaac and Rebekah did not trust each other and made a regular habit of being on opposite sides. How is your marriage? Do you have communication issues? How can you better communicate with your mate? When it comes to parenting do you parent as a team? Do your children try to divide you and put you on opposing sides? Explain. How can you practice trust and communication within your family unit?

- *Word textbox 16: *Jacob* means heel catcher, and *Esau* means hairy.
- *Interesting Information textbox 31: Esau was willing to give up his birthright for one meal. Esau showed that he didn't place much importance on family things.
- *Word textbox 17: A *birthright* is the special blessing of a father to his first-born son.
- *Interesting Information textbox 32: The devil still uses jealousy to try and destroy family relationships.
- *Activity textbox 15: Read Hebrews 12:15-17. Check your heart and see if there are any wrong or inappropriate decisions that you have made and ask God to forgive you and to give you the courage to make things right.
- *Word textbox 18: The name *Israel* means to strive and prevail. This is the perfect new name for Jacob. It is also a good name to sum up the history of the nation of Israel.



Twelve Sons

Genesis 29:31-35; 30:1-8, 9-13, 17-20, 22-24; 31:17-19, 32-35; 35:16-19; 35:23-29

Jacob began having children. His wives and concubines seemed to be in competition to have babies. (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 19) (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 33) During this time, Jacob was still living with his father-in-law and bringing him great wealth. Jacob decided to leave and go to the land God had promised him and his family. Through trickery, Jacob became wealthy. When

he finally decided to leave, Rachael stole her father's idol and took it with her. (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 16)

Rachal had one last child. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 34)
 This made twelve sons born to Israel. These twelve sons are: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 35) (*Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 20)
 These sons later became known as the twelve tribes of Israel. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 35)

➔ *Going Forward!*

Read 31:22-35. Sometimes we become used to the way our family lives. There comes a time in life when everyone has to decide for him or herself how to live and what to believe. Rachal was moving out from her father's house. She had a chance to make her own decision of how she was going to live for God. Instead, she followed what she was used to and took her father's beliefs as her own. Today when someone decides to become a Christian, that person has to experience Jesus and decide how he or she is going to live for Him. What were you taught about God as a child? Did your parent(s) have a relationship with Christ? Do you have your own relationship with God? Have you kept any idols from your childhood? Explain. Remember anything that keeps God from being number one in your life is an idol.

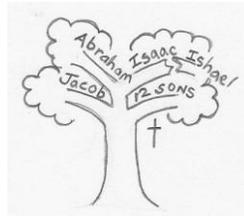
*Word textbox 19: A *concubine* is a woman that belongs to a man but who is not his wife.

*Interesting Information textbox 33: Having sons was an important part of a woman's life. If a woman had no children, especially a son, then the woman was looked down upon.

*Activity textbox 16: Read Exodus 20. God commands that we don't have idols. An idol doesn't have to be a statue that you worship. An idol can be anything or

anyone that you put before God. Ask God to show you if there is anything in your life that is more important to you than Him.

- *Interesting Information textbox 34: At this time in history, there were not hospitals. When a woman was ready to give birth, they were assisted by a midwife. Rachael died from complications while in childbirth.
- *Interesting Information textbox 35: In ancient Bible times, the naming of a child was a big deal. Parents named children based on circumstances surrounding the birth. On some occasions, God revealed the name a child should have. Children often lived up to the meaning of the name given them.
- *Word textbox 20: The name *Ben-Omi* means a son of sorrow. The name *Benjamin* means son of the right hand. This name signifies the honored position that he had in the family.



Joseph

Genesis 37:3-11, 18-28; 39:1-6, 7-23; 40:4-5; 41:1, 14-16, 25, 37-46; 42:1-8, 24-26; 43:4-5, 11-15, 23-26; 45:1-5, 24-26; 47:1-7; 50:20

Joseph did not have a good relationship with his brothers. Having twelve kids of my own, I am no stranger to brotherly fights. But the relationship between these brothers is far from normal. These verses describe deep jealousy that turned into hate and eventually led to violence. (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 17) Joseph received favored treatment from his dad – that wasn't fair. Often time's parents are a big reason for why siblings don't get along. Israel didn't do anything to help the situation get better, and his lack of action may have contributed to him losing his son.

Joseph ends up being sold as a slave and carted off to Egypt. He was only a teenager and he had to face the fact that his own brothers had betrayed him, and that he had lost

his family, his home, and his country. Joseph had nothing, not even the special coat his father made for him.

In the time Joseph was in Egypt, he found favor with an important officer. (*Note to Layout; Insert Words textbox 21) Eventually Joseph again came into a position of being the favorite. He was given many freedoms and responsibilities. Sometimes it is easy to think that popular people have it easy. We might even look at all their money and privileges and think they have the best life. Often times we don't realize that with that kind of fame also comes big temptations. That is exactly what happened with Joseph. He found himself in a situations where he had to choose to be righteous, or to have sex with a beautiful woman that was not his wife. Many people would not make the choice to stay righteous. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 36) Joseph did. Sorry to say, he still landed in jail. Not everyone around him made the same choice to be righteous.

While in jail, Joseph was again favored. God blessed him when he was in the middle of a very difficult time. As an adult, Joseph still had the ability to interpret dreams. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting textbox 37) He had two occasions in jail to use this gift. When brought before the pharaoh, Joseph interpreted two more dreams. Being able to explain what the dreams meant and being able to provide a solution, put Joseph in yet another favored position. He was second in command of all Egypt.

Egypt wasn't the only place with famine; it had also reached Canaan where Joseph's family lived. His brothers, the sons of Israel, traveled to Egypt to get grain, not knowing it was their own brother they would be getting it from. Joseph must have looked very different because he was able to recognize his brothers, but they were not able to

recognize him. (*Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 38) Joseph gave them what they needed, but he also manipulated a plan for them to have to come back bringing his baby brother with them. They came back and during this second visit Joseph revealed to them his identity. He openly forgave them and gave God the credit for allowing circumstances to be as they were so that Joseph would be in a position to help them. Joseph asked them to go back home, gather their father and all their belongings, and come live by him close to Egypt. They did. (*Note to Layout; Insert Activity 18)

Joseph goes from being a spoiled kid, to being an accused felon, to being the assistant to the pharaoh. He learned and matured through adversity. His life of trial and triumph is an example of how one man's faith and obedience in God can change the course of the future.

→ Going Forward!

I can't imagine how hard it was for the brothers to go home and have to figure a way to tell their father that Joseph was alive. They had kept their secret for so long they probably thought they had gotten away with everything. I am sure that their father was confused. Do you have a problem with lying? Have you ever been in a situation where one lie leads to another and pretty soon the lies have consumed you? Explain. Have you gotten away with something that you need to tell the truth about? Explain.

Lying can destroy relationships. Are there any relationships that you need to make right by telling the truth? Explain. Ask God to give you the courage to make things right. Regardless of all that had happened between Joseph and his brothers, the family came back together. Joseph was able to forgive and put the terrible events behind him. Has anyone in your family ever done you wrong? Explain. Do you harbor any ill

feelings against a relative? Now is the perfect time to work on forgiving your brother and making a new start.

- *Activity textbox 17: Sibling rivalry and jealousy causes many problems in families. If you have siblings, ask God to show you if there are any bad feelings between you and them. If so, make things right. If you are a parent, keep involved in your children's relationships with each other and help them resolve conflicts quickly.
- *Interesting Information textbox 37: In biblical times, a dream was believed to be one way that God communicated with people. God used dreams all throughout the Bible.
- *Word textbox 21: The Egyptian name *Zaphenath-paneah* means the god speaks and loves.
- *Interesting Information textbox 38: Egyptian officers often wore very dark, straight wigs, and eye makeup. Joseph, as an officer, probably dressed like an Egyptian.
- *Interesting Information textbox 36: Many movie stars and famous athletes are not necessarily happy. Many are divorced or addicted to drugs or alcohol. Having fame and fortune can be difficult.
- *Activity textbox 18: Make a family tree. You can ask family members the names of relatives and you can go to the library and research your ancestors.

CONCLUSION

All of Genesis tells story after story of how the people of God lived their lives. We read how people sinned and disobeyed God. We also read how God was still willing to use his people despite their human flaws.

Take time to think about your life and how you live it. Thank God for creating you and for having plans for your future. Ask him to use you and help you follow his will for your life.

Egypt; in chapters thirteen through eighteen the people are roaming around the desert (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 1); and in chapters nineteen through forty the people are camping at the bottom of the mountain of Sinai.

Moses is not only the author, but is also the main character in this book. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 2) We can read about his birth and about his life as it progresses over the years. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 3) Some people say that Moses is an Old Testament example of Jesus and that there is a close symbolic connection between them. For example, both Moses and Jesus came as deliverers to free people trapped in bondage.

→ *Going Forward!*

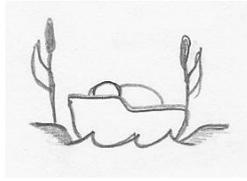
Reading through the book of Exodus is more than just a journey through history; it is a revelation of Jesus. In the Old Testament God set up a deliverer to save His people that were stuck in bondage – Moses. In the New Testament God sent a deliverer to save His people that were slaves to sin – Jesus. As you read, take note of how Moses is an early foreshadowing of the savior to come. Write down all the similarities. How does learning about Moses help you in your walk with Christ?

*Activity textbox 1: Do some research to discover what your ancestral heritage is.

*Interesting Information textbox 1: Because of disobedience and unfaithfulness, these people were forbidden to enter the promised land. They had to wander around the wilderness for forty years. Hebrews 3:18 reminds us that we too can't experience God's rest if we are unfaithful.

*Interesting Information textbox 2: Moses is mentioned in the New Testament more often than any other Old Testament character. One reference tells about a fight for his bones (Jude 1:9)

*Interesting Information textbox 3: Moses was the man who led the Israelites out of Egypt. He also took on many other responsibilities like being a law enforcer, a military genius, a political leader, a prophet, a judge, and a founder of a religion.



Birth of Moses

Exodus 1:22; 2:1-10

No matter how awful the circumstances, the Hebrew people kept increasing in number and in strength. In an effort to control the situation, the pharaoh ordered all the boy babies to be killed. In a time of so much death and sorrow, God had a plan.

When Moses was born, his mom must have felt desperate knowing that her baby boy was supposed to be killed. She came up with a crazy plan – she put her son in a basket and put him in the river. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 1) (Note to Layout; Insert Scientific Fact textbox 1) No matter how crazy this plan seemed, God’s hand was upon Moses.

Have you ever thought about how amazing God is? It is hard to process him in our human brains. To think that God knows everything, sees everything, and controls everything is almost too much to comprehend. This is one of those stories in the bible that shows just how amazing God is. The basket was placed in the river among the reeds at the banks. God’s plan was for pharaoh’s daughter to find the basket and spare the baby’s life. In order for God’s plan to be carried out, God had to control all the details.(Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 2) For example, the current of the river and the blowing of the wind had to bring the basket to just the right spot in the river where the princess would see him; the small baby would have to be quiet and calm so as not to be heard too soon; the princess would have to get the urge to bathe and to go to just the right spot in the river at the exact time that the baby was coming by. The timing of all

the details had to be perfect. We can choose to believe all of this was a series of coincidences, or we can believe that God is awesome and is in control of everything.

Even more miraculous than all of this is the divine intervention that caused the pharaoh's baby, defy her father's command, and to raise Moses as her own. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 4)

→ *Going forward!*

Read 1:15-22. Pharaoh ordered that the nurses to kill babies. The job of these women was to help bring life into the world, and now they were commanded to bring death. Pharaoh's request went against the nature of their calling, their laws, and their religious practices. The pharaoh was the most powerful in the land and obedience to him was expected. Disobedience was punished even unto death. These women were in a terrible predicament. They had to choose to hold to their faith and follow God, or compromise their faith and respond to the leader. Neither choice would have been easy. They chose to keep God's law and let the babies live. This story reminds me of all the Christian martyrs that have stood up for their faith in God, even when it has cost them their lives. Have you been in a situation where there seems to be no good choices? When you are between a rock and a hard place, how do you make your decisions? How important is obeying God to you? Do you consider God's way first? Do you think if put into this situation that you could make a decision that could mean losing your own life?

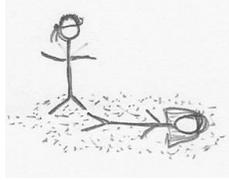
*Word textbox 1: The Hebrew word used for the *basket* Moses was placed in is the same Hebrew word used for the ark Noah built.

*Scientific Fact textbox 1: The Nile River is 4,184 miles long and runs through nine countries.

*Activity textbox 2: God's hand was upon Moses and kept him safe. Think back of all the times God has had his hand on you. Thank him.

*Interesting Information textbox 4: Egyptian royalty thought that they were superior to

everyone else. They thought that they were equal to the gods.



Moses in Egypt

Exodus 2:11-15, 16-21

Moses spent his childhood in Egypt. He lived and learned as a member of the royal family. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 5) All those years while he was a child of privilege the Hebrew people were slaves. (Note to Layout; Insert Scientific Fact textbox 2) In a moments time Moses realized the hardship of his biological people and he responded in anger. Had he never noticed before? Had he just found out he was adopted? There are so many unanswered questions. All we know is that on this particular day Moses reacted. This split second decision cost him his life of luxury. He ran away to escape death.

God's hand was still upon Moses. God led him to a place where he would be welcomed and would be safe from harm. Moses experienced a far different life style as a shepherd than as a prince.

→ Going Forward!

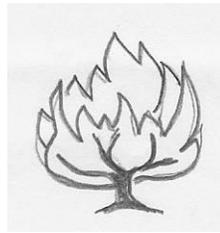
Read 2:15-21, 3:1. Moses went from being a pampered boy to a hard working man. He had to learn how to work the land and take care of the animals. This kind of intense labor would make him strong and teach him how to lead. Are there any times in your life that seem that God has taken you down a different path than you expected? You find

yourself in a strange and uncomfortable place? Maybe this is a Moses' experience.

What could God be teaching you or preparing you for?

*Interesting Information textbox 5: Stephen, in Acts 7:20-22, tells about Moses growing up. Moses was educated in sciences of Egypt and he was also trained in leadership and speaking. At that time, Egypt was a center for higher learning and royalty and princes from all over came there to learn. Moses was exposed to more as an Egyptian than he ever would have been exposed to as a Hebrew slave. God gave him the opportunity to gain the skills that would later be needed to negotiate with a king and govern a million people. He would have also been taught reading and writing which would equip him to later record the history of his people.

*Scientific Fact textbox 2: Bricks were made by soaking clay with water and adding straw. Then the substance would be shaped by hand or with a wooden mold and placed in the sun to dry. Some of the great Egyptian monuments that still stand today were made from these kind of bricks.



Burning Bush

Exodus 3:1-22; 4:1-17

God revealed himself to Moses in a miraculous way. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 6 and Interesting Information textbox 6.5) Moses chose not to ignore God but to listen to what God had to say to him. (Note to Layout; Insert Words textbox 2) Moses had been spared from death in Egypt twice. Going back there may not have been something Moses wanted to do.

We have no idea how much Moses knew about his biological people. We don't even know if Moses knew who God was. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 7) Growing up in pharaoh's family, Moses had probably learned about the many gods of Egypt. God made sure he introduced himself to Moses and let Moses know of

the promise made to his relatives, the people of Israel. God not only shared his plans of deliverance with Moses, but he included Moses in his plans as well.

Moses responded in typical human manner and doubted God's plans. Sometimes it seems that God's ways don't make any logical sense, so we convince ourselves that God can't be right. Because God is not human, and because he is far smarter than any human could ever comprehend, then his ways don't have to make sense. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 3)

→ *Going Forward!*

Read 3:3-13: 4:1, 10-14, and II Corinthians 12:9-10. Moses' doubt in himself could have hindered God's call for him. It was not until Moses could look past his own failings, that he could be used by God. It was not ever about Moses' ability but about God's ability to use Moses' ability. Do you ever feel unworthy or unqualified to do God's work? Explain. Has God asked you do something that you do not feel confident to do? It is ok to doubt yourself. It is good to realize that you can do nothing so that you can become totally dependent on God. God confronted Moses in his time of doubt to remind Moses of who is really in charge. You have had your doubt, are you now ready to accept God's call on your life despite your lack of confidence?

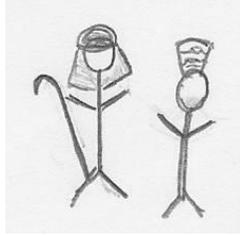
*Interesting Information textbox 6: It wasn't until God was sure he had Moses' attention that he spoke to him (3:4)

*Interesting Information textbox 6.5: Moses was 80 years old when he heard God's call.

*Words textbox 2: The mountain of *Horeb* is the same as Mount *Sinai*. It was at this mountain that Moses first heard from God and where he would later receive the Ten Commandments from God.

*Interesting Information textbox 7: God called Moses by name, letting Moses know that God knew all about him. God knows us by name too.

*Activity textbox 3: Think about any excuses you have made that have kept you from doing God's work. Ask God to forgive you. Now say "yes" when God asks you to do a job for him.



Meeting Pharaoh

Exodus 4:19-23; 5:1-2, 5-24; 6:28-30; 7:1-6, 9-13

Moses was given instruction directly from God in what to say and how to say it when he went before Pharaoh. When Pharaoh refused to negotiate with Moses, Pharaoh took out his anger and frustration on the Hebrew slaves. The Hebrew people did not like the position they were in, so they blamed Moses.

Sometimes when God has a plan for our lives we assume that because the plan is from him, then it should go smoothly. When there are troubles we will blame God or one of his workers and we will pull away. God's plans are always best but they aren't always easy. The people of God were going to have to go through some difficult times before they were miraculously freed from bondage. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 8) Gaining freedom can be a hard road to walk. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 4)

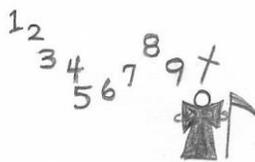
➔ *Going Forward!*

Read Philemon 1. Paul is helping a runaway slave gain his freedom. When I homeschooled my children, I taught them history as a subject and one of the most interesting units we covered was during the time of the civil war and how the slaves fought for being free. But the stories were heart wrenching, and knowing they were true made it so much worse. People were running in the dark, being chased by dogs, and

hunted like animals to find a place where they could escape bondage. When they would finally make it to their destination my sons and I would cheer knowing that they had accomplished a great deal. Freedom for the slaves came at a high price. But the people kept striving and they changed history. It is different to read the stories of slaves, like the Israelites, and the American blacks, but each of us has our own issues of slavery to differing degrees. What master keeps you help in bondage? For example, smoking, alcohol, a familiar sin, abusive relationship, lying, overeating, drugs, unhealthy habits. Can you remember when you first became enslaved? How does this make you feel? Do you believe you could be more effective as a free person? Explain. Do you want to be free? Even if it requires walking a difficult path to freedom? Make the decision today to begin your journey. Ask God to be with you as He was with Israel and Onesimus. It might be helpful for you to ask another to help you much like Paul helped his friend. Talk to others who have been through the same path and succeeded. One way the other slaves became so successful in gaining freedom is because when one became free then they helped another still enslaved to also become free. Who can you seek out for help? If you are already free, who can you help?

**Interesting Information textbox 8: When Joseph's family first moved to Egypt, there were only 70 people. When Moses led the people out of Egypt, there was estimated to be around two million people.*

**Activity textbox 4: Ask God to help you become free from any sin or problem that keeps you in bondage. The road to freedom will not be easy but don't give up.*



Plagues

Exodus 7:17-25; 8:1-7, 16-19, 20-24; 9:1-7, 8-12, 22-25; 10:12-15, 21-23; 11:1-10; 12:1-7, 12-14, 22-23, 29-37, 41-42.

(Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 3) The Hebrew people had probably heard of God from the stories passed down through the generation, but we don't know how much the Pharaoh or the Egyptians had heard. When God sent Moses and Aaron before the Pharaoh, he was going to let everyone know for sure that He was the one and only true God. At first the magicians were able to duplicate the plagues. It soon became clear that Satan's copy cat skills could not keep up with the power of God.

To understand the plagues, it is important to remember that Egyptians looked upon their Pharaoh as a god. They believed that the Pharaoh kept the world running smoothly. Through the plagues, God cut the Pharaoh down to size. Pharaoh could not protect the people from the plagues proving that he was incompetent. Egyptians also had many other gods, such as a Nile god, frog god, cow god, fly god, even a sun god. The plagues were a direct attack on these false gods.

Plague number ten, the final plague, was the killing of the first born. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 4) Not only did this act of God break through the stubbornness of Pharaoh leading him to release the Hebrew people, but it also symbolically foretold of the coming Messiah. (Note to Layout Insert Activity textbox 5) The death of an unblemished lamb saved their lives. The blood was spattered on the door posts sparing those inside. Nothing but a perfect sacrifice could meet the requirements of God.

Not only were the people of God set free, but they were also given the riches of the land that had held them captive. When one kingdom fought against another, whatever kingdom won would take all the riches from the kingdom that lost. This was a sign of total victory. The Hebrew people had triumphantly won and they had treasure from Egypt to prove it. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 6)

➔ *Going Forward!*

Read 7:22, 8:7, 17-18, and II Corinthians 11:14. The Bible describes satan as a transformer. He likes to imitate light. In the story of Moses the devil did everything in his power to imitate the power that God was able to display through Moses. The devil would like us to believe that he can do anything God can do. He CAN'T! Have there been times that satan has tried to trick you or distract you from focusing on what God is doing in your life? Are there miracles that God is doing right now but your mind has been looking in the wrong direction? Evaluate the light around you and decipher if the light is real or an imitation. Can you believe that God is more powerful than satan? Can you walk in that belief even when there are other powerful sources of imitation around you?

*Word textbox 3: A *plague* is a disaster that affects many people.

*Word textbox 4: The word *Passover* in Hebrew means to spread wings over or to protect. Protection was and is only found under the outstretched arms of God.

*Activity textbox 5: Compare 12:5 and I Peter 1:19. They both describe a lamb that was perfect. Also look at I Corinthians 5:7. It explains what role Jesus plays in the Passover celebration. If you have a chance to go to a Passover celebration or host one of your own, do so. If there is no opportunity for either of those make yourself a pot of Matzo ball soup and enjoy the tradition of the food.

*Activity textbox 6: God was able to change the hearts of the Egyptians toward the people. Those that mistreated the Hebrews were now giving them their valuable possessions. Pray and ask God to change the heart of your enemies.



God's Presence

Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 16:10; 19:18-19; 40:36-38

God had made a covenant with Abraham to make him into a great nation. After several hundred years, God was fulfilling his promise, and establishing a brand new nation that would be known as the people of God. They left Egypt migrating to a land that would become their own. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 9)

God lead the Hebrews in a unique and personal way. God made it visibly clear that he was with his people. Not only could the Hebrews see the blazing fire glowing in the night sky and the towering cloud hovering in the morning light, but all those around could see the evidence of God's coverage over these special people.

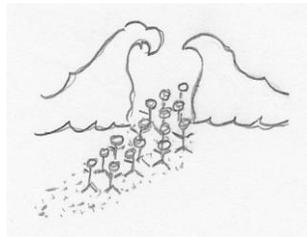
The pillars of fire and clouds were not just proof of God's presence, but they were also an Old Testament combination of a traffic light and three dimensional road map. Whenever the fire and cloud moved forward, the people were to move; whenever it stopped the people were to stop. The pillar gave the direction in which the people were to travel. This was one sure way not to get lost in the miles of desert and wilderness.

➔ *Going Forward!*

Read 5: 8-9, and Matthew 5:13-16. All of my married life my husband and I have been involved in youth ministry. There have been kids hanging out at our house. People have teased us that there must be a neon sign above our house advertising that this is a

teen hangout. As silly as it sounds, I believe that might actually be true. God's light is a wonderful beacon for people to see and to follow. When God has control of your life, there is a spiritual light that reflects off of you that others are drawn to like mosquitoes to a porch light. God can use His light through you to touch and lead other people's lives. Do you have light? How bright is your light for God? When people are drawn to your light how do you respond to them? Is God's light in you leading other people to God? Explain.

*Interesting Information textbox 9: Moses took Joseph's bones out of Egypt when they left (Genesis 50:25).



God's Protection

Exodus 13:17-18; 14:1-10, 13-18, 20-28, 31

God knew exactly what he was doing. The people were trapped in the wilderness and were pinned in by Pharaoh's army, but God was still in control. (Note to Layout; Insert Scientific Fact textbox 4 and Scientific Fact textbox 5) This would seem like a terrible set of circumstances that could never come out to any good. But God uses impossible situations to prove how awesome He was. God proved to the Egyptians and to the Hebrews that he was the only true God and that He had power over everything. After seeing the sea separate and the bottom dry up it would have been difficult to not believe in God.

→ Going Forward!

How do you think Moses felt being trapped? Do you feel trapped? Explain. Do you think Moses realized beforehand that God was going to do something so miraculous? Have you tried to logically figure out how God can rescue you from your situation? Do you believe that God can go beyond what your human brain can fathom? Can you let go of not knowing what God is going to do, and trust that He is capable of leading you, even when you are trapped in an impossible situation?

*Scientific Fact textbox 4: Because it is surrounded by desert, the Red Sea can reach 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

*Scientific Fact textbox 5: The Red Sea has an average depth of 1,640 feet and a maximum depth of 8200 feet.



God's Provision

Exodus 15:23-27; 16:4-8, 12-15, 19-21, 31, 35; 17:1, 4-7

Water, bread, and meat – all things the people needed to survive and all things God gave to them. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 10) The people didn't have a grocery store down the road, or a Wal-Mart in town to pick up a loaf of bread or a gallon of milk. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 5 and Word textbox 6) They were out in the middle of nowhere. God was with them. No matter how the people grumbled and complained, God always provided them with everything they needed. (Note to Layout; Insert Scientific Fact textbox 5)

Even though God provided for the people, he added an element of obedience to each provision. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 11) God took care of his people but he expected the people to follow the orders and guidelines he gave them so that they would get the most out of God's blessings. When the people, including the leaders, didn't follow God's instructions then they didn't receive all that God had for them. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 7) God did not leave his people to fend for themselves. They weren't capable. In his mercy, God repeatedly gave them his supernatural help.

→ *Going Forward!*

How has God provided for your needs? How do you tell the difference between what you need and what you want? Do you find yourself expecting God to provide for your wants as well as your needs? How do you react when God doesn't give you what you want?

- *Interesting Information textbox 10: Manna is described in Numbers 11:7-9. Manna is called grain of heaven in Psalms 78:24, and bread of heaven in Psalms 105:40.
- *Word textbox 5: *Marah* means bitter.
- *Word textbox 6: *Manna* means what is it?
- *Scientific Fact textbox 5: Quail is a small migrating bird that can fly short distances at a fast speed.
- *Interesting Information textbox 11: The people had to learn to trust God for their daily provisions. They couldn't store up any extra food for the next day. God was teaching them to depend on him.
- *Activity textbox 7: God still provides for his people. Think about all the ways God provides for you. Take time to thank him.



Uplifted Hands

Exodus 17:9-13

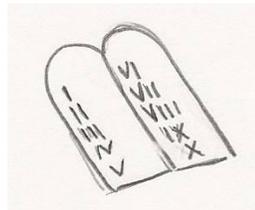
Moses was a leader that cared about the people he led. When the army was fighting the enemy, Moses interceded (that means he went before God on behalf of others). (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 12) As an outward sign of his commitment to lift the people in prayer to God, Moses raised his hands to heaven. This may seem like no big deal, but after only a short time a person's arm muscles would be sore from exhaustion. I watched a television show where there was a challenge to see who could keep one arm above the head. Whoever kept it up the longest was the winner. The individuals had looks of anguish as they tried to hold up just one arm. Moses had to hold up two and there was more than money on the line, there were people's lives. Moses was willing to do what it took to be a good spiritual leader. (Note to Layout; Interesting Activity textbox 8)

→ Going Forward!

Read I Timothy 3:1-16. God asks a lot of His leaders. Moses, as a leader of God, was stretched to the limit emotionally, physically, and spiritually in order to better lead God's people. Has God called you to leadership? Has God asked you to put yourself on the line for someone else? Explain. How do you measure up to God's standards of a leader as written by Timothy? What can you do to better yourself as God's leader?

*Interesting Information textbox 12: This first battle that the army of Israel fought was not won by swords but by God.

*Activity textbox 8: Jochabed had three children. Each child grew up and was used by God to do great things (Moses Hebrews 11:24-28, Aaron Exodus 28:1, 29:44; Miriam Exodus 15:20) If you are a parent or ever want to be one, pray for your children or your future children and ask God to bless them and use them to do his work.



Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-18; 24:12-18; 31:18

Left to themselves, the people often didn't make good decisions. God personally gave them a set of rules that, if followed, would help the people lead healthy and blessed lives. In the New Testament (Matt 22: 37-40), Jesus said that the most important of these commandments is to love God and to love our neighbors.

The Ten Commandments were written by God himself. These regulations focused primarily on an individual's relationship with God and secondarily on an individual's relationship with others. If obeyed, these rules would help establish a brand new nation – a nation faithful to God and peaceful with each other. God gave them the perfect foundation to stand upon. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 13)

#1- NO OTHER GODS: There was no other religion at the time that prevented the worship of other gods. In fact, this belief that there was only one true God set the new nation of Israel apart from all other nations. God asked them to commit to an individual allegiance to Him and only Him. The focus is still the same. The command is not

whether we believe in God, but whether we believe and worship God only. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 14)

#2- NO IDOLS: this is a commandment of faith. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 7) The first step to a relationship with God is to believe that he is God and is worthy to follow and to serve. Continuing in a growing relationship with him requires the faith to believe without being able to see him or touch him. Anyone or anything that becomes a replacement or becomes more important in your life than God is an idol.

#3- DON'T TAKE GOD'S NAME IN VAIN: (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 8) A name in Hebrew custom is not only what a person is called but also the essence of who that person is. A name carried symbolism and meaning. The Bible tells us often how important and powerful the name of God is. This command acknowledged that God's name should not be taken lightly or be used perversely. We are to say God's name in a loving way, never as a way to express anger and frustration.

#4- REMEMBER THE SABBATH: Life goes by quickly. God made it possible that even in the business of everyday life that we would not get so caught up and distracted that we would lose sight of him. God, in his perfection, set the example for us of setting aside a day to enjoy him and all he created. The Sabbath was never intended to be a burden to us, but to be a blessing. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 9)

#5-HONOR PARENTS: This commandment is in the middle. The first four make sure the relationship with God is in order, now the relationship with others is prioritized. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 10) God expects the home environment to be one of mutual respect. When people respect each other they listen, they care, and they speak

nicely. This creates a setting where every person is important. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 10)

#6- DON'T MURDER: God created man in his image which means every human is significant. Taking the life of an innocent person is devaluing what God has made. God never wants us to become indifferent to humankind. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 15)

#7- DON'T COMMIT ADULTERY: In the first two commandments, God stresses faithfulness in our relationship with him. In this one he commands faithfulness within a marriage relationship as well. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 16) Keeping commitments for a lifetime seems to be something that God requires of us. Sometimes this is a hard concept to understand in a world where everything is temporary and replaceable.

#8- DON'T STEAL: God set standards that would keep a society from falling into chaos. If each person acknowledged the rights and properties of all other person's, then violence and crime would be a minimum. Stealing is a lack of trust in God's provision and a lack of respect for each other. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 11)

#9- DON'T GIVE FALSE WITNESS: Lying usually leads to more lying. Most people think lying means speaking untruth. There are other ways of giving false witness as well. One way could be to not speak anything, leaving out the truth when the truth is needed. Or to deny truth, give half truth, or to pretend and lead others to believe something that is not true. False witness could also be to say malicious words or to gossip about another.

#10- DON'T COVET: It is easy to look at what others have and to convince yourself that you should have that too. Our society is financially dependent on human's desire to have more. Watching television or reading a magazine will help convince you that materialism is still a problem today – one that obeying this command would help reduce. Practice being satisfied with what you have (Hebrews 13:5) (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 17)

Often people will convince themselves that they are following God's ways because they have never murdered someone, never bowed down to a golden statue, or stole from a store. These commandments aren't that simple. There are far more to these commandments than meets the eye. God offered his people a way to live that would draw them closer to him and to allow them to live in peace with one another.

Chapters 21-24 contain civil, criminal, and ceremonial laws. These were rules of life for God's people. These laws were the glue that bound these people as a community set apart for God.

→ *Going Forward!*

Read 20:14 and Hebrews 13:4. The Old Testament emphasizes the importance of marriage. In the New Testament Jesus often used marriage as an illustration to help people understand relationship with Him. No matter where you read in the Bible, faithfulness in marriage is stressed as important. Today there are as many divorces in Christian marriages as there are in non-Christian marriages. There appears to be no difference. Many of the divorces have infidelity (unfaithfulness) as the reason listed. If you are married how would you rate your faithfulness? As a therapist, I counseled many married couples that were in crisis. Several were considering divorce. In numerous

instances they claimed to be faithful because they had never slept with anyone else, but in reality they were unfaithful in other ways. Sometimes a wife would give respect to anyone else except her husband because she felt he didn't deserve it. Sometimes a husband would withhold his affection from his wife because he didn't find her attractive anymore but he could hug other people. Sometimes a wife would tell her best friend everything and keep secrets from her husband because she felt closer to her friend. Sometimes a husband would spend hours at work and wouldn't give his wife ten minutes. Does your body belong only to your spouse? Does your heart belong only to your spouse? Does your devotion belong only to your spouse? Is there any area in your marriage where you are struggling to be committed to your mate only? Explain. If you are not married, take this opportunity to think about your definition of marriage, what your expectations are, and how God fits into your plans for marriage.

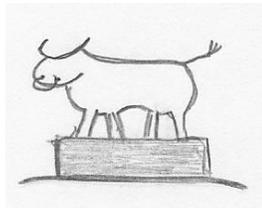
Read 20: 16, Deuteronomy 5:20, and Proverbs 6:16-19. This commandment puts emphasis on truth. God sets a high standard for how a person is supposed to use his or her mouth. If you belong to God, then your mouth is to be in His service. There are many biblical references to the mouth and how hard it is to control. Out of the seven things listed that God hates, three of them have to do with the mouth. How well do you serve God with your mouth? Do you struggle with telling the truth? With gossip? With exaggeration? With swearing? With sarcasm? With critical words? With speaking out of turn? With saying only negative comments? With yelling? Are there any words that you have said that you need to fix or make right? Ask God to help you with your mouth.

**Interesting Information textbox 13: When it comes to God's laws, there is no separation of church and state. In the Bible, legal, moral, and religious laws were inseparable. This showed God's concern for life as a whole.*

**Interesting Information textbox 14: Future generations suffer the consequences of our*

behaviors (:5). When God is not first in our lives, sin multiplies. The decisions we make today to serve God could influence the course of history. By putting God first, we could change the moral condition of our world.

- *Word textbox 7: *Faith* means to believe without seeing.
- *Word textbox 8: The Hebrew word for *vain* means empty, groundless, or insincere.
- *Activity textbox 9: Take a Sabbath and spend the day focusing on God and enjoying him and his creation.
- *Word textbox 10: In the Hebrew language, the word for *honor* means esteem, respect and rever.
- *Activity textbox 10: Send your parents a thank you card as a way to honor them.
- *Interesting Information textbox 15: The ten commandments are still important to follow today. Jesus gave them deeper meaning when he talked to the Jewish leaders (Matthew 22:37-40)
- *Interesting Information textbox 16: Historians have a theory that the stability of society is dependent upon the stability of marriage relationships.
- *Activity textbox 11: Theft is taking or keeping what is not ours. There are lots of different ways to steal – kidnapping, not tithing, taking someone’s purity, not giving the boss a full days worth of work, failing to give someone the credit they earned or deserved, writing answers on a test that are not yours, or by not citing references on a term paper.
- *Interesting Information textbox 17: The tenth commandment addresses inner feelings and thoughts, not just behaviors



Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-16, 17-26; 34:1-4, 10-14, 27-30

Once their leader was away, it didn’t take long for the people to turn away from God. The people had seen God’s glory in the fire, the cloud, and in the miracles performed. No matter how real God was to them, it was still easy to come up with human excuses not to follow him. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 18) Excuses soon led to compromise.

Compromising God's truth never works. Aaron seemed to have believed that he could calm the Hebrews anxiety by combining the Egyptian religious practice of idol worshiping with the new awareness of God Almighty. It is easy to believe in something if you can see it or touch it. God is invisible and some would use that as an excuse not to believe.

Aaron and the people when faced with doubt in what they believed took the easy way out. They substituted God with gold. Times of crisis are when we need God the most and when our faith has the greatest opportunity to grow. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 12)

The Hebrews relationship with God seemed dependant on having a spiritual leader constantly teaching them. Having a good leader is wonderful, but our relationship with God can't be dependent on any human. Our relationship needs to be securely based on God so that if a leader leaves or falls then our relationship will still be strong.

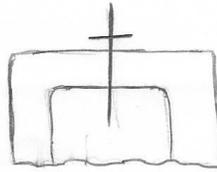
Even after this act of idolatry, God renewed his covenant with them. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 19) He wrote the laws again and gave them another chance to follow him. God agreed to provide for them, protect them, and perform miracles for them if they would stay committed to him and never compromise with the pagan world around them.

➔ *Going Forward!*

Read I John 2:15-17 and James 1:27. God expects His people to be able to maintain a relationship with Him. That sometimes becomes difficult with all the differing opinions that would try to influence you to compromise God's truths. Are you struggling with any areas of compromise? Explain. Can you serve God without seeing Him? Do you rely on

having to have a person to depend on for your spiritual strength? If yes, how do you think you would react if that person was not there for you? Do you have any stains on your beliefs that have come from the world's influences on you? How can you better walk with God without compromising?

- *Interesting Information textbox 18: There are several incidents in the Bible that had to do with forty days – the flood rain on the earth (Genesis 6); Jesus fasted (Matthew 4:1-2); Jesus appeared to his disciples after his death (Acts 1:3); the spies checked out the land (Numbers 13:25); the time given to the people of Nineveh to repent (Jonah 3:4); and Elijah walked after eating God's food (I Kings 19:3)
- *Activity textbox 12: The people had lived enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. They not only worked as slaves but they thought as slaves. Even after God freed them, they easily fell into the old Egyptian way of thinking. Examine your thoughts and behaviors and get rid of things that are still connected to a life of being stuck in sin.
- *Interesting Information textbox 19: God instantly knew what the people had done. We can't hide anything from him.



The Sanctuary

Exodus 25:1-9, 10-25, 23-30, 31-40; 26:1-32; 27:1-2, 9-18; 30:1-3, 8-9, 18-21; 35; 36:3-7

God called His people to be a separate people – to be different than all the other people around them. God wanted to be near them and to have them worship him. God made a blueprint for a sanctuary – a place where his presence would settle for all the people to behold. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 20) There were several components that made up the sanctuary. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 11) God, in his wisdom, had provided the money and materials that would be required to build such a beautiful place. Remember we already learned that when the Hebrews escaped Egypt, God had put favor in the hearts of the Egyptians and they gave many

riches to the escaping slaves. It is amazing to realize how God had all the details worked out.

THE TABERNACLE: The tabernacle was made up of a series of decorated curtains hung in three separate rectangular shapes, one inside another. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting information textbox 21) There was the outer court where the people gathered, the Holy place where only the priests could go, and the Holy of Holies where God's presence settled and the high priest could only enter once a year. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 22)

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT: This ark was more like an elaborate box overlaid with gold. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 23) There were two massive angels covering the top. This ark became a symbol of God's anointing upon his people.

THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD: This table held the bread that was to be made by the priests and placed before God. Twelve loaves were laid out on each Sabbath day. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 12)

THE LAMPSTAND: This was an intricate stand that had seven arms (or branches), each holding specially made oil. The fires of the lamp were never to go out.

THE BRONZE ALTER: The priests would make sacrifices on this alter every day. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 24) Therefore, it was important that the fire was kept burning. The alter was placed outside the entrance to the Holy place. (Note to Layout; Scientific Fact textbox 6)

ALTER OF INCENSE: The coals that were used to burn the incense were taken from the embers of the bronze alter where the people gave sacrifices for sin. The incense was

to be a sweet smell offered to the Lord. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 25)

THE BRONZE LAVER: This laver was like a giant wash basin. The inside was made of polished bronze which would act like a reflection pool so that whoever leaned over to wash would see their own image looking back at them. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 26) This oversized bucket was where the priests washed themselves before they could perform any ceremony. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 27 and Interesting Information textbox 28)

→ *Going Forward!*

Read 30:17-21. The priests had to come and wash to make themselves clean before they could make sacrifices to the Lord. This huge wash bowl was made from material that would act as a giant reflective pool. When the priests bent to wash they would be able to see a reflection of themselves looking back at them. Having to look at yourself straight in the eye before being able to be forgiven would be a hard process. How do you deal with sin in your life? Do you try to hide it? Do you face it? Ask God to give you the courage to look into Him for your forgiveness and to see your reflection through His eyes.

Read I Corinthians 3:16-17, and 6:19. God took painstaking care for every detail on the earthly sanctuary He had the people build. How much more care does God take in you, His living sanctuary? Why does He refer to you as His temple? What does it mean to be the place where God's Spirit dwells? God commanded the people of Israel to take care and maintain this place of worship. How well do you take care of yourself? Do you

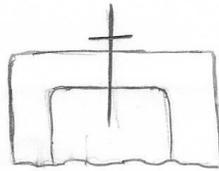
treat yourself as God's sacred tabernacle? Would others be able to recognize that God lives within you? How?

Read Matthew 27:50-53, Mark 15:37-38, and Luke 23:44-4. The veil in the tabernacle was similar to the veil in the temple – both divided the holy place from the Holy of Holies. Behind the curtain was where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. No one was allowed behind the curtain (except the high priest once a year) because it was the place where God dwelt and no human was righteous enough to be in God's presence. When Jesus died this veil of separation was torn. What does that mean to you?

- *Word textbox 11: *Sanctuary* literally means a separate place.
- *Interesting Information textbox 20: There are at least fifty chapters in the Old and New Testament that are devoted to the construction and practices of the tabernacle.
- *Interesting Information textbox 21: The tabernacle stood inside a courtyard that was about half the size of a football field. The tabernacle was a tent with two rooms.
- *Interesting Information textbox 22: The tabernacle was used for several hundred years until King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem.
- *Interesting Information textbox 23: There are three arks mentioned in the Old Testament- Moses' basket, Noah's boat, and the ark of the covenant. All of these were saving arks.
- *Activity textbox 13: What was in the ark? Read these references to find out. There was a jar of manna (16:32-34), the 10 commandments (25:16), Aaron's rod that budded (Numbers 17:10) Everything in the ark (Hebrews 9:4) was kept as a reminder. Decorate a box and place things in it that symbolize God's involvement in your life. Keep adding to this box.
- *Word textbox 6: A *cubit* equals approximately 18 inches.
- *Interesting Information textbox 24: Romans 12:21 says that we are like the sacrifice on the Bronze altar. Every day we are to give ourselves to God and seek his love and forgiveness.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 6: Animal blood and flesh smells terrible when it burns. With the amount of sacrifices occurring on a daily basis, this area had to smell bad.
- *Interesting Information textbox 25: In the New Testament, Zechariah (the father of John the Baptist) was burning the incense on the altar in the temple when the angel appeared to him (Luke 1:8-9, 11).
- *Interesting Information textbox 26: Blood, water, and oil were three primary components in the rituals performed at the sanctuary. Jesus is referenced as an embodiment of all three of these things: Blood of the Lamb, Living Water, and Bread of Life.
- *Interesting Information textbox 27: The entire sanctuary and all its furnishings were made to be completely portable. Notice that all the furnishings had poles on them.

These were used to carry the pieces from place to place. The articles were considered to be too holy for humans to touch.

*Interesting Information textbox 28: There were a lot of valuable materials used in building God's tabernacle – approximately one ton of gold, four tons of silver, and two and a half tons of bronze.



The Coming Christ

Exodus 28:1-5; 29:42-46; 35:19; 40:1-36

The tabernacle's immediate purpose was to be a place of worship and a place of witness. (Note to Layout; Interesting Information textbox 29) When everything for the sanctuary was complete, God fulfilled His promise and filled the place with the glory of his presence. It was a testimony for all to see that there was something unique and supernatural about this new nation called Israel. Israel had a God that was not like any other god.

The priests were people specifically chosen to serve in the Lord's sanctuary. They had to dress in certain clothes and perform a variety of different tasks. They were the middle man between God and the people. If it wasn't for the priests of the Old Testament there would have been no access to God's forgiveness. The ultimate purpose of the tabernacle was to point to the Messiah that was to come. This prophesied one would be the great High Priest who would make a sacrifice so that everyone could be forgiven.

(Note to Layout; Interesting Information textbox 30 and Picture textbox)

*Interesting Information textbox 29: The location of each object in the sanctuary was precise (Exodus 26:33-37). If you connect where everything was positioned it makes a large cross.

*Interesting Information textbox 30: In the New Testament, Jesus came and took the place of the priest. He became our direct access to God (Romans 5:5-10).

→ Going Forward!

Read Hebrews 3:1 and 5:8-10. In Old Testament times the High Priest was the only access that the people had to God. He would offer the sacrifices that made them clean. It was only through sacrificial death that forgiveness could come. The New Testament calls Jesus the High Priest. What do you think this means? Why are there no sacrifices made today? You have learned in this chapter that you are the tabernacle and Jesus is the High Priest. Describe what that relationship means to you?

CONCLUSION

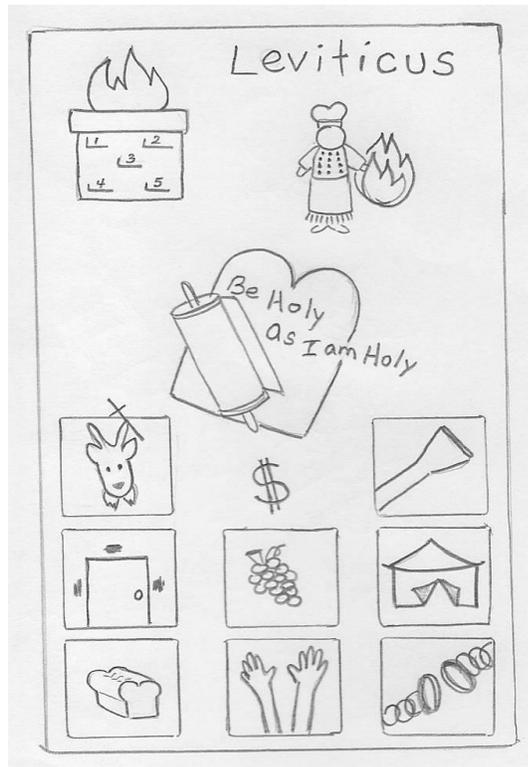
The book of Exodus summarizes the birth of a nation and the life of its leader Moses. Moses was a friend of God (Exodus 33:8-23). (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 15) He walked with him and he talked with him. Moses wasn't perfect, but he loved God and his people. The book of Exodus closes with the people camped at the bottom of Mt. Sinai. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 31 and Scientific Fact textbox 6) They had completed the sanctuary and God's presence was in their midst. God was in charge and the people seemed ready to follow his direction. For 300 years this portable tent of God remained the worship center of the nation Israel. (Note to Layout; Insert Word textbox 13).

→ Going Forward!

Read Proverbs 29:1 and Hebrews 3:7-19. Much of Exodus is about the forty years that the people of God spent walking around in the wilderness. They had disobeyed God

and had hardened their hearts toward Him. What does it mean to turn hard against God? Can a person believe in God and still be hardened? Explain. What caused the Israelites to complain and turn from God's ways? Is any of your heart hard toward God? If so, what has caused you to complain or turn from God? Can you truly follow God with the condition your heart is in now? Explain.

- *Activity textbox 16: Jesus is the fulfillment of the symbols in the tabernacle. Read each reference and write out how Jesus did this (John 10:9, Hebrews 7:27, John 13:8, John 8:12, John 6:35, Hebrews 7:25, Hebrews 10:20, John 1:14, and Romans 3:25-26)
- *Activity textbox 15: God and Moses talked together like friends. That is hard to understand. How can you know if God is talking to you? Try this experiment. Take your Bible somewhere you can be alone to read it. Pray and ask God to help you hear, through reading his word, what he wants you to know.
- *Interesting Information textbox 31: Mt. Sinai was the same mountain where God talked to Moses in the burning bush.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 6: Mt. Sinai is 7496 feet tall.
- *Word textbox 13: Exodus begins with people enslaved and ends with people redeemed. The word *redeemed* means to purchase back something that has been lost. In other words, to pay a price to gain freedom.



CHAPTER THREE

LEVITICUS

In the book of Exodus, we learned about an enslaved people miraculously set free. The book of Leviticus details what God expects from those who had been redeemed and had been labeled as the people of God. Leviticus is the third book in the Pentateuch. The Levites are singled out as the people destined to serve God in the role of priests. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 1) Comparing Exodus 40:17, 32-38 with Leviticus 1:1-2, we see that the story picks up immediately with the people still at the bottom of Mt. Sinai ready to receive instructions from God. Looking at numbers 1:1 we can also conclude that the book of Leviticus covers a period of approximately one month.

→ Going Forward!

As you read through Leviticus take notice of what God thinks of sin. Also note how God dealt with sin? Have God's thoughts about sin changed? Has his way of dealing with sin changed? How do you feel about sin? Are your thoughts different than God's thoughts? Do you take sin as seriously as you should? Explain.

*Interesting Information textbox 1: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. That is probably one of the most well known sentences in Leviticus. Jesus quotes this verse in his sermon on the mount, in his conversation with the rich young ruler, and in the parable of the good Samaritan. Jesus also referred to it as the second greatest commandment.

*Be Holy
as I am Holy!*

Holiness

Leviticus 19:2

This book's major theme is "be holy as I am holy." God set a high standard of behavior for those that He called to be His own. He is a holy God, perfect in every way, and He wants His people to adhere to a holy lifestyle. His people were to be different from the other nations whose gods did not require morality. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 1)

→ Going Forward!

God sets high standards for His people. He asks us to lead our lives in a way that mirrors His reflection. How well do you live a righteous life? How can you be more effective in living holy like God?



The Law

Leviticus 11:1-2, 44-47; 12:1-5; 13:1-4, 7, 18, 24-26, 29, 38, 40, 45-46; 14:34-35, 54-57; 15:1-2, 19; 17:1-7, 10-11, 14; 18:24-30

The book of Leviticus is a study of God's laws. The law became (and still is) very important for the Israelites. While in Egypt they had lived by Egyptian rules and laws. Now they were on their own and they needed rules to live by. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 2, and 3) These new rules also came with a set of consequences if disobeyed.

While reading Leviticus, you might come across some laws that don't make any sense. The laws that God set up for them not only gave them guidelines for their behavior but they also established health codes that prevented the people from being wiped out from disease. Through these detailed practices God was protecting his people in a time when modern medicine was not available. (Note to Layout; insert Scientific Fact textbox 1) The people of Israel, although nomads, were strong and healthy. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 2)

Chapters eleven through fifteen deal with what is clean and unclean, from the animals that could be eaten, to the diagnosis of red marks on a person's skin. (Note to Layout; insert Scientific Fact textbox 2 & 3, Interesting Information textbox 4, and Word textbox 3) In these laws there is a close connection between the physical and spiritual. (Note to Layout; insert 5 & 6) How the people ate, how they took care of themselves, and their houses were all related to their relationship with God.

Chapter seventeen covers the importance of blood and the rules regarding it. Because blood was associated with life, arbitrarily shedding blood was taken seriously, and the consuming of blood was forbidden. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 5) Sexual laws are discussed in chapter 18. God expected his people to be pure and to be different from all the neighboring cultures that encouraged gross sexual practices as part of their religions.

There were laws established to take care of the poor (19:9-10), and the handicapped (19:14), to keep unity in the camp (19:17-18), and to honor the elderly (19:32). There were rules about shaving (19:27), and laws forbidding psychic practices (19:31). God showed his concern with everything; he helped guide his people in all the details of life.

Punishments for breaking the laws are covered in chapter twenty. The consequences stressed the seriousness of disobedience. When you read this portion of Leviticus along with Exodus 23:25, Deuteronomy 28:1-68, and Joshua 24:19-20 you will see there is no question that obedience results in God's blessings and disobedience insures God's judgment. (Note to Layout; Insert Interesting Information textbox 6)

➔ *Going Forward!*

God spoke directly to Moses and Moses in turn spoke to the people. The instructions Moses received are principles for how the people should live. God offered tremendous blessings to those who obeyed his laws. But there were also curses that would come with disobedience. Like the original receivers of God's laws, we can also experience the joy of God's blessings and the fear of God's judgments. Have you ever experienced God's blessings when you are walking in obedience to Him? Explain. Have you ever experienced God's consequences when you disobey Him? Explain. Which do you

prefer? If choosing to live with God's blessing, what do you need to change in your life to become more obedient to Him? If choosing to live by your own standards and forfeiting God's, are you willing to accept the consequences of that choice?

- *Word textbox 1: Leviticus means about the Levites.
- *Interesting Information textbox 2: The list of curses is three times longer than the list of blessings.
- *Interesting Information textbox 3: According to Jewish tradition God gave Moses 613 laws which are written down in the first five books of the Bible.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 1: These laws express sound principles of diet, hygiene, and medicine.
- *Word textbox 2: *Nomads* are people who wander and do not live in one settled place.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 2: Those animals listed as unclean were unclean for good reasons. Carnivorous animals could transmit infection in a warm climate where carcasses would decay quickly. Pigs could be a host to various parasites. Predatory birds could be disease carriers, and shellfish could be a source of food poisoning.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 3: Grasshoppers and locust are high in protein and in calorie content. In warmer countries these have been a standard source of food since early times.
- *Interesting Information textbox 4: Throughout the years, these laws regarding clean and unclean became distorted. In Mark chapter 7 Jesus addressed this problem. The people had made the rituals more important than the relationship with God. Jesus confronted their corruption of the laws. Jesus put the emphasis not on the things outside of a person as being clean or unclean, but the condition of the person on the inside.
- *Word textbox 3: There are 24 different types of diseases mentioned. The Hebrew naming system can be confusing because they named things according to their similarities. For example, they used the same name for both mildew and psoriasis.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 4: This is an early textbook enabling the priests to distinguish between acute and chronic forms of various diseases.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 5: Cedar wood contains a substance used in medicine for skin diseases and hyssop contains a mild antiseptic (14:49)
- *Interesting Information textbox 5: Strict Jewish households still conform to kosher food laws. (Kosher refers to the special way food is processed) This has helped keep them as a distinct community of people. If the meat has to be prepared in a certain way, and if different foods can't be mixed together, than that limits the opportunity to eat outside the home or community.
- *Interesting Information textbox 6: Reading about the punishment for sin emphasized the magnitude of Christ's forgiveness. His death on the cross was enough to cover all sin. When Jesus came, he did not change the law, or lessen the law, sin was still sin. Jesus changed the atonement for sin.



Offerings

Leviticus 1:1-4; 2:1-3, 11-13; 3:1-5; 4:1-12, 13, 22, 27; 5:1-7, 12, 14-19; 6:1-7, 9-13, 14-16; 7:20-21; 22:17-21, 29, & Numbers 28

Because sin separates people from God, sin must be taken seriously. The penalty for sin is death. God, in his mercy, set up a system of atonement where a substitute could be offered as a replacement for the price of sin. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 4 & Interesting Information textbox 7)

There are five offerings mentioned in the first seven chapters of Leviticus. Each is specific in what should be offered and in how it should be offered. The BURNT OFFERING could be made with an animal from the flock or with a bird. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 7 & 8) This is the only offering that required the entire animal to be burned on the altar. The burnt offering was a continual sacrifice that the priests had to keep burning. The smoke rising from the altar would be a visual aid to help the people realize their need for God and his forgiveness. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 1)

The GRAIN OFFERING would be brought to the priests and a portion of it would be offered in the fire and the rest went as supplies to feed the priests. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 9)

The PEACE OFFERING was also to be of an animal from the herd. (Note to Layout; insert Scientific Fact textbox 6) This offering was given by those who were at peace with God as a way to express gratitude. This offering established fellowship between the

person and God and between the person and his family or community. The people would be come together and participate in a feast.

The SIN OFFERING was a means to receive forgiveness whether the sin was accidental or on purpose. Everyone sins, from the leaders at the top down to the ordinary guy at the bottom. Because everyone sins, everyone needs forgiveness. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 5)

The GUILT OFFERING was required if someone sinned unintentionally against the holy things of the Lord, against God's commands, or against a neighbor. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 10 & 11) Restitution, or paying something back, was an important part in the forgiveness process. Sin, even accidental sin, had a high price. Because sin was so costly, a person might be more conscious to keep track of his behavior and try harder to act appropriately.

One thing in common with all the sacrifices was that each animal offered up to God had to be perfect in order for it to be acceptable. Only something without defect was good enough to meet the requirements of atonement. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 12)

➔ *Going Forward!*

Read 2:3, 10. A portion of the grain offering went to the priests. Why would the priests need the leftover grain? How could providing for the priests be an intended part of the forgiveness process? Do you believe it is still important for God's people to provide for the leaders of the church? Explain. Is giving to others still an intended part of forgiveness? How well do you do at providing for your pastor or priest?

Read 5:15-16. The guilt offering was also necessary for unintentional sin. What do you think “unintentional sin” is? Why would God command that this kind of sin still require forgiveness? Do you ever unintentionally sin? Do you ask forgiveness for this kind of sin in your life? Can unintentional sin ever become a habit? If so, does that then make it intentional sin? Explain.

- *Word textbox 4: *Atonement* means to make payment for an offense, or to pay the ransom for a life.
- *Interesting Information textbox 7: Burnt offering is mentioned twice in the New Testament – Mark 12:33 and Hebrews 10:6-8.
- *Interesting Information textbox 8: The sacrifices that were performed day after day, and year after year were a constant reminder that sin separated them from the presence of God.
- *Activity textbox 1: Like the fire for the burnt offering that was always burning, so is our fire. In the New Testament, Jesus talked about letting our light shine. Think of ways that you can be a burning light for others to see God in you.
- *Interesting Information textbox 9: The grain offering was a major source of support for the priests who did not own land and therefore had no means to grow their own crops.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 6: Located on the neck of an animal, there is a major artery that pumps blood throughout the body. By laying a hand on the animal, the person would be able to feel the life flowing out of their offering. The blood was the symbol that life was being taken in payment for the sins of the guilty person.
- *Word textbox 5: The word *unintentionally* in Hebrew means to wander off like sheep. These sins were not willful acts of rebellion but were weaknesses and failures that came from daily living.
- *Interesting Information textbox 10: Isaiah said that Jesus became a guilt offering in Isaiah 53:10.
- *Interesting Information textbox 11: Full restitution, plus the added fifth, had to be paid before the sacrifice could be made. There was no point to go to God for forgiveness until amends had been made.
- *Interesting Information textbox 12: We no longer have a tabernacle or an exact building to go to where we can find God’s presence. Instead, Jesus declared our bodies as God’s temples where he can dwell. In Moses’ time, they had to be conscious that clean and unclean never mixed in the sanctuary. The sanctuary was where God’s presence came. He could not come to dwell where sin was. We may no longer have a tabernacle, but the same is still true. We must be conscious of how pure and clean we are because God will still not dwell with sin.



The Priests

Leviticus 8:1-9, 23, 35-36; 9:5-7, 22-24; Numbers 8:6-11, 14-19; 18:1-2

The priests were God's middlemen. They represented God to the people and represented the people before God. It was their job to obey God's laws and to teach these laws to the people. God specifically chose Aaron and his descendants as the ones for this job. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 13 & 14) This job was not an easy one. The priest had to daily maintain the fires, incense, and breads that needed to continually be offered. He was also in charge of making the sacrifices and the offerings.

Moses brought Aaron and his sons before all the people and anointed them for their special job as priests. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 15) They were given a bath and dressed in a symbolic uniform. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 16 & 17) Moses offered sacrifices and put some of the blood on their bodies. The places the blood was placed could be representational for what the priests would be required to do; the ear to listen to God, the thumb to work for God, and the toe to walk with God. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 2)

After Moses had done all that God required to make the priests and the people clean, God showed up and his glory filled the place. The people were in awe of God.

→ *Going Forward!*

Read 8: 6, 23-24, and 30. As a child raised in the church, I used to be so grossed out when the congregation would sing the song about being washed in the blood of the lamb.

In my mind I would picture someone taking a bath in blood. I would wonder how that could ever make anyone clean. Even as an adult, this ideas of blood as a requirement for becoming clean was hard for me to understand. When God made Aaron and his sons ready to become priests, He made sure that they were made clean by both water and blood. The water made them clean on the outside, and the blood made them clean on the inside. Do you think it is still important today for a person to be “clean” before they become leaders for God? Has God asked you to do any work in His service? Explain. Do you have anything on the outside that needs to be made clean? Explain. Do you have anything on the inside that needs to be made clean? Explain. Are you ready to work for God?

- *Interesting Information textbox 13: The last mention we had of Aaron was in Exodus when he sinned by making the golden calf. The fact that God was willing to still use Aaron is a reflection of God’s mercy. God is willing to use imperfect people to do his will.
- *Interesting Information textbox 14: Aaron was 83 years old when he teamed up with Moses proving you’re never too old to be useful to God.
- *Interesting Information textbox 15: Anointing with oil became an ancient symbol of setting things or people apart for God.
- *Interesting Information textbox 16: Washing symbolized becoming clean. No one could enter into God’s service without first being cleansed.
- *Interesting Information textbox 17: There were six pieces that made up the priest’s uniform – breastplate, ephod, robe, tunic, turban, and sash.
- *Activity 2: Read Hebrews chapter 5 through 10. This describes the qualification of the priesthood and also talks about Christ as the priest forever. The Old Testament priesthood was never enough to offer complete forgiveness for the sins of the world. Jesus came as the priest who only had to make one sacrifice for the forgiveness of everyone’s sins.



Unholy Fire

Leviticus 10:1-11 and Numbers 3:4

Nadab and Abihu had just gone through the ceremony to become priests. They had heard all the rules and had seen the awesome glory of God. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 18) There was a specific rule regarding the fire on the altar of incense located in the tabernacle. (Exodus 30:9) We don't have clear details of what was strange about the fire they offered, we just know it was against God's rules.

What a contrast this story is. In Leviticus chapter nine the fire of God came down as a sign of approval of the priests. Now fire comes down again, but this time it is in judgment of the priests. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 19 & Word textbox 6)

→ Going Forward!

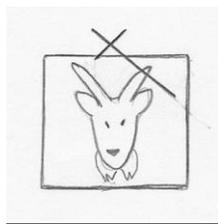
Read Exodus 24:1. Have you ever experienced God's amazing power first hand? Explain. How did that experience affect you? Nadab and Abihu had seen the God's power. But even after realizing who He was, they were still able to disregard what they had experienced, and disobey God. Do you think this is true of people today? Is this true of you as well? Explain. How can you help prevent yourself from forgetting God's power?

Read Matthew 26:31-35 and 69-75. Peter is another example of a person that had a personal encounter with God and turned around and did exactly what he wasn't supposed to do. Nadab and Abihu were killed because of their sin; Peter was forgiven his. What was the difference in these two stories? What was the attitude of Nadab and Abihu? What was Peter's attitude? Do you think this had anything to do with the way they were punished? Have you ever blatantly disobeyed God? Explain. What was your attitude later regarding your sin? Did your attitude have any bearing on the consequences of your sin? Explain.

*Interesting Information textbox 18: Nadab and Abihu are the ones who accompanied Aaron, Moses, and the 70 elders up on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:1).

*Interesting Information textbox 19: This story has a lot to say about those who serve as ministers of the Lord. They have a high standard to represent the holiness of God (Leviticus 21:8 & James 3:1).

*Word textbox 6: *Holiness* is much more than differentiating between moral and immoral, between good and bad. Holiness is a concept of being set apart, of being different, of being very special. God is holy because he is set above all others. The Sabbath is holy because it is different than the other six days of the week. An animal for sacrifice was holy because it was separated from the other animals to be dedicated to God. A priest was holy because he was born to be set apart for God, and Christians are holy because they are called to be different and separate from the world around them.



Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16:1-10, 16, 20-22, 29-31, 34; 23:26-32

Holidays are times when people come together and celebrate a special day of remembrance. For example, birthdays celebrate someone's day of birth, and Mother's day encourages remembering moms. God declares days that were to be set aside for his

people to gather and remember special events. This was one way the Israelites could honor God. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 20) These holidays were ways to ensure that the stories of Israel's history would be passed down through the generations.

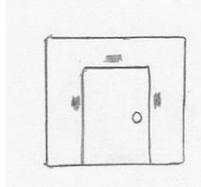
(Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 21 & 22) Once a year there was an elaborate ritual involving the sacrifice of one animal and the release of another. This was called the Day of Atonement. The sacrificed goat fulfilled the sin offering and the second goat (called the scapegoat) had the people's sins transferred to it before it was led off into the wilderness and set free. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 7) Blood was shed and the sins of the people were covered, or paid for, so that God's presence could come and dwell with the people. On this day both the sanctuary and the congregation were cleansed.

→ *Going Forward!*

Read 16:29-30. The Day of Atonement only happened once a year. This was a day of total forgiveness. Can you imagine if you could only have complete forgiveness once a year? Does the weight of sin ever feel heavy to you? Does being forgiven ever make you feel like you have been given new life? How do you think it would feel to have to live with a year of sin in your heart? Jesus has now provided a way for you to be constantly forgiven just by asking. Do you ever procrastinate and hold on to sin? Is there any sin that you need to have forgiven today? Make this very minute a day of atonement.

*Interesting Information textbox 20: The number seven is significant. Every seventh day was a Sabbath. Every seventh year was a sabbatical year. Every seven times seven year was followed by a year of Jubilee. Pentecost was seven weeks after Passover. In the seventh month were the feasts of Trumpets, Tabernacles, and Atonement. And Pentecost, Booths, and Passover lasted seven days each.

- *Interesting Information textbox 21: The clothes that Aaron wore on this day were different from the normal priestly clothes he wore (Exodus 28). These were not elaborate, but were very simple, much like what a slave would wear. When the High Priest went into the presence of God, he was nothing more than a servant.
- *Interesting Information textbox 22: This was the only day of the year that the High Priest was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies.
- *Word textbox 7: The Hebrew word for *atonement* is kipper. It has two meanings. The first is to wipe clean or to purify. And the second is to pay a ransom.



Passover

Leviticus 23:4-5

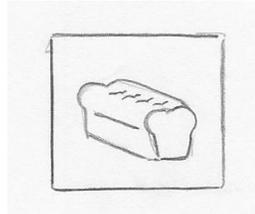
This one day holiday was for the people to remember the day that God delivered them from slavery in Egypt. The start of this holiday was at twilight, the time that the angel of death had passed over the people of God and spared their lives. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 8 and Interesting Information textbox 23, 24, &25)

→ Going Forward!

Each of the Gospel accounts tells us that Jesus and His disciples were celebrating Passover the night Judas betrayed Him. Why would Jesus have been celebrating an Old Testament Holiday? Do you think that remembering what God had done for His people was an important concept even for Jesus? What has God done for you and your family? Does it deserve a holiday, or at least a time of remembrance? How can you celebrate God's goodness, and provisions in your life?

- *Word textbox 8: *Twilight* is before sundown. It is regarded as the end of one day and the beginning of another.
- *Interesting Information textbox 23: I Corinthians 5:7 says that Christ is our Passover sacrifice.

- *Interesting Information textbox 24: The foods eaten during Passover symbolize different aspects of the escape from Egypt.
- *Interesting Information textbox 25: Jesus was celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples before he was arrested.

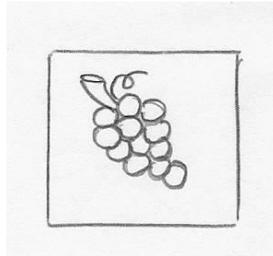


Feast of Unleavened Bread

Leviticus 23:6-8; Exodus 12:15-20

Immediately following Passover, this seven day fest began. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 3 and 4) The most significant part of this holiday was the eating of bread made without yeast. Yeast is what makes bread fluffy. This bread would have been flat like a cracker. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 26)

- *Activity textbox 3: Read Psalm 139:23-24, and I Corinthians 5:7-8. In the Bible leaven sometimes refers to sin. Leaven, or sin, needs to be removed from our lives before we can become close to God. Today is a great day to check in your life and see if there is sin that you need to remove. Ask God to forgive you.
- *Activity textbox 4: Today you can find unleavened bread at most grocery stores. It is called Matzo. Look in the ethnic section of your local store. Buy some, taste it, and read the story of the escape from Egypt
- *Interesting Information textbox 26: Unleavened bread is eaten because the women had no time to let the bread rise when they left Egypt.



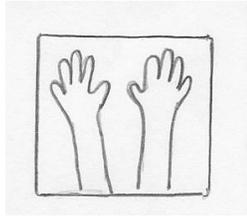
Festival of First Fruits

Leviticus 23:9-14

When God gave them the land that he had promised them, when he blessed them and provided for them, they in turn, were to give back to God the first and best of what had been given to them.

→ *Going Forward!*

Read 23:10. Our family, in 2008, was the blessed recipients of the Extreme Makeover home. The team from ABC came to our house and Ty Pennington shouted, “Good morning Frisch family.” This was an incredible experience. The people from our community came out by the thousands and volunteered their time, talents, and products to build us a safe and beautiful home. There have been so many that have come to us and told us that they gave, not because they were rich, but because they had been blessed. People were willing to give to others from they had been given. Since then, our town has gone crazy with giving to people in need. Family after family is being helped even though we are in economic crisis. And it is all because of this concept of giving from what you have been given. Israel reaped the harvest that God had given them. How has God blessed you? What can you give back to God? What has God given to you that you in turn can give to others?



Feast of Weeks or Feast of Pentecost

Leviticus 23:15-22

The people were to calculate the exact date each year to celebrate this feast. It was a special day set aside to make offerings to the Lord and to mark the end of the wheat harvest. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 9) God declared it a national day of thanksgiving. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 10) As a reflection of their appreciation for what God had given them, they left provisions for the poor among them. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 27)

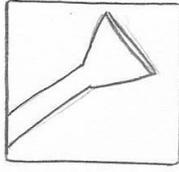
→ *Going Forward!*

If you grew up in America and went to public elementary school, then you have probably learned all about how the Thanksgiving holiday came to be. Often times, people come together on Thanksgiving to eat and celebrate. It is a day set aside to be thankful for our country and the blessings that we have. The Israelites also celebrated with a day of thanks. Do you have reason to thank God? Explain. Have you ever taken a day to thank Him and celebrate His goodness to you?

*Word textbox 9: An *ephah* is about one bushel.

*Word textbox 10: In the New Testament this holiday is called the *Feast of Pentecost* from the Greek word fifteenth. It was on the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the believers in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14)

*Interesting Information textbox 27: Feeding the hungry and taking care of the poor is ordered by God to be a normal activity for His people.



Feast of Trumpets

Leviticus 23:23-25

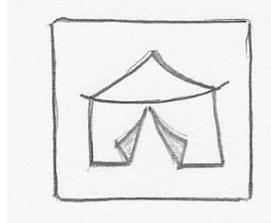
This special day occurred on the first day of the seventh month which is regarded as the most sacred month. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 28) This was, and still is, New Year's Day for Israel. The people blew trumpets and celebrated the hope of their future. God often put into his special days a clause to take a rest from work. Imagine the joy, after coming from forced slavery, driven to do endless hard labor, and being given the luxury of a full day of rest to worship the God who gave you your freedom.

→ Going forward!

Read John 8:31-32, 36. The Israelites spent hundreds of years in slavery. They were beaten, and mistreated. I am sure that escaping that life of bondage and coming into freedom was a wonderful experience for them. But that was not all God had for them. God's freedom offered them more. God knew they needed rest and celebration as well. When we receive the freedom that comes through the forgiveness of sin it is a miraculous event. But God, through Jesus Christ, offers us even more than escape from death and hell. He offers us a way to live on this earth in freedom. God knows exactly what we need to truly offer us freedom. Do you remember the day you asked Jesus to forgive your sins? Describe the feelings or thoughts you experienced? What specifically did God free you from? Think about this idea from the story of Leviticus and the verses from John that

God may have more freedom and rest in store for you. How can you better grasp this concept of “free indeed?”

*Interesting Information textbox 28: Recorded in Nehemiah chapter 8 is a story of when the exiled people had returned to their land and celebrated the feast of trumpets. Ezra read the book of the law to the crowd from sunup until noon.



Feast of Booths or Feast of Tabernacles

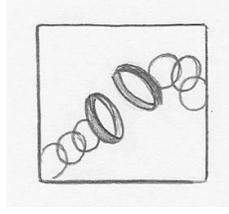
Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-44

During this holiday, the people lived in booths and would listen to the laws of God being read aloud. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 29) This would help them remember how dependant they needed to be on God and how critical it was to obey him.

➔ Going Forward!

We are reading that God’s word was critical in the lives of the people of God. Do you believe that is still true today? How are you doing with including God’s word in your life? When I was younger, someone was telling me about a man in China who could not have a Bible because it was against the law. But this person had previously read and memorized so much of God’s word that he could recite it to himself. I have often thought about what would happen if I could no longer have a Bible. Would I have enough knowledge to keep me going? There are people all over the world who have no access to the written word of God. How would you react if you suddenly could no longer read the Bible? Would you have enough stored in your memory?

*Interesting Information textbox 29: People lived for seven days in shelters made of branches as a reminder of the tent dwellings days in the wilderness.



Sabbath Year and Year of Jubilee

Leviticus 25:1-7, 8-17, 18-22, and 23-33

Not only did the people get to celebrate a Sabbath, but so did the land. After six years of sowing and planting in the fields, the soil would be left alone in the seventh year. God supernaturally helped them by giving them extra in the harvest year before. This would require the people to plan ahead to make sure they budgeted their supplies so that they would have enough provisions for the year without crops. (Note to Layout; insert Scientific Fact textbox 7)

Every fiftieth year beginning on the Day of Atonement, not only did the land get another chance to be renewed, but so did everyone. Slaves were freed, land was returned, and property was given back to its original owners. This entire year was a festive time of celebration for the freedom that God had given to them. If the people were faithful in practicing this holiday then God promised that He would provide for them and would bless the land they lived in. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 30 and Word textbox 11)

➔ *Going Forward!*

The people had to have a plan in order to survive the coming year without an income? God provided for them, but He also expected them to be prepared? How are you at budgeting? How can you be better prepared for the future?

- *Scientific Fact textbox 7: Scientists have found that planting the same crops in one place for a period of time will drain the soil of certain nutrients that the crop needs. By giving the soil rest and rotating crops, the dirt could be replenished.
- *Interesting Information textbox 30: Leviticus 25:10 hold the phrase “and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, to all its inhabitants.” Those same words are inscribed on the Liberty Bell.
- *Word textbox 11: The Hebrew word translated *jubilee* probably comes from the word used for the rams horn, the trumpet, that was used to signal the beginning of the celebration.



Tithe

Leviticus 27:1-2, 11-13, 14-15, 16, 19, 28-34

Some say money is the root of all evil, but it is also one of the roots of praise.

Humans seem to have a rough time letting go of money. We seem to think that we need as much of it as we can get. God asks us to willingly give what belongs to him. God clearly wants us to understand that everything we have, including money, belongs to him.

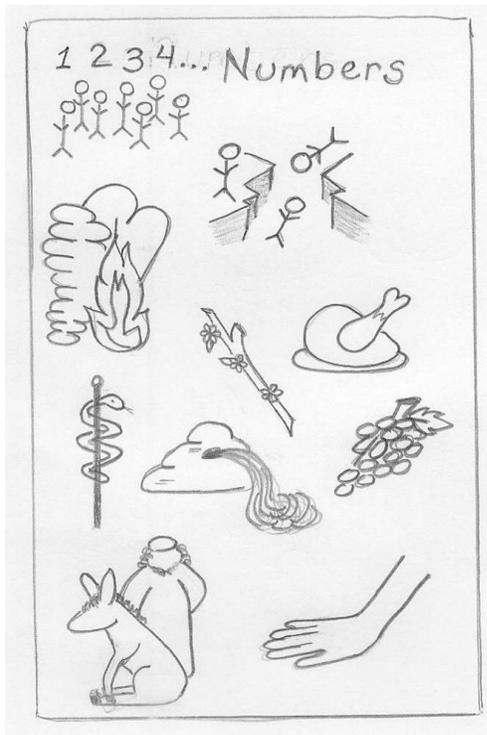
What is due to God is to be paid to God whether it be from a promise or from a tithe. For the people of Israel, they were to take the tenth of everything, from the grapes on the vine, to the sheep in the flock, and set it aside as belonging to God. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 32) The giving of this tenth, or tithe, comes with an incredible promise of God’s blessing. Tithing goes clear back to the time of Abraham (Genesis 14:20) and Jacob (Genesis 28:20-22) is confirmed in Malachi 3:8-10, and is reemphasized in the New Testament in I Corinthians 8 and 9. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 4)

→ Going Forward!

Read Ecclesiastes 5:4-5. Giving money to church or to other religious things has become a difficult subject to talk about. There are some people who say that all the churches want today is your money. There are others that have no problem giving, they just don't believe in the tithe amount (the 10%). Then there are still others that believe in tithing, and talk like they tithe, but really they don't. How do you feel about giving 10% to God? Do you believe this principle is still relevant today? Do you think the tithe is only referring to money? After reading these verses in Ecclesiastes, are there any gifts that you have promised to God that you have not given? Explain. How does this affect your relationship with God?

*Interesting Information textbox 33: Numbers 18:25-26 shows that even the priest who worked for God in the tabernacle had to pay tithes.

*Activity textbox 4: A common question asked is, "When do I start tithing?" The Bible doesn't state an age, but obedience should start at the moment one becomes a Christian or agrees to follow God. Children are not too young to learn to tithe. If you don't tithe, now is the time to start! Set aside 10% of what money you make from doing jobs and give it to God by taking it to the church.



CHAPTER FOUR

NUMBERS

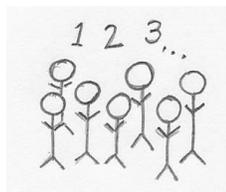
Numbers is the fourth book of the five that make up the Pentateuch which Moses authored. At the beginning, we find the people still encamped at the base of Mt. Sinai. Then the cloud of God's presence lifts and the people begin their journey. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 32) After wandering 40 years, they were to get ready to enter the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. At the end of the book, we find the people camped on the plains of Moab opposite the walled city of Jericho.

There have been different names given to this book. The Hebrew Bible uses the title "in the desert," or "wanderings" because it is the fourth word in the text. It is from the Latin Vulgate that the commonly known title Numbers comes from.

The book records the counting of the people of Israel. The Levites were counted separately and the first born were ransomed (3:45-48). The people were later counted again. They were now an official nation ready to conquer and possess the lands God had for them.

The people being numbered and the wandering in the desert are not the main theme. Instead, the theme seems to be that God keeps his covenant with his people. He is constantly with them as He promised and He enforces Israel's portion of the covenant to remain separate and holy. The people continue to struggle with discontentment and as a result an entire generation that has witnessed the marvels of God does not enter into Canaan.

*Interesting Information textbox 1: A distance of about 220 miles became a 39 year journey.



Census

Numbers 1:1-4, 17-19, 46-49; 3:15-16; 26:1-4, 51, 53-56, 64-65

After being out of Egypt for two years, God decided it was time for the leaders to take a head count of the people that now made up the new nation called Israel, and to get them organized for national security. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 1)

Counting the members of the individual tribes appeared to be a military strategy that prepared those of fighting age to be ready to advance into new lands. If you compare 1:1 with 10:11 you will see that it took nineteen days to take the first count of all the men.

They must have been extremely organized and very cooperative with the leaders. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 2 & 3)

Toward the end of the book, Moses takes another census. The years had gone and changes had occurred. It was time to take some numbers to ensure their military strength. Taking the count also aided in the distributing of the land to the various tribes. Larger tribes received a larger inheritance, and the smaller tribes received a smaller inheritance.

The settlement of the land is covered in chapters 32-34. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh set up on the east side of the Jordan River (2 ½ tribes) and the other nine and ½ tribes took root on the west side of the Jordan River. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 4) Cities of refuge were established at various places throughout their lands.

➔ *Going Forward!*

It is hard to fathom that God knows everyone by name. It is easy to think that maybe only those individuals who are really special or important to God are the ones He might know, but surely not ME. Many names are listed in this story of the census. Do you believe this is a true story? Do you believe that God really knew their names? Do you believe that God knows your name? Read Matthew 10:30. If you believe that God knows your name, can you believe that He also knows the number of hairs on your head? How does this belief affect the way you see God? How important do you believe you are to God? Explain.

*Activity textbox 1: In 1:5-15 there are lots of names listed. Each leader was called by name. God is a very personal God. He knows every single person on earth by name. Find out the number of people in your city or in your state. Be amazed at how incredible God is that he knows each one.

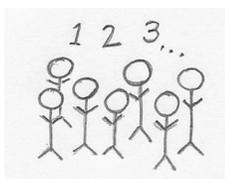
*Interesting Information textbox 2: It was God's original plan that the children of Israel

would go straight into Canaan, but the people wouldn't go because of fear. So God said that all those over 20 years old (except Caleb and Joshua) would die in the wilderness. After 40 year, a new generation of people would enter the Promised Land and this nation was about as strong in number as they were the day they left Egypt.

*Interesting Information textbox 3: The number for Reuben's tribe was only 46,500.

Back in Genesis when Israel (the dad not the nation) blessed his children, he said to Reuben that he would not excel. I wonder if there is a connection. There is also no record of any king, judge, or prophet coming from the tribe of Reuben.

*Interesting Information textbox 4: The 2 ½ tribes on the east side of the river is repeated often in the Old Testament – Deuteronomy 3:12; 4:43; 29:8; Joshua 12:6; 13:29, 31; 14:3; 18:7. They said they wanted to stay on that side because they had lots of cattle. Moses was angry at first but the tribes promised that they would not neglect their military duties.



Order

Numbers 2:1-2; 4

(Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 5) The camp of the Israelites was very impressive. The circumference was 12 miles. The Levites were divided into four separate groups and guarded the tabernacle. The 12 tribes (remember Levi was not a tribe and Joseph was not one tribe but two tribes under the names of his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh) were stationed all around. To the other surrounding nations, this must have been an intimidating sight. There was the threat of their military strength and then there was the greater threat of God's visible presence hovering over the nation.

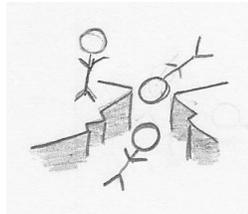
(Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 2)

→ Going Forward!

Read I Peter 3:14-17. The Israelites were making themselves ready for battle. They were in a position to defend themselves should anyone attack. Peter is telling Christians

that they need to be ready for battle also. He says we need to be able to defend our beliefs. Have your beliefs ever been questioned or attacked? Were you able to defend your beliefs? What do you believe about God? About Jesus? About the Holy Spirit? How can you be better prepared to defend your beliefs?

- *Interesting Information textbox 5: This square like encampment was used by the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II. Maybe Moses learned this military formation while in Egypt. The difference was that God was in the center of the Israelite camp.
- *Activity textbox 2: Each tribe was given its own appointed place and function. Read I Corinthians 7:20 and I Corinthians 13. Paul gave the church the same special instructions that each person has a specific calling and purpose that needs to be carried out. Ask God to help you understand what it is that he needs you to do to help his kingdom continue effectively. Then make sure you do what he asks of you.



Korah

Numbers 3:27; 4:1-3, 15, 17-20; 10:21; and 16:1-49

God had given specific orders that no one, including the Kohaths, could approach the holy objects from the tabernacle. When God gave a limitation He meant it, and when He was not taken seriously He got angry.

Korah was the cousin of Moses and the son of Kohath. The Kohath family was designated to take care of the tabernacle and all of its contents. This was a trusted position. Sometimes a high position can lead to pride and pride can lead to a fall. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 6) This is what happened to this family.

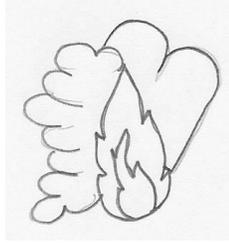
These people took advantage of their leadership. Instead of being examples for others to follow, they used their influence to incite a mutant. (Note to Layout; insert Word

textbox 1) They refused to accept that Moses was chosen by God to be the boss. They were jealous and thought they had every right to be in charge instead of him. They used human logic and tried to compare themselves with others. God doesn't choose leaders by using human logic. He picks whomever He wants and He expects them to trust His choices whether we understand or not. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information 7 & 8)

→ Going Forward!

Read I Timothy 2:1-2, Hebrews 13:17, and P. God gives rules and He gives leaders to implement those rules. I find that I often do not agree with the leaders that are in charge. Does not agreeing with leaders give us permission to disobey them? Explain. Are there circumstances in which it would be appropriate to disobey leaders? Explain. There are also some laws in our land that people don't agree with. For example some of my children do not agree with the speed limits. They think that if the sign says 60mph that it really means however fast everyone else is going. Are there any laws that you disagree with? Does disagreeing with them give you permission to disobey them? Explain.

- *Interesting Information textbox 6: Lucifer was once a beautiful angel of high rank in heaven. He became prideful and wanted to be in charge. This led to him being kicked out of the presence of God.
- *Word textbox 1: *Mutiny* was a common thing on ships. When people no longer wanted to follow the captains orders, they would band together and try to take over the ship and place in a new captain.
- *Interesting Information textbox 7: The bronze from the censers they carried was collected and hammered out into a covering over the altar (16:36-40). This was a reminder of the sin.
- *Interesting Information textbox 8: After the people sinned and God punished them, the people wouldn't take the blame for their mistake. Instead, they blamed Moses and Aaron for what happened. Taking responsibility for our sin helps begin the process of removing the sin.



The Law

Numbers 5:1—3, 6-7, 12-21, 27-78; 6:1-8, 13-18, 21; 15:37-41; 19:11-13

God was still making his presence known amongst his people through his laws and by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. There was no question who Israel's God was, and what He required of His children. The people of God could not succeed if there was sin amongst them. They had to follow God's rules if they were going to have God's blessings. God had spoken through Moses the laws that the people needed to know and God continued speaking through Moses. God added boundaries that would keep the people pure.

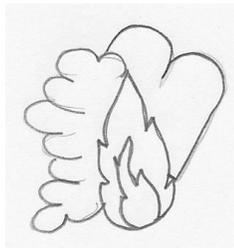
Being different was one way the Israelites distinguished themselves from other nations. There were those who took a special vow called a Nazarite vow. This vow made the participant even more unique. They promised for a period of time to be separated to the Lord and follow strict regulations. This was a time of dedication and holiness. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 9 & 10)

Not only were the people of God suppose to behave differently than those around them, but they were also to look differently. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 2) God asked them to wear bright tassels on the ends of their clothes as a visual reminder that they were to be obedient to God. These tassels were also a witness to others that they lived by a different code. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 3)

➔ **Going Forward!**

Read Mathew 5:14-16 and I Peter 2:12. God still expects His people to be different from those around them. Are you different from others? Would anyone guess that you believed in God? Would anyone believe that you were a Christian? How do you reflect a uniqueness that shows that you serve God?

- *Interesting Information textbox 9: A Nazarite vow was a vow of even further separation. The vow was taken for a period of time during which the person would refrain from cutting his hair, from anything unclean, and from anything made from grapes (including wine). This was a way for a person to show his dedication to the Lord.
- *Interesting Information textbox 10: There are some heroes of the Bible that took a Nazarite vow: Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Paul.
- *Activity textbox 3: Some people wear a cross around their neck, some wear a t-shirt with a Bible verse on it, and others carry a Bible to school or work. All of these are ways to let other people know you are different. What are some ways that you can let others know that you are a follower of God?
- *Word textbox 2: *Confession* is making things right with God. *Restitution* is making things right with others. Both require admission of wrong and taking responsibility for the wrong being made right.



Fire and Cloud

Numbers 9:15-23; 10:11-13, 33-34

God was stretched over the whole nation in a cloud by day and a fire by night. God was their night light and their day shade, protecting them and guiding them. His presence in these forms was there from the time the people left Egypt until they reached the Promised Land. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 12) While the people wandered, the cloud and fire hovered over them. When it was finally time to

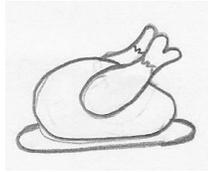
move forward, God's presence through these symbols would begin to move directing the path they were to take. Thus their movement was based completely on God. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 13)

→ Going Forward!

Read Nehemiah 9:19 and Psalms 119:105. One time on a camping trip I forgot to pack a flashlight. I didn't realize I had forgotten it until it was already dark and any store would have been closed. We were tenting in the woods and the bathroom was located up the hill. There were no street lamps close by, and the light of our campfire was not bright enough to offer light all the way up the hill. We struggled that evening trying to find our way in the dark until we could go buy a light in the morning. It was a scary and dangerous experience. We couldn't see where we were going; we could have gotten lost in unfamiliar territory, or we could have tripped or fallen on obstacles we couldn't see. David claimed that God's Word was what he used for directions. Is the Bible the map that you use as your guide through life? Explain. The Israelites had God's presence showing them the way. Is God's presence your guide? Do you allow Him to decide the direction you take in life? Explain.

*Interesting Information textbox 12: Even after all their murmuring and complaining, God's presence was still with them. He corrected them and sometimes punished them, but He did not take his presence from them. His grace and mercy are greater than our sins.

*Interesting Information textbox 13: If no movement of the cloud, then no movement of the people. God wants to lead us. To move before God's time always leads to trouble.



Quail.

Numbers 11:1-6, 10, 13-14, 18-23, 31-34

The people of Israel had been found to be a discontent and grumbling crowd. At the first hint of discomfort or trial, they whined. This repeated habit led to a character flaw in a people who were called to be holy. Although it is difficult, times of trouble can make people stronger if they can learn to trust God. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 3)

This is a sad story. The people were in adversity. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 3) They complained to each other instead of going to God about it. As soon as they took the problem to God (through Moses), God began to do something about their problem. (Note to Layout; insert Word textbox 4 & Scientific Fact textbox 1 & 2) By the time they sought God, they had already sinned and had to pay the consequences for their behavior. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 14)

In the middle of trouble it is tempting to think of the 'good old days' and only remember things as you want to remember them. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 15) The Israelites were slaves in Egypt and were treated horrible, yet all they chose to remember at this moment were the vegetables they ate there. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 16) It is convenient that they didn't remember the beatings or the long work days, nor did they remember the miraculous escape they made. They were unable to keep their minds focused on God and block out all other distractions that would keep them from following Him.

→ Going Forward!

Read James 1:5-8. Has your mind ever played tricks on you? One minute you are gung ho to serve God, and the next minute all you can think of is stuff that will keep you away from Him. There is a teenager in my life that I love dearly but I get so worried about her relationship with Jesus. She falls so deeply in love with God and serves Him completely. Then all of a sudden she will think of her old life of drinking and prowling and will only remember the fun times. She completely blocks out the hangovers, blackouts, and police involvement. She gets herself believing that God is keeping her from having a good time so she runs back to her old life. Pretty soon reality comes back and she realizes again that her old life is really a life of bondage and she then comes back to God. Do you ever struggle with having part of your mind on God and part of your mind on things of this world? Explain. How can you gain better focus of your mind and become more stable?

*Activity textbox 3: Think about the hard times in your life. Make a list of the good things that came out of that bad time. Ask God to help you be strong through the next trial

*Word textbox 3: *Adversity* means and unfortunate happening.

*Word textbox 4: One *cubit* equals approximately 18 inches.

*Scientific Fact textbox 1: The wind is referred to as both an east and a south wind. There are some scientists who believe the wind blows from the Arabian Gulf blowing in the migrating birds. This theory does not explain the vast amount of qual.

*Scientific Fact textbox 2: Quail belong to the pheasant and partridge family. They winter in Africa and migrate north in spring.

*Interesting Information textbox 14: Psalm 78:21-33 describes this event in the wilderness. That means the story was passed down the generations. Be careful because bad behavior will be remembered by our children and their children and so on.

*Interesting Information textbox 15: If we live in the past we might miss what is good in the present.

*Interesting Information textbox 16: Manna was called food from heaven. To appreciate heavenly food, they needed to have heavenly taste.



Budding Rod

Numbers 12:1-15; 17:1-11

Again we read of the people complaining. This time it was not the circumstances they insert Interesting Information textbox 17) Sibling jealousy had erupted and eventually jealousy infested the whole camp. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 4) God showed his favor toward Moses and warned others not to question whom he had chosen.

Later we see that jealousy was still an issue. This time many people came against the leaders. When come against, Aaron began to question his own ministry. He was lacking assurance that he was called to do this job. It is easy when people talk about us to lose confidence and maybe even stop doing what God wants us to do. But God proved to Aaron and to everyone else that he had called were exactly who He wanted to call to do the job He needed to be done. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 5)

→Going Forward!

Read Genesis 37, and I Corinthians 13:4. Like the sibling jealousy between Moses, Aaron, and Miriam was the jealousy between Joseph and his brothers. Jealousy can destroy families; whether it is in biological families or spiritual families, the destructive effects are the same. Do you struggle with jealousy toward others? How do you handle those feelings? Do you struggle with jealousy from others? How do you handle those feelings? Can love help you with your struggles? Explain.

*Interesting Information textbox17: It is hard enough when strangers come against you, but imagine how painful it would be if the people talking bad about you were your own family members. No matter how badly this hurt Moses' feelings, he forgave

easily and even asked God to help his sister.

*Activity textbox 4: Do you have siblings? If you do, think about your relationship with them. If there is any jealousy or hard feelings, take care of things and make them right.

*Activity textbox 5: Aaron's dead stick blossomed. That is scientifically impossible. Nothing is outside of God's power. Life and fruitfulness are both good signs of confirmation that God is in your ministry. Ask God to bless what He has called you to do. Also ask God to give you the confidence needed to do His will no matter what or who comes against you.



Serpent on the Pole

Numbers 21:4-9

These people seemed to struggle with food. Nothing God gave them was ever good enough – they always wanted something different or something more. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 18 & 19) (Note to Layout; insert Scientific Fact 3 & 4) They remind me of a toddler sitting in a shopping cart as his mom pushes him through the grocery store. The child is pointing, wanting mommy to buy him whatever he wants and he screams and whines when she won't give in to his demands. (Note to Layout; Insert Activity textbox 6)

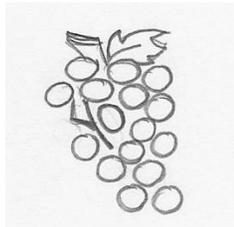
➔ Going Forward!

Read 21:4-5. The people became impatient and they started saying mean things about God, like it was His fault. Sometimes it is easier to want to place blame on someone or something rather than have to look at our own involvement when faced with a problem.

Do you struggle with blaming others? Explain. Do you find yourself blaming God when

you are upset? Explain. How does complaining and blaming affect your relationship with God?

- *Interesting Information textbox 18: According to II Kings 18:4, the serpent pole had become a part of the temple in Jerusalem until King Hezekiah destroyed it in the eighth century because the people began worshipping it.
- *Interesting Information textbox 19: In John 3:14-16, Jesus compares himself to the serpent on the pole.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 3: Today a serpent on a pole is the universal medical symbol.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 4: The snakes may have been a kind of adder, a poisonous snake in the sandy Sinai.
- *Activity textbox 6: Evaluate yourself. See if you are like a spoiled child always wanting more than what you have. If so, take the opportunity to thank God for what you have. Ask him to help you learn to be satisfied and grateful.



The Spies and the 40 Year Curse

Numbers 13:1-3, 17-20, 23, 25-33; 14:1-30, 34, 40-45; Deuteronomy 1:22-40

After years at the foot of the mountain, the multitude was finally moving forward toward their destination. They had seen God perform miraculous deeds on their behalf, but now, when faced with what could be a perfect opportunity for God to show His power yet again, the people tremble in fear. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 20 & 21)

There were detailed instructions given to the 12 spies who went to check out their future home. It took them 40 days to walk through the land doing a thorough search. They brought back evidence of the greatness of the size of the produce, but they also brought back stories of the greatness of the size of its inhabitants. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 22) Instead of focusing on God's promises and God's

timing, they let the size of their enemy intimidate them. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox 7) God was not pleased with their lack of faith and their unwillingness to trust Him. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information 23) If it wasn't for Moses' prayer, the people would have been wiped out. Instead, they were doomed to spend the next 40 years walking around the desert instead of sitting pretty on their own property. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 24 & Scientific Fact textbox 5)

→ Going Forward!

Read 13:30. My son came home one day from school frustrated with his humanities class. They had a discussion about how life began and the students were convinced that evolution was a reasonable explanation. Moise disagreed and had to stand alone in his beliefs. Caleb stood up in front of his peers and took the side of truth even though it would be contrary to what the others thought. Are you one to take a stand for what is right even when others are against you? Explain. How can you become braver in defending your beliefs?

Read 14:4 and Nehemiah 9:17. The people were so afraid that they would have rather gone back into the bondage that they had come from than to go forward and trust God. As a counselor I had to help this young girl who had been horribly abused by her father. She had been placed with another family in order to keep her safe. I got a call one night telling me she had run away. I found her and picked her up. When we talked I asked her why she ran. She tried to explain to me that she would rather go back to her father where she knew what bad things would happen, rather to take the chance of moving forward and not knowing what would happen. This was very hard for me to

understand. Do you run when you are afraid? Would you rather go back to something you are familiar with rather than go forward to something unknown? Why?

Read 14:11-19 and Psalms 106:23. I knew a young man who stood between his mother and father as the father came to beat her. I thought he was so brave. Moses knew that God was very angry at the people but he was willing to pray and seek God's mercy for them. Are there any people you know that need God's mercy? Are you willing to stand in the gap for them and diligently pray for them to come to know God and His forgiveness?

- *Interesting Information textbox 20: Out of 12 spies, 10 saw circumstances as greater, and only 2 saw God as greater.
- *Interesting Information textbox 21: What a great compliment God gave Caleb, that he had a different spirit about him, and that he followed God completely (14:24)
- *Interesting Information textbox 22: The descendants of Anek and the Nephilim were giants.
- *Interesting Information textbox 23: Caleb and Joshua were rewarded for their faith even in what seemed like impossible circumstances.
- *Activity textbox 7: When the devil seems too big to defeat, remember the size of your God. Make a list of God's greatness.
- *Interesting Information textbox 24: God's punishment equals one year of wandering for every day they scouted out the land.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 5: Kadesh was only a journey of eleven days away from Canaan. Often times it is our own fears that keep us away from enjoying all that God has for us.



Water from the Rock

Numbers 20:2-13

There are times we may think we have a good reason to do things our own way rather than to do as we are told. God gave Moses explicit instructions on how to do get enough water for the people and their animals to drink. (Note to Layout; insert Activity textbox

8) (Note to Layout; insert Scientific Fact textbox 6) It is unclear why Moses didn't fully follow God's directions; regardless of the reasons, it was still disobedience. Disobedience often has consequences and Moses' consequences were severe. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information 25).

→ Going Forward!

Read Isaiah 26:7. God's ways are always best. When God tells us what to do and how to do it, we can trust Him. God orders the steps of a righteous man. That means that God has the details of our lives all worked out if we trust in Him. Do you struggle with doing what you are told? Do you push your limits and try to get away with as much as you can without actually breaking the rules? Sometimes we can talk ourselves into disobeying God if we can't see any logic in what He is asking us to do. Has God asked you to do anything that you don't understand the details of? Have you been obedient anyway? Explain. Do you believe that God knows what He is doing in your life? Explain. How can you come to a place where you can fully trust God with what He is asking of you?

*Activity textbox 8: Read I Corinthians 10:1-11. Paul is summarizing the stories of the people of Israel while in the wilderness. These stories were told and then written to help us not make the same mistakes as they did. List some of the mistakes that the Israelites made. Now think of ways that you can learn something from each of those mistakes. Take time to think of the mistakes you have made in your own life? Have you learned from those mistakes or have you repeated them?

*Scientific Fact textbox 6: Sinai limestone is known to retain water.

*Interesting Information textbox 25: Disobedience is serious in the life of a righteous leader. There is no such thing as being above the law. God's instructions are for everyone to obey.



Balaam

Numbers 22:2-41; 23:1-6, 11-17, 25-27; 24:1-2, 10-11; 31:1-7, 16, 48-49; 33:54

The people of Israel had gained quite a reputation because God had helped them wipe out the cities that had opposed them (21:24-25, 33-35). Other nations feared the supernatural power of God that the Israelites had on their side. The land of Moab was so desperate that they tried to hire a man to curse the nation of Israel in hopes of defeating them. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 26) Balaam was making a fortune as a curser. He must have been good at it to have earned the attention of a king.

We don't know if Balaam was a faithful follower of God, but we do know that God spoke to him. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 27) God told Balaam not to curse Israel. Balaam started out willing to obey God, but he began to compromise when the king continued to pester him and when more money was offered. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 28) There have been many people, including me, who have every intention of doing what God says but end up doing just the opposite. Good intentions don't always hold up against peer pressure. Obedience is often one of the hardest jobs in the world – it requires more than will power.

There is a whole spiritual world that we humans can't see. This story is an example of one such occasion when God intervened without being visible. (Note to Layout; insert Scientific Fact textbox 6) God did not want His people to be cursed and no human could overpower what God wanted. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 29)

Balaam ends up in a difficult and dangerous situation. God used him to bless Israel when he had already been hired to curse them. Balaam would have been better off to be brave and tell Balak “NO” right from the beginning. Disobedience can put us in compromising positions. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 30)

→ Going Forward!

Read Matthew 6:24. Two of my sons have struggled with trying to fit into a certain group of people at school. They each want to have the same kind of clothes and shoes and expensive gadgets that the other kids in this crowd have. Our family is on a tight budget; therefore, it is not possible to have all these extra things. The boys get frustrated because they get sucked into believing that money can buy friends. The word mammon in this verse is another word for riches or money. Has money ever been a cause for you to disobey? Do you ever choose money over God? Explain.

- *Interesting Information textbox 26: At this time in ancient history, it was a common custom to curse an enemy before going to battle.
- *Interesting Information textbox 27: Abraham had another son named Midian (Genesis 25:2) whose descendants became known as the Midianites. It was the Midianites that took Joseph to Egypt (Genesis 37:28, 36). And when Moses fled from Egypt after killing a man he ran to Midian.
- *Interesting Information textbox 28: This story is like a teenager whose mother told him no, but he keeps pestering her to change her answer until she finally gives in and says, “Fine do whatever you want.”
- *Scientific Fact textbox 6: The donkey was the most common pack animal used by both rich and poor. They are sure footed so they can travel in rough terrain.
- *Interesting Information textbox 29: There are other stories in the Bible where animals obeyed God’s commands and were used to accomplish God’s will – the fish that swallowed Jonah, and the raven that fed Elijah.
- *Interesting Information textbox 30: In Chapter 25, the people of Israel are punished for taking on the religious practices of the Midianites. Later in Chapter 31:16, Balaam is blamed for influencing the people toward idolatry. Eventually, Israel came to war against Midian and completely annihilated them without losing one of their own soldiers.



Transfer of Power

Numbers 20:1, 24-29; 27:12-23

The Israelites had been scolded for their constant doubt. They walked around in the heat of the wilderness and continued to complain. God decided it was time to bring an end to their wandering but this required some changes. First Miriam died, and then Aaron died. Only Moses remained. God spared Moses long enough to remind the people of their miraculous history and of their promising future. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 31) God explains to Moses that he will not return from the mountain after being permitted to gaze at the land that lay ahead. Moses dies on the mountain. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 32) Joshua, who had been Moses' assistant and had witnessed the power of the Lord leading Moses, became the new leader. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 33) God identified and anointed Joshua, making him the perfect replacement. (Note to Layout; insert Interesting Information textbox 34 & 35)

→ *Going Forward!*

Growth often comes from pain. A seed when it is planted has to crack open and completely transform before it can become a fruitful plant. The hot sun, the flowing water, and the dark dirt set the stage for the growing process. Sometimes our growing process feels very similar to what a seed endures. My son grew three inches in six months during his eighth grade year. He grew so fast that his bones ached. Are you at a

growing stage in your spiritual walk with God? Explain. How has God been able to use change to help you grow?

- *Interesting Information textbox 31: All the places they traveled in the 39 years of wandering should have only taken about one month to travel. This long trip wouldn't have been necessary if they wouldn't have sinned. They were constantly on the move but didn't get anywhere.
- *Interesting Information textbox 32: Moses' burial site is known only to God.
- *Interesting Information textbox 33: Joshua was with Moses and trained by Moses (Exodus 24:13; Exodus 33:11; and Exodus 17:8-14).
- *Interesting Information textbox 34: Joshua got the job by ability, not by heredity.
- *Interesting Information textbox 35: Moses was to lay hands on Joshua as a sign of the transfer of authority.

CONCLUSION

Some people hear the title of Numbers as a book in the Bible and they assume that the book must be boring. That would be a wrong assumption as we have discovered together. There are wonderful treasures to be found in the book of Numbers; the earth opening up, birds covering the ground, dead sticks blooming, and talking animals. Another nugget hidden amongst the pages is what is commonly referred to as the benediction. These verses are often recited at the end of many church services across the nation. Let me close this chapter with this blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26:

“The Lord bless you, and keep you;
 The Lord make His face shine on you,
 And be gracious to you;
 The Lord lift up His countenance on you,
 And give you peace.”



CHAPTER FIVE

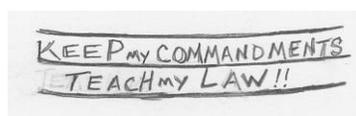
DEUTERONOMY

(Note to Layout, insert Word textbox 1 and Interesting Information textbox 1) Moses was now about 120 years old and was coming to the end of his life. Before Moses could die, God had one more thing for him to do. The people of God were so close to crossing over the border into the land God had promised to them; but before they could enter, they needed to be instructed of what God expected from His chosen ones. (Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information textbox 2) Moses, as his last act of leadership, stood before the people to remind them of their past and foretell of their future. (Note to Layout, insert Activity textbox 1).

→ Going Forward!

Moses has gathered all of the people together to hear him speak. This was centuries ago, before any technology to amplify voices, yet Moses was heard by everyone. Could God have supernaturally intervened? What are your thoughts on this? Does God do miracles of hearing in your own life? Explain. Have people listened to you that you would have never expected to listen? Explain. Look for God's power in your voice as you do His work.

- *Word textbox 1: The word *Deuteronomy* translated from the Greek means 'second law.' Some say this is a mistranslation of the Hebrew word *debarim* which means 'word.' Either translation explains accurately the title of this book – the repeating of the law, or the words of Moses.
- *Interesting Information textbox 1: Most of the Old Testament was written on scrolls in Hebrew, which reads from right to left.
- *Interesting Information textbox 2: It was necessary for the people to hear Moses tell the stories from their history and to repeat their laws because all of the generation that had experienced these things first hand had died in the wilderness, except two, Joshua and Caleb.
- *Activity textbox 1: Read Romans 15:4 and II Timothy 3:16. Everything written in the Bible, including the books of the Old Testament, were written for our benefit. As you read through Deuteronomy, write down the things that you can apply to your life that will help you walk closer with God.



Keep and Teach

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 17, 20-25; 10:12-14; 11:1, 8-9; 31:11-13

While considering ideas for my dissertation proposal, I happened to be reading the eleventh chapter of Deuteronomy (:18-23; 26-28) regarding the importance of keeping and teaching God's truths. An equation theory came into my head. (Remember, I am not good at math so just thinking about an equation is a big deal for me). Telling of the commandments (T), leads to obeying of the commandments (O), and this leads to

blessings from the commandments (B). Or in other words, $T+O=B$. If this equation is accurate, then the equation would also be true if it was inverted. This brought many questions to my mind. For instance, would blessings come if there was no obedience to God's Word? Or, would there be an obedience to God if there was no teaching of His Rules? These questions may reveal a problem that occurs within our world. Could it be that disobedience, evidenced by moral decline, has left our society unblessed just because teaching of the Bible has decreased? If this is so, then putting more of God's word into children would help increase morals and ensure blessings. (The brain of a doctoral student often thinks too much, but maybe this line of thinking is not so far off. It is at least something to think about).

The main focus of the book of Deuteronomy is built from these two principles- keeping God's laws, and teaching His truths. According to Deuteronomy 5:1, this kind of obedience is an active process. Hearing, learning, and observing God's laws all require a response. (Note to Layout, insert Word textbox 2)

God commanded that the people diligently teach His ways. God required that His laws and regulations be handed down through the generations. Telling the stories of God from His word and from the activity He had in their lives was to become a habit. Having the children see their earnest behavior, and hear their consistent words would pass on the legacy of obedience. (Note to Layout, insert Activity textbox 2 and Word textbox 3 and Interesting Information textbox 3)

God commanded the daily individual sharing and keeping of His laws. He also called for the regular coming together of the entire community for the reading and teaching of

His Word. This ensured that everyone would know God's instructions for their lives.

(Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information textbox 4)

→ Going Forward!

Read 6:4-9. God put a large emphasis on telling children about Him. Have the children around you ever heard you speak of God's Word? If so, what impact do you think this has had on them? Give examples. Have you shared the stories of your faith with any young people? Explain. How can you better fulfill God's instructions to pass on His truths?

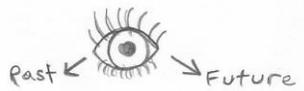
*Word textbox 2: Moses repeats the word *hear* over 30 times, the word *learn* 70 times, and the word *observe* about 100 times.

*Activity textbox 2: Read Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:4-9; and 11:18-21. Pick one of the following activities to do, or make up one of your own. Volunteer to read a Bible story at a local day care or preschool; sign up to be a Sunday School teacher at your church; host a kids Bible study after school at your house; establish doing family Bible time everyday; chaperon a youth event; sit down one-on-one with a young person and share the stories of what God has done in your life; or take a child on a walk through the park and point out all of God's marvelous creations.

*Word textbox 3: A Jewish tradition (in fulfillment of Deut. 6:9) is to hang a *mezuzah* on the post to the entrance of the door to the house. A *mezuzah* is a small box that holds a copy of the law of God.

*Interesting Information textbox 3: Some orthodox Jews still wear a phylactery box, that contains the commandments, strapped to their foreheads.

*Interesting Information textbox 4 : The Old Testament teachings are not obsolete. They are the foundation that Christ built upon when He came to earth. Jesus, in the New Testament, reaffirmed these principles not just for the chosen Israelites, but for all of God's people. In fact, Jesus added emphasis to these principles by directly relating the degree of obedience to the law, to the degree of love we have for Him (John 14:15, 21-24).



Look to the Past – Look to the Future

1:3-8' 26-33; 2:1, 14-15, 24-33; 3:1-3; 4:1-2, 6-9, 31-40; 31:17, 21

God knows the past and He knows the future. (Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information textbox 5) He knows what Israel has done and what they will do. God takes the people on a journey through their history highlighting both the good and the bad. And although He promises hope, He also predicts the outcome of their future based upon the behavior pattern of their past.

Past

In chapters one through three, Moses reviews what happened from the time the people left Mt Sinai until they stopped to camp in the valley at the base of Mount Nebo. (Note to Layout, insert Scientific Fact textbox 1) He looks back in sections, recalling how God helped him establish a leadership team to guide the people. (Note to Layout, insert Activity textbox 3) He retold the story of rebellion when he sent twelve spies into the land of promise. The consequence of their lack of faith was more time learning the lessons of obedience while aimlessly walking around. Many of these lessons were learned facing enemies along the way. (Note to Layout, insert Word textbox 4)

When the last of the rebellious generation had died, it was time to end the wilderness journey and head into the promise land. (Note to Layout, insert Activity textbox 4) That was where the people found themselves as Moses recapped their history. Battles were fought and Moses supervised the first distribution of land. Moses was unable to actually enter the land, but God allowed him to get a good look from the top of the mountain (Numbers 27:12) before he turned the leadership over to another man.

Future

After reviewing the past, Moses, in chapter four, calls the people of God to a life of obedience. He warns them of the inevitable consequences that will come upon them through disobedience. It was important for them to understand that obedience was a requirement for receiving their inheritance.

The act of remembering where they had been and how far God had brought them was to urge them to continue to keep faith and not forget God - His character or His laws. The determination of the people to respond actively in carrying out God's laws would ensure a future. To forget God and disregard His rules would be disastrous for their future. God's plan for the future was for the nation of Israel to be in a close relationship with Him. As He incites them to anticipation, He also makes it vividly clear that the new land came with a covenant condition - Acknowledge God and He will acknowledge you. (Note to Layout, insert Word textbox 5 and Scientific Fact textbox 2).

→ *Going Forward!*

Read 1:12-17. Moses chose his leaders carefully, and established a chain of command.

Has God chosen you to be a leader? What qualities do you possess that allow you to lead? Do you respect the authorities over you? How do you handle situations that seem too big for you? Compare your ways with the ways Moses handled things. How can you improve the way you lead?

Read 1:26-28. The men sent out on God's task could not see what God wanted them to see. Has God called you to do work for Him? How is your perspective? Can you see what God sees, or is your vision tainted by our own feelings and interpretations? Ask God how He wants you to see.

Read 2:10; 9:1-3. When the spies went to Canaan, they reported seeing giants. God was asking is people to have faith that He would do his work through them, but they struggled at believing. Their fear of giants kept them from moving forward in God's time. Are there any giants that seem to be standing in your way of moving ahead with God? How do you believe God wants you to handle them? Do you have circumstances that appear bigger than what you believe that God can handle? How does God want to increase your faith in these circumstances?

Read 9:1-6; Numbers 13:22, 28-33; and Joshua 11:21-23. The Israelites had a chance to go up against the giants of their past. Are there any leftover giants in your past that God needs to defeat once and for all? Explain.

Read 3:23, 26. God told Moses NO in response to his heart felt plea. Has God ever told you no to something you really wanted? How did you react? Do you find that you resent God's decisions when they don't match up with yours? How does this affect your relationship with Him?

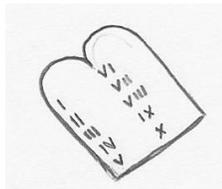
Read 4:1-2, 6-8. Our obedience is a witness to the world around us. The nations would watch Israel's behavior in order to have a better concept of God Almighty. Because of God's laws, the people of the world could recognize God's power and personalization. How is your obedience to God? What do your actions communicate to the world around you? How do others see God because of how you live?

**Interesting Information textbox 5: Abraham had been promised descendants like the stars (1:10). God was fulfilling His Word (10:22).*

**Scientific Facts textbox 1: It has been calculated that the journey from Mt. Sinai, up the coast across Kadesh, and to their campsite that took them forty years to travel, would actually only take about eleven days.*

**Activity textbox 3: Looking back in your life can be a helpful exercise. Review your past and relearn any lessons, rejoice over things you have overcome, and renew any relationships lost.*

- *Word textbox 4: There really were such things as giants. The word for *Emim* means “terrors,” or “dreaded ones.” Og, the king of Bashan (3:1) was a giant whose bed was 9 cubits by 4 cubits. Cubits were measured by a man’s forearm, or about 18 inches. That was one big bed. Imagine the size of the man that fit into it. There is another reference to giants in 9:1-3. These were the sons of the Anakim, the same giants that the twelve spies had encountered forty years earlier.
- *Activity textbox 4: Read 1:42-46. One test of obedience is to do what you are asked, when you are asked. Evaluate how well you obey.
- *Word textbox 5: *Diligently* means to purposefully, willfully, and with regard to detail. To diligently obey is to give it all you’ve got, and to diligently teach is to do it with all your heart.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 2: The material of their clothes would actually wear out and tear due to the harsh conditions of the terrain and climate. It is supernatural intervention from God that their clothes and shoes lasted so long.



Reminder of the Laws

6:4, 12-14; 7:1-2, 16; 20:1-4; 13:4, 6-8; 16:16-17; 17:2-5, 30:10-11, 15-20

Most of the book, chapters five through twenty six, is spent reminding the people of God’s laws and the importance of obeying them. Moses spoke the law to the Israelites for an entire week. By the length of the speech we can infer that this was an extremely important message that God wanted the people to hear. Can you imagine sitting in a large crowd of people for seven days straight listening to one man talk? It makes it seem silly to complain about a two hour Sunday morning church service while sitting on padded pews surrounded by people who most likely just showered.

During his speech, Moses first exhorted the people to remain faithful to God and stay away from idolatry. (Note to Layout, insert Word textbox 6 and Interesting Information textbox 6) The Ten Commandments were repeated and emphasized. These were vital in understanding the basics to living a life acceptable to God. (Note to Layout, insert

Interesting Information textbox 13) Loving God first would keep them from idolatry; loving others would maintain healthy community – both were required priorities for the people of God that would soon become a nation. (Note to Layout, insert Word textbox 11, 12, and 13)

God promised to help the Israelites defeat their enemies in order to possess the land promised to them. (Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information textbox 7) Overcoming their physical enemies was not Israel's only battle that lay ahead. They would constantly be struggling with the spiritual warfare of not being distracted by the false gods of the surrounding nations. God demanded His people not to compromise their beliefs but instead to stand strong as a holy people. Moses warned that there would be many, even those closest to them that would try to lure them away from God.

Next, Moses gives a series of laws and regulations that will guide the everyday lives of God's people. God did not leave the people with the order to obey His laws solely on human willpower. He gave them a sure formula to help them resist temptation that included listening, fearing, serving, and clinging (13:4). (Note to Layout, insert Word textbox 7 and 8)

Moses then reviews the holidays and their symbolic meanings. Celebrating the feasts and festivals was an act of worship. (Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information textbox 8) Worship was critical to maintaining their covenant with God. It would be the responsibilities of the leaders to maintain the purity of worship after the people settled into the new land. (Note to Layout, insert Activity textbox 5)

Moses finished his speech by reviewing the laws. He assured the people that they could go forward and live up to God's expectations of obedience.

→Going Forward!

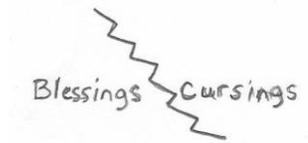
Read 5:7. Living amongst people who served other gods would tempt God's people to allow false gods into their lives. The first commandment demanded that God be number one. This principle remains the same today. God must be God of everything. He must be in control of every area of your life. Whatever your heart is obsessed with, that is your god. Who or what is the number one place in your heart? Is God in control of your check book? Is God in control of your calendar? In what areas of your life is it hard to put God first? Why?

Read 5:11. The way you use God's name is an indication of your relationship with Him. There are many ways to take the Lord's name in vain: Attaching God's name to your own will; giving yourself credit for what God has done; scoffing at His Word; using His name as profanity; hollow praying to Him; and praising Him from a vacant heart. Do you have a problem with this commandment? Explain. In what ways do you most often speak His name? Are they in ways that honor Him? How can you better manage the way you speak God's name?

- *Word textbox 6: *Idolatry* literally means “putting anything in the place of God or ahead of God.
- *Interesting Information textbox 6: Deuteronomy is quoted more than 80 times in the New Testament by Jesus and others. Jesus quoted many verses from Deuteronomy: 6:4-6 – Jesus used as a summary of the importance of God's laws; 8:3 and 6:16 – Jesus used to defeat the devil in the wilderness.
- *Interesting Information textbox 7: The Canaanites were not one big nation but were a group of different cities that all had their own king. They were known for their many gods. The worship of these gods often included the horrible practice of human sacrifice.
- *Interesting Information textbox 8: Three times a year the men went away and gathered together to spend time in God's presence (16:16-17). I wonder how this practice affected the strength of the home and the communities as the men were committed to having time with God.
- *Activity textbox 5: God set high standards for the qualifications for anyone elected to be the leader of the country (17:14-20). He should be a citizen, he should not be

greedy or out for his own good, he should be lawful, and read God's Word daily. Think about these things every time elections come around.

- *Word textbox 7: *Temptation* is anything that will try and take us away from God. Satan will use anything at anytime to accomplish his purposes.
- *Word textbox 8: The word *clinging* brings a picture to my mind of a little girl with her arms wrapped tightly around her father's neck refusing to let go. This is how God wants us to hang onto Him.
- *Interesting Information textbox 9: A roof was used for more than just a protection from the elements. Household chores, entertaining guests, and even sleeping often took place on the rooftop. Building a parapet, a railing or a protective wall, would make it safer to be on the roof (22:8) God showed that He cared and wanted to be in charge of even the smallest details of their lives.
- *Interesting Information textbox 13: Obeying the first four laws give evidence of love for God, and obeying the next six laws give evidence of love for fellow man.
- *Word textbox 11: In the phrase "no other Gods before me," *before me* literally means 'near me,' 'at my side,' 'against me,' and 'to my detriment.'
- *Word textbox 12: The word *murder* in verse 17 means to take an innocent life either by criminal intent or by negligence. We are to protect life. We have been made in God's image, therefore human life is sacred and not to be taken lightly.
- *Word textbox 13: The word *covet* in verse 21 means to jealously want what someone else has or to desire something we have no right to possess.



Blessing and Cursing

4:40; 7:9-12; 8:1-2, 11, 17-20; 11:13-17, 26-28, 47-48, 58-62; 27; 28

Although this book is full of review and reflection, retelling of the laws, and renewing of the covenant, the overall theme of Deuteronomy is obedience. Obedience leads to blessings; disobedience leads to cursings. (Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information textbox 10 and Word textbox 9) Choosing to obey God is choosing reward and life; choosing to disobey God is choosing punishment and death. It was choice, not chance that determined their destiny.

Moses warned the people that forgetting God, His words, and His interventions was the beginning of disobedience. Remembering God in good times and even in bad times would help maintain their relationship with God. (Note to Layout, insert Word textbox 10) The result of forgetting God would be failure in keeping His commandments. Loving God and serving God were as important to obeying God as remembering Him was (11:13-17) The condition of a person's heart was conditional to their relationship with God and His Word. (Note to Layout, insert Activity textbox 6)

(Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information text box 11 and 12) There is beauty in the relationship between covenant and consequences. The covenant, or the agreement, was a gift from God to His people. Obedience was the outcome of this agreement between God and Israel. Obedience was to be a response motivated by gratitude. This is a cycle that grows more beautiful and rewarding as it continues.

➔ *Going Forward!*

Following God is a life of choices. God promises that if you choose to obey, He will bring you blessings. But if you choose to disobey you will have consequences. Make your choices wisely. How well do you make daily choices? Have you experienced blessings as a result of your choices? Explain. Have you experienced cursings as a result of your choices? Explain.

*Interesting Information textbox 10: The blessings and curses were to be read publicly to the entire nation after the people entered Canaan.

*Word textbox 9: *Obedience* requires action. Moses told the people to hear fifty times, and to do, keep, and observe one hundred seventy seven times.

*Word textbox 10: *Remembering* is a common word in Deuteronomy. It appears thirteen times.

*Activity textbox 6: In 9:4-6, God did not want the people to take credit for God's miracles. Think about this for a while and make a list of times that you might have thought that you could somehow manipulate God's intervention. Repeat three times

like Moses did that you cannot earn God's intervention.

*Interesting Information textbox 11: It was at the bottom of Mt. Ebal that the Lord appeared to Abraham and he built his first altar (27:4). It was also the same place that Joshua would obey God and build an altar (Joshua 8:30).

*Interesting Information text box 12: Notice in 27:9-10 that God asked the people to say "amen," which means so be it. This act engaged them into a verbal contract with God.



Open Hand and Open Heart

15: 7-11

God made arrangements for a community to be able to survive. His plan was for everyone to take care of each other. Whenever someone was in need, others were to soften their hearts and open their hands to provide for the need. God's promise was to generously bless all that freely gave to the poor and needy. (Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information textbox 14)

➔ *Going Forward!*

God's plans for how His people are to live are complete and perfect plans. We are required to live with our focus on more than just on ourselves. Helping others requires noticing when others have needs. How do you know when there is a need around you? Do you have to wait until someone tells you? What do you do when you do discover that there is a need? Are there any ways that you feel the most comfortable in helping? Are there ways that you do not feel comfortable in helping? Are there any needs around you now? Are there any poor, hungry, orphaned, widowed, or lonely? What can you do to help?

*Interesting Information textbox 14: A community that has poor among them is not a new dilemma. To avoid the obligation of helping is to go against God's design.



Farewell Address

31:1-8, 23; 32:48-50; 33:5; 34:6-10

When someone we love and respect dies, we often remember their last words and deeds – replaying them over and over in our minds. Somehow, by reliving these things, it seems the person is still close. Moses had been an incredible leader and he was now about to die. He was giving his last speech to the people; these words would be what would ring through their ears for years to come. (Note to Layout, insert Activity textbox 7)

Moses knew he was not going with his people into the Promised Land (4:21-26), but he wanted to make sure they would never forget their covenant with God. Moses warned the people to watch themselves and the way they behaved. When obedience to God is no longer a primary concern in life, then it becomes easy to forget God’s place. The chances of falling away from God are higher when we no longer care whether or not our behavior is pleasing to Him.

Moses explained to the people that he was old and was going to have to replace himself before the nation was established in the Promised Land. He was transferring his leadership. At a time when the people must have thought they needed him the most, Moses turns the reigns over to Joshua. Moses selected the new man and encouraged the people to trust that God had chosen correctly. Moses blessed and empowered Joshua to be strong and faithful to the Lord. (Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information textbox 15)

God helped Moses compose a song that would summarize his life and times as the leader of God's people. The song honored Israel's history and was sung by the people as a way to worship by remembering. (Note to Layout, insert Interesting Information textbox 16 and Activity textbox 8) I love my time with my children. When mine were young, I would sing songs to them. Many times I would make up my own songs expressing my love for them. I would also make up songs describing things I saw. One of the kids' favorites was when I would sing the going to school song. It had the same melody every day, but I would change the words to incorporate what the plans were for that day so they would remember. It was a fun thing to do together. Today, when my children and I feel like reminiscing, we will talk about these songs. After Moses was gone, the people of Israel still sung the song. (Note to Layout, insert Scientific Fact textbox 4, Interesting Information textbox 17 and 18)

Moses spends his last moments alone with God. God performed the funeral, and the people mourned the loss of a great leader. God prepared another leader to complete the job Moses started.

➔ *Going Forward!*

Read Psalms 23. Like Moses, David had to face the fears of death. A few years ago I was in a terrifying physical crisis. I had become very ill and the doctors and people around me knew that I was probably not going to make it through. I was facing the reality of death. I had twelve children, a husband, a mother, and lots of friends and family I loved that I was not ready to leave yet. Of course, I was excited about the thought of seeing Jesus, but I still did not feel ready to die. At the time, the doctors suggested that I tell my husband and children goodbye. I brought them into my hospital

room one at a time and told them how I felt about them and gave them a blessing for their future. It was a very emotional experience but my children still remember the words I spoke to them. We don't realize how quickly we could be faced with death. Our lives on this earth are to affect those around us; we are to make an impact on our world. If you were to die soon, what would people remember about your words or your deeds? What would you want people to remember about you? How would you like to change the way you live in order to better influence people?

Read 31:16. God shared with Moses his time of death. Have you ever thought about your own death? Explain. Would this be a hard topic for you and God to talk openly about? Explain. Moses had to face his death and the reality that he would be replaced. Try to put yourself in the place of Moses. How would you respond to God? How would you respond to the person that would replace you and take care of the people you loved and led?

Read 34:10. God described Moses as a leader that had an intimate relationship with Him. There is something about talking with someone while looking into their face. Face to face contact allows one to see hurt, joy, deception, and truth in someone's eyes. This is how it was for Moses. God looked him the face. What kind of relationship do you have with God? Do you have a face to face relationship with Him? Explain. Is God your best friend? I love spending time with my best friend unless, of course, I don't want her to know something. She can tell in an instant if I am holding something from her. She says she can see it in my eyes. There are some relationships in life that leave room to get away with not being completely open and honest. Then there are those wonderful relationships that increase integrity because there is no room for anything but truth. Do

you have any relationships that have this kind of integrity? Explain. Are there any relationships in your life that you need to work on? Explain.

- *Activity textbox : As if it were the last days of your life, take the time to consider what you want to say to the people in your life. What blessings and what instructions would you give? Write each a letter expressing your thoughts and feelings.
- *Interesting Information textbox 15: Joshua was 80 years old when he became a full time leader.
- *Interesting Information textbox 16: It is ironic how at the beginning of Moses' career he didn't want to speak in front of people Exodus 12), however, by the end of career he was singing a solo in front of tens of thousands of people. That is a life transformed.
- *Activity textbox 8: Making up musical tunes may help you communicate something or remember something of importance. Try it. Put your agenda to song, listen to scripture songs, tell your children the Bible stories through song, worship with a song, say thank you with a song, or sing I love you in a song.
- *Scientific Fact textbox 4: Research has shown that some people learn better by applying music. For example, many people learn the alphabet by singing it. Moses used music as a tool to help the people memorize their history and the law.
- *Interesting Information textbox 17: The custom of passing on a blessing was not a simple good bye wish or prayer. The blessing before death was considered a promise that would be fulfilled throughout life.
- *Interesting Information textbox 18: The blessings Moses gave to each tribe were different than the ones Jacob gave to the tribes in Genesis 49. Jacob's blessings included judgment whereas, Moses' blessings were redeeming.

CONCLUSION

The Israelites had come so far. They had escaped the bondage of slavery in Egypt, they had witnessed miracles beyond imagination, they had been hand fed their daily bread, they had received the written and spoken laws of God, they had endured consequences of disobedience, and they had completed their required sentence of wandering the wilderness. It was a time to move forward in God's plan with a new leader, a new land, and a new hope. As long as the people could stay faithful to God's covenant by keeping His commandments and teaching His words, then the nation of

Israel would have a bright future (32:45-47). Although a generation had perished in the wilderness, Joshua would bring a new generation into the Promised Land.

→ *Going Forward!*

Deuteronomy is quoted so much in the New Testament indicating that it must have been an important book to the first Christians. Do you believe the Old Testament is relevant to the church today? Have you ever read the Old Testament? Why or why not? What importance does the Old Testament have for you? How can you apply Deuteronomy to your life?

ENDING THOUGHTS

This book has been a joy to write. No matter how many times I read or study God's Word, He always teaches me so much. As I read the first five books of Moses again and again, each time God showed me things that I had never seen before. I was challenged to work through every *Going Forward* and I learned things about myself and how I need to improve in areas that can increase my relationship with Jesus. I feel like you and I have been on a journey together and have become friends. I hope that you have enjoyed discovering new truths and learning to apply them to your life. God has been intimately involved with His people since the beginning and He is still involved with them today. Take the time to acknowledge God as your God, and thank Him for always being there with you. I am looking forward to our next journey together as we continue to Walk Through His Word.

Dear Reader,

Before we can begin, we need to address a potential misconception. The word storytelling is sometimes used to describe a child's inappropriate behavior of fibbing, or making up a lie. The elaborate fabrication of a tale to distract someone from the truth is absolutely not the definition of storytelling used for this project. Storytelling is also a word used to describe the art of transferring information to another person(s) using both verbal and nonverbal techniques. One can actually tell the truth and still be storytelling.

Please do not be overwhelmed at the idea of storytelling God's Word. I'm sure that most all of you, at one time or another has captured an audience's attention while sharing an experience. Whether telling a story to a child at bed time, gathering around the water cooler relating a story to fellow employees, or sharing your personal story before a group of strangers at a recovery group, you have already had experience with storytelling.

It is my desire to provide for you an exciting avenue from which to share the truths of God's Word. There are too many people, child and adult alike, who have never heard the stories of God and His people. The Bible contained the world's greatest stories and all of them are true. That is enough motivation to make sure everyone has the opportunity to experience these stories first hand - hear these stories, retain them, and draw life changing truths from them.

Telling God's stories to others is a privilege not a hardship. It may seem scary at first to have the confidence to begin, but it is well worth the effort. I have included a few instructions and suggestions that might help start you on the way of becoming God's storyteller.

*As a storyteller, take the stories of the Bible into your heart
and give them back as a gift to the listener.*

Blessings to the teller, and to the listener,

Jackie

INSTRUCTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

If you are using this book as a curriculum, it is not required that you read to the class from the text. This book was created to be a usable guide. Make yourself familiar with the particular picture card for the Bible book from which you are teaching. Read the material related to each text. As you share the information, have the bible handy to refer to for details. Keeping the story authentic is critical. Use the visual icon as a point of reference to keep you on track. You will find once you try it, storytelling will be easier than you think.

- When storytelling, let the story come naturally from your heart. Don't panic. You do not have to put the story to memory. Just make sure you know the details of the Bible story well because accuracy to god's Word is crucial. After sharing the story out loud for the first time you become more confident. The Bible, in and of itself is life giving so it will almost tell itself. Be faithful in sharing it's truths and God will bring the fruit from your efforts.
- Don't forget that as the storyteller you are setting the tone. The listener(s) will only be as excited to hear the story as you are in telling the story. They will get their cues from you. Allow God's Word to penetrate your heart. Fall in love with His stories. This love will then exude from your being as you story tell. Allow them to witness firsthand the all consuming power of God's Word and all that can be accomplished by truly believing the stories that you are about to share with them

- There is no magic formula to becoming a storyteller. You don't have to be gregarious and animated. You can be shy and reserved and still captivate an audience. God can use any personality type and mold them into a story ambassador. If you read Deuteronomy chapters 6 and 11, you will see that God asks everyone to tell His stories not just those with a flair for the dramatics. If God asks you to do it then you can be assured He will give you the ability needed to accomplish His task. Have faith in His willingness to see you through this wonderful job of storytelling. You might be pleasantly surprised by what He can do through you.
- Make sure you talk in a volume that is consistent with your audience. You will speak differently if you are telling a story to a child sitting on your lap versus to an auditorium full of 7th graders. Keep in mind that the inflection and tone of your voice is also important. Your voice not only communicates the story, but also communicates how you feel about what you are saying. Let your voice be strong and filled with passion for what you are presenting.
- Because you are the vehicle through which the information is being transmitted, your physical body is part of the communication. Your facial expression and gestures (or lack of these) will play a big part in the storytelling process. You want to be sure you are sending a consistent message. Utilize your face and your hands and arms to solidify the content, to captivate attention, and to make the experience memorable. The content of the story will be better retained if it is paired within a good context. In other words, 'actions speak louder than words.' Let your body cooperate with your voice to tell an accurate and exciting story. If

the character in the story is sad, frown and hang your head; if the character is scared, let your shoulders tremble. Use your whole being to engage your listener. Don't be embarrassed. Just remember the bigger picture – you are entrusted with the job of telling the stories of God's Word. WOW! What an exciting opportunity

- to show your love of God to others. That is nothing to be ashamed of. Don't be shy, tell His stories.

REFERENCES

- Achtemeier, Elizabeth. 1989. *Preaching from the Old Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press.
- Alexander, David and Pat. 1973. *Eerdman's handbook for the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman's Publishing.
- Alexander, David and Pat. 1999. *Zondervan handbook to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- De Hamel, Christopher. 2001. *The book: A history of the Bible*. New York, NY: Phaidon Press, Inc.
- Drane, John W. 1983. *The Old Testament story*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Ellwell, Walter (editor). 2000. *Baker commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Embry, Margaret. 1995. *Growing up in Bible times*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Flanders, Henry Jackson, Crapps, Robert Wilson, and Smith, David Anthony. 1973. *People of the covenant* (second edition). New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Freeman, James. 1996. *Manners and customs of the Bible*. Springdale, PA: Whitaker House.
- Guest, John. 1988. *The communicators commentary series OT: A book by book commentary by today's great Bible teachers*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.
- Halley, Henry. 1965. *Halley's Bible handbook: An abbreviated Bible commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan.
- Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: Volume 1 Genesis to Deuteronomy*. New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company.
- Lamsa, George M. 1964. *Old Testament light: The indispensable guide to the customs, manners and idioms of biblical times*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers.

- Lockyer, Herbert. 1961. *All the miracles of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Lucado, Max (editor). 1997. *Life lessons with Max Lucado*. Word Publishing.
- Maxwell, John. 1987. *Mastering the Old Testament: Deuteronomy*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.
- Macaulay, David. 1975. *Pyramid*. Boston, MS: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Morris, Henry. 1976. *The Genesis record: A scientific and devotional commentary on the book of beginnings*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Nelson, Thomas. 2002. *How people lived in the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Nelson, Thomas. 2006. *The ultimate Bible reference library*. (CD/ Rom) Bible Library.
- Ridenour, Fritz. 1971. *Who says?* Glendale, CA: G/L Publications.
- Thatcher, Floyd W. (editor). 1988. *Discovering Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*. Carmel, NY: Guideposts.
- Wolpe, David J. 1993. *Teaching your children about God: A modern Jewish approach*. New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co.
- Wood, Leon. 1986. *A survey of Israel's History: Revised and enlarged edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books.
- Wright Ernest G. (editorial consultant). 1979. *Great people of the Bible and how they lived*. Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association, Inc.

WORKS CITED

- Achtemeier, Elizabeth. 1989. *Preaching from the Old Testament*. Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press.
- Alexander, David and Pat. 1973. *Eerdman's handbook for the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing.
- Alexander, David and Pat. 1999. *Zondervan handbook to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Ammerman, Nancy T., Carroll, Jackson W., Dudley, Carl S. and McKinney, William. 1998. *Studying congregations: A new handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Association National. 1991. *Best loved stories told at the national storytelling festival*. Jonesborough, TN: National Storytelling Press.
- Association National. 1992. *More best loved stories told at the national storytelling festival*. Jonesborough, TN: National Storytelling Press.
- Babbi, Earl. 1998. *The practice of social research*. 8th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Baker, Augusta, and Greene, Eileen. 1987. *Storytelling Art & Technique*. New York: R.R. Bowker Co.
- Barth, Roland. 1990. *Improving schools from within: Teachers, parents and principal can make the difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing.
- Bates, Ernest Sutherland. 1964. *The Bible designed to be read as living literature*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Bausch, William J. 1984. *Storytelling: Imagination and faith*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-third Publications.
- Bell, Judith. 2002. *Doing your research project: A guide for first time researchers in education and social science*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia: University Press.
- Bixler, William Allen. 1932. *Chalk talk made easy*. Anderson, IN: The Warner Press.
- Blair, Christine Eaton. 2001. *The art of teaching the Bible*. Louisville: Geneva Press.

- Bogden, Robert, and Biklen, Sari Knopp. 1998. *Qualitative research for education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc.
- Bradway, Lauren, and Albers-Hill, Barbara. 2004. *How to maximize your child's ability to learn*. New York: Square On Publishers.
- Breneman, Lucille N, and Breneman, Bren. 1984. *Once upon a time*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Butterworth, Nick, and Inkpen, Mick. 1994. *Stories Jesus told*. Sister, OR: Gold 'n' Honey Publishers, Inc.
- Caswell, Helen. 1992. *Parable of the bridesmaids*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Colwell, Eileen. 1966. *A storyteller's choice*. New York: Henry Z. Walck.
- Colwell, Eileen. 1967. *A second storyteller's choice*. New York: Henry Z. Walck, Inc.
- Crawford, Chris. 2004. *Chris Crawford on interactive storytelling*. New Riders (proquest.safaribooksonline)
- Cullum, Carolyn N. 1999. *The storytime sourcebook. 2nd Ed*. New York: Neal-Schuma Publishers.
- Daniel-Rops, Daily, Henri. 1962. *Life in the time of Jesus*. New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc.
- De Hamel, Christopher. 2001. *The book: A history of the Bible*. New York: Phaidon Press, Inc.
- Drane, John W. 1983. *The Old Testament story*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Dryden, Gordon and Vos, Jeannette, EdD. 1994. *The learning revolution*. Rolling Hills Estates, CA: Jalmar Press.
- Earle, Ralph. 1968. *Story of the New Testament*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press.
- Ellwell, Walter (editor). 2000. *Baker commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Embry, Margaret. 1995. *Growing up in Bible times*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Flora, Dr. Joy. *How do I become a storyteller?* Available from Internet, <http://www.storynet.org>, (accessed June 2, 2007).

- Friedman, Edwin H. 1990. *Friedman's fables*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Geisler, Harlynn. 1997. *Storytelling professional: The nuts and bolts of a working performer*. Engelwood, CO: Libraries Unlimited
- Goldberg, Michael. 1982. *Theology and narrative: A critical introduction*. Nashville: Abington Press.
- Gordon, Stuart. 1993. *The encyclopedia of myths and legends*. London: Headline Book Publishing.
- Graves, Mike and Schlafer, David J. 2008. *What's the shape of narrative preaching?* St. Louis: Chalice Press.
- Guest, John. 1988. *The communicators commentary series OT: A book by book commentary by today's great Bible teachers*. Dallas: Word Publishing.
- Gurian, Michael. 2001. *Boys and girls learn differently*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing.
- Halley, Henry. 1965. *Halley's Bible handbook: An abbreviated Bible commentary*. Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan.
- Hamilton, Martha and Weis, Mitch. 1996. *Stories in my pocket*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.
- Haven, Kendall F. 2000. *Storytelling: A can-do guide for every classroom, everyday*. Englewood, CO: Teacher's Ideas Press.
- Hoffman, Mary, and Morris, Jackie. 2000. *Parables: Stories Jesus told*. New York: Phyllis Fogelman Books.
- Hough, Elizabeth and Woolsey, and Sechrist, Janette. 1964. *It's time for story hour*. Philadelphia: Macrae Smith.
- Isbell, Rebecca, and Raines, Shirley. 2000. *Tell it again! 2*. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.
- Johnston, Kurt, and Edwards, Kate. 2005. Holding on to your 'Keeper' Volunteers. *Group's Church Ministry Source Book*.
- K-12 Online School. 2004. *History, 2nd grade, Unit 12, lesson 3: Medieval Africa*. Available from Internet, <http://www.ohva.org>, (accessed Feb. 12, 2006).

- Kinghorn, Harriet R. and Pelton, Mary Helen. 1991. *Every child a storyteller: A handbook of ideas*. Englewood, CO: Teacher's Ideas Press.
- Lamsa, George M. 1964. *Old Testament light: the indispensable guide to the customs, manners and idioms of biblical times*. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Langdon, Grace PhD., and Stout, Irving W. EdD. 1962. *Teaching moral and spiritual values*. New York: The John Day Co.
- Larsen, David L. 1995. *Telling the old story: The art of narrative preaching*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications.
- Leeming, David Adams. 1997. *Storytelling encyclopedia*. Phoenix: Oryx Press.
- Levine M.D., Melvin. 2002. *A mind at a time*. New York: Simon & Shuster.
- Lightfoot, Neil R. 1965. *Lessons from the parables*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Lillie, David L., and Trohanis, Pascal L. 1976. *Teaching parents to teach*. New York: Walker & Co.
- Lipman, Doug. 1999. *Improving your storytelling*. Little Rock: August House Publishers, Inc.
- Litherland, Janet. 1976. *Storytelling from the Bible: Making Scripture alive for all ages through the art of storytelling*. Colorado Springs: Merriwether Publishing, Ltd.
- Lutzer, Erwin W. 1998. *Seven reasons why you can trust the Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Livo, Norma J, and Ritz, Sandra. 1987. *Storytelling activities*. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. 1996. *Values driven leadership: Discovering and developing your core values in ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Maxwell, John. 1987. *Mastering the Old Testament: Deuteronomy*. Dallas: Word Publishing.
- Merriam, Sharan B. 2001. *Qualitative research and case study application in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Merrill, Kathryn L., and Christon, Kristy L. 1993. *In Jesus time*. Highland City, FL: Rainbow Books, Inc.
- Merritt, Steve. 2004. Chalk it up to Experience. *Group 1/2 30* (Issue 2): 54.

- Meyers, William. 2000. *Research in ministry: A primer for the doctor of ministry program, 3rd ed.* Chicago: Exploration Press.
- Miller, Mark. 2003. *Experiential storytelling: (Re)discovering narrative to communicate God's message.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing.
- Nelson, Thomas. 2002. *How people lived in the Bible.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Nelson, Thomas. 2006. *The ultimate Bible reference library.* (CD/ Rom) Bible Library.
- Nestor, Robert P. 2001. *Critical research and evaluation.* Lanham, MD: University Press.
- Nummela-Caine, Renate and Caine, Geoffrey. 1991. *Making connections.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Panati, Charles. 1996. *Sacred origins of profound things.* New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc.
- Pardy, Marion. 1988. *Teaching children the Bible: New models in Christian education.* San Francisco: Harper & Row Publications.
- Piaget, Jean. 1950. *Psychology of intelligence: Translated from the French by Malcolm Piercy and D. E. Berlynn.* New York: Routledge Classics.
- Reid, Rob. 2003. *Something funny happened at the library: How to create humorous programs for children and young adults.* Chicago: American Library Association.
- Richards, Larry. 1991. *Talkable Bible stories.* Tarrytown, NY: Fleming Revell Co.
- Rock, Lois. 2001. *Everlasting stories.* San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Roots-Hefner, Christine and Roots-Lewis, Kathryn. 1995. *Literature based science.* Phoenix: Oryx Press.
- Scheub, Harold. 1998. *Story.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Shaw, Susan M. 1999. *Storytelling in religious education.* Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press.
- Simic, Marjorie, McClain, Melinda and Shermis, Michael. 1992. *The Confidant learner: Help your child succeed in school.* Bloomington, IN: Grayson Bernard Publishing.
- Spradley, James P. 1980. *Participation observation.* Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Co.

- Stroebel, Lee. 1998. *The case for Christ*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Stuart, Douglas. 1988. *Mastering the Old Testament: Ezekiel*. Dallas: Word Publishing.
- Swindoll, Charles R. 2001. *The strong family: Insight for living*. Portland: Multnomah Press.
- Tillman, Diane, and Belgrave, Myrna. 2000. *Living values for young adult*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc.
- Tolbert, LaVerne. 2000. *Teaching like Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing.
- Ulrich-Tobias, Cynthia. 1994. *The way they learn*. Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family.
- Value Soft. 1999. *The Bible Library (CD-ROM), Special Ed. Ver. 4.0*, Bible Library.
- Ward, Kaari (editor). 1987. *Jesus and his times*. New York: Reader's Digest Association, Inc.
- Washington, DC. Available from Internet, <http://www.fightcrime.org>, (accessed July 13, 2007).
- Webster's New Dictionary*. 1997. New York: Promotional Sales Books, Inc.
- White, William. 1982. *Speaking in stories: Resources for Christian storytellers*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.
- Wiersma, William. 2000. *Research methods in education: An introduction*. 7th ed. Needham Hights, MA: Allyn & Baccon.
- Wisniewski, David. 1992. *Sundiata: Lion king of Mali*. New York: Clarion Books.
- Wolpe, David J. 1993. *Teaching your children about God: A modern Jewish approach*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- Wright, John W. 2007. *Telling God's story*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
- Wright Ernest G. (editorial consultant). 1979. *Great people of the Bible and how they lived*. Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association, Inc.
- Yount, Christine (executive editor). 2003. *Fast facts*. Children's Ministry Magazine (Nov/Dec). Group Publishing Co.