

How to Learn and Naturally Tell a Bible Story

A story worth telling is worth telling well. The purpose of a story is to draw the listener in, making him or her an active participant in the story.

NEVER memorize a story! Instead, learn it until it becomes a part of you, so that when you tell it you are conveying something you believe in and feel.

How do you learn a Bible story?

1. Know why you are telling it!

What do you want to convey to your audience? Who is your audience, and why do you want to tell them this story? Is this story a part of a set of stories with a certain theme? If so, how does this story help develop that theme?

2. Read through the story several times in as many translations of the Bible as you can.

If there are multiple accounts of the story in different Gospels, read through each account and decide on which Gospel account (or which combination of accounts) to tell. A general rule of thumb is to read the story seven times in at least three different versions.

3. As you think about your goal in telling this story and the theme of the larger story set you are telling, decide what the main points of the story are that contribute to this theme.

Know where the climax is, and what actions lead up to it. Take out any details that confuse the overall story or that don't contribute to the story's goal. Go through those main points in your head, imagining them playing like a movie in your head until you have learned the storyline well.

4. Add the details that make the story interesting (but not too detailed or confusing).

For example, is it helpful or interesting to note that Abraham was 75 years old when he left his home country to go to the land God promised him? Maybe it is interesting, depending on your audience, or if you know that the fact that he had a baby when he was so old would be very helpful for your audience to know. Hang those details onto the main points of the story. Tell yourself the story.

5. Find the climax of the story.

How will you build up to it? How will you show with your voice or body language that the climax has come? Think about where you would pause as you're telling the story. Where would you speak more loudly, or more softly---more quickly, or more slowly? Where would you ask a rhetorical question to draw the audience in?

6. Think about transitions.

How will you begin the story? What does the audience need to know about the setting of the story?

7. Plan your landing.

If a story doesn't have a definite conclusion, the listener will go away feeling like something was missing. Craft the last line of the story, and stick to it!

8. Practice the story on someone else or in front of a mirror at least 7 times before you tell it to your audience!

9. As you practice the story, thinking about its theme, some thought provoking questions for your audience may come to mind.

If you're having trouble coming up with good, simple questions, here are some basic questions that can be used with any story and will hopefully help your audience start talking.

- What did you like about this story?
- What bothered you about this story?
- What did you learn about God from this story?
- What did you learn about yourself/people from this story?
- What is there that you need to obey from this story? (How does this story apply to your life?)

These questions usually provide enough fuel for your audience to discuss the story well, but here are some other questions that could be helpful:

- What are the decisions that the characters made in this story? Why do you think they made those decisions?
- If the characters had made different decisions, how would the story have ended differently?
- If you were _____, how would you have felt? How would you have acted differently?
- Why do you think God acted the way that he did in this story?