

A Case Study of a Biblical Storytelling Training Event in South Asia

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This case study describes how sixty-two full time Christian workers were trained as biblical storytellers. Included are many personal accounts by the new storytellers about their remarkable experiences as they told God's stories over the following weeks.

INTRODUCTION

In February 2006 sixty-two full time Christian workers with no previous experience as storytellers gathered to receive training in biblical storytelling. During four days they learned to tell twelve stories from the book of Genesis. Afterward they returned to their home areas where they were required to tell each story no less than three times.

Six weeks later when they came for their second training event, 94% had completed their field assignment which resulted in 32,386 story encounters.¹ Despite being in areas with deeply entrenched resistance to Christianity, the participants reported that as a result of hearing one or more stories from God's Word, eighty-seven people came to the Lord. Two of these were baptized and forty others were being prepared for baptism. Eighty-one individual Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists attended a Christian worship service for the first time, and five new cell groups were planted.²

VIJAY: I recently started ministry in a large city where you cannot distribute tracts or conduct open meetings. So I used to pray about how to start my ministry. Then I thought of starting with just my own children. And every evening from 5:00 until 7:30 PM, after they had finished their school homework, I would go outside and tell them whatever stories I learned through this storytelling program. So then, what my children did—they started to bring some of their school friends to my house. And then every evening from 5 through 7:30 PM, I used to share some of these stories with the children.

One evening, I was telling the Abraham story—about how Abraham was not having any children. So he is thinking about having children. And when I was sharing this story about Abraham, I did not know that my house owner was listening from upstairs. And this man and his wife were not having any children for many years and years. And they had visited all the Hindu holy places where they prayed to have children, but without result. So, unfortunately, this man was also hearing when I was telling the Abraham story.

So later that evening, about 9:00 PM, he came and knocked on my door, and he said to me, "I want to talk with you."

And so I said, "Yes, what is happening?"

And he said, "Earlier this evening, you were telling that story about Abraham to your children. Can you repeat that story to me?"

¹I define a story encounter as one person hearing one story. This total is conservative since a third of the participants said they told stories to more people than they had room to include on their FIELD REPORT forms (there was room to list only three tellings for each story on the report).

²See Appendix 1

And I told him, "Yes, surely. Shall I tell it to you only or to your family also?"

So he said, "No, No, No! I will go and call my wife, so she can also hear it."

So I said, "Good. Go and bring her immediately."

So he brought his wife and both of them were sitting in my drawing room. I started to tell the story. After finishing the story, I thought that they would just hear it and then go away.

But next Sunday, there was a miracle. Because, he brought three more of his relatives with him and now all of them have started to come regularly. So this is how I have started my ministry there. So this storytelling program is a big blessing to me.

BACKGROUND

For twelve years my wife and I have served with a large indigenous missionary agency in South Asia, spending up to six months each year helping train their workers and leaders. In 2001 we began developing an oral Bible pilot project, in the process training fifty-eight biblical storytellers in the northeast region of the country. Over four years, these men and women learned to tell as many as 125 biblical stories from Genesis to Acts. Our original purpose was to develop a training model that would provide effective communication to non-literate people. However, we soon discovered the tremendous power the Word of God has when it is told as a story, not only for people who are unable to read the Bible, but for everyone.

PITAMBAR: I am doing ministry in one Hindu village. When I am going for preaching, people were not listening. I had become very discouraged about that. But after Uncle and Auntie taught us to tell the stories, whether they are Christian or non-Christians, I realized it is better to share a story, which makes it easier to approach them. So I have started to tell the stories. And now these people are listening attentively. So now I know it is a helpful benefit for doing ministry in any language. That is why I am glad to learn the stories and tell the stories.

Q. Which stories did you tell them?

A. I told them two stories: The story of creation and the story about Adam and Eve. They liked this story very much. By hearing this story, now they could realize that yes, there is a real God, One who created and made all things. This story made them to know that there is a Real God.

A NEW ORAL BIBLE PROGRAM

Last fall the agency had asked us to begin a new biblical storytelling program in the central part of the country. They selected sixty-two leaders and workers from seven states to take part in the training which would consist of five 4-day workshops spaced over twelve months. The participants would learn to tell sixty Bible stories in chronological order. Because of the large number of participants we divided them into two batches with duplicate training events to be held back-to-back, requiring nine days each time. To assist us in the new program, we recruited three advanced storytellers from our pilot project to serve as storyteller trainers.

The training was held on the campus of the agency's central Bible school. At the same time that we were training biblical storytellers to perform the Bible orally, students enrolled in the Bible school were studying in traditional academic classes. To say the least, this made an interesting juxtaposition! Although the Bible school emphasizes quality theoretical learning, the teachers and students lack accompanying experiential knowledge. In contrast, the storytelling participants are in-service workers engaged in the intense challenges of ministry in pioneer areas, so most were receptive to practical methods that could help them in their ministries of Gospel proclamation.

PHELEMON: First I started to share these stories in my own house. Then after that, Uncle had given us a homework assignment to observe a storyteller in our village. I knew where there was a Hindu ashram. So I went there and heard this one man who is a storyteller and a teacher at this Hindu ashram. After listening to him, I told him the story of Adam and Eve including the Fall—all the way through the part where God drove them out of the garden. And this story really touched this man's life. So I gave him my address.

The next day, this Hindu teacher visited my house and he said, "Pastor, yesterday you told that story. How can I get that story book?"

I said, "No, we do not have a story book like that. But we do have the Bible. All the stories are in the Bible. So if you are willing to take a Bible, you can take it."

So he purchased one Bible and took it and went back to his house. And he started to read the Bible. And this Hindu storyteller had a daughter who was suffering from tongue cancer. So after reading the Bible, he realized that there is a God who can heal. So he started to pray to our God. And the other day, he invited me and asked me to pray for his daughter. Now she is improving and the entire family are believing in Jesus.

PARTICIPANTS

The trainees (sixty-one men and one woman) are all literate, having on average twelve years of secular education plus three years of Bible school. Despite their years of formal education, it was possible to glimpse an underlying orality shared by many. For example, 62% had mothers who could not read, and 38% had fathers who could not read. When asked how many books were in their childhood home, 11% had only their required school books. 33% had between one and five books, and 16% replied that they had no books at all. Only 13% had twenty or more books in their childhood home. This paucity of reading material indicates a strong oral context in their backgrounds.

A further indicator of orality is the fact that 94% had a significant person in their childhood who often told them stories. These were mostly their mothers or fathers, or grandmothers or grandfathers who recounted tales about the forest, or told them religious myths or family stories. To complicate this mix of literacy and orality, in their ministries they are targeting mostly non-literate people who are largely incapable of comprehending literate styles of communication.

The median age of the participants is twenty-eight. Half are from Christian homes or came to know the Lord in childhood. Another third came to the Lord as teenagers. Only 16% were converted as adults. Although most of them claim to have read the entire Bible, few knew more than a handful of verses by memory.

All are full time workers already active in evangelism and church-planting. Their agency motivates them through a leadership accountability structure. Monthly workers' meetings are held in each division where reports are compiled for every worker's activities and productivity. Before they entered the oral Bible program, they were primarily engaged in distributing literature and preaching. However over the last few years, resistance to traditional ways of evangelistic outreach has increased and violence against Christian workers has become more common.³

ISHWAR: After the February storytelling training, I went back home. And one day, when I was walking along the road, one family shouted, "Oh, one Christian is going there. One Christian is there."

Immediately I stopped, because I was so surprised to hear them shouting like that. So I went over to the family and asked, "What is the problem?"

A girl there was sick so I prayed for her. And not only that, I also started telling the Creation story. But the man of that house, the girl's father, was not at all interested to hear the Good News.

He shouted at his wife, "Why did you invite these kind of people into our house?"

So he was shouting about it. And he was totally against hearing the Gospel. He opposed us completely. But somehow, I was able to finish telling the creation story. I told it like this:

"God formed man out of the dust. And God took so much care when He did this. He came down and took some of the dust of the earth, some of the mud—in His holy hand. And out of that dirt, He formed man in His own image, with great love. So you and I, we are the creation of God."

I finished the story and went back to my home.

And after some days, the man who had opposed me, came to see me. He called me, saying, "Oh, Christian, come out."

I was afraid because I thought, "This is the man who opposed me. When I went to his house, he was very much against me. So now he is calling me again. So maybe he is going to beat me."

So I was very much afraid. But when that man came into my house, he said to me, "Christian, tell me this same story once again."

So I started to tell him the same story. It started to touch his heart. And slowly, slowly, his entire life has changed. So he began to tell that story to others. And the story started to spread among the people. Now he has committed his life to God. And not only that, some more of his family members have now started to come. So now they are also starting to hear the stories. So there are about 20 new people who have started to attend my church. That man's name was Jagid.

³See Appendix 4 for recent examples of persecution against Christian workers.

A CHURCH-COMPATIBLE TRAINING MODEL

In most theological training institutions, students learn in a system that is highly dissimilar to the one they will be using in their ministries. However, if the goal of a training program is to multiply new churches, it is better for the training model to correspond as closely as possible with the desired church model in the particular culture toward which the training is being projected.

The competitive, individualistic arena of Western education is alien or even offensive to many communal people groups. So in the oral Bible program, we use cooperative learning groups instead of classroom lectures, seek to promote *koinonia*, celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper during each training event, share testimonies, pray for one another and make the story learners full participants in the learning process, not simply passive recipients who sit and listen to an expert. Many leadership roles are contributed by the participants themselves. In short, the learners should feel they are members of a body not students in a class. Thus the oral Bible training program not only teaches; it also models ways of learning and relating that are appropriate to the new churches the participants will plant in the future.

PRASHANT: Before when I would share a message with my people, they would forget it after two or three days. But they liked the Bible stories. And they can remember these stories. I asked one of my believers about the Noah story. And he could remember all the exact measurements, how high, long and wide the ark was when Noah built it.

When I shared the Noah story with them I encouraged them to be righteous as Noah was righteous. Whether you are a follower of Jesus Christ or not, and whether you are obeying the word of God or not—I encouraged them to just be righteous. That is the reason why Noah and his family were saved from the flood.

TRAINING PROGRAM

The purpose of this oral Bible program is to equip bivocational and full time Christian workers to share the Gospel in ways that oral people can comprehend and reproduce. It is intended to facilitate the spread of the Gospel all the way out to the fringes of each people group irrespective of the level of literacy that may or may not exist. This should occur not only through the efforts of the storyteller, but also by his or her “down line,” that is other individuals who have also become tellers of God's stories.

Praxis is a crucial element in the program. Much of the training consists of the participants using what they learn by telling and teaching it to others. The process of repeatedly telling the stories moves them from short-term to long-term memory. It also enables the storyteller to internalize the story. When this happens the story becomes part of the storyteller, and his or her telling gains immense power. Even more importantly, through the practice of storytelling, the Bible knowledge will be passed along to others who can in turn reproduce it as a told story.

In this training model the ideal leader serves as a coach instead of a lecturer. In a ten hour training day, I lecture perhaps one hour. The rest of the time I observe the storytellers as they practice telling the stories individually and in groups and help them improve their skill level. This involves not only learning the stories, but also knowing how to perform them well.

No training model is universally applicable. Like all training programs, this one, too, must be adjusted to fit the context. What I describe here fits our own present context.

Each 4-day intensive consists of forty hours of training during which the participants typically learn to tell twelve Bible stories. In the February 2006 workshop, they learned stories from the lives of four different Bible characters:

Adam (3 stories)

Genesis 1:1 to 2:4
Genesis 2:5 to 3:24
Genesis 4:1-12,16-17, 25-26

Noah (2 stories)

Genesis 6:5 to 9:29
Genesis 11:1-9

Abraham (4 stories)

Genesis 12:1-8; Gen 13:2-18
Genesis 15:1-14,17-18; 16:1-16
Genesis 18:1 to 19:29
Genesis 21:1-7; 22:1-19

Jacob (3 stories)

Genesis 25:19-34
Genesis 27
Genesis 28:10-22

SANJEEB: After this training ended in February, I went back to my home village. And I started sharing these stories to different people. One day I went to a man named Govind. Even though I had spoken the gospel message to him again and again, he had never responded before.

So this time, I asked him, "Do you want to hear a story?"

And he responded, "Yes."

So I started to tell him several stories. And then I shared the story about how Sarah had been barren for so many years before God finally gave her a son.

Then he surprised me when he asked me, "Is it a real story?"

I said, "Yes, it is a real story. Why?"

He said, "Since ten years back, my wife has been unable to have any child."

So he asked me to pray for him and then I prayed for him. And then I came back to my station.

Another day, I shared the stories with my adult education people. And then I asked them, "Really, what did you get from these stories?"

And then they told me, "We used to hear your sermons and messages. But we are not getting them; we are not understanding most of those messages. But when we heard these stories, now we are getting something. We are understanding something from these stories."

A STANDARD DAY

Each training day follows the same general pattern. The table below shows the schedule for the February workshop:

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4
	6:30-7:00	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer
Eat	7:30-7:50			
	8:00-8:30	Worship - Tell a STORY	Worship (Group A) Tell a STORY	Worship (Group B) Tell a STORY
	8:30-10:30	Genesis 2:5 to 3:24 (Paul tell)	Genesis 1:1 to 2:4 (Teresa tell)	Gen 15:1-9,18; 16:1-16 (Teresa)
Brk	11:00-11:15			Genesis 25:19-34 (p/t team telling)
	11:15-1:00	Gn 4:1-12,16-17, 25-26 (Teresa tell)	Genesis 11:1-9 (Ismail tell)	Gen 18:16 to 19:29 (Ismail tell)
Eat	1:00-1:30			Genesis 27 (p/t team telling)
	2:00-3:00	Teaching (Paul)	Teaching (Paul)	Teaching (Paul)
	3:00-5:00	Genesis 6:5 to 9:29 (Laren tell)	Genesis 12 and 13 (Laren tell)	Gen 21:1-7; 22:1- 19 (Laren tell)
Brk	5:00-5:15			Genesis 28:10-22 (p/t team telling)
	5:15-7:15	STORY PERFORMANCE (telling, drama, song)	STORY PERFORMANCE (telling, drama, song)	STORY PERFORMANCE (telling, drama, song)
Eat	7:15-7:45			Process the stories COMMUNION (Group ___ to lead)

The amount of material that can be covered depends on the participants. In situations where everyone has at least rudimentary reading skills, it is possible to advance more rapidly than with purely oral communicators.⁴ We have found that on average two hours are sufficient for learning a story. The sequence of learning activities is as follows:

1. The participants listen to a storyteller who tells the story in a dramatic fashion using the national language. Listeners are seated in a semicircle.⁵
2. Next the thirty participants break into separate learning groups each based on a common-denominator language.⁶

⁴The participants themselves will teach the stories to oral people in their sphere of influence. Because they live among them, time constraints are not an issue. Since the stories are meant to be passed along, it is essential to avoid training methods that *depend* on literacy. For example, we represent each story by a mnemonic symbol that clearly identifies the story whether or not a person is able to read. (See Appendix 2).

⁵Try to avoid linear seating for storytelling if you can. Circular seating fosters the power of storytelling and amplifies the intimacy between the teller and the group.

⁶The 62 participants in this program each speak one of seven primary languages. The three learning groups are made up of those who plan to tell the stories in a) the national language; b) in a state language that a third of the participants speak; and c) another learning group for the other five languages.

3. They begin by looking over the story in their Bibles for ten minutes to familiarize themselves with it in their own language.
4. Then they practice telling the story in subgroups of no more than 3-4 people so there is time for everyone to tell.
5. After everyone tells the story at least once, one or two people tell the story to their entire learning group using the common denominator language of that group.
6. Then each group composes a story-song and practices singing it.
7. If there is time left over, they often begin working on dramatizing the story, which they delight in.

Evenings are given to performing the stories before the entire class of participants. This includes telling, dramatizing and singing the stories. Normally each of the three learning groups will perform one story that was learned during the day. Each group selects one of its members to tell the story and the rest prepare to present the story in drama and story-song. The stories are first told, then dramatized and sung.

Drama is a powerful tool for learning the stories. Overlooked details often show up in the dramatization of the story. Drama also lends itself to humor that was part of the original story but which is often lost in modern renderings. The best dramatizations include the dialog found in the Scriptural account. I like to refer to this use of drama as group interactive storytelling (GIS). It lets the participants get inside the skins of the Bible characters and walk with them through their stories.

At the end of the day, each of the participants has told the three stories at least once and has also participated in dramatizing and singing the stories. Moreover, they have listened half a dozen times to each story as it was told and performed by others. While this may not be adequate to equip them to go out and tell the story perfectly, it does give them sufficient familiarity with the story to begin telling it in the field and perfecting it during the next six weeks.

PRAKASH: I am working in a village where most of the people are rigid Hindu people. They are not at all believing in Jesus and they are not ready to take his name. And they oppose Christians. I started conducting a small tutoring class among the children. I shared with the children the story of Cain and Abel. And that story really touched the hearts of the young children.

So after that, the children went home and told that story in their own families. Now there was a man living there who had two wives. His grown children were always fighting and arguing over how his land was going to be distributed among them. So they were not having any peace and joy in that family.

The next day, those two women came to my home and asked me to tell them that story. So I shared that story of Cain and Abel in their home. And God did a work in their lives, because that story really touched their hearts. And they started to think and discuss among themselves, "Every day, we are quarreling and arguing over this land. And there is no peace and joy in our lives."

So the next day, they came to me and said, "We don't want this land; let them take it. But we want peace and joy in our family."

There are many brothers in that family. And one of those brothers, he and his family have now started attending my church. There are five people in his family. And now these five are ready to take baptism.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is important for learning. People tend to consider things unimportant if no one checks up on it. Hence there are accountability procedures built into the program which require the participants to master the stories instead of just sitting through a class. It is a well known fact that whatever does not cost is generally perceived to be without value. Accountability means that being in the program costs the participant something.

The primary accountability structure is the FIELD REPORT. (See Appendix 2). This one page form lists the stories learned with space for the participant to fill in three occasions where he or she told each story and the number of people who listened. This form must be completed and returned to the facilitator of the program at the beginning of the next workshop.

Second, the subsequent training event begins with a SNAP QUIZ on the stories from the previous workshop. This is oral, of course. In learning groups, each participant is called on to tell a particular story, or part of a story if it is a very long one. This makes it easy to see who has been telling the stories and who has not!

Finally, each storyteller is required to train at least one APPRENTICE who can tell all of the stories that the storyteller has learned in the program. At some point, we like to also test these apprentices to verify that the participants have completed the assignment.

VIJAYPAL: Most of the people where I minister are uneducated. Before I attended this storytelling program, whatever I preached, the believers would immediately forget everything. But after completing this first training event, I started telling the message through storytelling. After that, they easily remember the messages which I have taught in story form. Since I am now telling the stories, this is the first time they have been able to remember anything I have ever told them.

I go to one village where there is a man, a believer, who is named Mansingh. Before, Mansingh would always forget all my messages. But now that I have started telling the stories, he remembers everything. And now Mansingh is so totally blessed that he has given his whole life to God. He especially liked this one story, the story of when Noah built the Ark. So even now, Mansingh remembers the entire story of Noah. He will tell all the details, and give all the exact measurements, when he tells about how high, how wide and how long the ark was, when Noah built it. So we are very happy.

MORE STORIES ABOUT STORYTELLERS

Despite the hard work, we have found that this program is a lot of fun for the participants. In addition, they see the fruit that it bears for them in their own contexts. The many exciting testimonies they brought back from their first six weeks in the program bear witness to the effectiveness of biblical storytelling.

In each training event, time is given to the storytellers to recount their own personal faith stories about what transpired as they were telling the biblical stories. Listening to these accounts encourages everyone, including the trainers who need to hear this feedback from the field. The other storytellers are often able to glean ideas about how and where to use storytelling and are motivated to greater efforts.

Some of the testimonies were included earlier in this document. Following are twenty-seven more accounts that the storytellers brought back after the February 2006 training. *(See Appendix 3 for a list of the categories of places, people and occasions where the stories were told).*

1. **BIBHUTI:** I went to a village where no one knows Christ at all. There was no one there to listen to me, only a small girl from that village who came to me to listen. And I started to tell the stories which I learned here. And when I shared the story about Sarah, how she had been barren, but finally had a child called Isaac at the age of 90 years. This was amazing to the little girl who was listening to me, because at this age, no one can give birth to a son or daughter.

She asked, “This impossible thing—who did this thing?”

So I slowly shared with her that only Christ can do this; no other person can do these things. So she told me to tell something more about Christ. So I shared with her, and ultimately, she came to accept Jesus as her personal Savior. The girl’s name is Payanti.

2. **RAJAT:** One day after I attended the storytelling training, my wife and I were both in bed. The room was totally dark. Suddenly, my wife cried out very loudly. So I woke up and reached out and touched her. I spoke to her but she could not rise. I could not make her get up. In that moment, the Lord brought faith into my heart, and I remembered the story from the life of Elijah—the time that Elijah laid down on that boy and breathed into his mouth. So I did the same thing. And when I breathed into my wife’s mouth, then suddenly, she gasped very loudly. And then she began to breathe again.

These stories are such a blessing to me. I have been telling them to both the old and young in Sunday School. So now they have come to realize that God is the only God, the real God.

3. **HIRGURAM:** I give thanks to God for this storytelling training program. When I returned to my mission station, I started telling these stories to many people. They are not educated; most are laborers. They are Hindus and they believe people are made in image of monkey. But when I told the story about Creation and how God made Adam and Eve, the people listened very well. They were very interested and enjoyed hearing these stories. Then one Hindu man named Ram Lal, he asked me, “It is true? This really happened?”

So I shared the Gospel with them. Then, they believed. So, now many people are coming to the church. Through the storytelling I am able to reach the Hindu people too. And I’m also able to tell them how they can be set free from their bondages.

4. JAYESH: I am a pastor of three small congregations. When I was going to preach, I told them about the words God said to Abraham, how he promised to bless Abraham. Four ladies were there who were so discouraged because they were in a distressed condition. After telling the story I asked them, “What about you all, you seem to be very discouraged.”

They said, “We have not received our monthly payment. It is so late, we have nothing to eat in the house.”

So I shared with them about how God blessed Abraham. Then I prayed for them. After praying, the next day they got the blessings of God and their money came!

5. AJITH: I give God much thanks for this storytelling program. I told the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in a small village. After finishing the story, some people really realized that in the middle of these worldly pleasures and pressures, everything will pass away in one minute. When God comes, it will all change in one instant.

As a result, four people accepted Christ, and now they are attending regularly. The men are named Ashur and Suresh. And there were two women, one of whom is named Laxmi. But I forgot the name of the other woman.

6. AMRUTH: I went to a village where I told the creation story to some of the educated people including a chemist who works at a pharmacy/medical shop. When I started to tell this story, they asked me many questions. That man said, “No, no, that is not true that God created man and everything else.”

But then I said, “If it is not true, then why has evolution not happened again and again?”

So now at last this man has come to know Who made man, and which god is the Real God.

Q. Is he coming to the meetings?

A. No, he is not coming to the meetings. But he is coming to my home. He is very interested, but he is not saved yet.

7. KAKASAHEB: There was a man in my village who died from cancer because he had a habit of chewing tobacco. More than 150 people came to his burial ceremony. During the ceremony, people started crying. Then they asked me to come pray at the funeral service. So I thought, “Yes, it is good for me to go pray. But maybe I can also tell some Bible story that can bring some comfort to that family.”

So I told the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. I said, “At Sodom and Gomorrah the people were also burdened down with these bad habits and worldly pleasures. They were also drinking and smoking and chewing tobacco and ‘tumbuck’. So these people were also having these bad habits. So because of this, God destroyed the whole city.” (One of the main reasons why he had gotten cancer was because of chewing tobacco and this tumbuck. That is the main reason why he died from cancer).

Originally, there had been eight people in that man’s family. But then he died from cancer, and also another person in the family had died within a short time. Now there were only six left.

When I started sharing the word of God through this story, many people were crying, especially his family members. So I told them. “We cannot understand the language of your tears, but God can understand all those things. If you will submit your life to God, He will deliver you and really touch you and change your life.” After the prayer and the ceremony ended, I went back to my home.

The following day the family called me and said, “Yesterday you shared the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. That story really touched our hearts. So we decided to serve God only from today onwards.”

On that same day, four people from that dead man’s own family decided to follow Christ. So now they are ready to be baptized.

8. SIDHANT: Last month after I completed the training here I went back to my mission station. The next Sunday I shared the story of Sodom and Gomorrah with my church people. But because of some family problem, I had to return to my own village. So before I went, I appointed some good church people who can continue telling the stories.

At this same time, a girl in the village had died due to some problem. Our church people went there to comfort the family. They said, “Don’t worry. It will happen to all of us and we’ll pray for you.” Then after some time, another one also died in the same house. So the church members again comforted them, saying, “Don’t worry.”

Then some village people came to that house and said, “Some demon forces are working in your house and that is why the people are dying. So you have to do some animal sacrifice, like a goat or cow or something. You have to bring it and sacrifice it.”

Our church members said, “We will go and share a story so they can be comforted.” So they told them the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. The church people said, “If God is willing to save the righteous people in this story, then you can be saved. If you believe on God, then you can be saved.”

Those people were willing to believe in Christ. Because they came to understand that they had been honoring those demons, so now those demons were beginning to kill them. So they came to believe in Jesus Christ. And whatever demonic things and demon pictures—those that they had been worshipping before—they have taken all those demonic things out from their house. And due to our believers’ encouragement and counseling, now they are attending our churches, and are ready for baptism. On April 6 and 7, we are planning to have a convention. And during that event, we are going to conduct a water baptism service for them.

Q. How many people in that family are going to be baptized?

A. At first there were eight people in that family. But then two had died. And now there are six people left in that family. And all six are now ready to be baptized during the convention. *(Although this story seems similar to the previous one, it occurred in a different part of the country).*

9. RAMESH: I am working in a village where most of the people are uneducated tribal people. There are several different tribal languages which are spoken by the people living in this village. Before, whenever I would preach a message to them, they could not understand or remember much from my previous messages.

After I attended the first storytelling training event, I started to tell them the stories we had learned here last month. And then the people began to tell me, “Oh, pastor, previously when you used to tell us messages, we could not understand them very well and we could not remember anything from those messages. But now that you have started telling us the stories, we can keep those stories in our mind and we can remember them.” Every Sunday, I started asking the tribal people questions, and they could easily remember the answers from the stories I had told them.

There is a young man in that village who is an orphan. His name is Prakash. He failed 10th grade, so after that he went to a hotel and became trained as a waiter. After completing the training last month, I met this man. And after that whenever I was going someplace, I would often take him along with me. So automatically, Prakash began hearing all these stories and he was remembering them.

When I told the story about the tower of Babel, Prakash really liked that story. He believed that story was true because there are so many languages spoken in his village. So, he began to believe when I told that story. Because he has been listening to these stories now his life has changed. So this past month, he received Christ as his personal Savior and took water baptism.

One day, Prakash told me, “Pastor, you are doing this work and telling these Bible stories. I could also do this same ministry. I want to learn how to do these same things you are doing.” So now he is ready to go to Bible school.

10. DINAKARAN: For the past two years, I have been ministering in a small village. I had many people (mostly from Hindu background) who had attended church services. Though they would listen to my messages, they could not remember anything I had told them. So I was not seeing any result. I was wondering what to do. After discussing this with my family, we had decided to open our home to provide free tutoring classes for school children. So my wife and I began to teach fifteen children, tutoring them for free.

When I returned home after the February training, I began to tell the stories from the Bible to my own children, ages 3 and 5. Before, at family prayer time they did not want to sit and listen while I was delivering small messages. But since I have begun to tell the stories, now they are happy to sit and listen. Now they know all these stories, and they even know the names and everything.

Then I told the stories at cottage prayer meetings. These are all Hindu people, new people. I also told at Sunday worship. Each week, I would tell the next story.

I started telling these stories to the children we were tutoring. One time I asked them this question: “Children, do you know how everything was created?” The children answered that it all began with an amoebae, then gradually there was a monkey, and so forth. They were telling me this scientific evolution myth. So I told them, “No, it is not at all true. There is One God who is there. And this One God is the one who created human beings. Only because of Him, that is why we are all alive.”

So the children became so enthusiastic and started to listen to the true creation story. Not only that, but they went back and brought more children to the tutoring classes. Now we have about twenty-five students attending our tutoring center.

Then the children began to tell the stories to their parents. Now the parents are starting to become interested to listen to the stories. And all of this has happened only because the children started telling the stories to others. So now my ministry has begun to grow from this. My goal is to develop a close relationship with the childrens' families through the free tutoring classes we are providing.

We already have three families who have started attending to hear the stories. They are Uma and her family, Urmila and her family and Ekna and his family.

11. ASHER: *This pastor became very emotional even to the point of crying as he told about the deep changes the stories have brought about in the life of his own young son.*

In my station I always used to conduct Sunday services for the children. But I was doing it in a way that was different from how we learned to do it in the Bible story program. When I would tell the stories in my Sunday School, my voice and face were stern like I was commanding the children. I even distributed chocolate to make them listen to the message. But they still would not sit quietly and behave and listen properly. Some would get up and walk away. And my own son was one of those who was misbehaving. He would be walking out. Or he would be pinching or hitting the other children. He was the pastor's son, but he was misbehaving so much.

But when I attended this storytelling program, I learned from Uncle and Auntie that we should have a different attitude when telling the stories. We should be careful to use the right facial expressions, the proper voice, hand and body motions when we are telling the stories to the people. Our voice and face must show a loving attitude and we should also use action, so the people will be attracted to hear the message.

So when I went home, I started telling the stories in this way to my Sunday school. I began telling all the stories we learned here, starting with the story of creation. My voice and face and attitude were different, more loving. So I was telling in this new way and all the children liked it and were eager and ready to sit quietly and listen attentively to the stories. Now they are sitting properly when I am telling the stories. The entire situation and atmosphere has changed totally. One day, one of the children even reminded me, "O, you forgot to tell about how God made the stars."

Now as I said, I have a three year old son, whom I love very much. But even though he is my own son, he never used to sit and listen properly. He would be misbehaving, getting up, walking around, going here and there, pushing, hitting, pulling on the other children during children's Sunday school. I know that often the pastor's son is not well-disciplined, but in my heart I had a desire that my two children should be disciplined and should know God. I have been praying for my children, "Lord, give them good knowledge and discipline."

Before that, my son would always fight with a neighbor's son who is near to us. And I thought that was such a bad example, because he is a pastor's son. When I was telling the story of Cain and Abel, both of them were sitting there. And both of them began crying. The tears were running down from my son's eyes. This story really changed them.

So now that I have started telling these stories in this new way, my own son has become so proud of me. He will go and tell so many others, “Come, look. Come and see how my daddy is telling so many stories so nicely.” So he will tell them when is the next time they can hear me telling the stories and now he is bringing others to hear the stories. And he is helping me. He is ready to sit quietly and listen whenever I am telling the stories. For this change, I am very much thankful to Uncle and Auntie.

I am so grateful for this storytelling method, because it has brought such a big change and blessing to my own son, to my own family, to my church, my mission station and all my ministry.

12. ISHWAR: *The first part of Ishwar’s story was recounted earlier in this document.*

As I was going away from that house, the Holy Spirit inspired me to speak to another man. So I told him, “Brother, Jesus loves you.” And he said, “What is love? I don’t know what this is?” So I told him the story of Cain and Abel.

Now three brothers live in that man’s house, and two of them are always fighting with each other. So I started to tell him the story of Cain and Abel.

After hearing it, he did not want me to leave or even go home. So I gave him my phone number and address. The very next day he came to my home and asked me to tell the story to him again. So I told him that same story again. That story really touched his life. And now there is no quarrel or fighting in his house. And he is ready to come to the Lord.

13. PRABASH: After returning home last month, first I told the stories to my wife. Then I told them to the little children in Sunday School. But this time, I did not tell like I was angry; instead, I told with love, as we had learned from Uncle and Auntie a good model for how to tell stories in an attractive way.

In the field where I am working, there are many non-literate tribal people who speak many different tribal languages there in those villages. I also told the stories to some Hindu people. They liked the stories very much and they believed the stories. Many believed. They especially liked the story of Noah, where I told about how the sin had increased so much on the earth that God became angry and destroyed the people. I also sang a song. They wanted me to tell it to them again and again. Now there are five people coming and believing. One man is named Sukru. And one sister is named Jimtee.

14. SABAT: When I returned home from the February training, there was a ladies’ meeting where I told the story of Abraham, about his call, and I was telling it and preaching about faith. Eleven or twelve ladies were sitting there listening and afterward they went home.

There is another lady in the village named Somari who is a member of a Hindu family. Now it was almost time for Somari to deliver a child, but they were very afraid that she would have a difficult delivery, and this family could not go to get medical treatment. They were very afraid about this. Then one of the ladies who had heard me speaking at the ladies’ meeting told them, “You should call this pastor to come and pray for you. If you believe, if you have faith, then nothing bad will happen to you while you are delivering your child.”

So that family listened to this lady. See, what happened: when I told the story about the call of Abraham, those ladies who were listening in that ladies' meeting came to believe that, "Nothing is impossible for God." They remembered that story and their faith increased.

So some of the members of this Hindu family came along with this lady to my house, and called me to come and pray for Somari's delivery. She had already heard the stories about the call of Abraham. So I prayed for her and she got faith and did not have any problems at all; she did not have a difficult delivery as she had feared. Everything was normal.

Now three new people are coming to hear the stories: Somari and Ramu and Rathnama. When they come they bring this lady's new child whom they named Santosh.

15. THIRUPATHI: In one place I told some of the Bible stories before I showed the Jesus film. Some of the people were more interested to hear the stories than to watch the movie! I told them the stories of Creation, Adam and Eve, the Flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah. I told them how the people were sinning, and as their sin continued to rise on the earth, then God became angry at their sin. So then God destroyed those who were sinning. I encouraged them to have faith.

As a result, four people believed. They feared and then they trusted God. They are Kiramay, Sujata, Kumarsingh, and Goachagaon.

16. SATISH: In my village there are two Muslim ladies who were always fighting with one another. So I told them the story of Cain and Abel. Now, they are reconciled and are loving toward each other.

I also told the Creation and Fall stories to some in my own family who are not yet saved.

I told the story of Babel to some young men who are in Bible School. Though they are finishing their Bible school training, they had no desire to go out to serve among others. They wanted to stay and minister only in their own home villages. So I told them this story about how God made the different languages, and he purposely wanted to send people out all over the earth. Since God did this, then we should be willing to go out to share God's word with others in other places—even with those who speak different languages. When they heard this, then these three Bible school boys were really touched and their thinking was changed. So now they have become willing to go wherever God may send them. Their names are Pradeep, Deepak and Thomas.

I went and told the stories to one family who had been celebrating the Muslim holiday of Id. They were sacrificing a goat in the name of Isaac. So I told them that story from the Bible, how God provided a ram to take the place of Isaac. They liked that story very much. Now they are wanting to hear more of the stories.

17. JITENDRA: There are so many different languages being spoken in my field, I was wondering how to start with the story telling. So I called four men for training, so I could teach the stories to them. These four men speak three different tribal languages.

I started by telling the Creation story, how and why God made man. Now one of the four men that came for training is a Hindu. His name is Subhas Harijan. He is an outcaste. He began to listen to the stories as I was telling them. Somehow the stories were touching his heart—in his heart, he was feeling something through hearing the stories. And he was wanting to hear more and more of them.

Now Subhas Harijan is understanding the stories. And he is regularly walking the two kilometers from his village to my church. He is also reading his Bible, and he is telling these stories to others.

18. SHANKAR: After learning these stories, I went back to my field and started telling them in many places; in homes, villages, at cottage meetings, at church. I told the stories in many different villages.

The people like the stories very much. They are happy to hear the stories. I told all the stories, starting with the creation story. The people understand these stories. They came to see and accept that these stories are truth. I can see that these stories are helping my church to grow. The names of some of the new people who are now listening to the stories are Anil, Abiraj, and Amarsingh.

19. JONAH: My name is Jonah. Whichever stories I learned here, I shared with the people, and some have also accepted Christ by hearing these stories. Some Christians told me, “You should not tell stories.” I replied, “This story is a true instrument; it really happened.” Some English people were there. They came to listen so I shared the stories with them.

And I also shared with one man who is a Buddhist guru. His name is Rama Krishna. He wears the Buddhist garment. So I told him the stories. After hearing the stories, especially the Creation story about how everything was created, he said, “There is some difference between my book and your book.” And he accepted that my story—the story from the Bible—is the true story. Now he wants to hear more stories from me. But since I needed to leave so I could come here for this training session, after finishing this week of training I will go back there and will share more stories with this Buddhist guru, Rama Krishna.

20. SANGRAM: After leaving here last month, I went home and started telling the stories in many places. I went to one street where there are seven or eight people living. They are all Buddhists. But they were nominal, because they believe in evolution and do not even really believe in a God.

After distributing the tracts, I began to tell them the stories. When they heard the story of Creation and Adam and Eve, then they became very interested. Before, these people had been believing the evolution myth started by Darwin. So they believed that monkeys evolved from amoebas. And that is how man evolved. But then they came to realize that I was telling them the true Creation story. So they became very interested and took my phone number and contact information. And now they are coming to my home to listen to more stories.

21. BHIM SINGH: I began telling the stories, Creation, the languages at Babel, etc., to the children in my church. So afterward, I could quiz them a bit through doing skits and asking them questions. I have not seen very much difference in them yet. But I can tell that they are understanding the stories better than my prior teachings. And they are more interested in hearing the stories. And there seems to be a difference in their lives after hearing the stories.

There is one believer in my church whose name is Mala. Mala and his wife have been barren and unable to have any children for the past seven or eight years. So I told them the story of Abraham and how God gave them Isaac when Abraham was 100 years old. So somehow he believed. He said, “O.K., you please pray for us.” So, now I have prayed for them and they are believing for a child.

22. VINOD: I went to another state and was asked to share the Word of God with about 150 people in a church there. So I decided to tell a story. I began to share the Creation story. First, I asked them, “What did God create on the first day?” But they were all silent. So I told them, “As believers, we must know the word of God properly.”

So then I told them this story. Afterward many of them came up and said to me, “This kind of story program is a very good method to help us to know about the Bible.”

23. DULJI: I have been working with the tribal people. Before, whenever I would preach a sermon, they were not able to remember my messages. But then I began telling them the stories. After telling these stories, they are able to remember these things.

I feel they are able to remember and understand the messages which I am sharing with them by means of stories. And they are understanding these stories thoroughly and deeply.

24. PEDAPALLIWAR: After learning these stories, I went back to my field and began telling them in cottage meetings and at church. Before that, the people were not very interested in the Word of God. But after sharing these stories, I encouraged them to read the Bible and tell Bible stories to others. So they enjoyed these stories very much.

As I was visiting in their homes, now I have noticed that they are very interested to read the Bible and are wanting to discuss God’s word. These are some of the changes I have found in my churches after telling these stories. And for me myself, also, this has been a great blessing in my preaching style and in my personal life.

25. DASRATH: After learning these stories here last month, I went home and one day I was walking through a field when I saw a Hindu family of four people who are living there. They are very Hindu—fanatical Hindu. I asked them for a drink of water. And they gave me some good water to drink. Then I asked them, “Do you want me to tell you a story?” And they replied, “Yes, we are interested to hear that story.” So I told them the story about Creation.

They liked my Creation story very much. They said, “This creation story of yours—it is different from our own Hindu creation story. Why is it different from our story?” And so I told them, “My Creation story that I am telling—it is written in the Bible. It is a true story.” And they were very interested to hear it.

So that man (Sharmapak is his name) said, “When are you going to come back to our home again? Whenever you come by here again, we are ready to hear more such stories from you.” So they have invited me to please come and share more stories with them in the coming days.

I also told the stories in my own church. The children and old people are especially influenced by the stories.

26. SUNIL: In my church there is a man who is a fellow-worker in my church. This man's father has died. Only his mother and brother are left in his family, and they are Hindus. This man came to me and said, "My mother and brother are not respecting me. They are quarreling with me. They are not ready to listen to my messages about Christ even though I have tried to share this with them many times. But they are not able to hear and understand the message from me. So, can you please come and help me to tell them?"

So I went with him to their home. After I had asked how they were doing, I told them the story of Creation. About 4 or 5 days later, I went again to their home and told them the story of Noah. About two weeks later, I went there again. But this time they said, "We do not want to hear any more stories right now."

So I became frightened and wondered to myself, "What happened? Did I do something wrong?" They kept saying, "No, we do not want to listen to any stories. Do not tell us any more about Jesus. . . . Just tell us what we need to do!"

They kept repeating this. So I told them, "Believe in Jesus Christ." So they accepted Christ, they believed and became ready for baptism. The mother's name is Phulma and the brother's name is Madhav. Now both of them have been baptized. The first brother, the elder brother who is my fellow worker, has enrolled in Bible College.

27. BHASKAR: In my field there is a man named Champalal who has a wife named Ramanan. Though they got married about six or seven years ago they still have not been able to have any children. So they asked me, "What will we do about this?"

So I told them the story about Abraham and how God gave him a son Isaac when he was 100 years old. After hearing that story, then Champalal said to me, "Before, I have been thinking I will take a second wife, so I can get a child through her." So then I told him, "What if there were two men—two husbands—for only one wife? Then what would you do? How would you feel if that was the situation?" So then he became quiet as he was thinking about that. So now they have begun to believe. And I prayed for them to have a child. And I believe these people will leave their Hindu beliefs and come to Christ.

APPENDIX 1







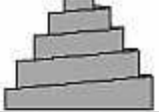




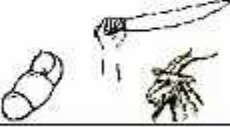
CATEGORIES OF RESULTS FROM HEARING A STORY TOLD (during 6 weeks)

(An “x” indicates that the question was not asked to Batch #1).

Category	Batch #1	Batch #2	Other Information
People who came to Jesus	46	41	
Number being prepared for baptism	20	20	
Already baptized	0	2	
Sick who received prayer for healing	7	5	
Number improved or complete healing	5	3	
Number who attended Christian worship service for first time	44	37	
Times people came to inquire after hearing a story (like Nicodemus)	X	28	
Barren women/couples who heard a story	X	12	Usually this was the story of Isaac's birth. Six women received prayer to conceive.
Number who asked to hear a second story	X	21	In 13 instances.
Family conflicts resolved through hearing a story (brothers fighting over inheritance; spouses)	1	8	This was most often the story of Cain and Abel.
New cells planted	3	2	

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE FIELD REPORT FORM

						
	Adam	Genesis 1:1 2:4	Genesis 2:5 3:24		4:1-12,16-17, 25-26	Noah
Where?						
How many people?						
Where?						
How many people?						
Where?						
How many people?						
						
	Abraham	Gen 12:1-8; Gen 13:2-18	Gen 15:1-9,18; Gen 16:1-16	Genesis 18:1 19:29	Genesis 21:1-7; Gen 22:1-19	
Where?						
How many people?						
Where?						
How many people?						
Where?						
How many people?						

APPENDIX 3

CATEGORIES OF PLACES, PEOPLE AND OCCASIONS WHERE STORIES WERE TOLD

All the participants told Bible stories at Christian meetings such as church, Sunday school, cottage meetings, ladies prayer, fasting prayer, youth meetings, and so forth. In addition, the table below illustrates some of the other places they told the biblical stories. The figures for Batch 1 and Batch 2 indicate the number of storytellers who told in a particular context. (An “x” indicates the question was not asked to Batch #1).

Place, Person, or Occasion where a story was told	Storytellers		Additional Information
	Batch #1	Batch #2	
To spouse & children at home	21	15	
To other relatives	X	13	
To non-family person at my home	19	6	Batch #2: two beggars (1 m, 1 f), a Hindu saddhu, a Hindu priest, a Buddhist guru, and another religious worker.
At a neighbor's home	16	15	Both Christian and non-Christian neighbors
At a school	4	3	Batch #2 told in primary schools; the Creation story twice, and Cain & Abel once.
At a shop (store)	10	0	
At a clinic/hospital	4	3	
Bus / bus stand	16	6	While on a bus (11); at bus stand (11).
RR / Train station	13	13	While on train (19); at RR station (7)
In share taxi	1	2	
Work place	2	8	Mostly agriculture and day laborers.
Tea stall	4	0	
At a telephone call shop	4	2	
At river while bathing	3	2	
Under a tree	X	7	
At market	4	0	
While cycling	8	1	
While walking	16	9	
At a special event	5	0	A funeral, a wedding, birthday, a retirement, and two Independence day programs.
Evangelistic mini-crusade	11	5	
Government adult ed centers	X	10	They are invited to tell at breaks.
Well-washing	X	1	While storyteller is waiting at the well to wash clothes (told to both men & women).
To Muslims	X	4	
To Buddhists	X	4	
To nominal Christians	X	14	
To animists or tribal people	X	9	

Some other places where the stories are being told are community sports fields, at a children’s club, at tutoring centers, to sick people, at a school for the blind, at a computer cafe, to fifteen leper families at a government leprosarium, at an office, on a ferry, to policemen, to Hindus who had gathered at a shrine for worship, and to shepherds watching their flocks.

APPENDIX 4

RESISTANCE to CHRISTIANITY

Two recent reports from the agency with which we partner illustrate the dangers that Christian workers face. These attacks focus particularly on traditional ways of evangelizing. This is a primary reason the agency asked us to begin a program of biblical storytelling training for its workers.

1. On 23rd January 2006 four indigenous workers had gone to a village for a special meeting. The anti-Christian activists came to know about this meeting and went to the village in search of the gathering place. They interrupted the meeting and forcibly entered into the audience and took out the workers. After pulling them out they beat them up inhumanly. Two of the brothers became unconscious. Then the activists turned to the believers who attended the meeting and brutally beat and harassed them. The workers who were severely beaten were taken to the District Hospital around 9 pm. It is more than 60 kms away. Three of the workers are under treatment but one is very serious and is still not recovered from the trauma.
2. Two workers were conducting discipleship training for new believers from 27th to 29th March 2006. On the third day one activist came into the meeting place, Christ Church that is a union meeting place. He started to ask questions and looked at every literature of the people. Sitting there he made a few telephone calls on his mobile telephone. Sensing trouble the leader, Bro. Daniel, closed the meeting but the fanatics arrived in front of the church. About 60 people went to the authorities and demanded that every one must be arrested.

They took some people to their office and questioned them. They were all fearful of physical attack – that did not happen. Thereafter the activist leaders came to the church and with the help of the police broke opened the church and took away whatever literature they could find. They took songbooks and notebooks of the 20 people who were doing the discipleship training and their new testaments. They got their names from the note books and immediately they went to their homes and took all of them into police custody. At 5.30 PM police arrested 15 of them. But after the questioning they were released at 12.30 am.

The police particularly wanted to get one man who is a high-caste convert to Christianity and is now a worker. We remember the trouble they gave him on his wedding day. They saw the marriage invitation and they chased his marriage party asking how come he is marrying a Christian girl. He was immediately counseled to leave the area and stay elsewhere with his wife. Their motorcycles are also kept elsewhere fearing attack on their vehicles.

The anti-Christian activist leader referred this matter to the state government home minister and there was heavy pressure form the minister's office on the police. Bro. Daniel was asked to report to the police every day. Later he was told to be available whenever they will call him. He is afraid to go out of his house as he could easily be attacked. Thank you for your prayers. Please continue to pray for the workers and for the twenty believers who went through the discipleship training and were ready to take baptism.