

STORYING GOING MAINSTREAM

Bible storying is booming as a powerful movement throughout the world and is on the rise in mainstream America. Storytelling has grown from Harvard's MBA program using case studies as the basic teaching methodology to being touted as the next breakthrough in organizational change.¹ In the secular world storytelling associations are gaining in popularity.

The post-modern culture drives much of the revival of storytelling in the United States.² We are seeing a groundswell of change. This wave began as a small swell in the United States a number of years ago. It began with the expansion of the visual media – cable news networks, MTV, video tape, and CDs. The Internet has accelerated this change. Cell phones, instant messaging and web blogs continue to increase the momentum. This is the result of a learning style preference. What's happening is this – most of today's younger generation and even many of the baby boomers of the 50's, 60's and 70's prefer to learn through spoken and visual means rather than written word. A 2004 study reported that "literary reading in America is not only declining rapidly among all groups, but the rate of decline has accelerated, especially among the young."³ This reflects a "massive shift toward electronic media for entertainment and information."

But this is much deeper than a learning style preference. It is more than just wanting to watch TV and listen to music. There is also a preference towards relational, non-linear learning. Many young adults are very comfortable engaging in multiple conversations at once – both on-line through instant messaging and even in open social gatherings. The problem before us is that most of our preaching, Bible studies, evangelism and discipleship is reader-oriented and very linear-sequential. So how do we change? That is the question of the hour. We must do something before this wave engulfs us and before we lose a whole generation for the cause of Christ

In this briefing we are limiting our application to Bible storying. Chronological Bible Storying (www.chronologicalbiblestorying.org) began its modern application thirty years ago in Papuan New Guinea and in the past ten years has spread to most of the countries of the world through missionaries using oral strategies to engage oral learners. Through mission agencies, returning short-term volunteers and several organizations listed below storying is making an impact in America. We are still in the early stages of storying becoming mainstream but the trend is on a decided upsurge.⁴

¹ See law school website with an impressive list of sites related to orality and literacy, university courses on orality and literacy, academic papers, etc.

(<http://www.law.pitt.edu/hibbitts/or-lit.htm>)

² Another organization working in corporate/community/organizational storytelling is focusing on digital storytelling in particular. (<http://www.storycenter.org/index1.html>)

³ Results of the first tests since 1992 are now available in the publication 'A First Look at the Literacy of America's Adults in the 21st Century.' To download the report as a PDF file, please visit: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006470> Grant Lovejoy will post a more complete discussion of these just released NAAL results on the www.chronologicalbiblestorying.com web site soon.

Bible Storying innovations in the United States have taken advantage of this trend in several arenas. Examples and contacts are listed under each for you to research what is happening in your attempt to predict the future of Bible storying in the United States. The extensive storying applications overseas are not detailed in this briefing except where they influence what is happening in the United States.

1. Family and Children

a. Family devotions/worship to shape children's worldview

Traditional family devotions have basically been lost in fast-paced American family life. Barna said in *Think Like Jesus* that only 6-9% of evangelicals have a biblical worldview. Biblical scholar N.T. Wright says to replace one's life stories at the core, you do it with better stories. The American movie industry and television has changed American culture through stories. Below are initiatives to address this arena.

- ❑ *The Turning Hearts Tour* www.turningheartstour.org is an endeavor to reestablish family devotions twice a week. They expect 20,000 people to attend these tours in 2006. Richard Ross, co-founder of *True Love Waits* is very interested in producing a storying component using the Kingdom Families Proposal below.
- ❑ *Kingdom Families: Come Home to the Heart of God* provides 52 chronological Bible stories for a year of family devotions to address the worldview problems highlighted by Barna. To see the scripts of first 13 stories see IMB's website at <http://family.imb.org/iframes/devotionals.asp>. A multi-year curriculum is possible using stories from *Following Jesus* www.fjseries.org. (This is not to be confused with IMB's *Kingdom Families: Discovering God's Mission For Your Family*. <http://family.imb.org/>)
- ❑ Storying in families is an age-old practice that has fallen into disuse and needs to be revived. The storying method including re-telling the story, re-enactment of the story, songs and memory verses related to it. It was used by my parents, and then I used it with our five children to shape their worldview.

b. Home Schooling

- ❑ John Walsh (JWalsh@Christianstorytelling.com) has created a CBS curriculum for Christian schools, Sunday Schools, and home schooling families. He calls this "Bible Telling" because he has taken pains to stay close to scripture as he tells the biblical stories. His beta testers have used it from third grade to high school with good success. He is a professional storyteller and storytelling coach, so Walsh has created CDs that contain his telling of the stories. He also sells teachers' guides that teach how to tell stories and give suggestions for additional learning activities. John's materials include memory techniques to help

participants recall the stories so that they can tell them. He says, “BibleTelling changes Bible class from the most boring class of the school to the most exciting. The students learn a new story each week and create an activity for it. Before the school week is over, each student tells the story to a younger class. The strength of BibleTelling is its method of helping people learn the stories without memorizing. Two other qualities are: the stories are crafted in a “telling” format instead of a simplified “written” format, and activities are provided for each story.” See <http://christianstorytelling.com/BibleTelling.html>

- Caesar Kalinowski has developed stories for ages 4-8 (adjusted to be age appropriate) with individual sections of a larger “story quilt” created by each child and assembled at the end of the stories into their personal quilt so that they can walk through each square as they retell The Story. His web site is www.echothestory.org

c. Christian Schools

- John Walsh is close to finishing the school curriculum for the first year (Old Testament Structure) with 36 stories for this first set that lay out the structure for the Old Testament. The web site is up but is in the process of being updated as this curriculum is published. www.BibleTelling.com (.org .net)
Each quarter has nine stories with the following:
 - Search the Scriptures – Students read the story in the Bible and fill out questions and crossword puzzle in preparation for learning the story.
 - Storyboard – These are mental pictures for learning the story without memorizing. These pictures become more detailed when the story involves a list or extended conversation.
 - CD of the nine stories –it is important for older students and adults to have a way to review the “told story” if they are to personally tell it.
 - Map study, tips for telling, and background information – These are provided in text boxes as needed.
 - Text of the “told story”
 - Activities - a variety of activities which fit the different learning styles of people. Students become even more creative once they get into the course.
 - Quizzes – These are easy (if you know the story) and is a fun activity even in a non-educational environment.
 - Tests – These are not in the book, but are provided for every three stories in a teacher’s guide.

2. Youth

- a. Caesar Kalinowski has developed a suite of Bible storying youth products that will be published by Youth Specialties (Zondervan). www.echothestory.org He has used them in the following settings:
 - Mega Church Youth Groups (Willow Creek, Christ Community Church etc. home groups and large group usage Large group 1000+ kids, home groups 25-50 kids)
 - Average Church Size Youth Groups both Urban and Suburban (group sizes 20-100)Testimonies are available on request.⁵
- b. LifeWay had a training web cast, "Better Bible Study Through Storytelling," Tuesday, December 13, 2005. <http://lifeway.breezecentral.com/studentministrybbsts/>
- c. LifeWay's *Fuel* series for students.
- d. Mark Snowden has developed a book on storying for high school students to use on overseas mission trips. It has been used in Senegal and other countries with success. Mark.Snowden@comcast.net
- e. The Global Short Film Network of the Jesus Film (CCC) strives to speak in the language of "media" to create an environment of discussion, interaction and community through the use of short films. This environment will give someone a chance to be heard and to be challenged to consider a spiritual relationship with Christ. The focus is to harness strategies and package short films with "behind the scenes" filmmaker modules, followed up by questions for small group interaction. These DVDs can be used to host a film café and other events where students gather to discuss spiritual themes brought up in the short films. The Global Short Film Network focuses on local experts and filmmakers, who will use storytelling, build community and give students a chance to be heard. For more information contact: Doug Weiss at doug.weiss@ccci.org

3. University and College

- a. Steve Douglass, President of Campus Crusade for Christ, is storying to college students in his home For more on his test group see <http://www.intre.org/event/info.php?site=3&a=msg&id=13>. For more information on secondary orality and follow up discipleship using oral strategies explore all aspects of <http://www.intre.org/event/info.php?site=3&a=doc> Be sure to scroll down to the bottom where it describes materials. Also see: <http://www.intre.org/event/info.php?site=9>.

⁵ Caesar Kalinowski [caesar@die2self.com]

- b. Douglass also leads the Secondary Orality Task Force for the International Orality Network. They plan a public consultation in 2006 focused on secondary orality in the United States. For developments contact Paul Konstanski paul.konstanski@ccci.org.
- c. Elizabeth Finch as the Director of Student Activities storied to athletes at Mobile College in 2003. The women's basketball coach shared that she overheard a basketball player sharing the Bible stories with her teammates in the locker room. Before long, other players stopped by her office to learn more about the stories they had heard. The Bible stories were reproducible for this student and she truly shared with those around her.
Currently, Elizabeth is serving at Oklahoma Baptist University as the Community Ministry Coordinator. She is using CBS with her Senior Women's Bible Study which focuses on preparing the ladies for life post-OBU—chronologically storying women of the Bible with a discipleship emphasis. They have testified that studying the women of the Bible helped them comprehend some of the deeper issues and made a difference in how they make decisions related to life after graduation.
- d. Caesar Kalinowski is using is using Bible storytelling both situational and chronologically to reach college students. He spent 21 weeks hosting a “Story Night” at a local café in Tacoma, WA where everyone was invited to tell their story or any story they wanted. Along the way, each week, he would also tell the next story from The Story of God and spend 20-50 minutes dialoguing around that week's story. He witnessed amazing responses and dialogue from this younger, urban, liberal crowd. All ages were represented and engaged. Lasting relationships were built and some have begun to follow Christ.
- e. Nicole Merrill using CBS in a women's discipleship group at California Baptist University and is planning to offer it as a missions course this spring.
- f. Iva May, wife of Stan May who is a professor at Mid America Seminary in Memphis, TN, is discipling seminary women with CBS and some are now leading their own groups. She says, “I have been active in women's ministry for the past fifteen years and frustrated at the same time. I have used many of the familiar discipleship programs, such as Masterlife, Navigators materials, Precept Inductive Bible studies, and various others, and I know how time consuming they can be if they are done well. Then I began to use CBS. Never has discipleship been more exciting, more challenging and yet so simple! A year has passed and I have started five groups. Several of the girls have begun their own groups. They have memorized hundreds of verses and can re-tell many stories, unpackage theology from them and link together the

judgment, beautiful women, submission, scheming and other character developing stories. The impact on my own life is incredible. Husbands stop me nearly every time I am on campus to tell me the impact CBS discipleship is having on their wives, raising their awareness and interest. It is contagious! ”
She is also working with her youth minister and children's director to develop a discipleship track for the kids and youth of her church and is beginning a ministry to the women's prison using CBS.
theshulamite@bellsouth.net

4. Adult Bible Study

- a. John Walsh developed his Bible Telling curriculum in part through using it with adult Bible study groups in several churches, including Grace Evangelical Church, Morton, Illinois. The teacher of the class, Mark A. Getz, MD, has embraced CBS as a teaching method and continued using it in his adult class. Getz has also used it with children and teens in his church with good results.
Mark.A.Getz@osfhealthcare.org. John says that “I can make what I have developed work in a church adult Bible study setting, but I have not found them incorporating the stories into their lives like I find with students. I am actively searching for a methodology that would work best in a church, adult/teen, non educational setting. I was with Tom Steffen this last week at Biola University, and we discussed this very issue. I believe I may have found the answer, but I don’t know yet how to implement it in the American church (the way it exists today). www.christianstorytelling.com
- b. Dale Smith, Campus Crusade, is using storying in his Sunday school class in Orlando and is developing his own curriculum.
fishville@aol.com
- c. Mission trips: Several storying strategies have been developed for adult mission trips

5. Small Groups, cells, and church planting

- a. Real Life Ministries, www.reallifeministries.com. a church that has grown from four members to 7,500 in six years with 5100 in small groups is using storying in some of their cells. Jim Putman, the pastor, has written a book about their growth that he is in the process of getting published. The website does not deal with their use of storying in some of the groups although testimonies are coming from it. For more information contact Marcus Vegh, president, Progressive Vision mvegh@globaldigitalsolutions.com who is using storying in his home group and in his family worship.
- b. Larry Johnson, director of missions in Ellis Baptist Association south of Dallas, Texas, has led his association to develop a Bible storying strategy to reach out to rural, blue-collar residents. They

have studied the worldview of that audience, chosen and crafted about 40 stories, and developed teaching plans. Their goal is to have multigenerational Bible storytelling groups meeting in homes. Contact: (larry@ellisbaptist.org)

- c. Caesar Kalinowski (Caesar@die2self.com) is using CBS at Soma Church in Tacoma, WA (www.somachurch.org). Soma is using CBS in home groups with the goal of planting 20-30 “missional communities” (house churches) among the postmodern young professionals in Tacoma. They are using an adapted form of the curriculum that Caesar and Michael Novelli developed for Willow Creek Church in South Barrington, IL. Caesar has reported that using Bible stories has created greater openness to God and to others than Caesar has seen in more than twenty years of small group ministry.

6. Training Materials and Seminars

- a. Oklahoma Baptist University is offering two courses this year on Chronological Bible Storying and is offering a minor in Orality. Contact Bob.Dawson@okbu.edu.
- b. Southwestern and Southern seminaries have offered classes for credit on Chronological Bible Storying for several years. Contact Grant Lovejoy glovejoy@imb.org or David Sills dsills@sbts.edu. David is the leader of the ION Theological Education Task Force.
- c. The International Centre for Excellence in Leadership www.imb.org has developed a course on Chronological Bible Storying, *Telling the Story*. www.icelonline.com
- d. Seminars are offered by many including John Walsh.
- e. Grant Lovejoy, leader of the ION Training Task force can give you information about training all over the world. glovejoy@imb.org

7. Missions Organizations

- a. OneStory, a partnership of International Mission Board, Campus Crusade, Wycliffe, YWAM and Trans World Radio, provides a two year mentoring program for two year missionaries to get 40-60 stories translated in unreached people groups. www.onestory.com
- b. The International Orality Network, a network of 18 missions organizations provides books, CDs, seminars, consultations, and seminars in the US and overseas. www.oralbible.com
- c. *Following Jesus: Making Disciples of Oral Learners* that includes 404 Bible stories with dialogue questions as well as training in orality is a standard resource for developing story sets in other languages. It has story sets in Mandarin, Waa, Persian and is being translated in 28 other languages. www.fj.org
- d. Progressive Vision, a digital solutions production company has many oral products available. www.progressivevision.org

- e. Saddleback Community Church is developing oral versions for hundreds of its training kits for its PEACE plan. www.peace.org (This website will become public in May but I do have access to it.)
- f. Finishing the Task, a movement to get churches to engage the 639 unengaged unreached people groups has a strong orality component and training for those who go to the unreached people group. www.finishingthetask.com

The Secondary Orality Task Force is working on another name for Secondary Orality that will describe the phenomena and popularize it.

So what is the future of Bible Storying in the United States and other post modern countries? There are moments when society changes in significant ways. Successful people capture the moment. They ride the jet stream of change. They anticipate rather than react. Having the foresight to see the coming wave allows people and organizations to ride it rather than be crushed by it.

None of us know the future results of this trend but the organizations and Christian communicators that ride it should have a great impact on this and succeeding generations.