

## **Living God's Story: Using Bible Storying to Evangelize and Disciple**

### **Carol Berry**

I'm Carol Berry. I work with Awana. I'm the director of International Program and Leadership Development. I first met Malcolm Webber in LeaderSource about 15 years ago; Malcolm is a big believer in children and families. I took all of his courses on how to develop healthy leaders, and I wanted to take his leadership development model and use it for a discipleship development model. I worked with Malcolm to come up with a revised, contextualized leader development program for children and families. I developed a program (with a team of people) called *Building Healthy Families*, and I have had the privilege of introducing that program in about four provinces in China.

We also developed a new curriculum for our international program based on "storying." Storying is a teaching methodology that's been used around the world for years. In biblical terms, we call it parables. Jesus Himself oftentimes used stories to teach. Now, we're using this method to teach Jesus' stories.

Storying is primarily developed to put the emphasis on oral cultures – speaking. There's a lot of people who prefer actually listening and hearing rather than reading a text. They say even people who read very well, don't read newspapers. They're reading on the internet with the videos and interactive features. They're getting their news through pictures while they're listening to the news on the radio as they go into work. Storying is really for everybody. Today, we're going to be practicing learning through listening rather than learning through reading.

The methodology we're using also goes in with Malcolm Webber's idea, transformational theology. He says that theology should never be boring, because God's Word is alive. We want to learn Bible stories – not just to learn them, but to be changed. Whenever we're learning a story we're going to be thinking about: *What impact does the story have on me? Because I learned the story, how will my life be different?* We have a whole day together, and my plan is that by the end of the day I will have presented to you three stories. Then each of you are also going to learn a story to present to two others. You'll learn your story and then you're going to hear two different stories from your colleagues. You will have been exposed to six stories today. This is like a two-day training squished into six hours.

While I'm doing the story, I can't take any questions, but if you have any questions make a note of it, and at the end we can discuss it. In general, when you have a question you should feel free to ask it. The other thing is that I may have a group leader for each story. I haven't decided yet. If we do have a group leader, that one group leader will get to look at the Bible. The others of you are not allowed to look at your Bible or your phone with the Bible. Alright? So, I think we're going to start with our first story. In your groups, I'd like you to discuss for two minutes the following question. The question is, *Who is someone important in your life and why is that person important?* Actually, I'd like you to discuss it in pairs; that way everybody gets to talk. Before we start can we pray, please?

*Father, we thank You so much for our time together today. Father, we thank You that Your Word is so powerful. Thank you that Your Word brings life and Your Word is true. Father, we just ask You to be with us today and help us to open up our minds to receive something special from You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

**Participants:**

Amen.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, first some rules for our stories today. We're going to talk about just this story; don't bring in any other stories. It's important that everybody participate, because each person has a unique perspective, and maybe something that you say will give an idea or spark an idea in somebody else. Then next thing is that if you can try to imagine that you're in the story. Imagine if you were there – *What do you see? What do you hear? How do you feel?*

Let me give you a little background of the story. Jesus traveled around with His disciples. Another word for disciples is followers. He was telling His disciples that He would be leaving them soon. In this story we have a word that, of course, you know but if you were teaching the story maybe other people wouldn't know. It's the word "millstone." These big stones were used in the time of Jesus for grinding wheat and grains; they were made of heavy stone. This story is from the Bible and we know that the Bible is God's Word.

*At that time, the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And He brought a child into their midst, and He said, "I tell you the truth, unless*

*you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself, like this child, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and whoever welcomes a child like this in My name welcomes Me. If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a huge millstone hung around his neck, and to be thrown into the depths of the sea."*

That's the end of our story. Our story today is from Matthew 18, verses 1-6.

Okay, let's remember the story. It starts off with a time marker. At that time, who came to Jesus?

**Participants:**

The disciples.

**Carol Berry:** Yes, the disciples came to Jesus, saying: *Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* Jesus answered them immediately. What did He do? He got a child and brought the child into their midst. Then He said, "Unless you become like little children, you'll never enter in the kingdom of heaven." Now, he mentions a character trait of children. What's the character trait?

Yes! Whoever humbles himself like this child, and whoever welcomes a child like this in My name welcomes who? Welcomes me. But, what? Right, if anybody causes one of these to stumble or to fall ... what would be a good thing to happen to that person? It would be better if he ...

**Participants:**

Hung a millstone around his neck and threw them to the sea.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, got it. Alright, let's have some questions here, and let's do this in your groups. Who are the characters – all the characters in the story? Okay, you can discuss (*in your small groups*). Okay, next question. What might Jesus have been showing or teaching the disciples?

Okay, next question. In this question I want you to work in pairs. The question is: *What were you imagining as you listened to the story and how did it make you feel?* Okay, now we're going to play a game. I'm going to demonstrate with this group here. Could you stand up? Could you get one of the balls from your bucket? Stand in a circle. That's good. What we're going to do is the first person is going to tell the beginning of the story, just one or two sentences, not the whole story. If he forgets something or if he puts it out of order the others can help. The person holding the ball is the one who has the word, so give him a chance to think about it and try to remember. When you're finished, pass the ball to the next person. Okay? He's going to say also one sentence. Okay, and then when you're finished pass the ball to the next person. You keep going around until you finish the story. Okay, the second time you tell the story you don't pass the ball, you throw it to somebody. You throw the ball back and forth remembering the story. If you finish and the time is not up, you can tell the story again. But make sure that you're helping each other to tell the story in the correct order, not leaving out any parts. Any questions about the instructions?

Okay, so everybody stand up and have a few minutes to play this game.

Okay, stop. You can sit down. I have some more questions. This question is also for groups of two. *What did you like about the story? Was there anything you didn't like about the story?* You can have one minute. Okay, stop. Later on you're going to receive a list of all these questions.

So now, I'd like you to discuss another question in pairs, but this time I want you to change pairs in your group. And the question is: *What surprised or amazed you about the story?*

Now discussing in your big group within your small group, I want you to answer this next question. *What do we learn about what Jesus is like?* What did we learn about Jesus in this particular story?

Okay, one last question. *What might you do a different way because of what you learned from the story today? How might you act differently or live differently because of the story?* Also discuss in your small group.

Okay, stop. Now we're coming to a portion that we call "action steps." The idea of this is for you to write down any action steps that you have from the story. It's optional. You don't

have to write anything down. If you write it down, you should consider it like a commitment. One action step that all of you could write down is to share this story with somebody else today. If God has shown you anything specific about your actions that you feel you would like to change, you can also write that down. We're going to pass this paper around in the group, and just put your name and what your commitment is and your action step. Any questions about this part? Okay. Everybody just write something down. When you're finished, put the paper back on the chair.

Stop for a moment because we finish the activity with a prayer. You should be doing it in small groups, but right now I'm going to do it for everybody.

*Father God, we thank You for this story about Jesus and how much He loves children. We thank You God that when we welcome a child, we welcome You. Father, in my own life I would ask You to help me to welcome children the way I would welcome You. If I were welcoming Jesus, I would put a lot of attention into it and I would like to give that same attention to the children in my life. We thank You that the Holy Spirit helps us to do those things.*

**Participant(s):**

Amen.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, you can continue writing. Now, I want to just talk about the activity a little bit. What did you think about this activity? Any observations?

**Female Translator:**

We shared with one another in the class more deeply than just learning the story. We also can learn from (the other group) members and then the insights come out.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay. Okay, great.

**Female Translator:**

In China, we have the same assignments before. They always want to listen. Take and take and take that the picture of the story. He said that this morning I really take again and again for four-five times of the story. This really helped me a lot.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, good. Any other comments?

**Female Translator:**

He said problem. I have many thoughts. Reading has two things, more than once ... again and again.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay.

**Female Translator:**

And it also brings the changes in life.

**Carol Berry:**

Great, create life changes. Okay, great! Any other comments?

**Female Translator:**

I learned to do this method, I have to get a new insight.

**Carol Berry:**

But sometimes we've heard some stories and we've heard the story many, many times, but when you actually have to learn the story, you may notice some things you didn't notice before.

**Female Translator:**

Very interesting method, and will draw the attention. She said that through this method the story of the Bible becomes alive.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, great. Yes, anybody else?

**Female Translator:**

Yes? This kind of start thinking to see the story from imagination ... so when we read the Bible it was limited to the literature of the word. I cannot see it, so out of that ... I have more attention to imagining this.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, so imagining how you can see, seeing something new.

**Female Translator:**

Because without reading, opening the Bible and reading, it's a different process ...

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, yes. We're going to stop with this now, but after each story we'll have a chance to reflect on it like this. Now I'm going to talk. I'm going to tell you about three good methods to learn a story. These are methods mostly to learn a story, not necessarily to present the story like I did. Presenting the story takes more effort. I'm teaching you these methods, because, later today, you're going to have to present the story to the other people. I hope that you'll like one of these three methods. I hope you'll say: "*Oh, that one works for me.*"

The first method is using the Bible story, reading the text. The way you do it is you read the portion of the Scripture out loud, not softly but using your voice, you read it out loud. Read it two or three times out loud. Now, close your Bible, and say out loud as much as you can remember. Maybe you can't remember how the story begins, so just start at the part where you remember.

Maybe there's this portion in the middle and it's like, uh I can't remember it. But force yourself to do as much of the story as you can. Then, when you're finished, open the Bible, and read the story again out loud one or two times, and then repeat. Close the Bible. What happens is that when you read the story again you immediately notice those parts that were difficult. So, you couldn't remember the beginning of the story ... when you open it up, you say, *oh the beginning of the story, what was it?* Yes, so you repeat this various times, and you say, *oh very, very close but I forgot a sentence in the middle.* Then you continue doing that, but now you're going to add some gestures. These gestures just help you to fix the story in your mind with actions. Even while you're sitting in a chair. You say: At the time the disciples came to Jesus, and they asked Him a question, *Who is the greatest in the kingdom*

*of heaven? (Carol demonstrates some gestures with the story.)* Practicing with these gestures it also helps you to reinforce, to remember it. Using this method you can learn 10 verses in 10 minutes.

Okay, but don't cheat.

*(She demonstrates saying one verse, then sneaking a peek from the Bible, then closing it and opening it for each line. At that time the disciples came to Jesus and ...* Okay, if you do it like that you're not following the method and you may have some problems. Also, we're not asking you to memorize the story. It's telling the story in your own words, but it must be biblically accurate. Don't add in any comments. Don't add any summary statement at the end saying, this is what the story means. Also, don't leave any part out either.

So the second method is called the "mind map." The story is *Jesus Welcomes and Values Children*. You can write it down here. It's Matthew 18:1-6. For example, the first part here is a question, so I just write here some questions. So what's the question? First of all the disciples come to Jesus. The next part is they ask Him a question. I'm going to put it down, and then Jesus calls a child. Jesus calls a child into the midst. The next part is an answer. This is the question, this is an answer.

Then we have some things to solve ... unless you change and then become a child. When put here, a positive example is whoever humbles himself. Then another positive example of whoever welcomes a child. And then at the end He gives the negative example. This method just calls you to organize your ideas. For some people this is a very, very, helpful way to see the story. We call this a "mind map." Alright, do you have any questions or comments about this method? If you've never used this before, I would suggest that you try it once or twice to see how it feels for you.

On the other side of your paper, we have a "story drawing." So for some of you this third method will also be a good way to help remember the story. (She shows them a story drawing already filled out with stick drawing.) These are the disciples, and they come to Jesus, and have a question. Jesus calls a little child in their midst. Here we have again the positive things *unless you change, and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this little child, this is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes a little child in My name welcomes Me.* Now, we

have a negative example. *Whoever causes one of these little ones to sin, it'd be better for him to have a huge millstone hung around his neck.*

Again, just drawing it, for some of you that's a good way to help you remember the story. Now, I'm not a creative type. I don't draw, but I can use this to remind me of the different parts of the story. Once again, if you've never used this method I would suggest you try it once or twice. It may work for you. So I've given you three different ways to learn stories.

Okay, listen to my instructions, please. Now, what we're going to do is we're going to arrange our groups of three. In your groups of six, you need to divide into groups of three. It doesn't necessarily have to be like down the middle; you can decide. Then in your groups of three, each of you needs to choose one story that is different from the others (*from a handout with a list of stories*). As soon as you have your group of three and you determine which one is doing which story, come and see us and we'll dismiss you for the break. We'll be starting again at exactly 10:30.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, I will begin the story. I want to remind of our **rules**. 1) We're only discussing the story, not any other stories, and 2) we want everybody to participate because when everybody participates you learn something from the other people, and maybe something you say will also be interesting to the other people. 3) While you listen, imagine that you're actually there in the story – imagine that you are one of the participants in the story, or maybe you're just an observer standing there and you're watching this happen. Imagine how it feels. Imagine what your response might be.

Okay, let me give you a little **background to the story**. This story is about Elisha, one of the prophets of God. Prophets were people who spoke for God. God spoke through them to the people, and they could also do miracles. The sons of the prophet were the followers of the prophet who are learning from the prophet, and our story comes from the Bible. The Bible is the true Word of God. This is where our story begins.

*A widow of one of the prophets, the sons of the prophets came to Elisha, and cried out to him, "My husband, your servant, is dead, and you know how he feared God. Now, the creditors have come and want to take my sons as his slaves."*

*Elisha said, "What do you want me to do? What have you got in your home?"*

*"I have nothing, except the jar of oil."*

*"Go out to your neighbors, and ask them for empty vessels; then you and your sons go into the house and shut the door behind you. As you pour into the vessels, set them aside."*

*The woman left, and she and her sons entered the house and closed the door behind them, and her sons brought her the vessels, and she filled up a vessel. She said to her son, "Bring me another."*

*He said, "There is no other," and the oil stopped.*

*She went and told the prophet and he said, "Go, sell the oil, and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live off of the rest."*

That's the end of our story. This story is from 2 Kings 4:1-7. And don't worry, later on I'm going to let you look at the story. Do I have a volunteer who would like to try to remember the story the best you can? So, let's remember the story. We're going to try to remember all of the facts and the order of the facts. It starts with a woman, and who is this woman?

**Participants answer the questions and the translator sometimes tells Carol what they are saying:**

A widow.

**Carol Berry:**

She's a widow. Okay. She's a widow from whom? Okay and who did she go to? She went to Elisha, and was she kind of happy and smiling? No. What was the emotion? She cried. She cried out to Elisha. She said, "My husband, my husband died, and my husband is ..." – What is the relationship of the husband to Elisha? He's a teacher and student. That's right. Yes, the text says my husband, your servant, has died. She says something else about his character. He's a godly man. He feared God. "You know how he feared God." Now, it's the creditor. What does he want to do?

**Participant:**

... the two sons.

**Carol Berry:**

He wants to take the two sons and ... they're going to sell them as slaves. The prophet says, "No problem I can take care of that." (No, he doesn't!) What does he say? "Okay, but

what do you want me to do? What do you have in your house?" She says? He gives her some advice. What is the advice? (Get some vessels.) Okay. Who is she borrowing them from? (All their neighbors. All their neighbors.) Borrowing full jars of oil? (No, empty.) Okay and how many should she get? He says, "Not too few." Then what should she do?

**Participant:**

To go and close the door.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay. She and her sons go home and close the door behind them? As you fill up the jars you should set them ...? Okay, so here the story kind of skips over some stuff because I just said, "So, she left and went home and closed the door behind her." The story skips the part about going to the neighbors. But first let's talk about that. Her sons are bringing her the jars and she's filling them. She asks her son a question, and he says what? (There aren't any more vessels.) Okay and so then what happens with the oil? Now, she goes to talk to the prophet, and so he gives her some more advice. He says, "Go," and then what? (Sell the oil), and then ... the rest? (Keep it and pay off the debts.)

Okay, alright. In your groups, all together just quickly go through all the characters in the story. Okay, stop.

In groups of three, I'd like you to talk about choices. First of all, think about the choices that Elisha made. What else might he have done? Then refer back to what he actually did, and then what were the consequences of that choice? Then do the same thing with the widow. What choices did the widow have? What else might she have done? But then what were the consequences of what she chose to do? Any questions? Do you understand the question?

Okay, stop. Let me remind you that it's very important that everybody participate. If there's somebody who's not, please invite them into the conversation. Yes, we do this also with children. We have to watch out for the dynamics with the children, right? We want to teach them to be inclusive, to have everybody be a part of the conversation.

Okay, the next question is: What did you learn about the relationship between God and Elisha? You can also discuss in groups of three. Okay, stop.

Okay, we're going to play another game to practice the story. In your little bucket you have one of the pair of dice – a die.

Now I'm going to let you open your Bibles to II Kings 4:1-7. If you don't have a Bible with you then share with another person, please. Second Kings, write it on the board. You get to read through the story once and then either share your Bible or close your Bible. Just once and then close the Bible. Okay, Bibles closed. So once again in your circles, go over practicing the story and remembering the story; you can help each other. But first, you give the person whose turn it is again a chance to think and remember. Okay, so the way this works is that the first person rolls the dice. Alright, if the number is one or six, one or six, then you get to pass. You don't have to do anything. But if you get two, three, four, or five, then you're going to tell a part of the story – one or two sentences and then stop. Then the next person takes a turn. *(They play the game in their small groups.)*

Now, I have another question for you, too: How are we like the widow, and how are we different? Please discuss this in groups of two or three, please.

I'd like to discuss this question: How did Elisha remove shame and his honor? Groups of three.

Okay, one last question and this one is in pairs: What do you learn from the story about what it means to follow Jesus?

Okay, I'm going to have you do actions steps, but later on when we're debriefing. What I want you to do now is just pray in your group, just one or two minutes, thanking God for this story and what we've learned from it. In your group, you can decide how you want to pray.

All right. Now, get out your actions steps paper again. One paper for each group. Now, I'm looking at action steps for story number two. Remember it's optional for you to make a commitment to an action step. We would like you to do an action step. We are not going to force you. If you write down an action step; you should feel committed to do it. A good action step is that you share the story with somebody today at lunch or in the evening. Or

perhaps the Holy Spirit has shown you something from the story that you need to make a change in your life. Okay?

While you do that, we're going to talk about learning the story again, a little **debrief**. Once again, do you have any comments or observations about learning the story that we've just done?

Okay, yes, the importance of the questions is key for this method. Is this the normal way you learn in school or in Sunday school? How is it similar? How is it different?

**Female Translator:**

Even the small group, you can share with the members of the group, and they also participate.

**Carol Berry:**

Participate? Okay.

**Female Translator:**

... continue to ask the question. The questions are connected with one another.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay. Right. Often when we teach Sunday school lessons, we give the story, and then we tell the interpretation of it. In this method, we're allowing the participants to explore the story. There's no right or wrong answer. Every perspective can be correct. **We still stick to the story.** If somebody says something that doesn't go with the story, then you just refer back to the story. Does it say that in the story? Let's go back to the Bible and check it.

Sometimes in China you get very large classes of children or youth, or adults. In this methodology we hope that **everybody** has a chance to speak. More importantly that everyone has a chance to be heard. The small group leader is the one in charge of asking the questions, but also listening to the answers. It really honors the child when you listen to their answers. Any other last observation or comments?

Okay, we're going to talk now about **retell activities**. At the beginning, I present the story to you; I tell the story to you. Then we have many, many different ways to retell the story

several times. We're going to make a list of them. Okay, the first one is: when I go to the story again and 1) I ask questions or ask you to fill in the blank. That retell is very important and it's not optional. Yes, you have to follow the order of the events in the story. Yes, so the first one is to retell the story with **fill in the blank**, or **I will ask you questions**. Now, a second way is to 2) **ask for a volunteer** to come and say the story. This time we didn't get a volunteer, but maybe for our story after lunch we'll get a volunteer. After we get a volunteer, I'll explain why this is a good retell method. After that we have two basic classifications of retell. One is some kind of 3) **game**, and the fourth would be a 4) **creative activity**. What are some examples of games that you've seen this morning? I'm just going to tell you some others, because we don't have time to demonstrate them.

One is to have a 3a) **rope** (*with the ends tied together*). You have the children move the rope around, and then you say *stop*. Then, whoever has the knot, that person tells the next part of the story. It's a very nice method. The one where 3b) we **pass the ball** or **throw the ball**, you can also do 3c) **kicking a ball**. Sometimes you could have the small group leaders kick to the students, and then they kick it back to the leader. It always comes back to the leader, or you can have them kick it to each other.

Another way is to have a 3d) **timer**, and then ask them to tell the story, very, very quickly, in a certain amount of time. Maybe the first time, you give them two minutes to tell the story. Then the next time a minute and a half, so the task gets more difficult. You need to practice in advance to figure out how long it takes to tell the story at a normal pace and in the fast pace. The first time, give them enough time, so that they can help each other remember the parts that they forget. Now, when we're doing this here, we don't have a small group leader in each group. Normally, we have a small group leader who has learned the story in advance. That **small group leader helps to correct** to make sure that the story is being told in a correct order.

Remember, the children get to say the story in their own words. For example, I was practicing a story with my husband. He knew that he could take the role of being a child. I was telling the story about the transfiguration. After I told the story, I asked him if he could remember the story. He says, "Jesus went up the mountain with his best buds." I'm thinking, "It's not exactly the text," but in truth that group of three was his small group of favorite people. [Although the text doesn't actually say that – he knew it from other

portions of the Bible.] Then after that my husband said, "And so then Jesus lit up like a light bulb." I'm thinking, "Hmm, the text didn't exactly say that." But I went back to the text, and I looked at it again. The text said, "His face shone like the sun and his clothes were white as light" and it happened fast, so really, he lit up like a light bulb. The point is that, **the kids get to use their own words**. We're not here as the grammar police, trying to get every single word right. The important thing is that they learn and understand the story, that they learn the story well enough to share with their family or friends. The goal is that they like the story well enough that they want to tell their friends and families. That's the goal.

So these are some of the games; you can now do other things. You can have the 3e) **children line up by height**, or they **line up by the day of their birthday**, or they **line up by their grade in school**, or their **age**. Then the first one tells the first part of the story.

Let's think about some ways to practice the story that use creative methods. (Let's make a list on the white paper), by thinking about 4a) **drawing**, by thinking about 4b) **drama**, by thinking about 4c) **music**. What kind of methods do you think you could use to tell the story?

**Participants reply:**

4d) **Role play**.

**Carol Berry:**

Role play, okay. So, that's great. You put the group together, and they role play the story. Yes, that's great. Yes, let's put that under the creative ... and put numbers here, yes, role play. What are you doing now? These are ...

**Female Translator:**

Music.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, good. Yes. Go to the basic category. You need some more ideas.

**Female Translator:**

Imagination.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay. How imagination?

**Female Translator:**

Could be PowerPoint, like PowerPoint.

**Carol Berry:**

Make a PowerPoint. I'm not sure if that works. One way to use imagination with drawing is to give a portion of the story to each child to 4a) **draw just one part of story**. You have six kids in your group; you divide the story into parts and say, "You draw the part where the widow goes to the prophet. You draw the part where the prophet gives a solution, and you draw the part where they close the door behind them," or something like that.

It depends on the story. Some stories work better for that; and others not so much. Each child gets up and explains their picture, and gives their part of the story, and then the next person explains their picture, and you go around and tell the story. Now, you change the picture; you pass your picture on to the next person. A different person uses your picture to look at the picture and remember the story. That allows children to use their imagination through drawing, to draw to imagine how it looks, or you can have each person draw the picture. Then, the teacher, or the small group leader, takes all the pictures together, **mixes up the pictures**, and tells the children to put them in the correct order. As they put them in order to then tell the story, or after they put them in order, however you like it.

You can also 4c) **make up a song** that tells the story. You can make up a new melody or you can use a familiar song, and then just put the words to the song. When you put words to music, it also helps you remember the story very well.

You can also do a 4b) pantomime. **Pantomime** is when you do a drama with no words. I just had a training in Egypt. We had our Awana representatives there being trained. When we're practicing, we assigned a different way to each group, and they had to come up with something. The story was Jesus walked on the water. A group of six of them told the whole story with no words. You could see all the parts of the story in their actions. Later on we had a practice where we brought children in. The ones who did the pantomime were the

English-speaking group. All the other missionaries there spoke Arabic. The children also just understand Arabic. The English language group was able to participate with their pantomime, because they didn't need any language.

We have reports around the world that this method can even reach kids with handicaps or with special needs. Okay, you can also tell the story but using some 4e) **clapping by the rhythm**, you can make a rhythm and then tell the story. Another really fun way is to play 4c) **musical chairs**, so you put the chairs, and the kids go around on the outside, and if you have a group of eight, there's only seven chairs, so you put some music on, and then when you stop the music everybody goes for a chair. The person who's left standing has to tell the next part of the story. But we don't take a chair out each time, (as you usually do in "musical chairs"), we just leave it and keep practicing with the same number of chairs (one less than the number of people in the group). People really enjoy that method also.

Another way is using 4f) **hand motions** so you can make gestures that you use for each part of it.

**Participant:**

How about 4g) **puppets**?

**Carol Berry:**

Puppets, you can use puppets as well, yes. You can also 4h) **make a construction out of blocks** or something like that that tells the story. For example, if you have little kids' blocks, they also can be used to tell the story. For example, if Jesus is going in a boat, you can make a boat. If we had more time, we would practice all these methods.

Okay, to connect with the children ... children or adults because maybe you've seen that this works very, very well with adults as well – we have **three kinds of questions**. We call them Head Questions, Heart Questions, and Hand Questions. We're trying to teach children to know, love, and serve Jesus. To know is to understand His Word. Love is to have that personal connection with God. Serve is to put into action your love for God. When we have **Head Questions**, we're basically concentrating on facts. We will read these three points here. My goal is to understand the content of the story. What does the story say? What happened in the story? I want to know God through His Word.

From **Heart Questions**, my goal is to connect emotionally and spiritually with the story – allowing the story to penetrate my heart. How does the story relate to my life? The next question is: Why is the story important? Why is it important to me? I want to love God through His words.

The last page has **Hand Questions**. Here, we say my goal is to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit through His plan, through what I have learned from the story. How should I apply the story to my life? What does God want me, specifically, to do with what I've learned from the story? I want to serve God by obeying what I've learned from His words.

Okay after lunch, we're going to read through all of these questions and we will work on them more. Do you have any questions about this morning and about what we're doing? Wait a second, we need to pray. Could I ask for a volunteer to pray, thanking God for our session this morning? Okay, I've got an idea. Do I have a volunteer to remember the story from this morning, the first one about Jesus values and welcomes children? Okay. (A volunteer tells the story, remembering what he can.)

Thank you very much. Okay. Now, did he get the story exactly right? Did he miss anything? Being humble. This is the way when you ask somebody to retell the story it's a very good way for you because you are listening. You are wondering, is it in the correct order? Did he leave something out? It is also a practice for you. Likewise, if he goes back and he reads the text. He'll say, "Oh, I forgot that part." It is a very, very good way to retell the story. He'd also show you how much you could remember just from doing it before. Okay, do I have a volunteer to tell the story about Elisha and the Widow? (Another volunteer tells the story, remembering what she can.)

Great! How did she do? Did she miss anything? Did she add anything in?

**Participant:**

A little bit, she said, to borrow the empty vessels from the neighbors.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, she repeated that. Yes. It is not a problem. You can see that the major point, the goal that we have, is to learn the story. It doesn't even have to be perfect. If you remember this morning, when I told the story, I also forgot the line about being humbled. I realized

that in the moment, so I was able to go back and add it in. Sometimes you don't remember until you are going through the first retell of the story. You just explain to them, "Oh, in this place I forgot this line." You put it in, in the correct place. Then you might need to review just that place again, so that everybody's clear that it goes right there. We are not looking for perfection. There's nothing to be embarrassed about. We are learning God's Word. That pleases the Lord, so nothing else matters.

That's why everybody can tell stories. Children can tell stories, youth can tell stories, and adults can tell stories. This is a great kind of thing also for families. It's a great intergenerational activity. You can have the grandparents also with the children and the grandchildren. Everybody participates.

All right. I have a question for you to discuss in pairs, or if necessary, groups of threes. The question is: What makes you feel special? I will give you an example from my own life. Sometimes if I fly a lot I have a frequent flier status. I get to get on the plane first. Well, not exactly first. There are other people more special than me. The families with children get on before me. The military people wearing their uniforms and who can show their identity card – in the United States – they also get on before me. Elderly people who need more time to get on the airplane – they get in before me. Then, the first class and business class – they also get on before me. But after that, if I have status, I'm next. It makes you happy. Okay, so discuss in your group: What makes you feel special? That was just a particular example, but any example will do.

Okay. I want to go over to the rules of our story. I'm asking you to 1) just stick to today's story – don't bring in any other stories you know, with the exception of the two stories that we learned this morning. If you want to bring in some point about that, that's okay. 2) It's very important that everybody participates. 3) I would like you to use your imagination as much as possible. I'm now going to give you some background of the story.

Jesus has been traveling around with His disciples. Then, He often tells parables to illustrate some point that He would like to make. Sometimes these stories are like mirrors so that the people who listen to them can actually see themselves in the story.

This is where our story begins. The story comes from the Bible. The Bible is God's Word, and God's Word is true.

*Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in their own righteousness of themselves and who had contempt for others. There were two people who went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed like this, "God, I thank You that I'm not like the others, arrogant, unrighteous, adulterers, or like this tax collector. But I fast twice a week, and I always give a tithe of everything that I have." The tax collector stood over at the side, and he couldn't even lift his eyes to heaven. But instead he beat his chest, and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus said, "This man went down to his house justified, because the one who exalts himself will be humbled. But the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

This is the end of our story. Our story comes from Luke 18:9-14. Maybe you could write it down for later on; just write it here. Don't open your Bibles. Do I have a volunteer to retell the story? The best you can.

Okay, you see how when she is telling it, you're thinking about the story again. Thank you. You're great! Okay, let's remember the story. It starts with the explanation of who Jesus was telling the story to. Jesus told a parable to what kind of person? Righteous. People who trusted in their own righteousness. They had contempt for other people. Okay, so now He begins the parable. How many people? Where? They actually say up into the temple, so the "up" in the temple is above. Pharisees prayed like this. What did he do? *God, I thank you.* Why? *I'm not like the others.* Okay, and now we have some adjectives. One of them I couldn't remember, and I put in some other adjectives. The first one is extortioners. Extortionist – when you get money out of somebody to like keep a secret or something like that. Can you remember the second term, the second adjective?

**Female Translator:**

Arrogant.

**Carol Berry:**

And unjust. *Unjust or unrighteous.* Right, and then what was the third one? *Adulterers.* And his last example was ...? *This tax collector.* Let's review those again. I'm not like those other people. Extortioners. Unjust or unrighteous. The third one is ...? *Adulterer.* And the fourth one is ...? Like this tax collector. What other examples did he give to justify himself? Yes, *he fasts twice a week and gives a tithe.* Okay, good. Now, we have the tax collector,

who wouldn't even lift his eyes to heaven. What did he do? *He said*, "Have mercy on me a sinner." Then Jesus says, "This man went down to his house justified." And why? "The one who exalts himself, will be humbled and the one who is humble will be exalted."

In your groups – I'd like you to do groups of three – I want you to talk about the similarities and the differences between the Pharisee and the tax collector.

Okay, stop. Now in pairs, I'd like you to talk about this question. I asked you to begin to imagine that you are there. The first part is: How did you feel listening to Jesus tell this parable? And the second part of the question is: How do you think the people He was talking to felt when they heard this teaching? The beginning of the story says, not that He was talking to the disciples, but, He was talking to some people who felt self-righteous and had contempt for others.

Here's another question for pairs: What stood out to you in the story? What caught your attention?

Okay, stop. We're going to play a game. Once again, I want you to stand up in a circle and take a ball. What we are going to do is we are going to pass the ball around in the circle, somewhat fast, because I'm going to say "start" and then "stop." When I say "stop," whoever has the ball in their hands, that's the person who's going to tell the part of the story. Okay, and I might say "reverse." Okay, so "start." "Stop." "Start." "Reverse." "Reverse." "Stop." "Start." *(They pass the ball around in small groups according to the commands and taking turns telling the next sentence of the story.)*

I want you to do a little bit more, but I want you to continue telling the story a second time. And don't forget the first sentence of the story. It's the sentence where it tells who the story is for. You can continue where you are, but when you finish the story you can start again.

Also, if a person has received the ball twice they have the opportunity to give it to somebody who has not had a chance to speak. Okay, "start." Sorry, keep passing the ball. Okay, "stop." "Start." "Reverse." "Reverse." "Reverse." "Stop." "Reverse." "Stop" ...

Okay, take your seats. This is the question for the total small group: "What do you learn about Jesus in this Bible portion?" "Because of what you have learned in the story, how might it change how you love and serve Jesus?" Discuss in pairs, please.

Okay, stop. Who would like to volunteer to give thanks to God for the story from Jesus? We'll pray.

Normally we will do the action steps before the prayer. In order to save some time, I'd like to now get the paper out and write down your action steps. Remember, you don't have to sign anything up, but if you do write it down, we want you to be committed to it. It can be to tell and share the story with somebody today, or next week, or when you get home, or maybe the Holy Spirit has shown you, taught you something special today that you would like to put into action.

And while you're doing that, I want to open it up for observations again. Do you have any observations or comments about what we've done with the story? In the story background, I didn't explain about who a Pharisee is, and I didn't explain about the reputation of the tax collector, because most of you already know that. Remember, if you're working with the people who are new believers, it's important to give some background on those words (*and cultural insights*) that might not be familiar to them. Okay, any comments or observations?

**Female Translator:**

Now, it is time for us to open the Bible and understand here what the Bible said and what the story is about.

**Carol Berry:**

Yes, it's good to go back to the story, and that's why we gave you the Bible reference, so you can compare and see what it looks like. We're not against in any way of having the Bible opened. Well, I should have said that. We're not against at all, reading the story in the Bible. We ask people to keep their Bibles closed because if they have it opened, they're going to be learning, trying to learn, from the text (*the printed word*). Now, we're trying to force you to learn by listening and talking. It's a different way of learning, and our hope would be that everybody would go back to the story again and again. Like next week, if you go and you look up these verses, this portion, you should be able to find it in your Bible. Then you should be able to close your Bible and tell the story because you've learned the

story now. Once you've learned the story, it's different than just reading the story. It's kind of like you take ownership of the story by learning it.

Usually, if we are dealing with a group situation like this, we usually have a small group leader. That small group leader would learn the story in advance, using one of the three methods I told you about: 1) Read the Bible, close the Bible, open the Bible, hold the Bible. 2) Mind maps is the second one, and then 3) the story board. Let me come here and we do these activities of asking questions and playing games and doing the retell activities, the idea is to learn the story by listening to the spoken words.

Now, we're going to move on to start preparing our stories. I am going to give you some instructions. Once I give you the instructions you can start working on your own. Okay, I will give you the instructions ...

This is your paper to help you prepare your presentation for the next session. The first part is to write down the Bible story that you chose. Then, the second part is to come up with the story opening. The **story opening** is the question that I asked you before I present the story. The idea of the story opening is to give the participants **a chance to talk about something in their own lives**. It is like my story. In the first story, my question was: "Who is somebody who is important to you and why?" I asked you in pairs so that you have a chance, everybody has a chance, to talk and engage.

Then, the second story I asked you a question: "What if God did a miracle in your family, what would it be?" The question is related to the story, but it doesn't tell what the story is. This last story I asked you was: "What makes you feel special or important?" Do you understand the purpose of the story opening by these three examples? Now, on your papers there are some parts that are written in italics. The parts in italics just explain how to handle the Bible. Like pick up your Bible, and then do other things, then put your Bible down on the table open, and then pick it up, and then hold it, etc. There's a reason why we do all that this particular way, but we don't have time to go into it today. I give you the information, but you don't need to do this today. Now, on the **story background**, I have already given you the story background on the other side of the page. Again, we don't have time today to practice learning how to do the background. You can use this story background for your story today.

Then you have to retell the story. We've talked about how to retell the story. Now, we have asked some questions. Then we have to retell the story with the game, and then we have some more questions. Each of you is going to have 15 minutes exactly to work with your group on your story. We've taken much longer here, so I don't think you will have a hard time with 15 minutes. You don't have to do the action steps, and you don't have to close with prayer. Now, what I'm going to have you do, I'm going to have you work to prepare your story. What I need you to do is to take your Head, Heart, and Hand Questions, and choose two Head Questions, three Heart Questions and one Hand Question. This will give you a chance to read through those question papers. At the end of the fourth session, we will have some question and answer, and if you have some comments or questions about the question pages, I'd be glad to talk to you more about that.

You are going to have 15 minutes until the break time. Then, when we come back we are going to hopefully start almost immediately to do the presentations. I am going to let you go ahead and get started on this now, and if you have questions we will help you, as you need us. As I mentioned, this is a time of practice and to have fun. I am not going to be, you know, we are not grading you and I am not going to be a policeman with you, nothing like that. If you didn't have a time, a chance to prepare your questions, no problem because (*you can use*) the questions that are in bold on your papers. Just choose a question that's in bold.

Now, to have respect for the other people in your group, when one person is presenting you should not be preparing your presentation. I am going to know who's presenting because the person presenting is going to be standing up. You have to be standing up at least while you are telling the story. If you feel more comfortable to sit down when you are doing the discussion, that's fine also. The other people who are listening, I want all your papers put away and your Bible put away and your computer put away and just giving attention to the person who is presenting. Each person will have 15 minutes. At the end of your practice page you have the instructions of what you do with the "*feedback time*," the remaining five minutes. When we start with story presentation one, they have 15 minutes. If you finish early find some more questions and keep discussing different questions, and then I'm going to stop everybody. You *then* have five minutes to talk about how you feel about the experience. We are just focusing on the positive here; we are not doing any criticizing. Then the second person that will present the story will stand up; they'll have 15 minutes, followed by five minutes of conversation. Then, the third person does the presentation in 15

minutes, *(followed by)* five minutes of conversation. We finish in one hour. Okay, do you have any questions about our process?

You need to figure out who is going to present first. Story presenter one, please stand up. Everybody else put your papers away. I need to see one person from each group standing up. Okay, 15 minutes starting right now. Have fun.

Okay, stop. Presentation number one is finished. You have five minutes to just discuss, to talk about the experience. What did you like about it? Do not start on the second story until I tell you. Okay, five minutes.

Okay, stop. Will the second presenter please stand up? The others with you, please put away your papers. Okay, you have 15 minutes. If you finish early, ask some more questions.

Okay, stop. Now, I'm going to give you just three or four minutes to discuss about how you feel. Especially the presenter, how did it feel to give the story, and the rest of you, what did you like about the story or how it went?

Well, the third story presenters stand up. All right, you have 15 minutes.

Okay, stop. You have four minutes to just reflect. Presenter, how did you feel? For the others, how did you like the activity?

Let's talk for a few minutes about this practice exercise. Do you feel the practice gave you some confidence that you can tell a story? Did you enjoy listening to the stories of the others, too? Tell me some of your impressions of this hour that we just spent.

**Participant:**

We are happy and we are having fun.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, happy and having fun. That's great.

**Female Translator:**

They have a deep discussion.

**Carol Berry:**

A deep discussion.

**Female Translator:**

He said, basically, according to the method that you have been given to ask the questions, but because of that, we draw out many, many applications in our lives, so we discuss more.

**Carol Berry:**

Okay, good. That's good. Okay, any other comments?

**Female Translator:**

She said time goes fast. Enjoy the relationship with one other, enjoy the process ... It also reminds us ... inspired us, even gives us a new insight.

**Carol Berry:**

That's one of the most important principles of this method. The person presents the story but **they don't teach it**, instead **the participants learn it**. The rule of the presenter is not to explain the story or talk about the story at all. The rule of the presenter is to be a skillful asker of questions. The page of questions gives you lots of ideas of the kinds of questions you can ask. The questions also have the doctrine of the story. When we ask, what did you learn about God? What did you observe about the characters in the story? What's the relationship of God with the characters in the story? Those are questions that have to do with the character of God, the character of men. We don't include it as a lecture, instead we allow the participants to discover it. I titled this session, "*Living God's Story – Using Bible Storying to Evangelize and Disciple.*" Where did you see the evangelizing here?

Okay, yes, people are willing, because it's interesting and it's fun. Yes, anything else? Yes?

**Participant:**

When you ask a question, the question is that follow the God, and follow ... what do you think of God?

**Carol Berry:**

What do you think of God? Okay, it's a good opening to that, yes. Let's look at the Hand questions, the last question – question number 43. The last question on the Hand Questions. Yes, why don't you just read it to them? (*It's a question that gives three ways to bring in the gospel to the story.*)

These questions even give you a direct link to the Gospel. The other part is in the action steps. We ask the participants to commit to sharing the story with friends or family. Especially children; if you have this expectation of them, they're quite willing to share the story. We have some missionaries in India that received training; if they are missionaries they receive training in this method. They decided to start a club from their house. They live in a primarily Hindu neighborhood. The first week by doing some advertisement and some home visits, they had 24 kids. The second week they had 76 kids. They didn't have a place for them, they had to meet outside. Now, they have between a hundred, between 80 and a hundred kids that come in, in any given week. Now, they've been able to actually plant a church, kind of Bible study in their home because of the interest of people, of the families in the area. That's because the children went home and shared the stories. Okay, that's evangelism. What about the discipleship? How does this improve or increase your discipleship?

Anything else?

Just learning the story itself takes you deeper into God's Word. Because I think you'll find that even with the passages that you've read many times, when you take the time to learn, you'll discover new information that you didn't notice before. One of our missionaries in South Africa, he used this method to give the message in a church (*he visited*). They were using the story, "The Prodigal Son." It's a story that's told a lot in churches. After the service, the pastor's wife came to talk to him. She said, "I always thought that we needed to have the people come to the church, so that we could serve them. I realize (*now*) that when the father went running out to meet his son outside, that maybe the church should also take our ministry to the people." This methodology allows the Holy Spirit to show each person something special about the story. You can have some people in your group who are non-believers, or maybe they believe in another religion, or maybe they're new believers, or maybe they're mature believers. This method allows the Holy Spirit to hit each one in their spiritual journey. You discover the meaning that the story has shown you and then you find the way to obey it or to do it.

Okay, our time is coming to a close. I wanted to give you an opportunity to ask any questions that you might have.

**Female Translator:**

In this method, can we talk about and share the gospel with unbelievers?

**Carol Berry:**

Yes, the method works. So you could use a story that has the gospel message in it, or you can share stories that have to do with some problem or some area of interest of the non-believer. For example, if you know somebody and they have some pressing needs, some difficulty that they're facing, you can tell the story of the widow, of Elisha and the poor widow. Through skillful asking of questions, "How did she solve her problem? Did she say, I'm going to go get a job? Or I'm just going to give up my children to the creditor? No, she went directly to the man of God. Then, did he just give her everything like that? No, he used something she had to help her solve her problem." That combined with the miracle of God (*to multiply the oil*). Now, maybe on a first story they're not going to feel like they're ready to be led to Christ, but if you share stories with them, then they can see the wisdom of the story. If you know the person well, you'll know the appropriate moment to present the Gospel. Any other questions?

The Bible has a lot of narrative in it. You can use this method with other kinds or other portions of the Bible. For example, in our training, we use a portion of the Bible where Jesus is teaching His disciples. Judge not and you will not be judged. Then, the part about taking the log out of your own eye before you could see the speck in your brother's eye. The portion has four different stories of Jesus all in one, just in a few verses. It doesn't have the narrative in it. You can still use it, using this methodology. The psalms work well as well. If you use some heavy portions of the epistles, you probably need to keep the portion shorter. Paul's letters have some great content that can be used in story. There are easily 250 stories that you can do. Probably many more. Try it.

**Female Translator:**

When you design the questions, according to the story itself or according to what you feel?

**Carol Berry:**

When I design the questions or when you choose the questions you'll use? The real important thing is to make the connection with the heart, the Heart Question. I mean obviously you need to understand the story first. You want to ask some questions that dig into the content of the story, just to make sure that the facts of the relationships are clear. The Heart Questions are where you really get people to respond to the story. For example, if you are preparing a story, you may find some treasure in it. Your job is not to share that treasure with the kids. Your job is to ask questions to help them discover their treasure. Maybe the part that the Lord showed you was, say, "Oh, wow! I never noticed that," and you (*will find something new*). Maybe one of the students also comes up with the same. Try to refrain from teaching them what you want them to know. Instead cooperate with the Holy Spirit for them to learn what the Holy Spirit wants them to learn. This is **learner centered not teacher centered**.

I want to respect your time, so we're going to close, but if any of you have any additional questions, I'll be glad to talk with you afterwards. I'm going to pray to close this off.

*Father God, I thank You for this precious group of people. I thank You, Lord, that You brought them here today. I thank You, Lord, that we had a chance to explore Your Word in a new way. Lord, I thank You that You tell us in Your Word about new things. So we can't put new wine into old wineskins. I thank You, Lord, that You are the one who told stories. You knew how to connect with people where they were. You knew when to correct them and You knew when to encourage them. You knew when to be harsh and You knew when to be soft.*

*Father, we thank You for sending Jesus. We thank You that Jesus took our place on the cross. As He took our punishment, He gave us His white robe of righteousness. It's something so wonderful we can hardly understand it. But thank You, Lord, that You desire to have a relationship with us. And You've spoken to us through Your Word. Father, I pray that as we go out, people who signed up for commitments that they will keep their commitments. I pray they'll take a few moments and tell a story to somebody else. And thank You for this wonderful time together. In the name of Jesus, we pray.*

**Participants:**

Amen.