



Crafting a Biblical Story

Crafting an accurate Bible story is very important for several reasons. In many cases the story that you craft may be the only scripture that they will ever have, either because they have no scripture in their language or because they will never read the scripture for themselves. A well-crafted story is also important so that the stories are easy to remember and to re-tell. For these reasons, crafting a story is a serious undertaking that requires careful preparation. In this document you will learn how to craft well-told, accurate Bible stories.

Things to keep in mind as you begin crafting a Biblical Story. The story should be:

1. Simple.
2. Memorable.
3. Reproducible.
4. Accurate.

If you are going to craft a good story, you have some homework to do first! Here are some things that you will need to do:

1. Read the full biblical passage that contains the story multiple times. It is recommended that you read the passage at least three times from at least three different translations. (If available)(Total of nine readings)
2. Make sure that you know what happened before and after the story. This helps put the story in its proper context.
3. Make sure you thoroughly understand what happens in the story. If there is anything that is not clear, research it in scholarly commentaries, dictionaries, and other exegetical helps (if available)
4. Identify words or concepts that you know are difficult concepts in the language or culture you are crafting the story for. (Example: disciple, parable, righteous)
5. Is there anything in the story that may be misinterpreted by the people hearing the story because of their worldview?
6. There may also be cultural gaps that require background information necessary for someone in the culture to understand the passage. (Example: The Roman culture, or Jewish culture of the Bible)
7. Once you have identified the problems in the story, as mentioned in steps 3-6, research the passage in scholarly commentaries, dictionaries, and other exegetical helps (if available) to help you resolve these issues. Once you have done your research, you need to do the following:
 1. Decide how to express the difficult words and concepts in every-day language. (Example: say "Follower of Jesus" instead of "Disciple")
 2. Decide what background information is needed to make the story understandable. In other words, discover the information that was readily understood by the original audience, but that is not available to your audience, and then decide if and how you need to make that information explicit in your story.

Now that you have done your homework, here are some things that you need to keep in mind as you put your story together:

1. Keep the story short. The story should be one written page or less. Short stories are easier to remember and retell.
2. Keep the story simple. It is OK to simplify the story. Too much detail makes the story hard to remember and retell.
3. Use everyday language, not difficult to understand Bible, Christian or church terms.
4. Be conversational in telling the story. Be natural and tell the Bible story just like you would tell a personal story to someone else.
5. Limit details and names used in a story. Ask yourself, is this name or detail necessary to fully understand the story? Will this name or detail come up again in a future story? If so, perhaps it is important and should be mentioned. Try not to introduce more than three new names of people or places in a story.
6. Keep the story biblically accurate; don't add things to the story that aren't in the biblical passage!
7. Maintain Continuity and Cohesion between stories by using the same terms, phrases, and names, while keeping in mind the theme of the story set, to connect the stories one to another.
8. Keep in mind your chosen theme for the overall story set when selecting and crafting individual stories.

Now that you have done the research and the crafting of the story, it is time to learn the story so that it can be told in a natural engaging way. Here are some helpful hints:

1. Don't memorize the story word-for-word. Rather, internalize it.
2. Be familiar enough with the story that you make it your own, so that you will be natural and at ease with the story.
3. Tell what you know!
4. Think through the story, breaking it into scenes (be aware of which scene is the climax). Breaking the story into scenes provides an "oral outline." You can use this "oral outline" to develop a short summary of the story in your mind. Tell this summary to yourself several times until it is clear and flows easily. This summary is the skeleton upon which the interesting details of the story hang. The summary is NOT the story you will tell. It is only the foundation of the story that allows you to remember the details of the story more easily. Those details make the story more interesting, and actually more tell-able.
5. Now, learn the story scene by scene, including these interesting details. Don't forget to clearly identify the climax using whatever story telling devices (pauses, louder or softer tones, etc.) you need.
6. Picture it in your mind as you tell it to yourself, or to someone else for practice. You'll probably need to tell this story out loud at least three times before being ready to tell it to a group.

Now you are ready to tell the story. The best way to remember the story is to tell it to others. The more you tell it to others, the more you will remember it.

As you tell the story to others you will also discover what works and what does not work. So, crafting is a process, and continues over time as you retell the stories to others and make little changes, which makes the stories better, as well as easier to remember and retell.

As with anything, practice makes perfect. The more you craft and tell stories the easier it becomes.