

# Orality Breakouts

Using Heart Language  
to Transform Hearts



*ION / LCWE*

## Testimonials

“Paul tells the Romans that ‘faith comes from hearing the Good News about Christ.’ As people of the Word, the staff of Wycliffe Bible Translators is committed to seeing every man, woman, and child have the opportunity to hear the Good News about Jesus Christ in a language and form they relate to best. Some of the most exciting strategies being employed today use oral means to do evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. You’ll be encouraged, blessed, and invigorated as you read these pages.”

**Bob Creson, President/CEO Wycliffe Bible Translators, USA**

“I have had the privilege of watching the International Orality Network grow from infancy to its current significant role in world missions. I have become grateful for the people God has called to lead this movement. I have spent quality time with many of them and can attest to the fact that the knowledge they bring is not theoretical. It has been lived out in their personal lives and ministry experience.”

**Steve Douglass, President/Chairman of the Board, Campus Crusade for Christ, USA**

“The orality movement is a gift from God for the peoples of the world to become acquainted with God’s book. But it is also God’s story to lead each person to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that God would use this book to extend His kingdom worldwide.”

**Loren Cunningham, Founder, YWAM**

“For hundreds of years, literate Christians held the purse strings of communication and made decisions on how to wrap and deliver Scripture based on their understanding of best methodology. Wonderfully, of late, literate leaders are hearing God, embracing oral strategies, and working alongside oral communicators in powerful Great Commission fulfillment.”

**Dorothy A. Miller, Executive Director, The God’s Story Project, Simply The Story, USA**

“This book helps us to come to grips with the reality that for centuries we have ignored the most effective way to convey the Good News to the vast majority of oral learners. It reveals how God is orchestrating *Orality Breakouts* to enable the completion of the Great Commission during our generation. What an awesome privilege to be alive at this time and to participate in unprecedented church growth through the effective method of storytelling. Read this book to find out more.”

**Joseph Vijayam, President/CEO, Olive Technology, India**

“The closer I have gotten to the concept and champions of orality, the more I am changing my paradigm on how we are to disciple the nations. Thank the Lord we have new hope and storytelling tools to reach this generation.”

**Martin Deacon, CEO, Walk Thru the Bible, Turn the Tide Southern Africa**

“*Reaching Oral Learners* launched a movement by focusing the centrality of orality on the completion of the Great Commission. This excellent sequel fuels the momentum by illustrating pathways to multiplication and effectiveness among least reached communities.”

**Dr. David Swarr, President/CEO, DAVAR Partners International, Israel**

“The pre-writing communities and the postmodern world have one thing in common—the need for the mode of communication through stories. Storytelling or narratology, or in this context orality, is an effectual tool of communication by oral means. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth through His oral words. When Jesus was teaching the multitude, He taught in oral words. He is the storyteller *par excellence*. He takes a common life experience and expounds it to reveal spiritual truths which are understandable and applicable to the audience.

*Orality Breakouts* takes readers backward to the pre-writing stage of employing stories, and using heart language that people are accustomed to in order to transform lives. It also brings readers forward to the postmodern world in which people like to glean truths through stories. This oral strategy can move backward or forward to meet the needs of people with diverse backgrounds around the world. It’s a paradigm shift, a refocusing on the basic mode of communication. May God continue to guide this project and use this book to multiply disciples for His glory.”

**Peter Au, Principal, Canadian Chinese School of Theology, Tyndale Seminary, Director of Educational Projects International**

“The importance of audience adaptation in any communication strategy cannot be overemphasized. For oral audiences, audience adaptation means that we incorporate oral communication styles. This book provides an attestation that the use of oral styles is not only theoretically necessary, but also practically effective. This is certainly a great resource for those of us communicating the Gospel and making disciples among oral societies.”

**Emmanuel D. Mbennah, PhD, International Director of Africa Region, TWR International, South Africa**

“Orality—a couple of years ago I did not even know what that word meant. Now I see it not only as a major tool for reaching the world for Christ but as an asset for communication in every sphere. This book is practical and useful, and I recommend *Orality Breakouts* for all who are business leaders.”

**Al Caperna, CEO, CMC Group, Director, Call2All Business Network**

“Even to the most educated, Jesus Himself told stories to make a point. Sometimes the parables and the stories did not make sense, as in the simple story of the mustard seed and sowing of the seeds. Today, in a developed but stressed-out world, it is not illiteracy which is a challenge, but the ability to tell a story to educate, absorb, understand, and commit themselves to simply follow Christ. The media world is working very hard to produce stories in many forms to communicate their message. How much more the followers of Christ should become innovative in telling the story. I appreciate all the International Orality Network is trying to do to impress the modern world to tell the story effectively. Hats off to the efforts of the ION!”

**K. Rajendran, India Missions Association, WEA Mission Commission**

“As I read this book, I was excited and blessed to see this major shift in missiological thinking. Storytelling, to accomplish the Great Commission in our generation is the fresh, new wind we have been praying for and it is now blowing into the sails of the worldwide missionary enterprise. How I wish I were twenty years younger!”

**Dr. Hans M. Wilhelm, author, speaker, and former Executive Vice-President, OC International, USA**

“I have found the contents of this book good and interesting. There are many immediate applications that we can all implement into our ministries.”

**Rev. Joseph Hsiang, Elder, Lutheran Life Church, Taipei, Taiwan**

“This book gives great insight about the growing Orality Movement. The testimonies found within its pages will no doubt transform lives and the way missions are carried out around the globe.”

**Hector Tamez II, President, ECO International, Mexico**

“In *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, one learns *why* we should work desperately to reach oral learners. In the follow-on book, *Orality Breakouts*, the question many organizations and individuals ask is answered— *how*? Through this book, orality methodology is becoming open-sourced, so that those of us dedicated to reaching the lost, discipling believers, and training leaders can collaborate, share, and see God glorified in reaching ALL of the world.”

**Ed Weaver, CEO, T<sup>4</sup> Global, USA**

“Having read *Orality Breakouts* I am convinced beyond all reasonable doubt that this book on orality is an invaluable reference document for evangelism and could not have come at a more opportune time. It is a must read and I recommend it to all in the business of orality.”

**Theodore M. Asare, President/CEO, Theovision International, Ghana**

“This watershed book chronicles how ‘orality breakouts’ are resulting in transformed lives, disciples made, and churches planted among peoples previously unengaged or unreached with the Gospel. More than that, it provides a roadmap for ‘cracking the code’ of effective communication with primary oral learners, enabling them to hear God speak to them in their own heart language.”

**Brent Fulton, PhD, President/CEO, ChinaSource, USA**

“God’s love story has to be told and re-told beyond the written word to people whose lives revolve around the concept of orality. This book offers approaches, strategies, and stories that at once include and blend people of oral culture into the continuing story of His love, peace, and joy. Indeed, this is a piece of work not to be missed by those serious about reaching people who are different!”

**Paul Russ Satari, Pastoral Staff (Missions/Witness & Evangelism)  
Wesley Methodist Church, Singapore**

As a businessman, I am overwhelmed by the leverage and legacy of making disciples of oral learners. Leverage, because there are so many missing the connection with God’s Word because they are learning in an oral context. And legacy, because this approach, as described in *Orality Breakouts*, is probably one of the keys to finishing the task that Jesus gave to make disciples of all nations—and the bulk of the unreached are oral learners.”

**Rick Brekelbaum, ExxonMobil, retired, USA**

“For much of the modern missionary movement we have led evangelistic and church-planting efforts with literate-based strategies. What joy to see the global Church recognize that oral cultures will be most quickly reached with a Scripture-based storying approach. All the literacy trainers can relax with this development. People will move from storying groups into the text and learn to read. This is not an orality versus literacy conflict. It is a movement where both strategies flourish, but sequencing with orality first is essential.”

**Roy L. Peterson, President/CEO, The Seed Company, USA**

“Orality is applicable to every nation and culture. The story grabs people, touches hearts, and transforms lives. It’s simple, understandable, and practical.”

**Yuriy Shelestun, Director, Walk Thru the Bible in Commonwealth of Independent States, pastor (Ukraine)**

“Oral learning has changed the way our ministries are conducted. I know the congregants are now receiving at least 70% of their spiritual nourishment using oral strategies. We are also able to commence church planting with a focus on the unengaged and unreached people groups. Orality and the many applications from this book have enriched my life and ministry. Do not miss this for your ministry.”

**Bishop P. N. Njunguna, Kenya**

“Why is it that I’m surprised at orality realities and the International Orality Network itself? It’s not like I personally felt that only (or primarily) by reading would all people gain information, knowledge, and understanding. After all, I lived thirty years in Latin America, and during our seventeen years of mission ministry in those contexts it became very clear that much of my North American university and theological study would be challenged. This was because my field was communications—teaching, evangelism, preaching. And my own life-long teaching/preaching style is laced with story after story.

So why am I surprised now? I’m not sure. Perhaps it’s that I, amongst so many other church and mission leaders, lost contact with the reality of SO many people who communicate either primarily or exclusively through oral means. Regardless, I can only thank God for visionaries in the International Orality Network who have challenged us again to consider how so much of the world listens, stories, learns, makes decisions, and gains wisdom. So thank you, good friends and colleagues, for a penetrating challenge that we cannot ignore.”

With appreciation,

**William Taylor, PhD, Senior Mentor, WEA Mission Commission  
Global Ambassador, World Evangelical Alliance**



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to Transform Hearts

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Bi-Annual Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization held in Korea (2009)  
Special Interest Committee meeting  
Avery Willis, Convener  
Steve Evans, Co-Convener  
Samuel E. Chiang, Facilitator

## **Orality Breakouts: Using Heart Language to Transform Hearts**

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and  
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Consequently,  
faith comes from hearing the message,  
and the message is heard through the word of Christ.  
Romans 10:17



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# FOREWORD

*Avery T. Willis, Jr.*



The room was abuzz at the 2000 Amsterdam conference on evangelism, sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Six hundred of the ten thousand participants were hard at work discussing how to finish the Great Commission in the next ten to fifteen years. We sat at Table 71. As the meeting concluded we were still hard at work when Marcus Vegh, a friend of several years, came up to me and startled me with a question that was to change my life forever. I looked up at his six-foot-three-inch frame and wide smile and felt his piercing black eyes staring through me. “How do you make disciples of oral learners?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” I replied, shrugging my shoulders. “People have asked me that question for twenty years. I just say, ‘I am not working with illiterates. If you are, figure it out.’” Marcus retorted, “It’s been twenty years and no one has done it. You know about discipleship. It’s your job. Seventy percent of the unreached people in the world are oral learners.”

I heard his voice as if it were the voice of God. I am not

sure why it hit me so hard. While serving as Senior Vice President for Overseas Operations with the International Mission Board of Southern Baptists, I had helped lead our five thousand missionaries to focus on reaching the unreached. I was aware of oral learners and Chronological Bible Storying, but never considered they were my responsibility. Now I heard God telling me it was.

One outcome from that conference was the formation of “Table 71,” a loose association of Christian organizations committed to working together in partnership among the remaining unreached people groups in the world. The goal is to help evangelize and make disciples, and to begin to nurture indigenous church-planting movements.

In 2004, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization Forum in Pattaya, Thailand, was organized around thirty-one issue groups, including the Orality Issue Group. This group produced a book, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, which became a groundbreaking publication and, by God’s grace, is being used by thousands of people worldwide. Tens of thousands of copies of the English version are now in circulation, and it has been translated into Chinese, Spanish, French, Russian, Hindi, and Arabic.

This Orality Group organized the International Orality Network (ION) with the mission to radically influence the way oral preferred communicators are evangelized and discipled in every people group. ION exists to accelerate the process of making the Gospel available to all oral learners in their mother languages and to do it better, faster, cheaper, and more effectively than when literate methods alone are used. The orality movement mobilizes mission organizations and denominations around the world to work together to share oral strategies, to disciple oral preference learners, and to accomplish the vision of reaching all unreached people groups.

The focus of *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* was evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. The book you hold in your hands is a follow-up resource that was created with the intent to deepen your understanding of the breakthroughs in orality strategies in all areas of life. It focuses on using heart languages as well as oral communication

styles to transform lives. Welcome to the world of orality!

On behalf of the orality movement, ION received the first ever Innovations in Missions award from The Missions Exchange in 2009. This innovation is really accomplished through men and women who are passionate about orality and are enabling the breakouts globally. This book is about how God is breaking down resistant fields of mission endeavor, bringing His stories to unreached people groups alive, and birthing His Church around the world. Join in and witness what God is doing with orality.

**Avery T. Willis, Jr.**  
**Executive Director**  
**International Orality Network**  
Arkansas, United States







# Section I: The Back Story

*With many similar parables  
Jesus spoke the word to them,  
as much as they could understand.  
- Mark 4:33*

*Now this is not the end.  
It is not even the beginning of the end.  
But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.  
- Sir Winston Churchill*

Bagel, roti, cornbread, pita, bun, chella, baguette, injera, paska, mantou, white bread, tortilla, croissant! Bread, by any name, is a prepared food enjoyed across the world. In some parts, it actually serves as the knife, fork, and spoon, and not the meal itself. Indeed, in many places, sliced white bread is served as a necessary part of the meal of the day. We take it for granted. About a century ago, however, Otto Fredrick Rohwedder invented the bread slicer and it was not until the 1930s that *Wonder Bread* made sliced bread famous.

It took nearly two decades for sliced bread to become popular in the United States. This novel invention had two consequential

## 2 Orality Breakouts

effects: (1) many inventions are now measured as “the greatest thing since sliced bread” and (2) sliced bread is served worldwide. Just as sliced bread took some time to gain acceptance, so orality is now taking root in missions across the world—and following a similar path of innovation adoption. It is being discovered, rediscovered, and spreading around the world. These chapters recount remarkable activities that God is doing through His servants worldwide using oral strategies and practices.

The chapters in this first section unveil “Back Stories” that show God’s Word is at work, planted in faith, garnered in hope, shared in love, and by God’s grace and influence, comes to fruition. Following the stories, there is a selection of questions designed to be processed in a group setting.

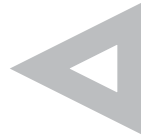
Step into these remarkable stories with us. You may never be the same again!



## Chapter 1

# The Passion for Orality

*Samuel E. Chiang*



We listened intently to a description of how children’s soccer teams were trained. It was June 2009 and Rev. Dr. Sameh Maurice, Senior Pastor of Kasr El-Dobara Evangelical Church in Cairo, Egypt, was speaking animatedly. At the end of our coffee shop conversation I blurted out, “The methods you use to train the kids are the same as the principles of orality!” Rev. Maurice immediately asked, “What’s that?” At that moment, I realized I had come full circle in a decade of journeying, exploring, and learning about orality.

At the beginning of the last decade, I was traveling through Mozambique and received a request to speak to an audience that had traveled some distance. While preaching through a portion of Nehemiah, I noticed many were falling asleep. So I changed my mode of delivery. There was a momentary jolt, but most managed to fall asleep again! My communication method was ineffective. After the trip, I was determined to find out why the audience was not listening. This sojourn of discovery radically altered my thinking and sent me on a journey of exploring the world of oral communicators. After extensive reading (and with the help of eager and well-meaning

colleagues), I became convinced that we were missing the mark of reaching oral learners and unreached people groups.

In addition, like many mission organizations, we allocated infinitesimal resources<sup>1</sup> to the world of oral learners, conservatively estimated at over four billion people. During that time, while serving as the Chief Operating Officer of Trans World Radio, I had the great privilege of working alongside two passionate souls, Tom Tatlow and Bill Mial, who breathed orality. They told short stories of orality successes, and assisted in shepherding, using orality as one of the strategic priorities for the organization of the future. Their infectious cheerleading enabled their organization to adopt orality and reach seemingly impossible milestone goals two years early.

What are “Orality Breakouts”? Orality is defined in *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* (2009) as:

- a reliance on spoken, rather than written, language for communication
- the fact or quality of being communicated orally

Many mental images are evoked by the word “breakouts”: in medicine—skin or viral breakouts; in finance—stock market breakouts; in correction facilities—prison breakouts. The concept can be applied to both individuals and teams across many sports—breaking out from the normal flow of the game to gain an advantage. “Orality Breakouts,” therefore, speak of the orality movement that is taking place across the world and across many aspects of missions. This movement includes unengaged and unreached people groups, clean water provision, HIV/AIDS prevention, community development, and micro-financing and loans. Through the practice of oral communication, the Gospel is breaking out in places and in ways previously unknown, disciples are being made, and churches are being planted.

### Language of the heart matters

Most people involved in ministry understand “heart language” similarly as the language we learned from our mothers or fathers. It is the one we speak fluently with strong, expressive emotions, or the language of our dream world. So our heart language is also our mother tongue. When heart language links with a good story that is well told, it is the direct way to the heart—ask any good film-maker or pastor illustrating a Sunday sermon. Eminent British theologian Dr. N. T. Wright, in his book *The New Testament and the People of God*, drives this point home. He asserts that we all have an internal store of stories that provide our framework for experiencing the world.<sup>2</sup> To change people at the deepest level, we must change their stories. Consequently, if stories in our mother tongue or heart language are important, and they frame the way we see the world, is there tangible evidence of how this insight affects the mission enterprise?

In *From Seed to Fruit*,<sup>3</sup> a landmark book on missions and church planting, Dudley Woodberry and his team draw a statistical inference that among the workers they surveyed, there was an 82% probability of a church or multiple churches being planted if three fruitful practices were honored:

1. at least one person on the team is highly skilled in the local language;
2. the learning preferences of the people group (i.e., oral vs. literate) are incorporated into the team’s strategy; and
3. the work is done in the heart language of the people.

This is exactly what the orality movement in missions has found to be true. Using heart language or the mother tongue, together with an oral approach to learning (e.g., storytelling, drama, etc.), transforms hearts and communities around the world. And in this approach we are simply following the example of Jesus who, on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection, spoke to His disciples from the Scriptures in such a way that their hearts burned within them.

In our previous flagship book, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*,<sup>4</sup> we described orality and advocated a quartet of values: heart language, worldview<sup>5</sup> studies, accountability, and disciple-making multiplication. When storytelling, drama, poetry, dances, arts, and music are fused with these values, there will be new effectiveness in ministry.

Five years after *Making Disciples* was published, we want to revisit the practices of orality and see what God's servants are doing around the world. Each colleague contributing to this book is a practitioner. The ages of those writing span the generations from the twenties to the seventies. We will encounter their passion and prayer to bring the Gospel to the world's unengaged and unreached people groups. We will also witness how God is breaking through in new translation projects—eight new language groups in ten months—so that sixty-five million people are able to hear the Good News in their own heart language through biblically accurate, culturally relevant, oral stories from the Bible. We will demonstrate how Chief Executive Officers engage in changing their organizations, and how their colleagues are being innovative on the mission field. We will witness how orality is applied in music, visual arts, social sectors, visual-oral learners, and how appropriate technology may further sustain the church-planting and discipleship movement.

If we are sensitively using worldview studies to understand unreached people groups and communities we are trying to reach, we might see fruitful results. In the chapters ahead we showcase how those with worldview studies in place are applying oral strategies to entire nations, or among Gospel-resistant people groups. This newfound engagement in orality and indeed the whole movement is galvanized together and supported by prayer. We cannot underestimate the reality of spiritual battles as we move into realms where previously we have been ineffective. The orality movement has had dedicated intercessors and prayer warriors who have established prayer rooms for events, attended top-level executive meetings, and engaged in an ongoing call to pray together each week. How does one even attempt something as ambitious as this orality movement? Chapter 15 describes how God's leading birthed a sustained prayer

initiative that has caused His people to marvel.

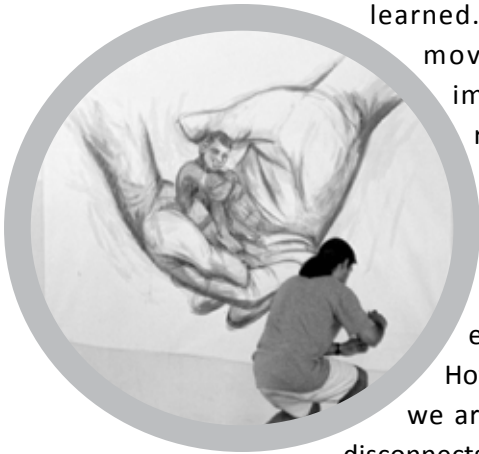
The practice of orality focuses on individuals who live in a highly relational community context. If something works, it will multiply and spread quickly in a geographical as well as a spiritual sense. If something does not work, that too becomes clear. We have seen this over and over again. Thus, orality strategies and practices are measurable. Orality is not a fuzzy, feel-good fad; it works, and it can be shown to work. This is not to say that it has all the answers, and in Section III there are explanations of lessons

learned. But organizations in the orality movement we *do* measure what is important. Organizations measure results for all sorts of reasons and in all sorts of ways—some-good, some bad. The organizations in the orality movement set goals, measure success (or failure), and endeavor to learn the lessons.

However, in our travels and dialogues, we are discovering that there are huge disconnects in the orality practices of the field

and the requirements from their “headquarters.” The latter tend to measure based upon what was appropriate in the last century (e.g., just “filling out the information forms”). The new orality practices will require a radical rethink in this process. In chapter 18 there is a thoughtful examination on what it means to do measurement in an oral environment.

My own journey finally led me to tell my first story in Ethiopia in 2008. I remember sitting with Steve Evans and Steve Sims (both have contributed chapters in this book) as we told oral stories from the book of Acts. I recalled the time when Acts 1 was the story being told and translated into the local language. After a great deal of dialogue back and forth among the newer, younger leaders and the translators, we interrupted and asked why there was so much conversation as we had not even finished telling the story. Referring





to Acts 1:4-5, the translator told us that the younger leaders said, “Now we understand! We have been waiting for two thousand years, and now we no longer have to wait.” This was church birth development in real time. Around the world, God is moving His servants to respond to the strategy and tool of orality so that the Gospel can be effectively communicated, and disciple-making of oral learners becomes both fruitful and multiplying.

I think of Bishop Njuguna of Kenya, when he caught the vision of orality and what it meant for reaching unengaged and unreached people groups. He personally underwent training, and then led in the vision of unengaged and unreached people groups. He adopted these groups to both bring oral stories of the Bible in their heart language and plant churches among them. But he did not stop there—he leveraged his influence so that eight other bishops would also receive training and consider adopting unengaged and unreached people groups. Will we dare to dream of the day when there are ZERO unengaged and unreached people groups? Will we dare to dream that all languages of all people groups can have biblically accurate, culturally relevant, oral stories from the Bible in their own heart language? Will we dare to dream that oral learners from different sectors of society can be disciplined? There are those who dare to dream. Follow us into the next chapter and witness from their personal testimony what three CEOs are doing.

### **Biography**

*Rev. Samuel E. Chiang was born in Taiwan, grew up and worked in Canada (Ernst & Young), and graduated from Dallas Seminary where he also served on staff. He served with the church in China and has written extensively on China, Asia, and orality. Formerly the Chief Operating Officer for TWR, currently he serves as the Global Coordinator of the International Orality Network. His passion is for oral communicators to hear, understand, respond, live out, and further reproduce the message of the Gospel. He and his wife, Robbi, live in Hong Kong.*



## Chapter 2

# Three CEOs Leading Change

*Samuel E. Chiang and Steve Evans*



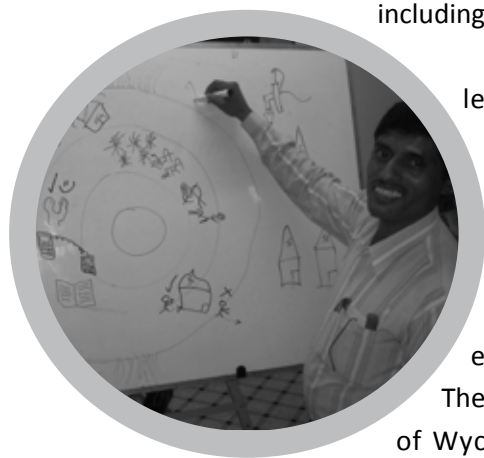
One of the biggest challenges for the leader of any organization is to face problems head on and deal with them. One of those problems is demanding increasing attention: the majority of the world's unreached peoples are oral learners. And our conventional literate approach is simply not going to be successful in making them disciples. What will be our response?

This book is no more than an introduction to the oral approach to mission evangelism, but it does show clearly the power of God's story among those oral communities of the world for whom storytelling is not just entertainment, but a way of life. Believers, previously excluded from the church and church leadership because of their illiteracy, have now become more than just believers—they have become church planters. Anyone who is serious about world missions cannot ignore this significant breakthrough.

The process of personal and organizational change from "This is what we've always done," to "What must we do differently?" is never easy. But it is vital if we are to thrive. This is no less true—

perhaps even more true—in our mission endeavors. If you have a role in leadership in your organization, you cannot afford to ignore what is happening in missions through the rediscovery of oral communication. This raises challenging questions: *Should my organization change? If so, how? What are the pitfalls?* and *Is anyone taking the lead in this?*

The rediscovery of oral communication and its importance for millions of people worldwide (including those in the West) is one of God’s great gifts to us today. We encourage you to share in this rediscovery and consider what it can do for you and your organization to help you play your part in making disciples of every people group—including oral communicators!



Below three respected mission leaders share their impressions of the oral approach to missions. They are leading whole-hearted change in situations where orality is not just an add-on, or mere accommodation, but an innovation embraced across their organizations.

The three leaders are Bob Creson (CEO of Wycliffe USA), Jerry Wiles (President Emeritus of Living Water International), and Steve Douglass (President of Campus Crusade for Christ International). Each has had a personal and positive experience with using oral communication, is encouraging its use in their organization, and is making the necessary organizational changes to accomplish it.

### **Bob Creson on piloting experiments**

Wycliffe Bible Translators and its partners have an audacious goal of having the very last language translation started by 2025. Bob Creson, CEO of Wycliffe USA, knows the power of real-life stories to inspire organizational change and has aligned Wycliffe’s goal with this

vision, including the use of oral strategies. Creson recently shared the following internal memo with his staff:

*Dear Colleagues,*

*Vijay speaks a language used in Northern India. He recently graduated from a training workshop for storytellers, along with twenty-two others from eight different language communities. The workshop was sponsored by the New India Evangelistic Association and facilitated by The Seed Company, an organization affiliated with Wycliffe Bible Translators. With guidance from a OneStory consultant and supported by SIL consultants, just ten months after the workshop started, mother tongue Scriptures were available to sixty-five million people in the form of biblically accurate, culturally relevant, oral stories. In three languages, these stories represented access to Scripture for some for the very first time!*

*One of the consultants involved in the storytellers' workshop recently received a note in which Vijay told him that those hearing the stories in villages are very enthusiastic. He added that storytellers are pleased because their non-Christian neighbors are beginning to show great interest in the Bible stories. In this part of India, only 0.3% of the population profess to be Christian, and two-thirds don't know how to read or write.*

*You probably know how this oral strategy works, but let me say a few words about it. In this case in India, carefully selected mother tongue believers, who have a goal of reaching their own people groups with God's Word, began to minister through the means of Chronological Bible Storytelling. But their vision does not end there. They hope to continue to reach their own people by eventually completing the translation of the New Testament. One of the storytellers, Rev. Benny Das, who used to shun speaking in his mother tongue at public functions for fear of reproach, says, "I see the importance of providing people with Scriptures in their mother tongue—it appears as if God were speaking to His people in their own mother tongue."*

*During the workshop, stories were chosen that best communicated the truths of the Gospel to the target community. Mother tongue believers then crafted the stories with the help of skilled consultants. These teams were trained in story crafting, testing the stories for correct understanding by the target audience and checking for biblical accuracy. Some of these storytellers trained other storytellers. "Story fellowship groups" met to test the stories. In the one I observed, the storyteller/leader encouraged discussion: "What can we learn about God from this story? How are the people in this story like people today? What can we do differently in our lives after hearing this story?" As participants hear the stories, they are encouraged to repeat and discuss them. And so they explore new truths from God's Word using time-tested oral methods that oral learners have always used to learn new things. And since the stories are crafted in such a way that they are easily remembered, the stories can spread quickly from one group to another!*

*The results in India have been amazing. Rev. Samuel Hembrom, Secretary of the Brethren in Christ Church, whose denomination has been working in this region of India for about seventy-five years, says, "This is a strategic time to use the mother tongue, and we are convinced that the Lord will bring in a great harvest." Effectively, according to our partners in India, this work of translation into stories becomes a church-planting effort in oral cultures. The New India Evangelistic Association is focused on holistic ministry with a view toward planting churches that have all that is necessary to reproduce themselves.*



If you, like Creson, are a leader driving change, you have an arsenal of appropriate tools at your disposal, one of which is the use of real-life stories to challenge and inspire. Get to know some of

the great stories of what God is doing through oral mission and make them known in your organization or sphere of influence. They have the power to transform—and in God’s good time, change will come.

### **Jerry Wiles on learning**

Jerry Wiles, President Emeritus of Living Water International (LWI), led the effort to make orality that organization’s primary strategy for outreach, evangelism, and discipling. To bridge the gap between strategic decision-making and organizational change, Wiles and his leadership team decided to provide organization-wide training and awareness opportunities for the staff. They learned how orality works and how it can be applied in the projects they manage. He wrote in a communication:

*Phase I of our launch effort is conducting what we call “Orality Training Workshops: An Introduction to Contextual Bible Storying.” These two-day workshops consist of teaching five stories: the woman at the well, Jesus calming the storm, the demon-possessed Gerasene, the story of Nicodemus, and the blind beggar Bartimaeus. These stories illustrate God’s power over nature and the spirit world, and His power to heal, forgive sin, restore sight, transform lives, and much more.*

*Amazing feedback has come from our initial efforts in West and East Africa, Central America, and also our Orality Training Workshops in the United States. Participants tell the stories to others, and often lead them to Christ on the very day they learn them. One pastor of over thirty-three years said, “I have read, studied, and preached on these passages for years, but I have gained new insights that I had never seen before.” A well-educated engineer stated, “I thought I understood orality until I experienced the training workshop. Now I see the amazing potential and how it can spread exponentially.”*

*We intend to make every effort to see that everyone receiving clean water from our projects also receives a biblically-based, culturally-relevant witness of the gospel.*

*Among the communities that are served by Living Water's work, it is estimated that 80-90% are oral learners. Our partnerships include orphanages, hospitals, schools, churches, and other mission organizations. All of Living Water International's Orality Training Workshops include our staff and volunteers, as well as pastors, community leaders, other mission agencies and missionaries, and any others who wish to attend.*



To make orality a primary strategy for LWI required the constant availability of opportunities for learning and also demanded a cycle of feedback, stories, and testimonies so that Wiles' colleagues were willing to try it. Which tools of cooperation are available to you? Are you using them to engage in change in your organization?

### **Steve Douglass on “visioneering”**

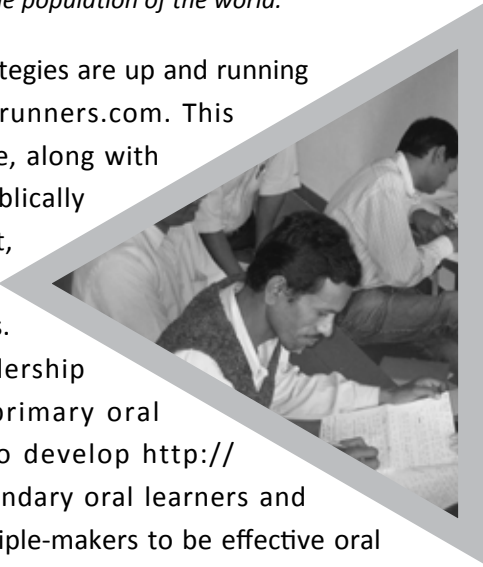
Steve Douglass, President of Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI) and alumnus of both the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard, is a master of communications. He often says that when he “got it” on the importance of four billion oral learners, he busily involved himself in the orality movement. He repeatedly “visioneers” and communicates internally and externally about why orality is important and why CCCI should be involved with it. He recalls speaking to his staff a few years ago about “cracking the code” to reach oral communicators and then disciple them as followers of Christ.

*. . . In that context, God led us to the breakthrough of “orality.” Up to 70% of unreached people prefer to learn by*

*oral means. It was a prerequisite to have cracked this “code” before we launched. It must be possible to follow up with people, disciple them, train them, and commission them as pastors, evangelists, etc., without assuming that they can read. Of course we now know how to do that. It is a breakthrough! This is very exciting news! Whenever I share it, people are stunned. Instead of assuming that local church pastors must go to seminary or Bible school, we are showing how that mold can be broken. The real issues center on a personal walk with God and an ability to communicate God’s truths in ways that penetrate into the lives of listeners. And that is actually better done orally for most of the population of the world.*

Today, CCCI’s oral strategies are up and running through <http://www.storyrunners.com>. This ministry of Campus Crusade, along with its partners, is providing biblically accurate, culturally relevant, oral stories from the Bible for unreached people groups. And Douglass and his leadership team did not stop with primary oral learners. They went on to develop <http://essentials.ccci.org> for secondary oral learners and are helping small group disciple-makers to be effective oral communicators for the twenty-first century through the process of CHAT (Connect, Hear, Apply, and Tell).

Bob Creson, Jerry Wiles, and Steve Douglass are just three mission leaders who have seen the potential of the oral approach to mission and are working tirelessly to see that potential realized. In the next chapter you will read about Douglass’ “aha” moment. You will also read of hearts previously unmoved by conventional gospel presentations, being melted by the storytelling, song, and drama of oral communication and miraculously transformed by Christ.





## **Biography**

**Rev. Samuel Chiang** has written extensively on China, Asia, and orality; additionally, he has authored a book chapter "Innovations in Missions" (Authentic, 2007). He was formerly Chief Operating Officer for TWR, an international Christian media organization. Currently, Samuel serves as the Global Coordinator of the International Orality Network, which involves over two hundred participating organizations globally and aims to make the Word of God available to unreached people groups using appropriate oral strategies.

**A. Steven Evans** is a Senior Research fellow and Communications Specialist affiliated with the International Center for Ethnographic Studies in Atlanta-USA, specializing in both cross-cultural communication and oral cultures. He is widely published on the topic of orality and biblical storytelling. He has most recently authored a book chapter: "Using the Bible in Oral Cultures" in Understanding and Using the Bible (SPCK Publishing, 2009). He serves as the co-chair of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization's Orality Special Interest Group. He lives in Johannesburg, South Africa, with his wife.

## Chapter 3

# What God Hath Wrought:



# The Electronic Breakthrough that Revived Orality



*Mark Snowden and Avery Willis*

The invention of the electric telegraph in 1835 and the transmission of Samuel Morse's code in 1838 compares as a breakthrough with the invention of Gutenberg's movable type printing press in 1436. A telegraph wire was installed from the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, DC, to Baltimore, Maryland. On May 28, 1844, Morse allowed a friend's daughter, Annie Ellsworth, to choose the message. Her Bible verse arrived as printed dots and dashes on a paper tape. The trained operator in Baltimore received the telegraph and read aloud to the waiting group the question, "What hath God wrought?" from Numbers 23:23 (KJV).<sup>1</sup>

For the first time in history, speech resulted from something electronic. As orality missiologist Grant Lovejoy once put it, "Print became loud." Today, actors bring a screenplay to life through movie theaters, television sets, radio plays, and Internet downloads. Written text messages fly through the air with the greatest of ease. The clear lines of orality and print blur in the electronic media. Walter Ong has said:

*I style the orality of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, 'primary orality.' It is 'primary'*

*by contrast with the 'secondary orality' of present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print. Today, primary oral culture in the strict sense hardly exists, since every culture knows of writing and has some experience of its effects. Still, to varying degrees many cultures and subcultures, even in a high-technology ambiance, preserve much of the mind-set of primary orality.<sup>2</sup>*



Electronic media facilitate the ability of those who can't read, or struggle with literacy and literate learning styles, to communicate and learn on an almost equal footing with those who can read. Believers who have been awakened to the secondary orality issues are seeing a harvest even among those considered the most literate (e.g., college

students). Take the case of Steve Douglass, President of Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI), an engineer by training, who never considered himself an "oral-preference learner." But after being introduced to orality as a significant issue for global evangelization, he made the connection with secondary orality: "It dawned on me that students in colleges thought like this, too," he said.

In 2005, Douglass began discipling a small group at the University of Central Florida by using oral methods, particularly storying. He began a pilot project to see firsthand if storying would work among proficient readers. The original two small groups branched into eight within four months. Douglass agreed to work beyond the initial dozen lessons and created a new set plus a one-page leader guide for each session. He encouraged the original two groups to begin their own groups. By February 2007, there were thirty-five groups involving 290 students. Today, these groups have spread to more than forty campuses.<sup>3</sup>

Secondary oral communicators can be defined as “people who depend on electronic audio and visual communications (multimedia). In some developing countries people are moving directly from primary orality to secondary orality without passing through an orientation to print.”<sup>4</sup> Lovejoy, in writing about learning preferences, stated, “Secondary orality depends on electronic media and the literate people who operate it. Secondary orality uses television, radio, film, and the like to communicate the staples of oral communication: story, song, poetry, proverb, drama, and discussion.”<sup>5</sup> He continues that when reading diminishes, then both the ability and desire to use that methodology decreases, or is replaced by other non-literate learning preferences.<sup>6</sup>

In the U.S. today, fewer than *half* of all adults read prose literature such as the Bible.<sup>7</sup> Only the elite fourteen percent still read prolifically—two-thirds of college graduates fail to read with proficiency. 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.”<sup>8</sup> This reflects a significant shift, especially among younger generations, toward non-print media for entertainment, information gathering, and education.<sup>9</sup> Situations like this in the U.S. and other countries lead to a “digital divide” resulting not only in declining prose literacy and comprehension rates, but in an increasing demand for electronic (non-print) media access.<sup>10</sup> People scan written material for items of interest, evaluate them quickly, and then look for a summary or hyperlink to a related topic. How do you think such skimming over the Scriptures affects spiritual development?

### **Prioritizing disciple-making**

Failing to address secondary orality in the twenty-first century ignores Jesus’ first-century command to make disciples of all peoples. The first-century wisdom is for everyone to be a “proclaimer of Good News” and to help others *receive a message* in a way they can understand and act upon. “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). The Greek word for “hearing” was a common word used by

the Roman Empire’s military officers in which a messenger orally communicated decision-making information. The messenger was expected to use words and styles the officers already knew. Do we consider lost people who have an oral preference—even if literate—with enough respect to bring them faith by hearing to the glory of God?

Avery T. Willis, Jr., Executive Director of the International Orality Network, served as a consultant from 2006 to 2008 to a church in Idaho. Real Life Ministries is 12 years old and has unintentionally become a mega-church of 8,500 members in Post Falls, a city with a population of 25,000 people. Senior Pastor Jim Putman, with Willis’ help, led the church to implement storying methodologies in their small groups.<sup>11</sup>

*“I like orality because it helps me produce leaders,” writes Putman in an upcoming book. He continues: The number one thing I hear when I ask a person to lead a small group is, “I don’t know enough.” Why? Because they have in mind that old model that says, “I have to have all the answers.” But when I ask them, “Can you tell a story and ask questions?” they say, “Of course I can do that.” When they become small group leaders, they have a place to grow and to develop their skills.<sup>12</sup>*

### **The call for change in churches**

Churches with a literate approach use a linear, analytical thinking pattern based on print media. It impacts virtually every aspect of church life, imposing learning styles alien to the culture around them. The following list is not meant to be harsh, but to reflect what we’re doing.

- Expository word-based sermons are delivered and accompanied by fill-in-the-blank study sheets. Bible verses are often out of context to make the pastor’s point.
- Adult Bible study classrooms are so lacking in interactive teaching methods that they numb or ignore most of the five senses.
- Well-meaning teachers give droning lectures.

- Workbook-driven discipleship lessons that may have a videotape based on written scripts are read on camera and use a highly analytical teaching style, usually lecture.
- Evangelism that requires tracts and other printed material is used. These approaches are like ripping a page out of a novel and trying to guess the plot by reading only that page.

This list was developed for Christian leaders who are actually *attempting* to make disciples. However, the reality is that Christians and non-Christians are just not responding. Churches increasingly reduce or even stop their disciple-making efforts and focus instead on the worship “experience,” with the full intention of using twenty minutes of preaching on different verses scattered throughout the Bible to impact disciple-making. All this does is make churches and their ministries further out of touch with society. In fact, according to a Barna Group report, evangelicals are viewed as out of touch with the reality facing the very people we should be impacting. The 2007 study showed that only 3% of 16 to 29-year-old non-Christians in the U.S. gave favorable views of evangelicals.<sup>13</sup>



Developed societies around the world have a postmodern culture characterized by storytelling. Their lack of a print-based orientation has revived orality. Our modern-day storytellers are shaping spirituality in movies. Take, for example, the highest-grossing movie of all time--Avatar (2009). Jake Sully, the hero, bows before a tree and prays to it, saying, “I’m probably just talking to a tree right now. But if you’re there, I need to give you a heads up.”<sup>14</sup> Whether the content is right or wrong, this is how modern oral communicators learn their spirituality. How should the church respond?

Learning-style preferences of secondary oral communicators have clearly shifted and not yet finished their evolution. Electronic

media are alienating those who know Christ from those who don't know Christ. The majority of the younger generations clearly prefer learning through oral means, mediated through electronic channels, rather than by the printed word and its structures. Are Christian leaders willing to engage the evolution with a discipling revolution?<sup>15</sup> This book brings together storying and discipleship within the secondary oral cultures of the United States, estimated at 50% for basic and below basic readers. This is an unprecedented resource that pulls on many interviews and real scenarios in churches, prisons, campuses, etc., where what they call "TruthSticks" methodology is clearly working to make disciples to the glory of God.<sup>16</sup>

Just as the telegraph gave way to the telephone and so on, change can come in many forms as the Holy Spirit leads those listening to His still, small voice. We must infuse the DNA of first-century disciple-making into the twenty-first century. This "DNA21 Discipleship Revolution"<sup>17</sup> brings with it risk and reward. "God is doing a fresh work in the twenty-first century," Avery Willis says, "by making us aware of communicating truth to primary and secondary oral learners."<sup>18</sup> By prioritizing the need to make disciples who are secondary oral learners, believers and church leaders alike will keep embracing the best means to make true disciples.

### **Biography**

**Mark Snowden**, speaker and global storying trainer, specializes in secondary orality. Along with co-authoring a number of publications on orality and developing an oral Bible for an unreached people group, Mark led in the development of the *Following Jesus* series and *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*. He also served as the Program Director for the annual workshop of the ION and has worked with the mission agencies of the SBC. He holds a MS in Communications Management and has studied at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Mark and his wife, Mary Leigh, live in Atlanta.

**Avery T. Willis, Jr.** is Executive Director of the International Orality Network. He is also a recognized international speaker, missionary, author, and conference leader. Well known for creating the *MasterLife* discipleship materials, he previously led the adult discipleship department for *LifeWay Christian Resources* and served as Senior Vice President for Overseas Operations of the International Mission Board, SBC. He has a BA from Oklahoma Baptist University, an MDiv and ThD from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and two honorary doctorates. Avery and his wife, Shirley, live in Arkansas.

## Section I: Processing Together

### Review (Learning)

There were several ideas presented in this section. Choose one you found interesting and share why it stood out to you.

How would you describe it to others? Are you using stories to describe it?

Share any further questions or comments you have.

### Reflect (Deepening)

Are there certain orality strategies already happening in your organization?

Is there an orality strategy that your organizational colleagues understand?

What are your colleagues' commitments to using orality strategies in your organization?

Are there several people who can champion, facilitate, and communicate the orality strategy? List them. Can they explain why it is important?



What barriers are you facing? What resistance do you anticipate?

What inconsistencies are there between what is important and what is actually done in your organization?

### **Resolve (Implementing)**

Are there people who need to be involved in embracing the process, but are currently not involved?

What are some things you or your organization needs to stop doing or to let go of?

We tend to move in an either/or orbit. How can we encourage more both/and thinking?

What are new ways to measure your growth?

How will you communicate this to various stakeholders? Will you use narratives/stories?

Will you update the new metrics regularly and talk openly about them?

In the next twelve to eighteen months, what are some practices you hope will be fully embraced by your organization?

# Section II: The Word Became Fresh

*Listen then to what  
the parable of the Sower means.  
- Matthew 13:18*

*What we are living in is a  
century of idea diffusion.  
- Seth Godin*

Ideas take time to spread and embed. They yearn for a nest to grow and a climate to flourish. To prevail, they must address today's questions and make a difference—and they need a culture that will stay with them until crucial tipping points are reached and new practices adopted.

Creating the right environment for growth is challenging. It cannot be done singularly, or as a one-time event. The right environment needs repeated cultivation and regular opportunities for participation. At the end of the last section we posed some questions on the process of change needed to embrace the philosophy and practice of oral mission. These questions asked you to consider thoughts like: *Who else needs to be involved in your discussions?*

*Where are the resistance points to change? How can things be measured differently? and Do you know the language of the heart in your setting so that you can communicate what differences orality will make?*

Ron Green, Executive Director of StoryRunners, an organization deeply committed to oral strategies in mission, has seen accelerated growth in the last five years in the number of Oral Bible Projects launched. Five years ago, StoryRunners had just nine projects underway; by 2009, this had already grown to sixty-two. Green recognizes that prayer and God's leading are together growing the ministry to oral communicators. He also shared that people in certain areas which have seldom responded to StoryRunners training are now immediately inviting them back because of effectiveness of using oral strategies. As Green describes it, "Orality is like a virus and is spreading very fast." His informed observation confirms research that shows the emergence of faith movements among many people groups, including previously hard-to-reach Muslim communities.<sup>1</sup> This is very encouraging.

The chapters in this section concentrate on oral strategies that are having a powerful effect among diverse people groups in very different geographical contexts around the world. You'll read how trusted colleagues have put oral ideas into practice and have seen God at work in impressive ways.

Come and step into their remarkable stories.



## Chapter 4

# Breakthroughs



*Elizabeth Wilson*



### **“How do you say this in Kahani?”**

It was about midday. I sat on our shaded concrete porch and watched determined villagers, wearing worn flip flops, trek along dusty paths that crisscrossed the surrounding foothills of the majestic Himalayan Mountains. At the other end of the porch, I listened as my colleague asked our language helper for the equivalent of three pictures (a square, a circle, and a triangle) in the local Kahani language. After taking a long look at the shapes, our language helper responded with these words:

*“Handkerchief” for square*

*“Chapatti” (round flat bread) for circle*

*“Mountain” for triangle*

It was at that moment that I first realized I was living among an oral people group tucked away in the mountains of South Asia. Being from a predominantly oral society, our language helper connected the abstract shapes with concrete items found in everyday life. Someone from a Western, literate tradition would probably have described these shapes as a square, a circle, and a triangle.

For an oral society, an abstract idea like “shapes” may have more of a “foreign” flavor, and be interpreted as something outside of their culture. So, the question then becomes, “How might the potentially foreign-sounding truths of Scripture, such as grace and forgiveness, be transformed into an understandable form for an oral society? How can God’s truth reach these groups in such a way that they can truly connect?”

### **A glimpse into a cross-cultural storytelling project**

About ten years ago, when I first began to seek where God was calling me to serve Him, He ignited a fire inside of me for India. Over the years, He has fanned the flame of that fire so that my passion goes beyond this country to the rest of the world so that I am praying for the many untouched people groups to be reached with His story in their own language. Just thinking of this task is daunting, but I have seen firsthand that through Him all things are possible.

In September 2005, my colleague and I moved from the United States to South Asia. For two years, we lived with the Kahani people group, and by God’s grace ultimately provided them with a set of twenty-nine biblically accurate, culturally relevant, retellable, oral Bible stories in their own heart language.

Several months after engaging in village life (which included cutting grass in the fields, chasing monkeys away from the fruit trees, carrying buckets of water on our heads, and soaking in as much language as possible), my partner and I moved into a larger town and began crafting stories with the local people.

“Maybe you can just try to tell what you heard,” I suggested to Anne, a Kahani village girl we had met through a local pastor. Due to our minimal language skills and the fact that we were still learning what was meant by “crafting stories,” my colleague and I made many mistakes during those first story-crafting sessions. One mistake was allowing Anne (pseudonym), our story crafter, to read the national language Scripture passage herself. Good practice would have been to present her with an oral presentation of the passage (which was previously recorded by someone else) in the national language. The outcome of that first storytelling session was a well memorized, fairly

straightforward translation from the national language Scriptures into the Kahani language. Anne's first recording may have been biblically accurate, but it was certainly not something that could be retold or even adequately understood by someone unfamiliar with the passage.

### **Cutting grass and crafting stories—another (better!) storying session**

As time went on, we learned more of the language and discovered good story-crafting techniques. Most of our story crafters resulted from friendships with neighbors or shopkeepers. One of these friends was Grace (pseudonym), the niece of our unbelieving neighbor.

One day, Grace and I spent a few hours cutting grass by the river near her village. After we returned to the village, we sat down on a wooden table that is used as a bed and started crafting the story of David and Goliath. We listened to the passage of Scripture that had been recorded earlier in the national language by another neighbor. I asked Grace what parts she liked best and least. We talked about how her mother or brother might interpret this story and why she thought it might be important for Kahani people.



Grace's cousins came into the room and drew pictures with pencils as we listened to the Scripture again. Grace began to picture the story in her mind. After having tea, she told the story from what she remembered. Shortly thereafter, we went to her sister-in-law's home, just a footpath away, and sat on her roof (it was warmer in the sunshine than inside the house). Grace's sister-in-law listened to the story and laughed when she heard Goliath's description. She explained that the word Grace had used to describe Goliath meant that he was indeed tall, but also skinny, like a telephone or totem pole. Grace's sister-in-law gave us a few natural phrases to use to describe Goliath. The next day, before heading to my home in the town, I asked Grace to tell the story one more time

and I recorded it. The storying session over the course of two days resulted in a more natural and learnable story.

### **Stories evoke important cultural insights**

After recording a story, my partner and I met with other Kahani friends to listen to the story and double-check the content. We attached “anchors,” or Scripture references, to each section to ensure that each phrase was biblically accurate. I then took the recorded story to test with local Kahani people. We wanted to see if people who had never heard the story could understand it correctly and retell it easily.

One day, I sat on our concrete roof with a neighbor. We had just finished listening to the recorded story of David and Bathsheba and I asked her, “Do you think it was good that God forgave David for what he did?” She responded, “How could God forgive him? And why would He forgive him? I’ve been arguing with my sister for fifteen years, and we would never forgive each other because we would just fight again. What’s the point?”

Most Kahani people, including my neighbor, are high-caste Hindus and rarely practice forgiveness. Taking that into consideration, we developed David’s character by including four stories about him. We tried to show that even though David was in a high position (like the Brahmin Hindu), he still sinned. And yet, because God is so caring, He forgave David.

People began to see that forgiveness was important, but they still didn’t see how God, who is just, could forgive such a big sin. We asked several people how we could describe God’s character to show that He was undeniably capable of forgiving. Several Kahani friends suggested a phrase that means “God’s heart is very big.” We adjusted the story and tested it again. The response ultimately was, “Yes, it is clear that God was able to forgive David, and it is good that He forgave him.”

### **Who will tell the stories after we leave?**

On a rainy January day, a little more than midway through the project, a few Kahani believers from surrounding areas gathered in a cold, drafty room of an old building. It was the first of three

workshops that were held to help local believers learn about the storying work and how to pass on the stories after we left. Without a Bible in their local language, these believers typically used the national language to share about God. However, it was through this first workshop, conducted completely in the everyday language, that they realized they could talk about God in their own mother tongue!

A few months later, at the second workshop, the wife of a man who attended the first one told me,

*My husband used to preach using a Bible. This is a foreign idea for many of our illiterate neighbors and villagers. He also taught in the national language that no one uses on a daily basis. Now he tells stories in the local language. The villagers want to hear more, and say that the message is for them because it is in their own language.*

Near the end of our project, during the third workshop, twenty-nine approved and recorded Kahani stories were presented to the local evangelists in the form of CDs and cassettes. The training focused on starting story fellowship groups, where the local believers could use the stories to disciple new believers and attract unbelievers. As a result, several of the participants are now using their own mother tongue when sharing with others, and have included the stories in their strategy for reaching the Kahani area.

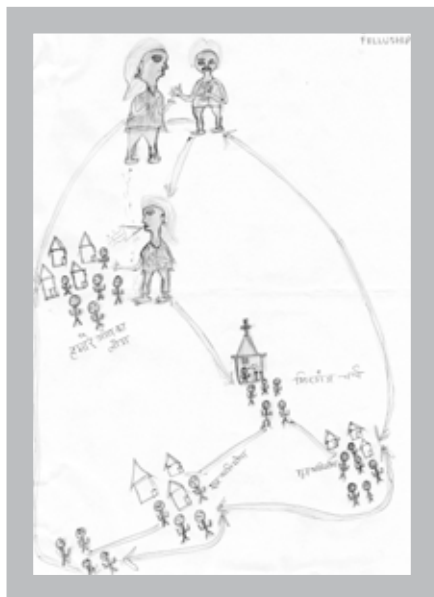
### **Taking the story to my own people—mother tongue storying projects**

God led me next to a northern region in South Asia, where six language communities represent about sixty-five million people. The area is considered backward due to the low literacy rate. These six groups have limited or no access to Scriptures in their own mother tongue. My role was to coordinate six mother tongue teams as they crafted Bible stories orally into their own heart languages.

#### **“The stories make it so easy!”**

After re-recording one of his stories, one man, Oscar (pseudonym), from the mountain team, said,





*These stories have helped me share the gospel like I've never been able to do before. Last week, I told the story of Jonah, and an unbeliever heard that God forgives those who do wrong, which is something missing in his cultural worldview. After the story, this friend asked, "Will God also forgive me?" Before I knew these stories, I couldn't find a way to explain these things in a conversation, but the stories make it very easy, and people understand when they hear the truth.*

Near the end of the project, I asked Ben, another local member of our team, if he had been able to tell the stories in his village on a regular basis. He pulled aside a napkin that was on the table and drew a circle. Then he drew five lines stemming out of the circle and drew other circles at the end of each line. Stemming from each of those five circles, he drew more lines and more circles. He said, "This is what we are doing—I teach my wife the story and then she tells the story to a group. Then a few people from that group take the story to another group, and a few people from that group take the story to another group." I wanted to cry as Ben drew this example of true multiplication of God's story among those who have never heard it before in their own language. This is one of the main goals of storying projects, and a real answer to prayer!

### **Biography**

*Elizabeth Wilson, a graduate of the University of Delaware, USA, majored in English as a Second Language and taught in the public school system. In 2005, she joined Wycliffe Bible Translators to work with the OneStory Program in Southern Asia. Elizabeth crafted twenty-nine biblically accurate, culturally relevant, oral Bible stories for the Kahani people. Later, she coordinated six mother tongue teams as they completed oral story projects in their own languages. Currently, Elizabeth is consulting with story teams, training mother tongue teams, and developing OneStory's two-year cross-cultural program.*



## Chapter 5

# Oral People and the Spoken Word

*Ralph Danita*



### **Oral communication of God's truth**

Oral storytelling has a long history in many people groups. In some cultures, stories are the principal means of communicating community history and values. These stories can evoke strong, deeply emotional reactions from the listeners. Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost is an ancient example of a moving oral recounting of a people's history. After he told the sad story of God's struggle with His chosen people, Israel, those in the audience were "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37). Nearly three thousand people responded to his call to repentance that day. Stephen told a different audience the same story, and he too evoked a strong response, and was dragged out of the city and stoned to death! In each case, the listeners heard God's truth, processed it at a heart level, and then made a decisive response.

This chapter describes a church-planting project in Muslim North Africa, in which evangelism, discipleship, leadership training, and reproduction of new house churches are all driven by storytelling.

This project is supported by the OneStory Partnership.<sup>1</sup> While we are still in the development phase with this particular people group, it has already yielded surprising results. Our goal is to see sustainable, reproducing house churches that have access to the riches of God's Word through stories told in their heart language.

### **A quick peek at a typical onestory house group**

A typical story group in our Muslim North African setting takes place in someone's living room. Monica (pseudonym), who has become a follower of Jesus after being raised in a Muslim home, has several friends over from work and from her neighborhood. She has shared her faith with these friends in the past, but with little evidence of interest and no response. Recently, however, Monica's friends have been gathering at her house each week to hear Bible stories told by a storyteller. Each week, the storytelling time follows the same simple pattern. After visiting with the people for a while, the storyteller begins by saying, "Today, I'd like to tell you a story from God's Word..."

The first time the group met, the story began at the beginning, when God created the world and Adam and Eve. After the three or four-minute story, each person tried to repeat the story for the group. Although it was difficult for the first person retelling the story, it was a lot of fun. By the time everyone had taken their turn, each knew the story perfectly. Then the storyteller asked a few simple questions such as, "What did you like about the story?" She asked the same five questions every week. Usually the discussion between the participants went on for an hour or more as they examined God's truth and their own hearts, looking together for God's answers to their own heart questions. If the storyteller was asked a question, she just repeated the relevant part of the story and asked them to



answer the question themselves. Sometimes she answered questions by telling another story altogether. While Monica was learning a lot, it wasn't because the storyteller was teaching them. The stories themselves were the lesson. Each time the storyteller returned, she told another story. Each time, everyone retold the story until they all got it right. And the discussions were becoming very, very interesting.

The third week's story was about Cain and Abel. Vera (pseudonym), a doctor, could relate to Cain. She had tried to please God as a Muslim, and yet she knew in her heart that she had failed. God, as she had known about Him in Islam, was very far away—and so great and important that He couldn't possibly care about her personal struggles. Yet in these stories, she saw that God cared deeply and was reaching out to people, even those like Cain. Could He reach out to her, too? During the discussion time, she asked this same question, and several others joined in to talk about how God seemed to care, love, and relate to the people He had created. Vera shared that deep in her heart she wanted God to reach out to her, like He had reached out to Cain. In response, the storyteller told her another story, this one about the Messiah who died so that God's desire for a relationship with her could be a reality.

Vera decided then and there that she would accept Jesus as her Lord and Savior. And she was not alone. As she prayed to receive Jesus, another person in the group was also mouthing the words to the prayer. Jasmine (pseudonym) was a single mother who had not completed high school. Life had been hard and unfair for her, and now she wanted to give all her pain and disappointment to Jesus and follow Him. This was a special day for the group, and especially for Vera and Jasmine. They could hardly wait to go home to tell the Cain and Abel story to their own friends, and they hoped the storyteller could come back soon. Monica was elated to see her friends finally know the joy she herself had found in Jesus. These friends continue to meet together each week with several other believers and are forming a new house church.

While this group experienced dramatic results after only a few stories, this is by no means exceptional. Young and old, men and

women, illiterate farm girls and university students...each has found Jesus through listening to Bible stories told to them and their friends.

### **Why does this approach work so well?**

Why are simple, three-minute Bible stories so effective with a people group that has resisted the Gospel for over 1,300 years? We know that the Word of God is sharper than any sword: “It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). Scriptures are available in classical Arabic, but are difficult for most people to understand. For this people group, their mother tongue is a North African dialect of Arabic far removed from the classical language of literature. Stories in the mother tongue communicate God’s truth in a way that cuts right to the heart.

It is not just the oral nature of storytelling that makes these groups so effective for leading people to Jesus. Every time the group meets, everyone who comes learns the story by heart, and retells it to the group themselves. The retellings are very important, motivating the listeners to think deeply about every phrase. With everyone knowing the story by heart, the discussion following is invariably deep, provocative, and life-changing. This is where the biblical truths of the story are examined and applied to the listeners’ hearts and lives. Using the same simple questions to start the discussion each week allows the listeners to address their own heart issues, rather than being forced to answer questions to which someone else thought they ought to have answers. It also frees everyone who learns the story to lead their own story group.

There is another strategic reason each person is required to retell the story he or she hears from the storyteller: once he or she has learned and retold the story with his or her group, the person is ready to go out and tell the story again to his or her own family and social groupings. Even before people decide to follow Jesus, we find them telling each week’s story enthusiastically to friends and family.

One reason for the effectiveness of the OneStory approach is that the stories we tell do not come from a standardized list. The

stories that “make the cut” for a people group’s story set must address why this particular people group has not yet responded to the Good News. The issues Muslims have with the Gospel are different from those atheists or Buddhists might have, so they need to hear different stories.

Muslims, for example, have a defective concept of sin. In Islam, sin is more like what we would call a mistake. They do not typically yearn for a restored relationship with God, because they don’t think this is even possible or desirable. Islam is a works-based religion. Without an awareness of the problem of sin breaking our relationship with God’s love, Muslims see no need for Jesus to die on the cross, and the Gospel is “foolishness.” In fact, 1 Corinthians 1:23 says, “But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”

Arguing with Muslims about the meaning of sin or the nature of God has rarely been fruitful in my experience. Yet, simple Bible stories bring God’s truth about these stumbling blocks deep into people’s hearts. The story presents the truth, the retelling cements it at the heart level, and the discussion leads the listener to wrestle deeply with what he or she has heard. It is a very powerful process.

### **The mechanics of establishing and multiplying groups**

As effective as these stories are in leading people to Jesus, OneStory is not simply an evangelism tool. Bible stories communicated orally are equally effective in discipleship and leadership development, and for all the same reasons. Story groups can and should develop into house churches, led initially by the storyteller. Since each member of the group knows all the stories by heart, spiritual growth is often rapid and deep. And because each member of the group has already told each story to his or her home group, it is not too big a leap for



one of the group members to begin a story group with his or her own friends or family. The same five questions are used to facilitate the discussions each week, so no further training is required beyond the experience of participating in a group. Everyone who has been part of a story group has already experienced how God touched their own heart. Many have also experienced firsthand how to plant a house church. Using short, simple stories and the five simple questions, they see God at work right in their own living room. If it can happen in Monica's living room, why not in yours or mine? Every story group has what it needs to help start new story groups. They know the stories, they know the discussion questions, and they've seen the results in their own lives.

### **Conclusion**

In our North African setting, the Gospel has made very little headway until quite recently. While our OneStory project has not yet completed its full panorama of Bible stories targeted for our people group, it has been surprisingly fruitful. Because they are simple, easily reproducible, and effective across socioeconomic boundaries, orally-shared Bible stories, told in small groups following the pattern described above, may be the tool God uses to reach this people group for His glory.

### **Biography**

*Ralph N. Danita (pseudonym) is a missionary with the International Mission Board, SBC. He and his family have been serving in the Middle East and North Africa since 1989, and are currently using stories to plant local house churches. The Danitas have four grown daughters.*



## Chapter 6

# Living Out a Visual Story



*Paula Dubill*

Sometimes we think of communication mostly in terms of words. Oral communication then brings to mind the spoken word, or perhaps preaching or teaching. This is the idea we envision when we think of taking the Gospel to the nations. However, we have also heard the common saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” In the Bible, there were many instances where God spoke clearly in pictures or visual images (e.g., a burning bush and a pillar of cloud or fire<sup>1</sup>). Jesus also used a variety of images to communicate clearly with His followers. Sometimes they were physical visuals such as the vine or the bread, or when He drew in the sand; sometimes they were word pictures frequently seen in His use of metaphors. How many times did He say the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, the wind, etc.? There are still many ways God communicates and reveals Himself in images today. Let’s look at how the visual arts are being employed to spread the gospel effectively in different cultures today.

### **God’s love and visual communication**

God is love and His love penetrates to the deepest places



of the heart, even when verbal communication is not received or comprehended. Visual communication is a powerful means of giving a voice to the voiceless. The act of creating through art enables others to speak, have a voice, and express often unacknowledged feelings. Especially in environments of poverty, loss, and neglect, art is extremely effective in helping to set individuals free by valuing and affirming each person through the process. By the act of creating, victims are able to speak, especially if through neglect or abuse they find themselves unable to verbalize. They are able to “own” their art piece and take pride in something they themselves have made or “said.” Moreover, when the created art piece is valued, it is a reflection of their Father in heaven’s heart toward them.

Visual art is a powerful way to enable the participants to remember God’s Word and character. If they see it, hear it, and do it, they will remember it. This is particularly effective with the children and teens I have encountered in South African prisons. Many cannot read. I became aware that in order to reach these people, I had to find ways to help them remember the things of God. A number of these children were victims of fetal alcohol syndrome and most were also victims of severe abuse and neglect. In addition, many of the children were also addicted to glue-sniffing, drugs, and alcohol. They needed to have a sensory experience which would help anchor God’s truths in their minds and hearts.

Alternate means of communication are common in this area. Many peoples in Africa express themselves through oral cultures. These are children from the “colored” ethnic group (i.e., a mixed-race population group, primarily descending from the earliest settlers and the indigenous peoples, especially as distinguished during apartheid from Blacks, Asians, or Whites).<sup>2</sup> In this particular environment, the children are in a reformatory prison setting. They are confined to their cells unless they are able to attend a short morning school program or extracurricular activity offered by someone like myself, with my teams who accompany me on these visits.

I turned to Mauricio, an artist missionary friend visiting from Mexico, and explained to him that the children needed to know that



there was a “Daddy God” who loved them and wanted them to belong to Him. Mauricio did a large wall painting of God’s huge hands holding a small boy inside of them. While he did this, he shared his personal testimony by telling stories of how God met him and changed his life. He explained how God enabled him to forgive his abuser and then how he, in turn,

led his abuser to Christ. When the painting was completed, we shared the Scripture from Isaiah 49:16 of how our names are engraved on the palms of God’s hands. Then I invited the boys to place themselves in God’s hands, by faith. Because they had been working on a project to make an art design using their names as the centerpiece, they brought those—designed in small, colorful pictures—and we glued the pictures to the large painting of God’s hands. Every boy chose to participate and one by one they symbolically placed their names in the hands of God. When I questioned the boys the following week about the stories we shared on that occasion, they could recount the stories back to me.

Another very powerful art project was also inspired by the Holy Spirit. I received clear direction to wash the boys’ feet, targeting a very hardened group of older individuals, who were thirteen and fourteen years of age. I decided that we would paint their feet, allowing them to choose the colors, and then print their footprints on a large painting. This art project would allow us to introduce the concept of washing their feet (just as Jesus did for His disciples) and pray over them as we did so.

Mauricio did a large painting of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet and we shared the story from Scripture while he went to work on it. We even described how Judas had his feet washed, even though he was going to betray Jesus. They all understood about betrayal—each had betrayed others or been betrayed themselves. We asked them to name those who were serving them in their lives. Then

we posed the question, “Are you serving others?” A meaningful discussion followed.

I watched their faces as I issued the invitation for them to have their feet painted and to choose the colors themselves. I explained that if they wanted us to, we would wash their feet and then pray for them afterwards. Grins began to spread across these hardened faces. It was one of the most beautiful things I had ever seen. When they were having their feet washed, all agreed to receive prayer. We then invited volunteers to paint and wash our feet, so they could know that their Daddy God was approachable and wanted them to interact with Him. So many boys wanted to wash our feet that I had to organize one boy per foot during the process.

Again and again I have observed the profound impact of visual art in such settings. By using sensory methods, an unforgettable experience of God’s love is forged. Methods such as those that involve receiving and giving touch, the act of storytelling (hearing), and the visual and sensory stimulation of utilizing art materials in the memory-building process will engage the mind and enter the heart, bypassing the ingrained defense mechanisms. In a fun, delightful context, God’s truth is shared and remembered. Hearts are changed as the story of God’s love becomes real to them.



### **Biography**

*Paula Dubill, artist and lecturer, travels worldwide training individuals to use creativity and visual arts as catalysts for relationship and healing. Her MFA degree in Printmaking from Indiana University has opened many unusual ministry doors. In some thirty countries she has shared artwork, teaching skills, and art therapy with the disadvantaged and marginalized. Refugee children in the Thai jungle, detention homes for teens, traumatized burn and riot victims, and prisons are all venues for Paula’s visual arts ministry. From Singapore to South Africa, and now in Virginia, USA, Paula continues her ministry through writing and painting.*

# Chapter 7

## Stepping Stones to Reaching Orissa's Oral Culture



*Roy and Sheryl Wingerd*

In one day, seven families listened to the story of the resurrection. Through the story, they understood who Jesus was and openly committed their lives to Him. The following week, they started a new house church in their own village. Today, they continue to learn about Jesus through other stories of the Bible.

Reports like this are becoming commonplace through a new and growing network in the East Indian state of Orissa. Church leaders and field workers attend monthly training on topics related to building a church-planting movement that aims at transforming the community. Oral communication has become the essential approach for training at all levels, from mission leaders to local believers.

The testimonies of what is happening give compelling evidence of the power of story. At a recent training session I asked for volunteers to share their experiences of communicating with oral learners. They had gone through one three-day training on the importance and process of Chronological Bible Storying. One worker immediately jumped up and told this story. He recounted that on the first Sunday after the training he decided not to preach, but instead put into practice what he had learned. That Sunday happened to be

Easter, so he told the story of Jesus' resurrection and what it meant. He had invited several families from the majority religion, and he began by asking a question, "Why do we take Sunday, the first day of the week, as a day off?"

To answer the question, he told them the stories of what happened nearly two thousand years ago on one particular Sunday. He followed with other questions to help the people discover that Jesus had to suffer and die and be raised again, according to the Scriptures. They also observed how many people had seen Jesus after He was raised. Then he explained that this is why the followers of Jesus are so committed to telling everyone about him. Seven of the families responded, "We finally understand who Jesus is and what Christianity is all about. Now we want to follow Jesus, too."

### **Orissa's oral culture challenge**

This testimony illustrates the growing awareness of oral culture, leading to more effective communication of the Gospel. In Orissa, Christian workers face challenges due to the high percentage of illiterate and functionally non-literate people. The 2001 census reports a high literacy rate, yet many people classified as literate do not really understand what they read. In fact, it is estimated that more than 80% are functionally non-literate. The way they receive and understand information and make life-guiding decisions is what defines them as an oral culture. This reality posed a significant problem for the spread of the gospel.

In 2006, I met with church and mission leaders across Orissa to discuss issues that were most significant to them in enlarging the kingdom. Their most pressing training needs fell into four main categories: house church strategies, prayer and prayer walking, leadership development and mentoring, and marriage and family transformation. Few church leaders seemed to recognize that one of the biggest issues they faced was the need to understand how to communicate effectively with an oral culture. Fewer still seemed to see this as a problem or to have an intuitive sense of what to do about it.

Many church planters shared that a *primary* means they were using for starting ministry in new villages was *tract* distribution. Their own reports indicated the tracts often meant nothing to the non-reading villagers except for arousing suspicion about a foreign religion. And the church planters had many stories of rejection and abuse to prove it.

### **Integrating paradigms, principles, and practices**

Eventually, however, oral communication emerged as a vital area of training equal in importance with other issues. On behalf of church planters and leaders in Orissa, my wife, Sheryl, and I began to explore what resources were available to help them develop skills in this area. We scrutinized various materials, looking for principles and practices that seemed to fit the context of Orissa, and began learning from various experts in the field. We had known Rev. S. D. Ponraj and his wife, Sheila, for many years, and of their oral communication training in the state of Bihar. When the opportunity arose, we attended a one-week training led by Dan Vannelli of Scriptures in Use (SIU),<sup>1</sup> which was the basic approach used in Bihar. The training provided a foundation for understanding how to communicate stories effectively. It helped us to understand the cycle of storytelling from stone clearing and seed sowing, to watering and harvesting and then on to leadership development. Oral communication could be used effectively throughout this entire cycle.

Dorothy Miller introduced us to Simply the Story.<sup>2</sup> Her approach emphasized two key principles: (1) telling “whole stories” as they are recorded in the Bible is the “simple” foundation and (2) using stories and questions to help people discover biblical truths and treasures is the strategy that unleashes the power of self discovery. The Training of Trainers course, led by Stan Rowland of Medical Ambassadors (now called LifeWind),<sup>3</sup> used in the context of Community Health Evangelism, was also useful. Jim Slack’s writing explained the principle of Chronological Bible Storying,<sup>4</sup> and Bruce Graham added to our worldview understanding, outlining the core questions all cultures address that form the basis of their worldview.

### **Putting the puzzle together**

We began integrating these principles in January 2007. We invited Sheila Ponraj and a gifted Bihari storyteller, Lal Bihari Mukhiya, to participate in a spiritual retreat with one hundred leaders from thirty-nine missions in Orissa. The retreat introduced basic training on all the topics (including oral communication) of major interest to Orissa church leaders. Participants expressed an urgent need to develop a training program they could use at regional and grassroots levels. Around the same time several of the leaders in Orissa worked with Dorothy Miller's team to record God's Story in the Oriyan language. A couple of these later attended Simply the Story training and several others attended training on Community Health Evangelism.<sup>5</sup> This helped us build a team of master trainers to begin training at regional levels.

Over the next year we developed a new training program with this team. The state was divided into ten zones. Eight topics were selected for three-day training events in each zone, with one or two topics taught each month. The topics included oral communication, prayer, house church strategy, family transformation, body life, mentoring leaders, community health education, and self-help group administration. Each topic was covered at least twice a year, since most adults do not learn new approaches in one sitting. This allows for repetition and ongoing discussion.

Currently, three hundred mission leaders and regional coordinators from fifty-six missions are receiving training. The aim is to train the leaders through the same methods they themselves must use when they train oral learners in their fields. This way, they do not have to figure out on their own how to switch learning styles from a literate approach to an oral approach. Six of the topics—including oral communication, prayer, house church strategy, mentoring leaders, family transformation and body life—now have modules and story lists in place.

### **Testimonies from oral communication**

At the close of one training session, a pastor said, "I have

been preaching sermons for years to the non-literate people in my congregations and have never once interacted with them to see if they understood and remembered what they heard.” Mission leader Ashok Kumar Suna says, “I used to carry my Bible with me when I visited the villages. It always raised questions. Now, I carry the stories in my head and I have no problem.” Nimal Kumar, another leader, expressed, “People no longer see me as a pastor, but as a storyteller.”

Albert Palo, zonal coordinator for a major organization, says,

*We present all our lessons using stories. The people keep the stories in their minds and they share them with others. Workers are leading their churches using the stories. This has greatly affected our communities. Offerings have increased from 50% of the people giving to 75%.*

Sister Ashalata, wife of mission leader Abeda Nayak, told about the impact storytelling had during the outbreak of violence and persecution in Orissa in August 2008:

*The Lord used the story of Abraham to prepare His people for the crisis. In the church, they had been telling the story of Abraham and teaching, “You must be willing to give all for Christ, just as Abraham was willing to kill his son.” The Christians had this on their minds and held on to it when the crisis came.*

Oral communication is having a tremendous impact in prayer, leading to multiplying house churches and prayer cells. Sister Jharna attended a training session where she learned how to pray by understanding the Lord’s Prayer. She says that in eight months she taught over five hundred women to pray the Lord’s Prayer, especially asking Him to give them their daily bread. One group of eleven women had been barren for at least eight years. After hearing the stories on prayer, they prayed, and within a few months all of them became pregnant. Sister Jharna has now helped start 150 house churches and 60 prayer cells through her storytelling.

John Victor, pastor of a main church with several smaller congregations, says his congregations never had a pattern of giving for missions until we shared stories about giving from the New



Testament. They decided to dedicate the offering on every third Sunday of the month specifically to missions. After a year and a half, their average giving has increased from INR (India rupees) 100 to INR 1,200 per month.

During a recent training on mentoring, there was an extraordinary response to stories from Matthew 20 and 23 on Jesus' pattern of leadership. The participants explored the meaning using simple questions. The next day, a spontaneous time of confession and repentance broke out and the translator himself was so convicted that he excused himself from translating.

From January 2007 to November 2009, leaders from 40 organizations reported starting 3,807 new gatherings of believers and reaching 33,756 new followers of Jesus. Oral communication was a major contributor in approximately 50% of these results. These brief reports reflect a small part of the impact that storytelling is having.

The next steps for further development of oral communication in Orissa must focus on developing more and better stories lists for a growing number of issues and areas. We are greatly encouraged to see the progress made in only three years as a growing number of leaders and workers embrace these principles. As more church leaders own the challenges of oral culture in Orissa, we fully expect to see much greater impact for the kingdom.



### **Biography**

*Rev. Roy A. Wingerd Jr. is Founder of South Asia Now and works in partnership with the Foundation for International Research and Education (F.I.R.E.) to develop a model holistic movement in Orissa, India. Roy served with OCI from 1982 to 1989. From 1989 to 2005, he served Dawn Ministries as Director of Research and South Asia Coordinator. He has a BA in Religious Studies from Westmont College, and an honorary MA in Christian Ministry from Open College of Biblical Studies and Missions in Nagpur, India. He lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with his wife, Sheryl, and their daughter, Melanie, son-in-law, Curtis, and grandchildren, Elizabeth and Corin.*

## Chapter 8



# Media that Transforms Nations

*Calvin and Carol Conkey*



### **Media—by all possible means!**

Small roadside fires lit our way as we walked dusty cobblestone lanes in the foothills of India's Himalayas late one cold winter night. As we passed villagers squatting around steamy pots of rice and lentils, and women selling meals to local passersby, we saw flashing lights in the distance, and followed the path. Entering a dingy room, we saw an unlikely sight: several Tibetan youth crowded over video arcade games. The next shop held floor-to-ceiling videos, including *Back to the Future 2*, which at that time had not been released to theaters in America! Media had captured the attention of these remote, unreached people.

### **Crafting the message**

Since we started the media ministry Create International in 1989, the many accounts we've received have convinced us of the essential role of media in discipling the nations. From the interest stirred by new technologies like iPods, to the heart response to a

message communicated through traditional art forms, the Spirit-led use of media to impact individuals and nations is an enormous factor in our effectiveness to fulfill Jesus' mandate to disciple the nations. The test of effective media is in seeing souls enter the Kingdom of God and communities transformed. Here's a story of how media and technology are being used in discipling remote and unreached people around the world.

### Case study: the Komering of Indonesia

Not long ago, a short-term ministry team nervously stepped into the small home of a Muslim family in the highly restricted area of South Sumatra, Indonesia. The two team members sat on the only stools available as the others gathered around on the dirt floor. Through an interpreter, they explained that they had come to show a new video in the Komering language. The family smiled approval and removed a lace cloth to reveal a large television set. As the visitors silently prayed that their video would be a powerful testimony, the family's excitement grew with the anticipation of seeing a video in their own language for the first time.

The father watched skeptically as the culturally adapted video of the "Prodigal Son" began, but he kept inching closer to the screen as the story unfolded. As the truths of Christ's sacrifice and the great love of God were explained in their own heart language, everyone in the room watched intently. At the end, the father's nose was nearly touching the screen as he exclaimed excitedly, "This is the very first movie I have seen in my own language and I like it very much. Everything in it is true."

In response to the family's open hearts, the team provided follow-up through long-term missionaries; as a result, home fellowships were formed to study



the life of Jesus. There is now an indigenous Komerang church in Sumatra—the least evangelized island in the world. Stories like this one point to the fruitfulness of developing contextualized media tools for unreached peoples. Below we will look at four defining aspects of our ministry: our goal, vision, strategy, and process.

### **The goal**

Our goal is to produce culturally specific evangelistic and mobilization communication materials for all of the least evangelized mega-people groups of the world. Special priority will be given to these 194 unreached people groups with a population over one million.

### **The vision**

The vision for nation-discipling is to see men and women reconciled to God, released into their gifting, and finding their place in fulfilling the Great Commission. They will do so as they are free to worship and work through their individual cultural expressions in order to impact their own people group and see transformation in every sphere of their shared life.

### **Case study: the Turks of Turkey**

A critical stage in the process for an individual or a people group is moving from the salvation experience into growing as a Christian. As we wrestled with the needs of new believers, God led us to use the same principles we had used in creating evangelistic films. Our plan was to develop a DVD depicting a Turkish home fellowship in a Turkish home, with believers dressed in local clothing and speaking Turkish.

After creating the DVD, we were filming an evangelistic drama for the Turks and we noticed several of the actors excitedly reading a major Turkish magazine. To our surprise, we saw shots of our home fellowship film as illustrations for one of the feature articles in this nationwide magazine. The actors translated the articles for us,

describing the recent home church movement in Turkey in a positive manner! We were a little nervous that this massive publicity might deter the Turkish believers' participation in this present film. Instead, one of them declared, "It is positive; the media is doing the job for us!" Because our film was very Turkish and adapted to the culture, the local media and Muslim leaders were open to receiving the presentation into their society.

### **The process**

In creating any new communication piece, the process begins with an invitation from field workers and nationals to ensure that the media tools will be used and that there is a distribution plan for ongoing usage. Much time is spent prayerfully hearing God's direction for what media tools to develop, as well as for the overall message to reach the intended people group.

Creating communication pieces is a partnership between the Holy Spirit and us. As we do the research, we are continually in prayer, asking the Lord to give us revelation about the people and the keys to reaching them. As we pray, God highlights the key for that time and group from the research we've done. Every script is tailor-made for the specific audience. In the scripting process, our team addresses community issues such as revenge killings, ancestor worship, and stealing. The salvation message is interwoven in a drama of conflict and resolution.

Local cultural advisors are vital to the film's authenticity. We look for a local person (preferably, but not necessarily, a believer) who is not highly westernized and has a great love for his or her culture. If we're able to find more than one, we look for men and women in a range of ages and from various walks of life. This whole process of preparation is extensive, but vital.<sup>1</sup>

### **Selecting the media**

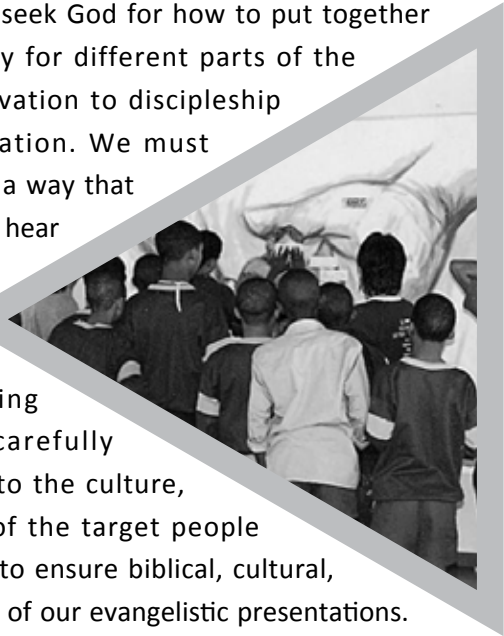
After selecting a message, the next step is to select the media which will have the greatest impact. Options range from the

“wow” of new technology to the comfort and authority of familiar art forms. It’s also vital to seek God for how to put together different media effectively for different parts of the process, ranging from salvation to discipleship to community transformation. We must package the Good News in a way that our target people group can hear with understanding and pass on with accuracy.

Create International is committed to producing presentations that are carefully researched and sensitive to the culture, symbols, and worldview of the target people group. Great care is taken to ensure biblical, cultural, and linguistic accuracy in all of our evangelistic presentations.

Create International is also committed to working with the missionaries on the field to determine the most appropriate media forms to use—whether they be videos, tracts, audio recordings, illustrated flip charts, dramas, etc. This is strategically significant for reaching unreached peoples and nations.

Among the more familiar forms of media are film, radio, Internet, mobile phone, satellite, and microchip players. Film is a powerful medium that attracts a wide audience; it is a community activity, and is cost effective. Radio is giving way to Internet and satellite, which enable us to be in touch with people thousands of miles away in an instant. In many countries, Internet usage is doubling every one hundred days, and even in impoverished countries many people go online in various ways (Internet cafes, schools, etc).<sup>2</sup> Less well-known are solar-powered microchip players, only the size of a credit card, which provide audio Bible stories with no need for electricity and can be programmed in any language.<sup>3</sup> Media doesn’t have to be high-tech, just appropriate.



### Case study: Tibetan Buddhists

Tibetans portray their Buddhist teachings in a circular type of artwork called a *thangka* painting. A missionary working among the Tibetans in Nepal gave the Gospel of Luke to a professional *thangka*

painter and asked him to paint what he read. In the typical circular format, the *thangka* depicted the life of Christ with meticulous clarity showing the birth, miracles, teachings, last supper, death on the cross, burial, resurrection, and ascension. The artist clearly presented how Jesus, coming from the outside, broke through the futility of the “Karma chain” by his resurrection.



We utilized this local medium in one of our evangelistic films for Tibetan Buddhists. After viewing it, Tibetans ask questions like: “Jesus can really liberate me?” “There are other Tibetans who believe in Jesus?” and “How can I become a believer in this Jesus?”<sup>4</sup> To add to the excitement, the painter of the *thangka* became a Christian and is walking with the Lord today.<sup>5</sup>

This case study illustrates an important principle: to be effective communicators, we must not only translate what we want to say into the appropriate language, but also communicate our message using the appropriate cultural symbols so that our audience is able to understand it readily. Contextual media is also the best form to ensure continued use by the target audience.

### From evangelism to church planting: discipling new believers

Video discipleship tools are being created to help new believers of a particular people group understand how to start contextual home fellowships that are both faithful to Scripture and relevant to their culture. The response has been dramatic. The local actors,

themselves believers from a Muslim background, told us that these films would also be very effective for evangelism, which has proven to be true for many people.

In South Sumatra, a new believer was viewing the contextual worship video with his wife, who was not yet a believer. After the presentation, his wife exclaimed, “If that is what you have been talking about, then yes, I am interested. I could worship Jesus like that!” One of the participants in the film, an actual church-planting leader in the community, showed the Indonesian contextual film to the Islamic evangelistic association in his area. After



viewing the film, one of the Muslim leaders said, “I believe in *Isa al Masih* [Jesus the anointed Savior]. How can I become a believer and be baptized?”

One of the greatest hindrances for Muslims to come to Christ is their preconceived idea about the nature and practice of Christians. If they can see that there are followers of Jesus who look like and worship like they do, they see how they too can be a part of this new family—a family that loves and follows the teachings of Jesus (*Isa* in Arabic) and that remains “fully submitted to God” (the call of all Muslims). God knew that this type of presentation was just what many Muslims were waiting to see and hear.

### **Putting it all together**

Technologies are being increasingly integrated, and this convergence will spark a revolution in how we see and interact with our world. As Christians and communicators of the Good News, we must constantly seek to utilize all forms of technology, and take advantage of new innovations to ensure wider and more efficient



communication of our message worldwide.

### **Biography**

*Calvin and Carol Conkey are the Founders and International Directors of Create International, a global ministry of Youth With A Mission (YWAM) focused on producing effective media resources for unreached people groups. Since 1979 they have served as full-time media missionaries, producing hundreds of audio-visual resources and ministering in over fifty nations. Calvin has an MA in Intercultural Development and Carol holds an MA in Intercultural Communication. They serve on several YWAM leadership teams, including the University of the Nations College of Communication, International Frontier Missions, and Contextual Resources, and Carol is a member of the Lausanne Strategy Working Group. Currently, Carol and Calvin live in Chiang Mai, Thailand, directing the Global Communications and Resource Center. Along with their staff, they continue to produce extensive media resources for unreached people groups, which can be found at [www.createinternational.com](http://www.createinternational.com) and [www.indigitech.net](http://www.indigitech.net). They recently authored a chapter, "Media that Transforms Nations," in the book *His Kingdom Come* (YWAM Publishing, 2008). They can be reached at [creategcr@gmail.com](mailto:creategcr@gmail.com).*

## Chapter 9



# A Church Was Born



*Steve Sims*

In early 2006, the Oral Communication Strategy team at e3 Partners Ministry<sup>1</sup> began to consider where we could start our first project using Chronological Bible Storytelling as our primary strategy. After approaching our directors in several countries, God made it clear that Ethiopia was the place.

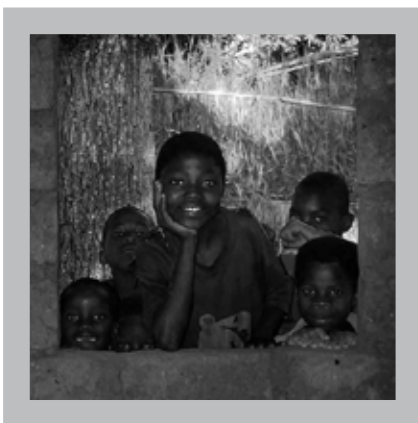
Soon after we decided on Ethiopia, we were contacted by a church in California that had been sending short-term teams there with our organization. They were interested in engaging an unreached people group, so we began to tell them about our plan to start a project using an oral strategy. We agreed to meet one of their teams later in the year in Ethiopia. Some of this team went with us to visit one of the Muslim unreached people groups to discuss the possibility of a project. After spending a week there, the church took time to pray and consider what God wanted them to do.

Toward the end of 2007, the California church chose an Ethiopian Muslim unreached people group that is known to be among the most resistant in Ethiopia. The group is conservative Muslim and one that, in the recent past, has killed several missionaries, as well as other Christians. Among this people group there have been churches

planted, but mostly with a majority from other people groups, and these churches had not reproduced. At the time, I remember thinking that this ambitious choice would not have been my selection for our first oral strategy project, but I also believed that it was God's choice.

Within a month or so, our e3 Partners Ethiopian national team was partnering with StoryRunners,<sup>2</sup> a Campus Crusade for Christ organization that shared our vision. We had identified two missionary families from the target people group and were willing to engage their people with an oral strategy. In one family, the husband, Markos, came from a Christian family, and his wife, Raka'el, from an Orthodox family who disowned her when she became a believer. In the other family, Teki (pseudonym) and his wife, S'rai (pseudonym), came from a Muslim background. When they became believers, their parents disowned them and planned to kill them. They escaped from the area and, when I met them, had not been living among their people for several years.

In March of 2008 we started the first round of training with these new missionaries; it lasted about three weeks. After a few days one of the missionaries said, "We thought that it would take years before we could take the Gospel to our people. They will kill us if we are found carrying the Bible. But now with these stories we can start right now."



One of the first stories we told in our training was about the demon-possessed man. After we finished telling it, Teki exclaimed, "This is my story! I was that man in the story."

Several days later, the other American trainers and I planned to go down to the area where this people group lived and do some research, take pictures, and see what we could learn. We did not invite our missionaries to go with us because we assumed it would put them at risk. However, they learned that we were going and

insisted on going with us. Reluctantly, I agreed, assuming they would take us to some random area where they were not known and translate the local language for us.

We traveled about two hours on pavement, another forty-five minutes on dirt roads, and then walked for thirty minutes before coming to a village. The people began to gather around us, excited to see white Americans in their village. Then we stopped in front of a hut and a man came out. One of our translators said, "This is Teki's father." I couldn't believe it. I was amazed that Teki was so bold, or maybe crazy. They began to bring out chairs and benches to put under a large Acacia tree just outside their hut. They invited us to sit and we began to exchange greetings and tell about our families and where we had come from.

Then Teki's father began to tell us a story about his son. He said Teki was a promising Qur'an student, and that he had been invited to go to Mecca, which was a great honor. He told us that Teki had become an Imam, but that one day he went crazy. He said that Teki had tried to kill him and that he went around trying to kill or beat up his friends, and day and night fought with everyone and screamed crazy things.

I thought, "Teki's story is truly like the demon-possessed man." Then, the father pointed at me and said, "One day, your God healed my son, but since he had converted to Christianity, we had to kill him." After the father finished, we asked, "Can we tell you a story like your son's story, from God's holy book?" The father said, "Of course, please tell us the story."

By this time, about seventy people had gathered under the tree. We told the story of the demon-possessed man. When we finished, everyone applauded and I was amazed that no one was offended. In fact, everyone liked the story from God's Word. Then the father again pointed to me and said, "I give my blessing for my son to be your brother and to work with you." I was astonished by what he said. After praying for Teki's family, we went to S'rai's family hut, and again sat under a tree and told a different story. Everyone applauded once more and afterwards they invited us for coffee and bread.

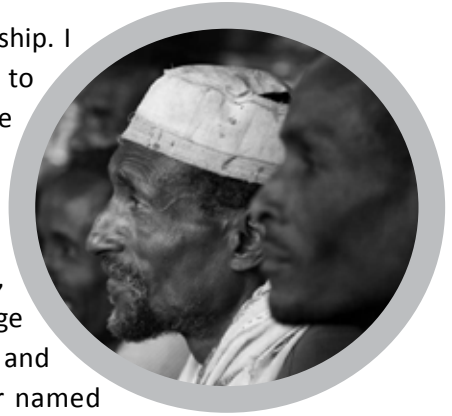
We returned in September 2008 to visit with Teki and S'rai, and they told us that their parents were taking care of their children so that they could attend this training. They also told us that since we had told the stories in their village, their parents wanted to hear more stories from God's Word. They had been telling them all the stories that they had learned in the training. Their parents said, "These are good stories and we give our blessings for you to tell them to the rest of the people in our village." Teki's father also gave permission for other members of the family to become Christians if they chose. Then, Teki told us that the Imam in their village had also heard the stories and had said, "These are good stories. Our people need to hear them." He also said, "You are not living here now, so when you come to tell these stories, you will need a toilet and a place to cook, so come use the toilet in our mosque and our kitchen." God's Word shared in stories was truly opening doors in Teki and S'rai's home village.

During the first weekend of our visit in September, we were invited to visit the new church that Markos (pseudonym) and Raka'el (pseudonym) had planted. After traveling some distance, we began to walk and suddenly I heard traditional sounding music with drums and singing. To my surprise, it was coming from the new church. They had put the stories to song, and they were singing them as we approached. We entered a traditional mud building filled with people of all ages, and sat at the back. About ten people got up and told stories from the Word of God; others shared personal stories of how they had come to faith in Jesus. Many told us that in the past, when Christians had come to their village carrying their Bibles and talking about Jesus, they would pick up stones and stone them. But when they heard these stories, they were interested and wanted to hear more. Others also said that when they decided to follow Jesus after hearing the stories, they became free of the local witch doctor.

After several had shared their personal stories, I noticed some Muslims sitting in the back near us. One of them got up and said, "Today, I am a Muslim. Tomorrow, I don't know." Another Muslim got up and said, "I have learned through these stories that there is a

difference between religion and worship. I am here to worship.” It was exciting to see Muslims at the church who were considering Christianity.

Later, I learned more about the history of this church. Shortly after the first training in March of 2008, Markos and Raka’el went to the village where the new church now stands, and met with a relative—a village elder named



Mazebah (pseudonym). Mazebah had earlier decided to follow Jesus, but did not fully understand what that meant. Markos began sharing Bible stories with him and Mazebah became excited because for the first time he really understood what it was to be a follower of Jesus. Mazebah was a village elder and wanted to share with the other elders about his decision to follow Jesus. He discovered that another elder, Meret (pseudonym), had also decided to follow Jesus. Meret had been watching a family in the village who were known to be Jesus’ followers and was impressed by their loving lifestyle. So Meret and his wife made a decision to follow Jesus as well.

Soon, Mazebah moved his hut to the village where the new church was now. Mazebah and Meret, along with their families, began to meet under a tree in this village. Markos continued to share the stories from God’s Word, and they prayed and worshiped together. Mazebah and Meret invited other families to join them, and so the first church in this village began. Later they put up a building for protection from the rain. When we visited the church, it was only about five months old and there were already nearly forty people meeting there. During our next training we learned that this new church and its members had started six other churches. We also learned that Teki and S’rai had planted three churches, even though they had not moved back among their people group until three months after our first training.

It has now been a year and half since this project began. We have conducted four rounds of training with our missionaries. The

trainees first learned twenty-two biblical foundation stories, followed by a second round of training in twenty-three stories from the book of Acts, to learn about the church and church planting. The third and fourth rounds of training have been developed and tested.

This project among an unreached people group has gone better than we could have ever hoped. This people group accepted the stories easily, and there has been very little persecution. Many more Muslims are making decisions to follow Jesus, often before they hear the stories from the New Testament. In fact, new believers in the new churches number around 250, plus those in other storytelling small groups. Whole families typically come to faith in Christ at once. We have seen many more churches planted in a shorter time than we had expected, and these are in turn planting other churches. In fact, there is now a fifth-generation church.

We have made mistakes (and tried to learn from them), but it is clear that God is working in a miraculous way among this Muslim people group. The stories of God's Word are running though this culture like never before. Muslims are becoming followers of Jesus. Churches are being planted which, in turn, plant churches. People are being healed and freed from demons just from hearing the stories. I have never seen anything like it. Praise God for His story, which continues to unfold among these people.

### **Biography**

*Steve Sims was born and raised in Texas, and is married to Charlene. He was educated at Texas A&M and Dallas Bible college. He has worked with youths for many years, including fifteen years in youth camp ministry. He has owned a remodeling business, and for the last fourteen years has worked with e3 Partners Ministry and is the Director of Oral Communication Strategies.*

## Section II: Processing Together

### Review (Learning)

There were several ideas presented in this section. Choose one you found interesting and share why it stood out to you.

How would you describe it to others? Are you using stories to describe it?

Share any further questions or comments you have.

### Reflect (Deepening)

Are there certain orality strategies already happening in your organization?

Is there an orality strategy that your organizational colleagues understand?

What are your colleagues' commitments to using orality strategies in your organization?

Are there several people who can champion, facilitate, and communicate the orality strategy? List them. Can they explain why it is important?



What barriers are you facing? What resistance do you anticipate?

What inconsistencies are there between what is important and what is actually done in your organization?

### **Resolve (Implementing)**

Are there people who need to be involved in embracing the process, but are currently not involved?

What are some things you or your organization need to stop doing or to let go of?

We tend to move in an either/or orbit. How can we encourage more both/and thinking?

What are new ways to measure your growth?

How will you communicate this to various stakeholders? Will you use narratives/stories?

Will you update the new metrics regularly and talk openly about them?

In the next twelve to eighteen months, what are some practices you hope will be fully embraced by your organization?

# Section III: An Unfinished Story

Jesus spoke all these things  
to the crowd in parables;  
he did not say anything to them  
without using a parable.

– Matthew 13:38

Time present and time past  
are both perhaps in time future  
and time future contained in time past.

– T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

In the last section, we introduced you to orality strategies in current practice. We again posed group processing questions, including questions on what you need to let go of, who else needs to be involved, large costs that may need to be adopted, and how to consider the heart language in your setting to communicate change.

Is there a collective consciousness about orality within your organization already? Are there colleagues you know who are using orality strategies and are seeing fruitful results? Will you consider learning from them or supporting them?

The following chapters are written by practitioners in the orality movement who represent different organizations working in different specialties. They have felt a leading to go forward and work within a supportive environment and are keen to adopt change where that means greater effectiveness and fruitfulness. The links between prayer, worldview, and storytelling in a people's heart language<sup>1</sup>—which you'll read about in the following chapters—are integral to the success of any oral approach to mission. You'll see how orality touches and changes many disciplines that come together to form a holistic mission strategy. These include music, arts, media, HIV/AIDS, micro-business, and church planting, among others. All are anchored in prayer and assessed through evaluative lessons learned. It is remarkable how God is working and how previously unengaged and unreached people groups are prayed for and, as a result, engaged.

As you read this section, think about your organization and the people who want to try orality or who are already experimenting with orality. How would you and a small group create a safe environment of a nest and the right condition for growth?

Step inside these practices and read how God is using these to grow His kingdom.

## Chapter 10



# From Storytelling to Church—the Heart of the Matter



*Stephen Stringer*

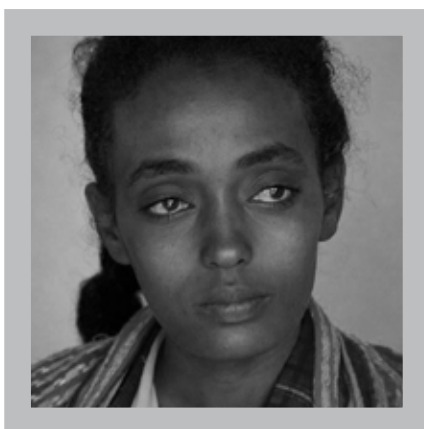
Whenever people ask me why I am so passionate about orality, I tell them that I am not passionate about orality—I am passionate about reaching people with the Gospel and unleashing others to do the same. I tell them the story of a woman I'll call Pemba. I met Pemba on a hillside in Nepal. She was attending a training in oral church planting that I was giving for a group of pastors. An illiterate teenager, Pemba rarely said a word among the pastors and evangelists. I don't know if I would ever have remembered her if it were not for the second training I did with this same group. Of all the groups I have trained, this one was the most unresponsive.

Our trainings are interactive and build on previous training. If the participants have not put into practice the principles of the first training, then the second is not very useful. We require each participant to go out and share stories both during the training and between trainings. This particular group of people seemed determined not to do a single thing I asked of them! We had reached the end of the second training, and it was obvious that these pastors were not buying into the principles of sharing stories orally and leading house groups through storytelling. They were certainly not going out and sharing their stories.

When the leader of the group asked me if I would come back

to do more training, I responded, “I don’t know when I will come back, but I guarantee I will not come back if you are not doing what you have been trained to do.” An uncomfortable silence followed. I was about to break it with the all-too-familiar closing remark, “Let’s pray,” when I heard someone sobbing. I was shocked to see Pemba standing in front of me and the rest of the group.

“Please don’t think we are not telling the story,” she struggled to say in broken English beneath a flood of tears. “We are telling. Please come back. This is something I can actually do.” It turned out that Pemba and her brother had been trekking through the mountains for three days to get to the trainings. They had been telling their stories along the way, and in the three months between trainings they had planted six churches! All too often we look at God’s anointed people like Pemba and dismiss them



because of their low level of formal education or literacy.

Over the past few years, missiologists have given greater consideration to the issue of orality in communicating the gospel to the majority of the world’s oral preference learners. It is unfortunate that orality has been labeled as an “issue” or a “problem” to be overcome when in fact it might be the key to equipping and unleashing millions of Pemas around the world.

### **Our orality universe**

There has been much discussion on the definition of orality, but for the purpose of this chapter a simple definition is: *orality is quite simply the way people communicate who can’t, won’t, or don’t communicate through the written word.* When we use oral strategies, we mean that we are communicating in such a way that oral audiences can understand, respond to, and reproduce what we

are communicating. We are, in essence, communicating in the way that they communicate. This enables everyone to carry the message and to teach others to carry the message as well.

Three decades ago, another Nepalese girl who had been kept hidden in a bedroom for years because of her family's shame over her physical handicap heard the Gospel and met the Lord. Neighbors continually persecuted her, but she held firm to her faith in Christ. After some time, she married a man who, like her, had physical mobility challenges. In 1992, a Nepalese evangelist from a nearby district challenged them to start a work in their home village and they began by investing time in developing new leaders.

By 2008, they had begun a network of eleven churches in Western Nepal. In early 2009, the leaders of this network were trained in the use of Chronological Bible Storying for evangelism and starting new fellowships. The pastors' mobility was limited by their wheelchairs, but that did not stop them from mobilizing forty-five trainees to implement what they learned for evangelizing and planting new fellowships. Within a few months the trainees had shared the Gospel with four hundred people and begun seven new fellowships in remote areas. Their primary tools were Bible storytelling and personal testimonies. They found that people who are primarily oral communicators—especially women—responded well and were easily able to reproduce this kind of ministry.

Reproducibility is the key to any church-planting strategy. Oral learners are most likely to reproduce stories from the Bible if they are well told in the mother tongue and in the storytelling style of the oral learner. It is not enough to tell stories. The stories must be retold by those who hear them. If the stories we tell cannot or will not be retold, they are not worth telling in the first place. In the same way, it is not enough to train a select few to tell stories. Those who are trained must, in turn, train others.

This is the lesson that Ganesh learned. Ganesh had been a radical Hindu nationalist in Southern India before he became a believer in Christ. When he followed Christ, other believers were suspicious of him in much the same way believers in the early church were suspicious of the newly converted Saul of Tarsus. Also like Paul,

Ganesh eventually became a leader among the believers. He was well respected and was seen as a pillar of the local church. But Ganesh wanted so much more! He passionately wanted every member of his people group to come to know Christ. He was convinced that the best way to do this was to plant reproducing churches.

Ganesh partnered with an expatriate missionary to learn how to train his own people to plant churches. Initially, Ganesh saw some fruit, but he quickly realized that he could not train the majority of his people to start churches because they were illiterate, so he asked for help. Ganesh learned an effective evangelism strategy using stories. He began teaching his illiterate brothers that they too could share God's Word with others. He taught them to share their personal testimony in order to connect with the person with whom they were speaking. He taught them then to connect their audiences with Jesus by telling a "hook" story—the story of the demon-possessed man from Mark 5.



This story shows that Jesus desires and has the power to radically change lives. Ganesh then taught them a Gospel presentation story spanning from the creation of the world to the creation of the Church. In this way, these illiterate believers were able to share their own faith stories, and also share with others how they too could become believers in Jesus. This method led into explaining the first steps of obedience for new believers—baptism, sharing their faith with their family and friends, and joining in fellowship with other believers for discipleship, accountability, and worship.

This new training revolutionized the church-planting efforts among Ganesh's people. Now everyone was able to start a church! What's more, the highly literate church planters with whom Ganesh had been working realized that they also preferred to use the storytelling method for evangelism and church planting. Over three hundred churches were planted during the first six months

of this new storytelling ministry. Once the churches were planted, they continued to function as storytelling churches. Each week, the people learned a new story, beginning with creation and building chronologically to the return of Christ. Today, many of the churches have completed this first set of twenty-eight stories and are now working through another set of twenty-three stories taken from the book of Acts that show what a church is and how it should function. Despite this movement of God among his people group, Ganesh was not satisfied. Many people were able to share the Gospel now, but Ganesh noticed that most of the new churches were led by him or by church planters he had trained. He knew that if every person were to come to know Christ, then every believer should be challenged and equipped to plant and lead his own house church. But how could that be possible?

### **Reproducing churches**

Ganesh learned that the very way he structured these house churches was the key to reproducibility. He no longer provided training events in different villages; instead, he trained a handful of trainers who would then start groups that met regularly. They worshipped together, and every week they had a time of loving accountability. The leader of the group asked the people individually if they had been sharing their faith and if they were training others to do the same. If any were not, the leader spent time with them to find out the reason. Sometimes, members of the group were not able to recall the stories. In that case, the leader knew they needed more time to learn them. Oftentimes, there were issues in the believers' lives that kept them from sharing, or there was a real threat of persecution. In this way, the accountability portion of each week's meeting became a chance to remind those in the group that they needed to be obedient to God's Word, and also a time where the Body of Christ could minister to one another.

After this time of worship and accountability, the trainer/leader/pastor told a new story for the group to learn, and everyone in the group was expected to retell the story and participate in discussion. Finally, the leader brought before the group the vision



that everyone needs to hear the Gospel and the only way for that to happen is for everyone to be sharing the Gospel. The group members formed pairs and practiced how they would lead this same session with the groups they were leading. In this way, every member was encouraged to start his own group and was equipped to do so. The group members then spent time in prayer. The session ended with the leader sending out the members of the group with the commission to share their faith and train others to do the same. By making these key adjustments, Ganesh spearheaded this movement of highly effective evangelism into a movement of highly reproducing church planting. There are now thousands of new believers, and churches are planting churches to the second, third, and fourth generations.

Oral strategies make it possible for every believer to start and lead a house group. Using simple, “retellable,” oral stories in the language and storytelling style of the people group is essential. However, reproducing church planting occurs when these stories are combined with a reproducible church-planting strategy that equips and challenges believers to share their faith and start groups in which they are discipling other believers through the use of Bible stories.

What would the Church look like if every oral believer were equipped to share his or her faith and also to disciple groups of other oral believers who, in turn, were doing the same? Perhaps God would call out more Pembas who would, for the first time, feel capable of sharing the Gospel and planting churches. I pray that God will call out more people of vision like Ganesh, who will not be satisfied with three hundred churches or even a thousand, but who long to see their entire people group reached with the Gospel through use of oral church-planting strategies.

### **Biography**

*Stephen Stringer has been teaching people for the past ten years to share their faith, disciple others, and plant churches using Bible storying. He and his family have lived and ministered in France, Benin, and India. He currently lives in Bangalore, India and travels around the world training, consulting, and coaching. The developer of the church-planting strategy, Storying Training for Trainers (S-T4T), Stephen believes that Bible storying is the key to reaching the majority of the world’s people who choose to learn through oral means.*

# Chapter 11

## Practices in Orality: The Existence, Identification, and Engagement of a People's Worldview

*James Slack*

Christ's desire and intention is to reach the lost by changing each person's heart and habits according to His salvation plan and message. Every ethnic people group in the world is included in His purpose and is distinctive in its language and culture. In order to be most effective, evangelizers should initially identify a group's worldview to present the Gospel through relevant means, and especially through using relevant heart language words.

*Worldview is simply the way a person views his or her world. It is a composite of the core beliefs, values, cultural views, and practical lifestyle habits that characterize a person within a specific ethnolinguistic people group.* Worldview identification is particularly vital when working among persons and ethnic groups with a preference to learn and communicate orally. This chapter is a practical exploration of worldview identification and its application to witness and church planting. Let's start with the basics.

### Where do we get our worldview?

The basis of worldview is found in the Great Commission. Making disciples among the *panta ta ethne*<sup>1</sup> (each and every ethnolinguistic people group) is at the heart of Christ's Commission. The roots go back to God's call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff) and continue through more than one hundred Old Testament references such as Psalm 2: "Ask of Me and I will give you the nations [*goyeme*] for your inheritance." (Hebrew *goyeme* means "ethnic people groups.") The question is, how many ethnic people groups do we have in our current church-planting inheritance?

The Great Commission began in Genesis and continues through Revelation 21:22-23, where God reveals His desire to have people from every tribe, tongue, and ethnic group in heaven. Although "making disciples" is the major emphasis of Christ's Great Commission, the arena for this activity is the *panta ta ethne* (translated as "all nations" in most English versions, but translated from Hebrew and Greek as "all the ethnic people groups"). God's expectation is clear: He wants all Christians to engage and evangelize every ethnolinguistic people group, starting in their Jerusalem and continuing to their Judea, Samaria, and uttermost (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).



The basis of the Great Commission is also seen in Matthew 28:19-20 (short form of the Great Commission) and Luke 24:44-53 through Acts 1:1-2:47 (long form of the Great Commission).

Most Christians recognize the "making disciples" part of the Great Commission, but few have understood that the venue for making disciples is the *panta ta ethne*. We are to identify and engage every ethnic people group from our Jerusalem to the uttermost

(Acts 1:8). Even fewer Christians have understood that Christ expects ethnic people group evangelizers to communicate the Gospel in each ethnic group's heart language.<sup>2</sup> We know that those who believe are to be baptized and gathered into local churches. Many, however, have failed to pick up on "engaging them in their heart language."



Our task is to identify the ethnic people groups around us, and evangelize them *one by one* in their heart language. However, if several ethnic people groups are gathered into one multicultural Bible study, it is very difficult to obey the Scripture by engaging each person in his or her heart language.

It is important to realize that God has significant reasons for underlining the use of heart language when evangelizing an ethnic people group. Most ethnic cultures in the world are composed of oral learners and communicators who can only understand the details of the Gospel in their heart language. If we want to identify clearly with a people group, we will learn their heart language. The choice of their heart language will let them know we came specifically to address them.

For more than two hundred years Christian missionaries, anthropologists, and others have begun to understand, through research, the importance of identifying an ethnic people's worldview and evangelizing and discipling them in their heart language. The bottom line of that research is that there is no substitute for working in a people's heart language. Failure to work in the heart language and failure to identify the worldview of the people group are just two reasons why some ethnic people groups have remained unreached for centuries.

Not only does each person have a unique fingerprint and DNA that is unlike anyone else's, but each person must approach the Lord individually concerning his or her spiritual condition. What lies beneath these truths is the reality of worldview. Each person has his or her own worldview absorbed from the ethnic culture in which he or she lives. But because worldview is unconsciously formed over time, individuals are seldom aware they have a worldview. One cannot simply enter their setting and ask them to explain their worldview to someone from the outside. Most have never heard the term "worldview." A *culture* also has its own worldview, which is actually a composite of all the persons who have lived in that culture from its beginning. And worldviews are changing generation after generation—although in isolated and insulated cultures the worldviews of the people and the culture are more homogeneous. This is especially true in oral cultures.



### **How is our worldview formed?**

Childhood educators and researchers tell us that 45-60% of a person's worldview is formed and functioning by the time a child is five or six years old. Beliefs will have formed, along with respect for certain things and people. By age eleven or twelve, 60-80% of a person's worldview is formed. It is interesting that in the Old Testament and until today, Judaism set twelve years as the "coming of age" for a boy. As his or her worldview is confirmed, the child tends to be reasonably at peace with him or herself and others he or she trusts. If a child's worldview (whether right or wrong in itself) is increasingly contradicted by people in his or her own worldview grouping, or through outside worldviews, coping becomes a serious issue.

Again, it is imperative for evangelizers to identify and understand the worldview status, situation, and setting. Barre Toelken says,

*Every child grows up surrounded by a number of cultural, personal, and physical features that provide its first—and perhaps its most lasting—set of perceptions about the world and its operation. In the earliest years, the child is learning more about its language than it will ever learn again, and at this time of life just as much is learned about cultural context and physical surroundings. No wonder that people in different ethnic, economic, and regional groups have the feeling that they live in different perceptual worlds: indeed they do.<sup>3</sup>*

Researchers such as Jane H. Hill and Bruce Mannheim add:

*An individual's personality is the complex of mental characteristics that makes them unique from other people. It includes all of the patterns of thought and emotions that cause us to do and say things in particular ways. At a basic level, personality is expressed through our temperament or emotional tone. However, personality also colors our values, beliefs, and expectations. There are potential factors that are involved in shaping a personality. These factors are usually seen as coming from heredity and the environment. Research by psychologists over the last several decades has increasingly pointed to hereditary factors being more important, especially for basic personality traits such as emotional tone. However, the acquisition of values, beliefs, and expectations seem to be due more to socialization and unique experiences, especially during childhood.<sup>4</sup>*

N.T. Wright, British preacher and New Testament scholar, provides insight into how stories relate to worldview:

*Human life...can be seen as grounded in and constituted by the implicit or explicit stories which humans tell themselves and one another. This runs contrary to the popular belief that a story is there to 'illustrate' some point or other which can in principle be stated without recourse to the clumsy vehicle of a narrative....Stories are a basic constituent of human life; they are, in fact, one key element within the total construction of worldview.<sup>5</sup>*

There are four areas that  
affect a person...



It is clear from these quotes that watching people do what they do in normal living is the best source of worldview information. To speed up the “watching process,” we can ask people for their famous stories, fairy tales, folklore, music, and any literature the people group may have.

So how can you identify the worldview of your people of choice to evangelize? Start by looking at an ethnography that has been identified by a professional anthropologist. A university librarian can help you research actual ethnographies; some of these will help in understanding much of this discussion on worldview. Also, the Caleb Project has a large number of worldview-type studies conducted on cities and peoples around the world. These are based on the *Exploring the Land* manual.<sup>6</sup> Some of their reports can be shared and provide good examples of worldview identification. Note that most of these studies, conducted by lay persons, do not represent extensive and detailed worldview work. Personnel of the International Mission Board, SIL/Wycliffe, and New Tribes Mission regularly conduct

worldview studies and can provide copies which can be shared publically.

### **What do we do with the information on worldview?**

Below is a step-by-step guide to developing a strategy to use the worldview information you have acquired:

1. Develop a glossary of words in the ethnic language to be used when talking with the people, especially about gospel matters.<sup>7</sup>
2. Determine the culturally appropriate ways of meeting, connecting with, addressing, inviting, and gathering individuals from this ethnic group into a small group for gospel-sharing purposes, either sooner or later.
3. Determine how best to organize them into Bible study or Evangelism Track groups, (e.g., women with women, men with men, or women and men in a mixed gathering).
4. Analyze the worldview facts of your group to identify the major worldview barriers and worldview bridges you will need to address specifically as you present the Gospel. Pay special attention to how the Gospel will be presented in light of cultural issues.
5. Choose the specific Bible stories that will address the particular issues described in #4.
6. Develop an introduction to each story to provide the hearers with listening tasks for each story so they can recognize and dialog about the specific worldview issue the story addresses.
7. Construct biblical/theological descriptions of those issues that will arise during storytelling dialog and during everyday discussions as a result of the storying and presence of evangelizers.
8. Finalize the evangelism, church planting, discipleship, and future leadership training tracks/phases.

Worldview and heart language are key issues in successful



evangelism and church planting. The guidance given in this chapter and elsewhere in this book will bring you closer to fulfilling your heart's desire as you witness the movement of God's Spirit among your chosen people group.

### **Biography**

*James Slack is a recognized researcher in missiological, ethnographic (worldview), urban, and church-planting movements, materials development, and global training roles. As a missionary in the Philippines he served as an urban evangelism consultant, church planter, educator, and urban strategist, and conducted oral and literate research. His accomplishments in Bible translation, and Chronological Bible Storying as a means of communicating the Gospel to oral learners and communicators, are recognized globally. Jim serves with the International Mission Board, SBC, as he follows his passion to reach ethnolinguistic people groups.*



## Chapter 12

# The Potter and Mass Media



*Andrew Sundar*

### **Mass media for broad-sowing and reaching oral societies**

Bright futures! That's all one could imagine while watching fifty children converge on a muddy floor to listen eagerly to Bible stories. We had traveled by ferry across the Mekong River to Kok Dack Island in Cambodia. There, the children displayed nothing but hope as they gathered on a Saturday afternoon to listen to Bible stories from their favorite DJ on their favorite radio program. We could see a fertile harvest field of little hearts right in front of us.

One young girl brought our idealistic minds back to reality. She confided that her mother would no longer allow her to attend Bible study. Now that she had reached puberty, her mother was sending her to work at a casino near the Thai border. *What kind of desperation must drive a mother to trade her babies off to sexual slavery? How can a young girl continue to listen to God's Word when human and cultural barriers imprison her? Can we hope to transform the worldview of mothers who trade their children? Can we influence children toward God with such a short time available?*

The answers to these seemingly hopeless questions are further complicated by the barriers of an oral society in a country seriously lacking basic infrastructure. Not even a reliable postal service exists

to enable a simple correspondence course. But then, what use is a reliable postal system when much of the population is illiterate? Where literature cannot help, mass media can be used to broadly sow God's Word and change worldviews and lives.

Hope rises every year as more than twelve thousand Khmer children respond to the 15-minute program, *Chronological Bible Stories*, aired on twelve FM radio stations throughout Cambodia.

Children draw pictures of what they remember from the stories they have heard on the radio. They send them to *Trans World Radio* (TWR)<sup>1</sup> through "postal delivery" volunteers operating in local churches. In this way, the Lord brings hope to listeners in an oral society, and hope to Cambodian believers who use media creatively to influence the minds and hearts of little ones!



This broad-sowing media activity requires strong networking and coordination at the ground level. TWR leaders have learned to network with over five hundred churches. Fifty-one Khmer believers help to coordinate children's clubs where neighborhood children gather each week to listen to Bible stories. In 2008, more than three hundred children professed their faith in Christ at these clubs, spurred on by TWR programs.

While we can feel satisfied that we have sown broadly to reach Cambodian children while the "harvest is plentiful," this does not resolve the question of what, if anything, can be done to prevent women from trading their children for their own survival. The plight of Cambodian women, who form the majority of the non-literate population, is another strategic focus for broad-sowing through media. These are women restricted by cultural barriers. But broad-sowing of God's Word will never return in vain. TWR Cambodia staff heard the story of a woman who traded her child. After listening to a *Women of Hope* program on the issue of trafficking, the Spirit of God convicted this woman. What could she do? She went and bought her child back. What lessons do we learn from these experiences other

than to use media strategically to reach oral communities?

Youth are also often found in hard-to-reach places. *How can we reach out to the numerous youth in the monasteries in Cambodia? How can we reach those exposed to vulnerabilities in the cities?* Mass media is one of God's solutions to reach beyond barriers and boundaries. For example, a young monk recently visited TWR in Cambodia to share his story of being a loyal listener to the youth radio program. We can capitalize on these experiences to use media strategically to broadly-sow seeds that will reach people who sometimes cannot be reached by traditional methods.

### **The story of the Potter**

The lessons learned in using mass media to reach the children, youth, and women of the unreached Khmer people group became the impetus for prayerful attempts to reach this group more thoroughly with the truth of the Gospel. Samnang, a trained Bible college pastor who attended orality training, knew how valuable it would be to use oral learning methods to reach the Khmer oral society. The Lord slowly unfolded each step in the process, enabling Samnang to develop a media strategy. The Potter was molding the clay.

Samnang and a team of five people conducted worldview and media habit studies among one hundred Khmer people living in twenty different villages in Cambodia. In an oral community the researcher is seen as a stranger and people are suspicious of being sought out to answer questions. The villagers were willing to answer general questions, but the moment faith-related questions were raised and the researcher was suspected of being from a Christian group, it became challenging to get answers. We learned to wait to gather worldview information until relationships were established. Relationship-building is essential before information-sharing will begin in an oral community.

The studies of worldview and media usage habits were completed and Samnang and his team leader, Veasna, decided to meet with Pastor Barnabas (who is known in the Buddhist world for his storytelling). Pastor Barnabas, Regional Director for Ambassadors for Christ,<sup>2</sup> was from a Khmer Buddhist monk family background

but later became a follower of Jesus. He understood the Khmer people's worldview and used his spiritual gifting to tell Bible stories in many villages in Cambodia. Samnang and Veasna wanted to partner with Pastor Barnabas in using media to tell stories, so they heeded his advice to focus on a prayer strategy before launching the intended project. The importance of seeking the Lord in prayer also enabled Samnang to bring along prayer partners from several other ministries,<sup>3</sup> as well as many local church pastors involved in reaching oral societies. This proved to be a fruitful strategy as it compelled those working in oral communities to gather quarterly to pray and share what the Lord was doing in their area of work.

The evidence of the Lord's blessing through the prayer network inspired Samnang to explore partnerships with other organizations working with the Khmer people group. Thus, he was able to have Bible stories recorded on solar-powered audio devices from the Inner Change<sup>4</sup> organization in Cambodia. These devices were distributed to Khmer evangelists who took them into villages to reinforce their message. Pastor San was one of the pastors who received an audio device. He reported,

*I am using it as a tool for evangelism at the new church at my house. After listening to the Bible stories, I passed it on to another listener and, after listening to it himself, he too passed it on. This tool has helped me to plant a church among the oral learners.*

Pastor San's report gave Samnang a model to provide focused media to local church leaders and evangelists who use it as a bridge to share compelling Bible stories with oral societies within their own culture.

In developing such a broad-sowing strategy, Samnang used his worldview research to arrive at a list of story sets to build bridges to those with the Khmer worldview. Pastor Barnabas came forward to record the stories, thereby enabling quality storytelling and recording in the Khmer language. To reinforce the message, stories are turned into songs composed according to the traditional musical genre. The Lord enabled Samnang to identify Khmer believers, gifted in

writing poetry which they often put to music, and the songs were recorded using Khmers singing in their traditional Khmer format. Another valuable lesson was learned as these stories were turned into songs: they became a major resource for the local church to use in their effort to reach the unreached. The songs create a bridge to communicate with God not only as the God of Jacob, but also as the God of the Khmer people.

Samnang field-tested the 30-minute radio programs with thirty-five oral communicators gathered from twenty-four villages. He used the oral learners' principles of dialogue, story, and song format to present the truths of the Gospel. They learned that the oral communicators preferred stories that were longer than thirty minutes, as well as many songs. Unfortunately, cost factors confine the radio program to thirty minutes! Further, based on the study of media usage habits, Samnang selected four FM radio stations that cover five major provinces. Unfortunately, limitations in funding allow the broadcast to be aired only once a week. To build a more effective outreach, three days of broadcasting is preferred, and probably required, to help the oral audience remember the stories.

Many lessons have been learned in the process of this pioneering operation. The research activity that began in August 2007, followed by prayer, networking, partnership, story, and song development, along with the necessary fundraising, took two years before the broadcasting of stories began in September 2009. Two lessons stand out: trust in the Lord to (1) open doors and pour out His resources and (2) enable a work of unity among the Khmer believers and missionaries and their organizations.

The field is ready for the seeds to be sown in cooperation with local church leaders who are willing to distribute the songs and form listener groups. This allows people to listen to the stories together and, as a community, learn about God's Word. The Holy Spirit at work will enable us to reap the harvest.

### **The Potter and the clay**

The question to ponder is whether Christian media has been used strategically in Cambodia to reach the oral society. So far the

answer is no, as we have not yet used Christian media to its fullest potential. When we examine the tremendous impact of commercial media on society, we can only imagine what a difference we could make if mission groups would use Christian media to create a greater impact and influence for the good of the Cambodian people. The clay is still being molded.

What an impact we could make if community development ministries were to collaborate with mission media ministries to create public education information. Topics such as farming, health, family education, moral values, and poverty alleviation could be conveyed using oral learner principles. If Christian media ministries broadcast these messages, there would be a greater spread of awareness and impact. Focused media (such as solar-powered audio devices) could boost the impact as the messages are distributed for group or community learning.

Complementing public education information, Bible stories can be developed to change listeners' worldviews and bring them to the knowledge of the Almighty God and the experience of Him as Savior. Closer collaboration between media ministries and other field-related missions would also be helpful, as would broadcasting consistently, seven days a week.

Further collaboration with local churches would be enhanced if church buildings were to be used for community-related work during weekdays. The doors would be opened for stronger collaboration between parachurch organizations and local churches to meet the needs of the oral society collectively. Focused media can assist in providing a bridge to the oral society to enable them to learn and grow. The opportunity the Lord has given to ministries in Cambodia is a testimony to the Potter shaping the clay. If we respond in a unified manner, we can make a major difference in reaching the oral society in Cambodia.

### **Biography**

*Andrew Sundar serves as Southeast Asia Ministry Director with Trans World Radio (TWR)-Asia. He provides leadership and works with Southeast Asia ministry teams in fields such as worldview studies, media strategies, media content development, developing partnerships, broadcasting, field ministry development, networking, and collaboration with local churches. He also serves as a member of TWR's Global Leadership Team.*

# Chapter 13

## The Forgotten Majority: Global Applications of Orality Training for Women

*Carla Bowman*

### **West Africa hears the call**

It is a sweltering day on the African Atlantic coast. A searing afternoon sun burns the white sand and a hot wind sifts through the silver waves. There is no shelter as several Peular-speaking women are baptized in the tepid salt water. Afterwards, there is a circle of praise and rejoicing on the shore as they recognize the newness of life represented by their step of faith. Their tentativeness is in the past, and the fear of persecution that has haunted their conversion is overcome. Songs in their mother tongue rise boldly above the ocean roar, a sweet sacrifice to God. And it is *hearing* stories from God's Word that has given them the boldness for this new journey. For as members of an oral culture, where print and reading are foreign for 95% of women, the communication of stories orally is their only access to the Word of God in their heart language.

Are women of oral cultures a forgotten majority of the world's population? It is a fact that women like the Peular sisters of Southern Mauritania constitute a majority of the oral communicators of the world, but *where are the materials and training focused on them? And what can happen when such training exists? Will they in fact be encouraged toward faith in Christ like the new believers of Mauritania?*

There is a longstanding need for materials designed exclusively



for women of the Global South and the Majority Church. This reality is underscored by the readiness with which women of oral cultures embrace a new course called *Bridges for Women*. The course, developed by Scriptures in Use,<sup>1</sup> facilitates a storytelling ministry among women of oral cultures. This chapter features field results and best practices based on the global implementation of *Bridges for Women*.

### **Integrating storytelling into everyday life and community events**

Faustine Mbongo has served as a national trainer of *Bridges for Women* in Francophone West Africa since 2006, when the materials became available in French. Having taught the course in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania, Mbongo also concentrates her efforts in Senegal, training trainers, as well as developing storytellers and mentors.

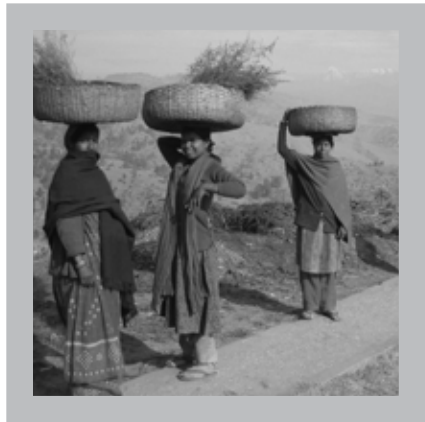
One windy arid day, Mbongo took me to Babark, a remote Serer village in central Senegal. Here, a beautiful Serer woman sat regally in the humble one-room health clinic in a costume befitting the Queen of Sheba. I was delighted to see women gathered for the weighing of their babies at the baby-wellness clinic. The women brought forward their babies and the crumpled yellow cards that recorded the progress of their infants in weight and height. This gathering place, where women come together monthly, creates natural relationships for storytelling and dialogue.

Women like Oumi Diouf, who weigh the babies and fill out the charts, are also proficient storytellers. Diouf, trained by Mbongo, is a tall, elegant woman who speaks three languages and has mastered more Scripture stories than perhaps any other Senegalese Bible storyteller. She is proficient in Chronological Bible Storytelling as well as in choosing stories that will minister at the right moment to the right women in terms of worldview and individual needs. She is also successful in developing appropriate and engaging dialogue.

Several of the women in the baby-wellness clinic have become believers and some have been trained in a local village training workshop to tell the stories of the Bible in their mother tongue. Diouf is not only a great storyteller, but has become an excellent mentor. *Bridges for Women* equips the mentor to (1) teach oral learners to

memorize new stories, helping her select appropriate stories for the audience; (2) check her telling for complete biblical accuracy; (3) help the storytellers develop the right dialogue questions; and (4) at a later time, listen to the stories again to make sure the accuracy remains intact. Diouf has mastered this role and finally, after serving for three years as storyteller and mentor, she feels confident to be a trainer of trainers, an expert in oral tradition. Mbongo is pleased with her progress.

Mbongo has learned her hardest lessons, however, as a lead trainer in Mauritania and Mali, where she is still working hard to identify local trainers. Obstacles to be overcome include the lack of a mother tongue translation (especially of the Old Testament) and the lack of potential in-country trainers. But there is progress. Just recently, she taught her first *Bridges for Women* course in Niger



with excellent results. Some of the women she taught work among Tuareg nomadic families for whom storytelling at the desert night fire or at teatime is an optimal communication tool. Mbongo has already identified several local trainers in Niger.

### **Narrative theology and story collections**

It is always astounding to see how quickly women from the Majority Church grasp the incredible potential of narrative once the concept is introduced. It is a matter of getting the message out to them since their models of ministry have been expository preaching, literature distribution, analytical Bible study, and so forth. They have not realized that theology can be taught profoundly through narrative examples. Once they do, their enthusiasm is boundless.

Oral cultures respond to stories in powerful ways, finding in the narratives real-life characters who provide concrete examples of good and bad behavior. Stories provide models instead of abstract theory and address human issues with profound clarity and precision.

They provide answers both on a theological and a personal level. The message is contained within the body of the narrative. It is not necessary to preach or amplify the story or analyze with exposition. The models of behavior, consequences of behavior, and examples of God's provision are provided in the stories themselves.

Human issues such as needs, worries, and fears (in addition to worldview and belief systems) are identified in *Bridges for Women* workshops. The leader's task is to identify those issues in the lives of the women. Issues are identified according to people group, community, or individual. They then proceed to identify a collection of stories that provide answers to those issues. More than 120 stories of the Bible feature women as main characters. To facilitate story selection by trainers, mentors, and storytellers, the 120 stories are divided into chronological and theme-based collections (e.g., suffering, comfort, wisdom, infertility, motherhood, love, and so forth). In their totality, these narratives depict every human condition, weakness, and strength in the character of women.

### **Biblical accuracy**

Asharphi, a Hindi speaker of Uttar Pradesh, India, is learning to tell Scripture stories accurately. Her teacher, Monica Paul, has emphasized biblical accuracy from the beginning. "Some traditional storytellers or chanters of cultural or religious narrative have been known to change words," says Paul. "Each time they may say it differently. Their devotees have in turn changed words, and in this way the story is distorted. That must not happen with us, the Scripture storytellers." Asharphi memorizes whole stories without leaving out or changing a single word.

To safeguard biblical accuracy, stories are painstakingly committed to memory and repeated under mentor supervision until perfect. The story of Ana at a *Bridges for Women* course in Oaxaca, Mexico, illustrates the process. Her head bobs up and down, her eyes are downcast, her lips move imperceptibly in a constant rhythm with the movement of her head. This continues as she repeats her new story over and over to herself, placing it indelibly into her memory. When she and the group are ready, she shares the story. Everyone listens closely, including the group leader. Only when all agree

she has told the story without error or omission will they go on to discuss the story's applications. It is the first time in her life Ana has ever really had the Word. Not only is it unlocked for her, but she is learning to share it with others in her mother tongue.

### **The oral arts—artistic adaptations by local teams**

In 2009, as part of follow-up training at a *Bridges* center in Madhupur, India, I was privileged to observe a team of twelve Santali tribal women. They have become local trainers of *Bridges for Women*, as well as the most accomplished story performing team I have observed anywhere in the world. Since their initial training in 2007 they have chosen scores of Scripture stories from the *Bridges* collections, and have developed an integrated oral arts approach to their presentation in their Santali villages. Having accurately memorized their stories and developed appropriate story forms for their Santali audiences, they develop songs using the exact words of the Bible and eleven traditional tunes. Repeated choruses highlight key themes. They then develop a dance and a drama to enhance the song and story. This team is exemplary, but similar artistic adaptations are being made in many places where *Bridges for Women* is used. The creativity in the workshops and in the field presentations is exceptional, and the drama is engaging and contextual. The song and dance forms and biblical poetic recitations are beautiful, indigenous to the region, and based on cultural practices. Everything is done with great attention to accuracy of the Scripture story.

### **Multiplication**

Indigenous practitioners and trainers are multiplying. Motivated women leaders are becoming experts in oral tradition and mentoring current and future generations. Successful women storytellers and oral arts teams are developing. Multiplication has not been difficult to achieve. Instead, it seems to take place spontaneously, yet systematically, wherever the vision is strong and initial training well taught.

To give just one example, in Vietnam and Laos some sisters have learned to use storytelling as a "Traveling Bible." They journey from village to village, to places where the Book is not allowed, with

Scripture stories in their minds and hearts. They choose from their repertoire of memorized narratives for the appropriate audience and situation at a moment's notice. As they travel, they train other believing women in the same storytelling skills, and so multiply the concept of Traveling Bible across the country.



### The story goes on

Hepsiba John of Tamil Nadu summarizes this chapter well:

*When I used to meet women, they would share a lot of their problems, but I could not answer their questions since I did not know much about the Bible. I always struggled to pick up appropriate passages from the Bible to address their questions and problems. During my husband's absence, I had to preach from the Bible in our house church. I was never confident. I also found that when I followed the preaching method which I picked up from my husband, people did not understand what I told them. Most of the people are non-literates. But I continued to preach, of course with little result. I attended the Bridges for Women training at the Church Growth Centre in Chennai. In those three days' training I learnt how to tell stories to non-literates. Moreover, the method of finding out the appropriate story from the Bible, answering the problems of the women in my place, was very useful to me. In that training I also discovered new avenues to use my gift of composing songs. Now I compose new songs from biblical stories. It is easy to share the Bible through songs. After the training we have started three new house churches in the nearby villages. In all these groups I am now telling stories, and also I am training young girls to share stories to others.*

### Biography

*Carla and Jim Bowman developed Scriptures in Use, a ministry employing strategies for oral communication of the Scriptures among tribal groups of Latin America. Later, they developed the widely-used training series, Communication Bridges to Oral Cultures. Out of this, Carla developed a women's track in 2006, Bridges for Women. The course addresses women's issues, and facilitates a storytelling ministry among women of oral cultures, focused on the oral arts of storytelling, drama, song, dance, and recitation.*



## Chapter 14

# Lessons Learned: Orality in HIV/AIDS and Water Projects

*Bramuel Musya*



### **Oral strategies at work**

I have been involved with the development and implementation of oral strategies for ministry in East Africa for the last five years through an organization called Straight Path Resources. We have found that, if pursued strategically, oral strategies can be an effective means for the establishment and implementation of specialized ministry projects such as HIV/AIDS intervention, micro-business creation, and water and sanitation projects. This chapter outlines some of our experiences, often in partnership with other ministries and corporate organizations, and introduces some of our most effective resources.

### **The case for orality in Africa**

Education and technology continue to thrive in Africa, but many people are yet to be empowered to read and write. Others prefer not to read, even after investing many years in education. For

many, education is only a means to a better job; it is not a way of life. Although Africa is a land of diverse cultures, Africans are united through a long history of transmitting information and cultural values through stories, song, dance, and other forms of oral communication. These methods of communication are part of the culture, a way of life. If we are serious about being effective gospel communicators and undertaking Bible-based development projects aimed at the transformation of the whole person in Africa, then we have no other alternative but to consider seriously this ancient way of engaging people.

Unfortunately, like many others in ministry, I was blind to this truth. Brought up by Christian parents and saved as a young man, I committed myself to ministry from an early age. I started by teaching in children's church and later began preaching in adult services and crusades. I trained for ministry and my commitment to ministry deepened. But many years later I began to assess the impact of my ministry efforts. Yes, the Lord had done a great deal through our work, but my biggest concern was, *How do I involve others in ministry to stop myself getting overwhelmed? Or worse, What if I become an expert and celebrity in ministry and take away from God's glory?* I had no satisfactory answer.

While traveling as a television producer in rural parts of Kenya, I had an experience that would forever change the course of my ministry. Rev. Eric Musee, East Africa Director for the Bible League,<sup>1</sup> was with me. We had just arrived in a traditional Maasai homestead near the *Oldonyo la Nkai* (Maasai for "Mountain of God"). It was hot and dry with dust blowing from every direction as one local boy arrived from school. After a quick lunch and a glass of milk, he took out his bicycle, pumped up the tires, tied a huge Maasai Bible on the back seat, and rode off. Rev. Musee asked Bishop Keturai, the local leader, about the young boy. We learned that he was one of the very few in the community who could read. The local believers had mobilized resources through sales of their goats to buy the bicycle for

the young man. Each day he would ride from one home to another to read the Bible to the growing number of believers who had a heartfelt desire for the Word. It was an inspiring story, but I had to ask myself, *Is there no other way to disciple these people who cannot read?*

### Engaging oral resources

My research on other means of evangelizing and discipling non-reading communities brought me in contact with key leaders in the International Orality Network and other oral resource developers. Dorothy Miller, who heads up God’s Story Project,<sup>2</sup> introduced me to the importance of using Bible stories chronologically. We started with the Bible video and audio resource *God’s Story: From Creation to Eternity*, a chronological journey from Genesis to Revelation in eighty minutes that uses key Old and New Testament stories.<sup>3</sup> When the foundation is laid through Old Testament stories, it gives people a better understanding of Jesus when they reach New Testament stories.

In traditional methods of evangelism, we led people to Christ using a few memorized verses from the Bible and our personal testimonies. But with this newfound resource, we discovered that evangelism could be done through the amazing stories of the Bible as the ultimate plan of God. When we began using God’s Story in the people’s mother tongue, we noticed how much they enjoyed it. They stayed to the very end and were open for discussion. They referred to the stories, instead of having to remember concepts, points, and memory verses. The concept took hold, and within one year our operational base in Nairobi was developing a vision for

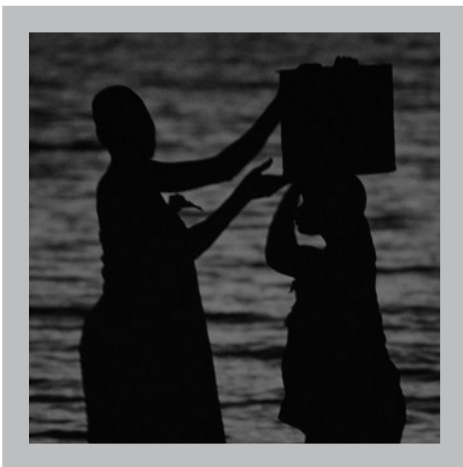




Africa. In Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Sudan, translation projects for God's Story were initiated and African leaders recognized the importance of teaching Bible stories chronologically.

God's Story is an effective evangelism tool, but there was soon a need for deeper teaching based on a similar oral model. We began using Simply the Story (STS),<sup>4</sup> an oral teaching method that shows participants how to learn a Bible story, hide it in their hearts, and dig out spiritual observations and applications using questions. We taught this to church leaders at practical five-day workshops and they took it back to their communities. We also taught instructors how to share STS concepts.

Where there were very few literates, we embarked on another project that we called Timothy Church Planter Training. Nearly seventy stories are selected chronologically from the Old and New Testaments and recorded in the mother tongue of the target people group. We package these together with the God's Story audio, also in the mother tongue, and make them available on MegaVoice (a proprietary media storage and playback device that can use batteries and solar power, similar to a MP3 player).



### **HIV/AIDS and micro-business projects**

James is a young leader in the Kiambu district just outside Nairobi. The challenge of HIV/AIDS came close to him when his immediate family was affected by the virus and he longed to do something to intervene in his community. After attending our STS workshop, he discovered how easy it would be to establish a Bible

study group. So, armed with a Bible, he went back to his community prepared to share God's Word through stories.

He quickly mobilized a group of women either affected or infected with HIV. Most were living in deep poverty and could not afford the HIV drugs for themselves or their loved ones. James shared that he had no money to give them, or material supplies to support them physically, but that he would commit to sharing a word of hope with them each week. In less than a month twenty-five women were attending regularly and each had a moving story. Some were widows, others stigmatized and rejected by their families because they carried the HIV virus, and the rest were raising their orphaned grandchildren with no income at all. We joined James in selecting Bible stories for the group and encouraged him to tell the stories in Kikuyu, the local mother tongue.

As we watched the success of the group, we decided to train women as leaders, so we trained them in storytelling skills. Leadership attendance doubled within a month, and at that point, working with a local church, a local project, called Fountain of Hope, was established. Each time the group met, we distributed basic provisions like soap, cooking oil, and food. Supporters from the West contributed, and with the largest donation of \$2,500 we decided to establish a micro-business project. We selected twenty-five women for the pilot program.

Initially, several businesses collapsed because the women used the money for their own children's health needs or education. Our strategy in the future will include raising funds for the children's education and food separately. We will then restart the micro-business project, allowing beneficiaries to concentrate their initial business capital on the business only. Although some of the businesses failed, the group continues to meet regularly and share Bible stories. Each woman testifies of the Lord's goodness as He reveals Himself and His love to them through the stories of the Bible.

**Water and sanitation project**

The water and sanitation program was an initiative of church leaders from the Matuu and Yatta districts in the Eastern Province. After Pastor Zacharia attended the STS training, he went back to his community and mobilized other leaders for a storytelling workshop. Nearly thirty leaders were trained in STS and afterwards gathered each week to practice their skills. One of them suggested the idea of meeting by the local water dam and undertaking water purification work. This service was greatly needed by the community and numbers grew rapidly. They increased their meetings to three a week. Each week, three stories are told by different people. They sing, dance, and discuss the stories as they fetch water and put it into sand-filled barrels for purification. They minister to many who come to obtain clean drinking water from the purification site. This project provides clean water for the community and has served as a tool to unite the local pastors and leaders, each of whom comes from a different congregation.

**Lessons learned**

When the micro-business project began, we had some people who were unfaithful with the project finances. In our survey, we discovered they were not committed to the Christian faith, but had only joined the Bible study group for material gain. We learned to withhold materialistic plans for the project initially. As a result, people made decisions for Christ and others re-dedicated their lives to Him without incentives. We also found that while some people might be the best storytellers in the community, they were not necessarily the most gifted in administration and leadership. We learned to select project administrators and leaders based on giftedness (not storytelling) skills.

Throughout these projects we saw the importance of handing over leadership to the local community. But for this to succeed, the

group had to be introduced to telling the stories and leading the discussions in their mother tongue from the beginning. Using the mother tongue created intimacy in the Bible study sessions and presented the program as locally-owned and led. It also helped in creating an atmosphere of accountability in the management of the business or crisis intervention projects.

### Looking forward

In the above story, we recognized that we were operating in an oral environment. Without the acceptance of this reality, many Christian leaders in Africa will fail to develop an effective strategy. Prayer is vital, followed by selecting and training committed members of the respective projects in storytelling skills. Once the storytellers began conducting Bible study sessions using the stories, something happened: the community came together and formed a strong body as every person participated in the discussions.



Prayerfully and corporately, the people went on to identify the pressing needs in the community as they continued with their oral-based discipleship program. A local committee was then identified to draw up a project plan and serve as the project's steering committee. This committee is part of the storytelling Bible study group, and therefore must demonstrate that they are men and women of integrity before their brothers and sisters and before the Lord. We have seen great accountability in the implementation of each of the projects. The success of each project is based on the group's unity

and accountability in the storytelling sessions. Indeed, oral strategies have proved to be an effective means of establishing and running specialized ministry projects such as those outlined in this chapter.

### **Biography**

*Bramuel Musya, born and educated in Kenya, is a speaker on orality at regional and international mission gatherings. He served in several media ministries before becoming involved in the use of oral strategies as an effective way of discipling, evangelizing, and raising up national missionaries for service in Africa. He is founder of Straight Path Resources (SPR) and serves as Secretary to the MANI Orality Committee and as a member of the Global Consultations Taskforce in the International Orality Network (ION).*



## Chapter 15

# On Mission with God in Prayer for God's Purpose: Transformation



*Linda Bemis, Maureen Bravo, and Barbara Clark*

In this chapter we want to share the experience and results of prayer in regard to what God is doing in the orality movement. Although we are a small group of intercessors, we have had the opportunity to mobilize and link with others to pray for an important part of God's mission work. That work is bringing together the practice of oral strategies with the identification and adoption of the Unreached, Unengaged People Groups (UUPG)<sup>1</sup> of the world. We represent one group asking God to multiply the fruit of His work. Our desire is to be obedient in responding effectively to the unique needs of UUPG all across the world.

### **Beginnings in prayer<sup>2</sup>**

It is with a humble heart that I share what happened as God shifted our group into this prayer focus. From the time I (Linda) was able to join the work of orality in prayer it was (and continues to be) a God-initiated experience. In June 2006, I had the opportunity to be on-site for prayer during one of the orality partners meetings. The global prayer movement workers were eager to share how they

had been praying for the meetings and how excited they were to see someone praying as the meeting was taking place. God opened the door for great unity among those involved in prayer. As with any new thing that God initiates, when He calls, He equips. When He equips, He provides. And where His provision is, He meets His people.

The key to praying and mobilizing prayer movements is to realize that it is not about us or our prayers—it is about God and His purpose and plan. As we pray, He calls us to join His work. As we join Him, He reveals what He is doing and leads others to unite together with the Son as He intercedes to the Father. Prayer is merely a conduit for a relationship with God. If we allow ourselves to be available, the Father will meet us. It's all about relationship! Initially, we were not aware of the details or the mechanics of what was involved in our new prayer challenge. God simply put it on our hearts to pray for Avery Willis, Executive Director of the International Orality Network, with whom we had a relationship. This led to a larger opportunity to link with others. God was calling us to prayer for what He was doing, without being concerned about the details.

### **Transforming prayer**

We must take into the arena of prayer an attitude that God will continue and complete what He is doing, understanding that we cannot take ownership of even our prayers. That may mean being open to doing things differently in prayer, letting go of our preferences or the way prayer looks at any given time. God's activity is progressing at such a rate and magnitude that we need to just trust in Him and believe what He has already told us.

God led us to pray for the work of orality *because He was at work*. We never realized our ignorance of what God was doing, much less what was actually involved in doing it. We just knew we had to pray for the work. When God thrust me (Linda) into the position of director for prayer, I began to ask Him to show me and our small group how and for what we were to pray. That is when the reality of the needs of oral learners began to unfold.

Unlike any other time in history, we must pray for God's people

in regard to their ignorance of the work of His Great Commission. We must pray that the sin of prayerlessness will not go unheeded in our hearts. God is calling us to join Him as He reaches out to those who still wait to hear! When we pray for something, *God* births a love for it in our hearts. That love grows deeper as we pursue it. As we began to put the puzzle pieces together in trying to understand what it was that we were praying for, God began to put the desire in our hearts to join His work.

How does that happen? As we pray for a sense of God-centeredness to take priority above anything else, in the midst of our prayers He begins to transform us. We gathered as a prayer team with those who were willing to listen to the Shepherd (John 10:26-28). We asked Him to put His heart over our hearts (Ps. 33:11), and began exalting His Name. We acknowledged He was with us, trusting His leadership through the Holy Spirit, giving thanks, asking for a deeper sense of His power within, and claiming, "The Holy Spirit will teach you...what you ought to say" (Luke 12:12).

How does that look in prayer? Real prayer has everything to do with joining the Son in what God deems important. Could it be that prayer is the God-breathed response from His heart as we speak together about a situation or person in prayer and echo back from God's heart His response and answer? How is that possible? We try to remove ourselves as much as possible and relinquish preconceived ideas, personal expectations, and agendas *so that God can reign and rule* in and through the time together, so that only He gets the glory. That is when God allows the work to move into an effective and fruitful realm.



### **Prayer rooms**

The process of prayer should help people get to a place of



access so that God can meet the need.<sup>3</sup> God allows us to be used to help those prayed for to receive the provision He already has for them. A prayer room can be very effective if it becomes a place for true worshipers. If we are to guard anything, let it be the vision of God for His people. As we enter His throne room, we should seek the heart and mind of God. We learn to look up and bear witness to His activity as we let go and allow God to show us His plan for gaining access to His strategy. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

The knowledge of the glory of the Lord will only be seen over all the earth when it is first desired, received, and released within believers. (We are the reason that it is yet to be seen!) His love will be made visible through those who engage in an intense “warfare of love” over the nations and the peoples of the world through worship, consecration, and intercession.<sup>4</sup> That warfare of love—launched by the Father, modeled by the Son, nurtured and sustained by the Spirit—can only take place when we truly abandon ourselves to Him in authentic, transparent, intimate worship where we enter that “secret place” of intense intimacy with Him. Then we are able to agree with Him (“Thy will be done!”) and pray His will back to Him confident of being heard.

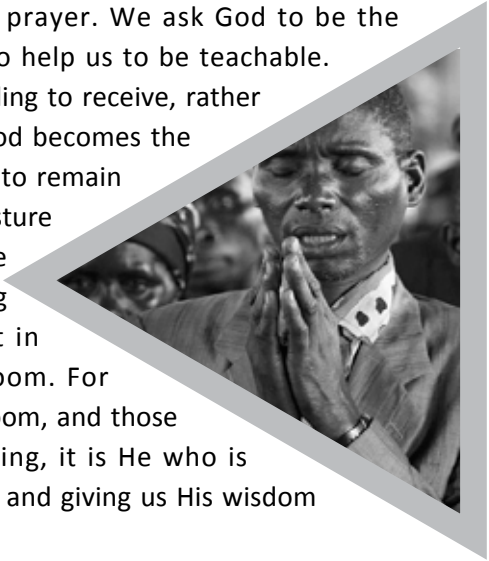
What must we do, or do differently, to bring us to the point of breakthrough? The breakthrough we desire requires a new consecration entailing a much deeper death to self in order to make possible a new awakening to Christ. In that place of worship, with authentic intimacy with God, we must intentionally reconsecrate ourselves, our lives, and our ministries, and couple that with intercession for our families, cities, and nations. That is the call being heard by many intercessors/worshippers at this hour. We must purpose to make ours a lifestyle of authentic worship that will allow us entry into His heart in ways we have not yet seen or experienced. There, we can cooperate with Him to see His plans fulfilled, rather than forming our own plans and asking Him to bless them.

The people and the relational connections that God is preparing for the future will be authentic and have a lasting effect

throughout the entire world. As we worship Him joyously over each gathering in the nations of the world, over each UUPG, He will move on their behalf. Trust Him and rest. In our intercessory prayer rooms we pray, share, train, and model the changing face of intercession.

People who come into a prayer room are either pray-ers or those who have come to be prayed for. They come from many different experiences and backgrounds. All must be ready to make a transition from a “self” purpose to a kingdom purpose, ready to transition in mind and spirit to be in a listening mode, willing to participate with a kingdom perspective, transformed and engaged by our awesome God. That is when God meets us as we are engaged in the spirit with His Spirit. We serve at the discretion of the King, in an intimate relationship.

We must function in prayer in a worship mode as opposed to an expectations mode, learning to take our hands off everything, even the words spoken in prayer. We ask God to be the facilitator of our prayers, to help us to be teachable. When we are ready and willing to receive, rather than to give our opinion, God becomes the rightful facilitator. It is vital to remain teachable, maintaining a posture of allowing God to have the last word. The Lord is seeking to refine us. He does that in the midst of the prayer room. For intercessors in the prayer room, and those for whom we are interceding, it is He who is changing our understanding and giving us His wisdom to know how to pray.



When God draws us into prayer, He opens His perspective to us. If we are willing to see it, this is *the changing face of intercession*. It is not that God's face changes, but His intercession and the needs for intercession change, with His movement. How does this happen? We walk in obedience to what He is calling us to, one step at a time, one prayer at a time. Where will this take us? Hopefully, to a place

where we really believe God will use us and our prayers in His work, linking all of us into His bigger picture.

### **Biography**

**Linda Bemis** is Director for the Prayer Task Force of the International Orality Network (ION), and an experienced trainer and facilitator in prayer and prayer mobilization. She has a history of working extensively in “hidden support and prayer ministry,” and leading intercessors to work alongside leaders. She combines her gifting as an intercessor with a passion for prayer and evangelism in her ministry.

**Maureen Bravo** is Founder/Executive Director of Resources Unlimited International, Inc. (RUII), the Founder/Facilitator of the Intercessory Prayer Network of Central Florida (IPNCF), and serves on the Prayer Task Force of the ION. She has extensive experience training intercessors, leading worship, facilitating reconciliation, evangelizing and discipling new believers, and mentoring emerging leaders, as well as training, and equipping those who serve in the Body of Christ.

**Barbara Clark**, Founder of In His Hands Ministry, has many years of church prayer ministry leadership, training, speaking, and consulting on prayer. She serves on the Prayer Task Force of the ION. Her passion is a deeper “relational” type of prayer with the Lord, instead of following strict “printed” prayer guidelines, and to see Him at work toward the completion of the Great Commission.



## Chapter 16

# Stories for the One Child Generation

*Fay Leung*



Stories are priceless. They can bring joy and a sense of appreciation and arouse creativity. They stimulate our imagination and develop new thought patterns. They can be especially useful in helping a child to develop good behavior and a healthy personality, and they help promote correct values. Any child growing up without listening to stories has truly missed out on a great deal in their childhood.

Since Trans World Radio (TWR) first began broadcasting in 1977, children's programs have played a very important role in our broadcasts, and storytelling to young people has been one of the highlights. These stories have taught children to understand God's truth, to know Jesus Christ as their Savior, and to reverence and worship God. In this regard, we have had the unique opportunity to minister and influence the "one child per family" generation in China. A storytelling program that TWR first produced back in the 1980s, *Please Listen to What I Say*, is aimed primarily at children. The program producer began by adapting true-life stories that were encouraging and moving and caused the listener to think about

life, both morally and philosophically. From the start, the presenter and listeners had wonderful interaction through the airwaves. The foundation was laid for a strong tradition of reaching children with the gospel through storytelling.

### **Storytelling in China**

China's culture has a vast and profound history, and its oral tradition, which is extensive and deep, is one of its gems. Anthropologists say that down through the centuries oral rather than formal, written education was the learning method of the majority of Chinese. Even today, since most farmers are illiterate, orality plays a very important role in passing on culture and customs in traditional societies. Besides using songs and rhymes to sing the story or to portray the image of a character, they will also tell folk tales. These include fairy tales, legends, fantasies, and animal stories, along with secular, philosophical, and educational fables. Of course, there are still the historical stories, revolutionary stories, and stories of heroes.

The stories that are passed on orally vary from region to region. According to one Chinese saying, "There are different styles within ten villages, and there are different customs within ten miles," so it is natural that different styles of stories will arise. These are all local creations of the common people, but spread widely through oral communicators. Children in China have traditionally heard many interesting stories, different in style and customs, and their lives have been enriched.

Storytelling remains an active part of folk culture in China, and some extraordinary story villages exist. For example, in Geng village in Gao Cheng County, Hebei Province, there are only 1,200 villagers, but one-fifth of them are accomplished storytellers. Further south, in Hubei Province, there is an old village called Wu Jia Gou, which has around eight hundred inhabitants. From the oldest to the youngest, everyone knows how to tell stories. In the west, Zou Ma Town in Chongqing is known as "the village of the folk stories in China" and the primary school includes storytelling in its syllabus.

Given this rich oral history, the results of recent research into

storytelling in families today is surprising and disturbing. A recent article reported that fewer and fewer parents tell stories to their children.<sup>1</sup> Only 20% of the children questioned had heard the story “Brushwood and tasting gall,” and around 36% knew the story “To proffer a birch and ask for a flogging,” although both were once universally known and loved. Of those who knew the stories, 75% said they learned them at school and only 5% heard them from their parents. Scholars have raised concerns about the findings. It seems that parents no longer recognize the importance of storytelling, and as a result many children have missed out on much of their classical traditional culture. In 2007, a survey was conducted with 4,464 parents with young children in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Chongqing. The results showed the parents spent an average of 2.8 hours per week telling stories to their children, whereas 10 years ago the average was 3.4 hours each week.<sup>2</sup>

### **How to tell Bible stories to children**

The traditional folk stories of China concentrate on teaching and entertaining, cultivating moral discipline, and passing down cultural norms. They operate at the level of human personality and artistic cultivation. However, the truths in the Bible penetrate at the spiritual level and bring the possibility of receiving new life from God and growing to maturity in Him. This is our hope for China’s children.



Proverbs 22:6 reads, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” In today’s society, where the value system is twisted and our wants are exploited, we need to urgently begin teaching our children the truth of the Bible at the earliest possible age. It is vital to build into them a proper value system and encourage obedience to God’s Word. The most effective

way to lead children to the Lord is to tell them Bible stories. They, in turn, will tell stories to others, including their parents.

Let us look at how we can tell Bible stories to children. Eight or nine experienced children's programs producers have offered valuable input. Below is a summary of their comments.

Having chosen the topic of the story, perhaps covering a Bible book or theme, or adapting good adult Sunday school materials, we need to master the basic techniques of storytelling for children. These are presented under three headings: form, use of tone and word, and stimulating the child's imagination.

### **Storytelling: Form**

One valid approach to telling a Bible story is simply to tell it as it appears in the Bible, using a normal voice and perhaps adding appropriate role play to bring it to life. But avoid adding any extra description that goes beyond the Bible narrative. The important thing is to convey to the children the key points in the story in an interesting and appropriate manner and within the usual five- to ten-minute attention span of most children.

At other times we might vary the speaking voice for different characters to attract the children's attention and interest. During the narration we could ask questions to interact with them and bring out the main points. We could also present the story as a drama with several actors, each describing the scene in detail. This would help trigger the imagination of our audience.

### **Tone and Word**

Our tone of voice should vary to make up for the deficiency in visual content. Use colloquial and simple words to connect with the audience. We might exaggerate our voice and emotions when explaining to add emphasis and also add different sound effects for dramatic effect. Hand or body movements during role play are also an effective way of presentation. Vary the tone by speaking faster or louder at an exciting part to create the mood of the story. We could also alter our voice for different characters (young vs. old, men vs.

women, loyal vs. wicked, etc.) to distinguish them.

We could also use different voice tones for different personalities. For example, in the story of the widow who offered two very small copper coins, we could use a very soft tone when playing the part of the widow to show her lack of self-confidence—and then change to a very loud or proud voice when playing the part of those who offer a lot, to emphasize their pride and confidence.

### **Stimulating Imagination**

The power of human imagination is one of the storyteller's greatest allies. A well-told story creates its own world in the mind of every listener. This helps the listener to own the story and take it to heart. The tone of voice of the storyteller, whether peaceful, exciting, slow, etc., will allow the children to imagine while listening. They create their own mental picture of the characters in the story, which helps hold their attention. Using the listeners' mother tongue will also touch their hearts and lives as nothing else can.

Letters from our young listeners over the years show that the seed of the gospel has been deeply rooted in their hearts through Bible storytelling, and that seed is bearing fruit. God has greatly used His storytelling servants, who have told stories to children in their mother tongue.<sup>3</sup> This is evidence that oral ministry, faithfully and properly practiced, is very effective in reaching children with the Gospel and affects the lives of many.

### **The challenges of Bible storytelling in China**

There are approximately 400 million children in China, and very few of these have the privilege of listening to Bible stories. Recognizing this need, TWR not only trains teachers through its broadcasts, but also sends teachers to China for teacher training workshops. Through the practical demonstration of good teaching techniques, we hope to help Sunday school teachers in China instill correct values in their children.

Partly as a consequence of China's "one child" policy, families are generally very serious about the education of their children.



However, the education system tends to put more emphasis on academic achievement and less on developing good moral standards. So the big challenge for Sunday school teachers and Christian parents is to know how to present spiritual truth and reality through oral Bible storytelling.

Storytelling is a gift from God. Children are very curious, innocent, and open to the Gospel and to becoming Christian believers. But they are also very open to other influences. They are like a piece of white cloth. If you dye it blue, it will become blue; if you dye it with yellow, it will become yellow. We must influence them for Christ while they are still young and we have the opportunity to tell them the Bible's great, life-changing stories. We should master the mother tongue of our listeners, practicing diligently, and grow increasingly in the art of storytelling. And we must have a sincere and loving heart that wants to present the stories of the Bible with the best that we have. I truly believe that God has already done, and will continue to do, wondrous work in the hearts of our listeners as we share with them His powerful Word through the gift of storytelling.



### **Biography**

*Fay Leung joined Trans World Radio (TWR) Hong Kong in the early 1980s, producing scripts for children's programs and translating English scripts for Mandarin productions targeting China. Her early experiences as a secondary school teacher and in freelance translation and recording provided valuable experience for ministry. In September 2001, Fay resumed her service as a Mandarin producer at TWR Hong Kong, hosting a counseling program and a youth program via webcast. Presently, she produces a program for the elderly. Fay and her husband have four children.*



## Chapter 17

# The Crescendo of Local Arts in Orality

*Robin Harris and Frank Fortunato*



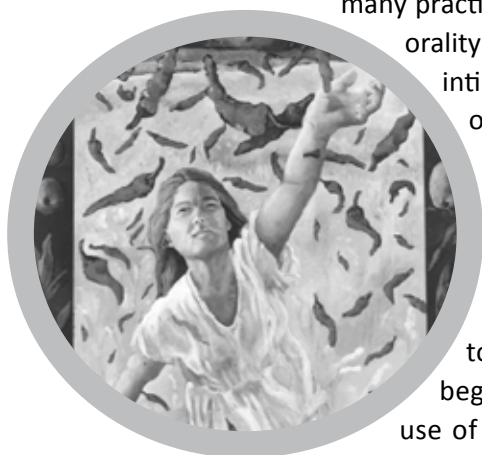
Since it was already March in this Siberian town, the beginnings of spring could be felt in the air. The sun again shone brightly after several months of somnolent hibernation, and the frigid temperature outside the one-room log church had risen to a tolerable twenty degrees below zero. A young singer sat in the comfortable, traditional “performer position” for this genre—her legs crossed at the knees, leaning forward on one elbow. She lifted her powerful voice and in a deep contralto, began to recite the biblical story of creation in Sakha<sup>1</sup> poetic form. The gathered cluster of Sakha people, bundled in fur coats against the now-forgotten chill, unconsciously leaned toward the rising crescendo of the narrative, gripped by the astonishing, undeniable appeal of the drama enacted before them.

This performance was radically different from any story heard within the walls of this humble one-room church building. It was, in fact, the first-ever telling of the biblical story of creation set in the genre of *olonkho*. This epic song-story-poetic form has for centuries expressed, more than any other genre, the values, history, and worldview of the Sakha of Siberia. It had never, however, been heard in a church building.

Although epic *olonkho* genre is celebrated among the Sakha, it took some time to enter the faith expression of the church. As an ethnomusicologist connected to this community for over a decade,

I had dreamed of seeing biblical stories set in the style of *olonkho* and was thrilled to observe the reactions of the listeners as they responded together to the high points of the story-song with the traditional “Eyhhh!”

The Sakha are providing a reproducible and sustainable model for other Siberian people groups in their use of contextualized artistic forms to communicate truth and tell God’s story. But for many practitioners, the use of music and arts in orality ministries seems to be an incredibly intimidating, complex, and “specialists-only” type of endeavor.



Are music and the arts an integral and necessary part of orality strategies or are they simply an afterthought? This chapter will address this and other issues related to music and the arts in orality. We’ll

begin by proposing a rationale for the use of music and the arts and give a few examples of what’s being done in this arena.

Finally, we’ll suggest opportunities for networking, resources, learning, and encouragement.

### **A proposed rationale**

So why bother with music and the arts? Brian Schrag<sup>2</sup> describes characteristics of artistic communication that reveal its crucial importance to mission. He also gives insight into why artistic expressions are often the most powerful and enduring means of communication within a culture:

Artistic communication is distinctive in that it explores a medium’s formal characteristics to create, modify, expand, and shape messages (including stories). The intentional use of form sets artistic expressions apart from everyday speech.

Artistic activity draws on (and reflects) cultural patterns and symbols. Locally-derived arts are thus more easily understood in that context than arts invoked from other traditions.

Artistic expressions seldom occur alone; usually there is some

combination of dance, music, costumes, drama<sup>3</sup>, verbal arts<sup>4</sup>, visual arts, or ornamentation.

Artistic rendering enriches the reception of a message. Tapping into local artistic expressions allows new messages of truth to be marked as particularly important, uniquely memorable, and distinctly engaging.

Local arts are often already mastered by community members, in contrast to writing systems that often require the acquisition of new skills and cultural patterns.

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, many cross-cultural workers find that in some communities anti-foreign and anti-Western feelings have historically hindered the Christian message from being received from outsiders. But the use of local arts and music in the faith expression of the church has contributed to a surge in the growth and health of local churches.<sup>5</sup> What follows are a few of those stories.

### **A story from Africa**

Imagine the moment in an African country when civil war breaks out, forcing the *Jesus* film team to suddenly leave the area. Six years pass without any word of the spiritual seeds sown. Then, one day, a man who had accompanied the teams on the film showings meets a national staff person from the project.

The visitor begins, “You know, I was with you the month that you and your team showed the *Jesus* film. I watched it every night. In fact, I memorized it.” Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out eighteen well-worn sheets of paper filled with words. They contain the story line of Jesus’ life—set to music. He had written a song from the words of the film! It was all there: the Lord’s birth, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection. Like most oral societies, he had a tremendous power of recall and had created an effective evangelistic tool for his culture.

He revisited the areas where the teams had shown the film and began to teach his *Jesus* film song to the people. It went from person to person and heart to heart. The team’s long years of disappointment and frustration soon exploded into praise. Seeds planted during their ministry and through one believer’s song had

grown into forty-eight new churches!

### **A story from Pakistan**

Daniel, a blind Pakistani, loved to sing. He needed an art form that would help him evangelize and teach. Eventually he discovered *kuwwali*, an indigenous devotional song form used by Sufi mystics. It employed antiphonal (call and response) singing. This was easily adapted into storytelling through music. In one all-night *kuwwali* songfest in an open courtyard, Daniel taught the stories of the Bible through music, beginning with Adam and Eve. It was a perfect communication technique for people who could not read. Daniel was blind physically, but his whole being radiated the light of the indwelling Christ as he sang.

### **A history of music and arts in mission**

These two stories, and thousands more like them, are cause for celebration. We've come a long way since the days when missionaries found it far simpler and "safer" to pack their hymnals in their luggage and eventually teach their known songs using locally-translated lyrics. There have always been exceptions (e.g., Francis Xavier, Robert de Nobili, and Narayan Vaman Tilak [India]). The most common pattern, however, has been using foreign artistic languages to communicate biblical truth.

In the Western Evangelical world the tide started turning back in the 1960s with the efforts of Vida Chenoweth, a concert marimbist. Chenoweth began a new career as a linguist and went to a tribal group to translate the New Testament, developing ethnomusicology concepts for missionary musicians along the way. This led to her starting the ethnomusicology degree at Wheaton College.

Influenced by her teaching and writing, many missionaries began to study applied ethnomusicology and found those tools to be a key to effective cross-cultural work.

In the 1980s, various international agencies like Youth With A Mission (YWAM) and Operation Mobilisation (OM) incorporated songs from Majority World communities into their international gatherings and music outreaches. In the late 1980s the Lausanne

Movement released one of the first ethnic songbooks. David Garrett and others started encouraging international gatherings of indigenous peoples with celebrations using their various local songs, dances, and costumes. During the 1990s, the AD2000 Movement started a global task force devoted to ethnic worship and the arts. The 1997 Global Congress on World Evangelization (GCOWE 97) included a track devoted to worship and the arts for the first time. SIL developed a journal called *EM News* devoted mostly to the music of ethnolinguistic communities.

Also in the mid-1990s, music missionary Dave Hall developed a series of theological articles about ethnic and global worship and created the term *ethnodoxology*.<sup>6</sup> Eventually, SIL's *EM News* was replaced by the *Ethnodoxology Journal* (published by Artists in Christian Testimony). In 1996, the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM) released a landmark issue of their *Mission Frontiers*<sup>7</sup> journal that dealt with ethnodoxology. Several new arts ministries traced their roots to that one journal issue.

In 2003 and 2006, the Global Consultations on Music and Missions featured seminars devoted to oral approaches using music and arts. A team of ethnodoxology practitioners launched the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE), a network that within a few years grew into a global fellowship of hundreds of associates serving in dozens of nations and agencies. The Lausanne Forum for World Evangelization's Issue Group on the Arts released the comprehensive "Redeeming the Arts" document,<sup>8</sup> followed by Colin Harbinson's *Stoneworks*, a global arts partnership for cultural reformation and the recovery of the imagination in the life and mission of the church.

Many forward-thinking mission agencies are now embracing arts and music in ways unheard of just decades ago. For example, Artists in Christian Testimony sends out bi-vocational arts missionaries around the world. YWAM is developing schools for ethno-arts training. OM started ArtsLink and DanceLink. Many agencies, such as OM's Heart Sounds International<sup>9</sup> and WEC International's Resonance help local believers release artistic expressions through arts festivals, new song concerts, and indigenous recordings. The Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc. (SIL), the agency that began decades ago to catalyze

local and contextual expressions of heart music and arts, continues to stay on the cutting edge, partnering with the Graduate Institute for Applied Linguistics to train their workers and other graduate students to become ethnic arts consultants worldwide.

From frigid Siberia to the stifling tropics of Indonesia, with all the nations and islands in between, the crescendo is building, the tempo quickening, moving steadily toward that exhilarating moment when all redeemed humanity joins the million of angels expressing their devotion to the Triune God in His glory. It will involve the vast mosaic of all redeemed peoples using all their redeemed artistic expressions in an unending symphony of eternity.



### **“Next steps” for connecting to training and resources**

The use of music and the arts in orality strategies may require the acquisition of new tools and a willingness to collaborate with locally-available arts specialists or through virtual networking. Many resources are available, including undergraduate<sup>10</sup> and graduate<sup>11</sup> programs, print and media resources for the non-specialist,<sup>12</sup> and networks for media and arts in orality.<sup>13</sup> Email [info@worldofworship.org](mailto:info@worldofworship.org) for information, or to join the rapidly expanding movement of Christians around the world who are incorporating culturally-appropriate music and arts in their ministries.

### **Biography**

**Robin Harris** is Co-Founder and Executive Director of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE). She serves with OM’s Heart Sounds International, focusing on music research and ministry in Russia. She is writing a PhD dissertation on the Siberian storytelling-song genre *olonkho*. The Harrises have been cross-cultural workers since 1984 and lived in Russia for a decade.

**Frank Fortunato** serves as the International Music Director for Operation Mobilization and coordinates Heart Sounds International, a ministry promoting indigenous worship through seminars, songwriting events, and recordings, mostly in restricted parts of the world. His publications include *All the World is Singing—Glorifying God through the Worship Music of the Nations*.



## Chapter 18

# Evaluations and Oral Cultures



*J. Peter McLain*

### **What difference is it making?**

A Christian ministry's quarterly newsletter arrived in the hands of its donors in July 2008. It profiled, complete with pictures, a training initiative launched earlier that year in rural India. One month later, a third-party team arrived to evaluate the project's impact. The team discovered that very little training had actually taken place in the targeted communities. The local leaders responsible for the implementation had failed to start the project, yet they had reported to their international headquarters that it was going well.

In 2006, a large, international, non-governmental organization (NGO) received a grant to train secondary school teachers in Iraq. A report was required for additional funding. Someone was hired to travel from school to school to get signatures from teachers, verifying attendance at all of the training sessions—a post-dated “sign-in sheet” so to speak. In reality, most teachers had *not* attended *any* of the training, given the volatile security environment at the time. They signed the forms anyway, hoping that it would make them eligible for future training. The organization got the additional grant.



These examples are commonplace in the non-profit and ministry world today. Donors want to know the impact of their investment in a certain development or ministry, yet it is hard to get accurate, reliable, or meaningful reports. Most ministries design projects without any thought of measuring end results. Many organizations will try, but they measure the wrong factor. For instance, a signature does not verify that someone is a better teacher. All too often, a project has no results to measure because it failed—either from flawed strategy, flawed implementation, or external circumstances beyond its control. Unfortunately, most donors do not know the project failed and repeat their investment. This can be avoided, however, by employing third-party evaluators to measure outcomes. In the case of T<sup>4</sup> Global, our outcomes occur among oral-culture learners, adding additional challenges and opportunities.

### **What are we measuring?**

Donors are increasingly asking for greater accountability. Referring to their donations as “investments,” they want a return on their investment (ROI). Some have coined the terms “social return on investment” or “kingdom return on investment.”

The focus is no longer on inputs or even outputs. Inputs would be the money raised, the number of staff or volunteers, and the facilities, equipment, or supplies. Outputs are the number of classes taught, materials distributed, services provided, or patients treated. One ministry measured its output performance by the *tons* of Bibles it shipped. Understanding inputs and outputs can help determine strategy and implementation, but outcomes are the more relevant indicators of impact.

Outcomes include changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs, worldview, skills, behavior, condition, or status. Measuring outcomes determines if the program is actually making a difference in the life of an individual or a community. It is not how many Bibles are distributed, how many radio hours are broadcast, or how many training seminars are held. Instead, it is how well participants applied what they read, heard, or learned to their lives and communities. Are

the lives and communities different as a result of the project?

### Independent evaluation

Not only are donors increasingly asking for evidence of impact and results, but they want to hear those results from a third party. Self-reporting does not carry the same weight and believability as a report from an independent organization. Engaging a third-party evaluator adds costs to a project, but it is a cost donors are willing to pay in order to get reliable data on their investment.

Yet many organizations hesitate because a third-party evaluation may report failure, thereby damaging their position with these donors. If the evaluation is accurate, the negative feedback can actually produce positive results. A third-party evaluation is not a risk to be avoided; it is an opportunity to learn whether a program is performing well or not. If it is not, adjustments can be made. A donor might actually fund a new project if its redesign is based on findings from the third-party evaluation.

The opening example in this chapter is true, and personally verifiable. The senior leadership of an international organization designed a training program for rural India using their established grassroots network and T<sup>4</sup> Global to implement the project. Three months into the project, a newsletter featured the project and reported its innovative success, while third-party evaluators simultaneously discovered that the network had not understood the project, much less implemented it. If T<sup>4</sup> Global had not engaged a third-party evaluator, the project's initial failure would have remained unknown. T<sup>4</sup> Global was able to take corrective action and the project eventually became a true success story. The donor expressed appreciation. Lessons learned from the India project were applied to a later project design on another



continent. T<sup>4</sup> Global believes the use of third-party evaluators is key to improving and refining our strategies and implementation plans.

### **Evaluating projects in oral cultures**

In theory, evaluation in the context of an oral culture should be easy. After all, they understand and interpret the world experientially. An oral culture person does not take what someone says at face value—he or she either has to experience it him or herself or relate it to his or her own everyday life experiences. In general, the person does not receive an idea in the abstract, nor does he or she accept an idea not connected to the community's experience. Oral cultures have built-in mechanisms to validate whether a project is successful. Simply ask: *Has it changed their everyday life experience?* If they are living life differently, then the project has had impact.

Other questions to ask include: *Has their story changed? How do they now tell their story?* and *Do they explain their world differently as a result of the project?* An African proverb explains, "Everything important has its own song and dance." Are there new songs or dances because the project was introduced into the community? If there are no songs or dances—if the story has not changed—then it is likely the project had no significant impact.

### **Challenges to evaluation in oral cultures**

Evaluation in oral cultures, then, should be easy: assess whether the story has changed for an individual or community. Yet it is not that simple at all. Almost all evaluators approach their task from a literate culture bias. Evaluations are designed and implemented using literate culture assumptions and methodology. Those work well in letter culture environments, but they often fail when used with oral cultures.

Obviously, oral culture people cannot respond effectively to written questionnaires—they can't read or write. But verbally-conveyed interview questions will not result in good data collection—you can't just read the questions to them. Interviewees struggle to understand what is being asked. They tend to say what they think

the interviewer wants to hear, or refuse to answer the question altogether. The very act of being asked questions may not even be culturally appropriate. Answers given to questions may have absolutely nothing to do with what they really think, believe, or experience.

In 2007, T<sup>4</sup> Global engaged an outside evaluator to assess the impact of their oral training project in Southern Sudan. The evaluator used both quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation. The quantitative part relied on pre and post surveys. A team of local Sudanese was hired to interview three hundred individuals using a written questionnaire. In the end, the evaluator was unable to use any of the data collected from the interviews. The evaluator concluded,

*It is apparent that the quantitative methods of the pre-post survey have challenged the resources and capacity of the indigenous partners. The methods may not have been appropriately designed to meet the constraints of data collection in Southern Sudan to provide timely and accurate data.<sup>1</sup>*

The interviewees were very unfamiliar with the questionnaire process. They did not understand the purpose, let alone the individual questions. The interview teams took an extraordinary length of time to complete the given task, thus indicating that the process itself was unnatural to the culture. Most of the answers collected were the same. This suggested that the interviews were either done in groups or the interviewers led the interviewees (knowingly or unknowingly) to the “right” answer.

The qualitative part of the evaluation went much better, consisting of focus group interviews. However, even these were initially difficult because of the question-and-answer format. An awkward silence fell upon the group because very few individuals were willing to talk, much less answer the questions. Oral culture learners do not use question-and-answer techniques. However, when the evaluator shifted to open-ended questions, some people began

to speak. And when they began asking people to tell their stories, the focus group discussions took off.

### **An oral approach to evaluation**

The whole concept of evaluation is different in oral cultures. In his book, *Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong describes a Central African evaluation of the village's new school principal: "Let's watch a little how he dances."<sup>2</sup> An American would want to look at changes in the school's national test scores. But test scores do not fit into a villager's everyday life experience. If they haven't experienced it, they cannot evaluate it.

Furthermore, any "answer" to an evaluation question is also best given experientially. Oral culture people don't sit around drinking tea in the village center saying, "yes/no" or "strongly agree/disagree" to one another. A story, drama, song, or dance is a more natural and effective "answer." In a recent group evaluation among the Samburu in Northwest Kenya, participants struggled to answer specific questions. However, they readily responded to open-ended questions by performing a drama or singing a song. Oral culture people rarely evaluate something individually; rather, they process collectively. The entire group or village has to agree for an evaluation to have any validity. Interviewing individuals is a literate fool's errand; either the individual struggles to give an answer, or the group arrives to help the individual.



### **Keys to evaluation in oral cultures**

Here are specific steps to follow when evaluating in an oral context:

1. Establish the current community stories related to the issues,

topics, or problems being addressed by the project. Where possible, seek out stories that reveal worldview (Why are things the way they are?), knowledge (How do they do things, or how do things work?), and behavior (What do they do, or how do they live?).

2. After a project intervention, assess whether any of the worldview, knowledge, and/or behavior stories have changed, and if so, by what degree.
3. Use indigenous people (preferably known and trusted) to collect data.
4. Collect data in the local language. Do not use translators.
5. Use oral methods of data collection. Do not use written questionnaires or individual surveys. Three suggested oral methods of data collection are:

**Observation:** Observe the community in action. This is particularly helpful in determining behavior patterns.

**Focus groups:** Focus groups are both a group interview and an observation technique. The evaluator should meet with groups of people in the community, not individuals. Use open-ended questions. Get them to tell stories. The data can be compared from group to group. If statistical analysis is still desired, treat each group as a unit. Talk and engage with enough groups to establish a good sampling size.

**Tests:** Conduct tests as part of the focus groups, or randomly in the community. This is not a written test or a questionnaire. Simply ask people to tell a story, sing a song, or act out various topics of interest (e.g., What is your creation story? Why/how do children get sick? How do you prevent malaria?).

Following these simple keys to evaluation in an oral culture will generate effective and reliable data. Strategies and project

implementation can be improved by organizations seeking to be change agents. Donors can determine if lives and communities are positively impacted as a result of their investment.

### **Biography**

*J. Peter McLain has extensive experience working cross-culturally in business, government, and non-profit settings. Since 2003, he has focused on training oral culture peoples, applying contextualized, indigenous-led solutions, first as the Executive Director at Voice for Humanity and then as the President of T<sup>3</sup> Global. He has overseen dozens of orality projects implementing Christian leadership training, basic discipleship, and humanitarian efforts, and designed mixed-methods evaluations to measure impact among oral cultures in Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, and Sudan.*



## Chapter 19

# Orality, Storytelling, and Values Preservation in



# Bhutan

*Steve Evans*

### **A new kind of happiness**

As the jetliner flew past eight of the ten highest mountains in the world, I knew I was in for an adventure. To my left I could see Mt. Everest towering high above the other mountains. It seemed close enough to touch. The plane turned north, into the mighty Himalayas, and began its descent. We navigated the granite mountains, going deeper into the valleys. Suddenly, the plane swooped around a hill and before us laid a beautiful valley with the airport below.

I stepped off the plane on to the tarmac and was dwarfed by the jetliner, the jetliner dwarfed by the brightly colored traditional pagoda airport buildings, and the airport buildings dwarfed by the mountains behind. Airport, immigration, and customs officials scurried about, wearing their traditional dress—the women in *kiras* and the men in *ghos*. “I have arrived in a magical kingdom,” I thought to myself, a kingdom that even included a handsome prince (who would eventually become king). I was hooked then and there, and I instinctively knew I would be back, that somehow Bhutan and I were bound together by some sacred silk cord that I couldn’t see.



The drive from Paro to the capital city of Thimphu left an indelible impression on me. The pristine rivers and forests, the high surrounding mountains, the traditional architecture, the rice fields and cultivated red chili peppers, the temples and monasteries—all contributed to the uniqueness of this tiny Himalayan kingdom with a population of only 600,000.

I was in Bhutan on a personal visit, staying at the home of friends, and it happened to be the week of celebrating the king's birthday, a national holiday. One day, their house was filled with friends, acquaintances, and invited guests (about eighty people total), and I found myself telling stories to the entire group. The theme of the stories was hurting women and the men who cause them pain. Each story had the idea that even though men took away the dignity of women, God could restore it through self-worth and personal identity. When I finished, the response was quite disappointing—blank stares, especially from the women. “Well, that went over like a lead balloon,” I thought to myself.

Later that day a woman came up to me. As we sipped tea she said, “I know you were puzzled by the way the women responded to your stories today. I want you to know, though, that it's not that they didn't respond; it's that they didn't know how to respond.” She went on to say that the stories spoke to the women at a very deep level, and that they all identified intimately with them. “You told my story today,” she said, beginning to weep. “My husband doesn't love me. Oh, he provides for me, but he doesn't love me. I cook and clean and give him children, but he doesn't love me. I know he doesn't. There's one thing I do know, though, and that is God loves me, and that gets me through.” She continued crying.

A few days later I boarded a plane to leave a country I had quickly grown to love. Silently, I prayed to return someday. It was on that flight that I discovered the term “Gross National Happiness.” It was in a small ad that ultimately had big implications for my life. It read: “Call for Papers on Operationalizing Gross National Happiness. Send abstract to Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimphu.” I asked myself, “What in the world is Gross National Happiness?”

It sounded intriguing. I worked for a small non-profit ethnographic research organization with a specialty in oral communication and oral cultures, and thought surely I could speak to the issue. I have



always operated from the premise that stories, as well as life events, shape our perceptions of reality or worldview. Deeply rooted happiness is a worldview issue, and surely stories have a role to play in “operationalizing” happiness. Besides, I loved to research and write, and this sounded like a fascinating challenge.

After an intensive Internet search on Bhutan and Gross National Happiness, I learned that His Majesty, the Fourth King of Bhutan, proclaimed that the ultimate purpose of government is to promote the happiness of the people, stressing both increasing prosperity and happiness. He said, “Gross National Happiness is more than Gross National Product,” and he gave happiness precedence over economic prosperity.<sup>1</sup> Then in November 2003, I submitted an abstract titled “Tears and Laughter: Promoting Gross National Happiness through the Rich Oral Traditions of Bhutan.” The abstract was accepted, the paper written, and I found myself back in Bhutan the following February, a guest of the royal government.

While researching Bhutanese traditional stories and storytelling in preparation for my paper, I learned that by beginning a story with *dangbo, dingbo* (*long, long ago*), the audience detaches itself from its present world and enters the fascinating land of folktales where they identify themselves with the heroes and the outcomes of the story. Another formulaic expression for opening a Bhutanese folktale is *henma, henma* (*once upon a time*). Little by little, the narrator tells his tale, punctuated with *dele* (*and then*), adding elements to quicken a sense of timelessness, a feeling of long ago and far away.<sup>2</sup>

Loaded with this new information, I decided to try my hand at

creating a new tale to illustrate what I had in mind concerning stories and worldview. I now stood before eighty other presenters and an audience of over three hundred that included royalty, aristocrats, members of state, diplomats, academics, and students from around the world. They were all delegates to the first International Seminar on Operationalizing the Concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). I began my presentation with my newly-crafted story.

### **Dangbo, Dingbo**

*“Dangbo, dingbo,” the old man slowly uttered. “Henma, henma.” “Long, long ago and once upon a time.” The circle of crowding villagers around him grew quiet and still. Sparks from the burning fire drifted upwards, creating a magic of their own, competing with the impending magic of the story about to come. For a few moments the storyteller drew incomprehensible designs in the dirt with his walking stick, then pulled his kabney tighter around him to ward off the chill of the night. Eventually he looked up, his piercing eyes reflecting the burning fire and projecting the wisdom of generations before him. “When few stones and pebbles could be seen,” he said. “When the saplings and grasses began to sprout out in greenness. When a few drops of water began to drip... first in the upper direction; then in the lower direction; in that direction; in this direction....” On and on he went, with a tale captivating and enchanting, punctuating various parts of the story with “dele” (and then), leading his audience from one event to another. Not a word was said by those around him; not an eye strayed from the figure huddled by the fire—until he was finished. Then there was a collective sigh, with smiles on their faces and murmurs of approval. One said, “We can be like those of this story! Are we not as good as they?” The others responded, “Yes! Yes! We are as good as they! We can be like them!” Then there were pleas for another story from the wandering storyteller who stopped by their village to entertain them for the night. They would stay up late, absorbing the stories of the old man like dry parched ground drinks in drops of freshly fallen rain. And long after he’d gone they would recall his words, the details of his stories, telling them to others, who in turn would pass them on. “All is right with the world,” they would say upon hearing the tales. “We are content; we are happy.”*

### Transformation at the heart level

Life transformation takes place at the heart level. To change the heart is to change worldview. To change worldview is to change culture. It is not until the role of story in worldview and culture is firmly grasped that one can fully comprehend the necessity of story in worldview change and cultural transformation. Surely, this is where the realm of happiness rests.

I read a book by Brent Curtis and John Elderedge recently that talked about story being the language of the heart.

*The heart does not respond to principles and programs; it seeks not efficiency, but passion. Art, poetry, beauty, mystery, ecstasy: These are what rouse the heart. Indeed, they are the language that must be spoken if one wishes to communicate with the heart. It is why Jesus so often taught and related to people by telling stories and asking questions. His desire was not just to engage their intellects but to capture their hearts.*<sup>3</sup>

What is worldview, and how does it affect culture? Succinctly stated, worldview concerns basic underlying assumptions people have about reality, whether on tacit or overt levels.<sup>4</sup> Charles Kraft, prominent cultural anthropologist and missiologist, further explained that a people's worldview provides them with a "lens, model or map" through which reality is perceived and interpreted.<sup>5</sup> "To discover why people behave in the ways they do, we must look beneath the surface to the things people believe and assume," he wrote.<sup>6</sup>

British theologian N.T. Wright devoted over one hundred pages in his book *The New Testament and the People of God* to the principle of worldview and life transformation through stories:

*Stories are a basic constituent of human life. They are, in fact, one key element within the total construction of worldview. Stories thus provide a vital framework for experiencing the world. They also provide a means by which views of the world may be challenged.*<sup>7</sup>

Wright argued that this is why Jesus often told stories,



particularly parables. He intended to challenge the existing Jewish worldview and provide an alternative picture of a reality Jesus called “the Kingdom of God” or “the Kingdom of heaven.” Wright said, “Stories are, actually, peculiarly good at modifying...other stories and their worldviews.” He added that the parable hides the “wisdom of the serpent behind the innocence of the dove,” gaining entrance and favor which can then be used to change assumptions which the hearer would otherwise keep hidden away for safety.<sup>8</sup> In essence, Wright said, in order to alter one’s worldview, he or she must hear a better story.

With worldview and culture, one mirrors the other, and one’s values are inextricably linked to both. “Values can be viewed either as part of worldview or as emerging from a worldview,” wrote Carol McKinney. “Which way you choose to view them depends upon your theoretical perspective.” She added that worldview, values, emotions, and behavior overlap, operating both dependently and interdependently.<sup>9</sup>

In his book, *Scripture and Strategy*, missiologist David Hesselgrave asked the question, “How are worldviews formed in the first place?” He then answered: “...by the telling of a story (and stories within a story) and drawing inferences from it. That’s why all peoples have their story...and draw upon it to sustain their values.”<sup>10</sup>

It seems apparent that the role of storytelling in maintaining and reinforcing Bhutan’s values system is a critical one, especially concerning the nation’s policy of Gross National Happiness. One could also wonder how else storytelling can be utilized once this nation has engaged and accepted its significance in values transmission. Those working within the kingdom might learn from a woman weeping after hearing a tale of God’s love, saying, “My husband doesn’t love me, but I know God does,” and from a king who believes that his people’s happiness is much more than material possessions.

The oral traditions are not lost on this Himalayan Buddhist culture, whose values systems are eroding because of globalization and outside media influences. The rich oral heritage of Bhutan must be fully explored and exploited to draw a people to those inner values that develop, nurture, and sustain a well-being that cannot be offered by the tangible things of this world.

### **Biography**

*A. Steven Evans is a Senior Research Fellow and Communications Specialist at the International Center for Ethnographic Studies in Atlanta-USA, specializing in both cross-cultural communication and oral cultures. He is widely published on the topic of orality and biblical storytelling. Most recently, he authored a book chapter: "Using the Bible in Oral Cultures" in Understanding and Using the Bible (SPCK Publishing, 2009). He serves as the Co-Chair of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization's Orality Special Interest Group. He lives in Johannesburg, South Africa, with his wife.*



## Section III: Processing Together

### Review (Learning)

There were several ideas presented in this section. Choose one you found interesting and share why it stood out to you.

How would you describe it to others? Are you using stories to describe it?

Share any further questions or comments you have.

### Reflect (Deepening)

Are there certain orality strategies already happening in your organization?

Is there an orality strategy that your organizational colleagues understand?

What are your colleagues' commitments to using orality strategies in your organization?

Are there several people who can champion, facilitate, and communicate the orality strategy? List them. Can they explain why it is important?



What barriers are you facing? What resistance do you anticipate?

What inconsistencies are there between what is important and what is actually done in your organization?

### **Resolve (Implementing)**

Are there people who need to be involved in embracing the process, but are currently not involved?

What are some things you or your organization needs to stop doing or to let go of?

We tend to move in an either/or orbit. How can we encourage more both/and thinking?

What are new ways to measure your growth?

How will you communicate this to various stakeholders? Will you use narratives/stories?

Will you update the new metrics regularly and talk openly about them?

In the next twelve to eighteen months, what are some practices you hope will be fully embraced by your organization?



# Epilogue

*They asked each other,  
“Were not our hearts  
burning within us while he  
talked with us on the road  
and opened the Scriptures to us?”  
- Luke 24:32*

Walking down Baghramyan Street in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, I was reflecting on how the Scriptures first arrived in Armenia. How strange it might have been to hear them read in Greek or Syriac, but it was translated into Armenian orally. The oral format of the Word was available for one hundred years prior to the translation of the Scriptures into the local language, and then they still had to devise the missing alphabets that would express the sounds of the Armenian tongue.

With all the innovations and urgencies of getting the Word of God to those without it, one would have thought that all Scripture had already been provided to all peoples in their own heart language. With two millennia behind us, the truth of the matter is that out of 6,912 languages in the world, only 453 have an adequate Bible. There are approximately two billion people without an Old Testament.

There are 2,252 unengaged and unreached people groups, a total of 350 million people who do not have a single verse of the Bible in their own heart language. Coming on the horizon is the “mobile” generation, in which three billion people, each with his or her personal Smartphone, will connect, interact, and transact very differently by 2013.

The Digital Bible Project is a consortium of organizations, funding advocates, and Bible societies. They share a dream to reach the three billion Smartphone users, oral preference learners, and oral-speaking communities and societies. They are staying in front of the curve of providing digital rights management from audio to visual to print-on-demand. They want to see the Word of God being made available to a new “mobile” generation. They are so cutting-edge that they are devising new alphabets and fonts for the sounds of pronunciation in the heart language, and for visual display on a gadget. They sense an urgency to bring the Word of God to all people groups.

We started our journey in this book with the questions *How have we missed the mark?* and *What must we do differently?* Almost always, the mental reflex is then to ask, *Who else has done this?* quickly followed by *What are the best practices?*

We have intentionally brought together a group of passionate strategists and practitioners. They represent a breadth of organizations from the smallest to the largest with different styles of operating. They are oral mission practitioners who are willing to listen to you and suggest means for you to go forward. Visit with them at [www.heartstories.info](http://www.heartstories.info), or join the Facebook group “Heart Stories.”

To the question of *What are the best practices?* we have deliberately not followed a formulaic route of providing simple steps to use. Too often, in the process of implementing those steps and without a powerful guiding coalition, some well-meaning advocate may manage to harm his or her own department or organization. Then, as some experts would suggest, if anything is ever identified as best practice, it probably isn’t, because it is copied too often and tailored only for certain organizational environments. In fact, some of the best practices are at the very leading edge of innovation, and not

yet widely known or distributed.<sup>1</sup> This book provides a glance at the leading edge.

We are not advocating any tried-and-true formula, as each organization, field, and people group is different. Furthermore, the cost of change might appear formidable, and the consequences of change are often a vast unknown. If you see orality as an innovation and need to implement it, it will require a change in fundamentals, including the measurement process. We ask, therefore, *what are the formidable resistances to changing those fundamentals?*

We are advocating the value of orality through the living proof of motivated colleagues. You know them, and you can trust in their words and watch what God has done through them. In *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* we described a quartet of values: heart language, worldview studies, accountability, and disciple-making multiplication. The colleagues contributing chapters in this book have affirmed those values in their practice and have seen tangible fruit.

Forward-thinking and inspiring statements have been put forth by Lausanne in the past. I think of the Amsterdam 2000 declaration, especially point number eight:

*The Bible is indispensable to true evangelism. The Word of God itself provides both the content and authority for all evangelism. Without it there is no message to preach to the lost. People must be brought to an understanding of at least some of the basic truths contained in the Scriptures before they can make a meaningful response to the Gospel. Thus we must proclaim and disseminate the Holy Scriptures in the heart language of all those we are called to evangelize and disciple. We pledge ourselves to keep the Scriptures at the very heart of our evangelistic outreach and message, and to remove all known language and cultural barriers to a clear understanding of the gospel on the part of our hearers.<sup>2</sup>*

What is your story? What will be your story? Are you willing to live out the next story?

**Samuel E. Chiang**  
Yerevan, Armenia

## Notes

### Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> Todd Johnson indicates based on the global giving amounts from Christians, the amount of money going to the unevangelized is 0.3%, or about US\$1.7 billion per year. Source: *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009): 296-297.

<sup>2</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 1992, 38-41.

<sup>3</sup> Dudley J. Woodberry, *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues among Muslims* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> "Making Disciples of Oral Learners," Lausanne Occasional Paper, no. 54 (Bangalore: Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization and International Orality Network, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> For an overview on this subject matter, see Chapter 11, "Practices in Orality: The Existence, Identification, and Engagement of a People's Worldview"; also see the Glossary for a definition. As examples, three excellent books that provide insights into worldviews of Middle East, China, and Afghanistan—Pakistan respectively are: Nabeel T. Jabbour, *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2008); Peter Hessler, *Country Driving* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010); and Greg Mortenson, *Turning Stones into Schools* (New York: Penguin Group USA, 2009). *Mortenson's* book has a chapter that he calls "Style"; it is an excellent description of how "worldview" works in real life in that part of Central Asia.

### Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup> Mary Bellis, "The History of the Electronic Telegraph and Telegraphy," <http://inventors.about.com/od/tstartinventions/a/telegraph.htm> (accessed 14 July 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge 1982, reprinted 1991), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Avery Willis and Mark Snowden interview with Steve Douglass, 3 September 2009. Note that Campus Crusade has launched <http://www.globalshortfilmnetwork.com>, which uses media to engage people with oral preferences.

<sup>4</sup> Defined in *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* (New York: Elim Printing, 2005), 121.

<sup>5</sup> Grant Lovejoy, "The Extent of Orality," International Mission Board, SBC, undated, 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 3ff.

<sup>7</sup> Sally Gifford, "Dramatic Decline, According to National Literary Reading in Endowment for the Arts Survey." National Endowment for the Arts, Washington DC, 8 July 2004, <http://www.nea.gov/news/news04/ReadingAtRisk.html> (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Results of the first tests since 1992 are available in the publication "A First Look at the Literacy of America's Adults in the 21st Century," <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006470> (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Donald F. Roberts and Ulla G. Foehr, "Trends in Media Use," *The Future of Children*, 18, No. 1 (2008), 11, [http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/18\\_01\\_02.pdf](http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/18_01_02.pdf) (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Grant Lovejoy, “The Extent of Orality,” 4-6 provides in-depth analysis of the basis for United Nation’s (UNESCO) global literacy claims.

<sup>11</sup> For more on Real Life Ministries read *Truth that Sticks* by Avery T. Willis, Jr., and Mark Snowden (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010) and also visit <http://www.truthsticks.org>.

<sup>12</sup> From Jim Putman’s book, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> The Barna Group, “A New Generation Expresses its Skepticism and Frustration with Christianity,” 24 September 2007, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/94-a-new-generation-expresses-its-skepticism-and-frustration-withchristianity> (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> James Cameron, *Avatar*, Twentieth Century Fox 2007 script 128. <http://www.foxscreenings.com/media/pdf/JamesCameronAVATAR.pdf>. Permission for use requested 21 January 2010.

<sup>15</sup> For more on this topic and how to implement it in your own church or ministry, read *Truth that Sticks* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Several resources comprise what is being called the DNA21 Discipleship Revolution resource family. See <http://www.dna-21.org>.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Snowden email exchange with Avery Willis, 1 February 2010.

## Section II: The Word Became Fresh

<sup>1</sup> Rick Brown, Bob Fish, John Travis, Eric Adams, and Don Allen, “Movements and Contextualization: Is There Really a Correlation?” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 26 (Spring 2009): 29-31 (accessed 14 July, 2010).

## Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.onestory.org/Partners/PartnersDefault.aspx> (accessed 14 July, 2010).

## Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 3:2 refers to the burning bush; Exodus 13:21 indicates the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/colored> (accessed 14 July, 2010).

## Chapter 7

<sup>1</sup> <http://siutrainig.org>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gods-story.org/sts/>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.lifewind.org>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://chronologicalbiblestorying.net>.

<sup>5</sup> For a description of this program, see CMF International at <http://cmfi.org/whatwedo/community-health-evangelism> (accessed 14 July 2010).

## Chapter 8

<sup>1</sup> [Http://www.createinternational.com](http://www.createinternational.com).

<sup>2</sup> [Http://theinternetmission.com](http://theinternetmission.com).

<sup>3</sup> [Http://www.megavoice.com](http://www.megavoice.com).

<sup>4</sup> Tibetan worker's personal communication, letter in 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Report from field missionaries in Tibet, 2000.

## Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup> [Http://www.e3partners.org/Page.aspx?pid=1209](http://www.e3partners.org/Page.aspx?pid=1209) (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> [Http://www.storyrunners.com](http://www.storyrunners.com).

## Section III: An Unfinished Story

<sup>1</sup> Rick Brown, "Language Matters Like Bright Sunlight: The Benefits of Communicating in Heart Language," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 26 (Summer 2009): 85-88 (accessed 14 July, 2010).

## Chapter 11

<sup>1</sup> The Greek phrase *panta ta ethne* in Matthew 28:20 and elsewhere is usually translated "all nations."

<sup>2</sup> See Acts 2:5-11, where "in their language" is emphasized three times, including the phrase "heart language."

<sup>3</sup> Barre Toelken, *Dynamics of Folklore* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1996), 269.

<sup>4</sup> Jane H. Hill and Bruce Mannheim, "Language and Worldview," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992): 381-406 (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 38.

<sup>6</sup> *Exploring the Land: Discovering Ways for Unreached Peoples to Follow Christ* (Orlando, FL: Caleb Project, 2003) can be purchased at Amazon.com or through Pioneers International.

<sup>7</sup> Check first with SIL/Wycliffe and New Tribes as they may already have a glossary related to your ethnic group's language.

## Chapter 12

<sup>1</sup> [Http://www.twr.org/asia/asia](http://www.twr.org/asia/asia)

<sup>2</sup> [Http://www.afciworld.org](http://www.afciworld.org)

<sup>3</sup> Partnering ministries were those such as Ambassadors for Christ, Food for the Hungry, and Mission to Unreached Peoples.

<sup>4</sup> [Http://www.crmladers.org/ministries/innerchange](http://www.crmladers.org/ministries/innerchange) (accessed 14 July, 2010)

## Chapter 13

<sup>1</sup>[Http://siutrainng.org/](http://siutrainng.org/)

## Chapter 14

<sup>1</sup>[Http://www.bibleleague.org/](http://www.bibleleague.org/)

<sup>2</sup>[Http://www.gods-story.org/](http://www.gods-story.org/)

<sup>3</sup> Video available from [http://www.biblevideo.org/distributors\\_outside\\_usa.html](http://www.biblevideo.org/distributors_outside_usa.html) (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>4</sup>[Http://www.gods-story.org/sts/impact.asp](http://www.gods-story.org/sts/impact.asp) (accessed 14 July, 2010).

## Chapter 15

<sup>1</sup>[Http://globalfrontiermissions.org/unreached.html](http://globalfrontiermissions.org/unreached.html) (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> References to the different types of prayer are from of Dr. Gregory R. Frizzell's book, *How to Develop a Powerful Prayer Life, the Biblical Path to Holiness and Relationship with God*, Fulton, KY: The Master Design, 2000. 29-40. Used with permission.

<sup>3</sup> Prayer is an indispensable part of God's strategy for His work and His mission, and several websites are helpful in developing a strategy of prayer: Table 71 (<http://www.table71.org>); ION official site (<http://www.InternationalOralityNetwork.org>), original link (<http://www.oralbible.org>); Oral Strategies, (<http://www.oralstrategies.org>); Ethne' Prayer Strategy group (<http://www.ethne.net/prayer/prayer-resources>); and Global Prayer Digest (<http://globalprayerdigest.org/>).

<sup>4</sup> For information about unreached people groups, the following websites may be helpful: Call2All (<http://www.Call2All.org>); 4K World Map (<http://www.4KWorldMap.org>); World Missions Atlas Project (<http://www.Worldmap.org>); Research collaboration project (<http://www.peoplegroups.org>); and Finishing The Task (<http://www.finishingthetask.com/Statistics.aspx>) (accessed 14 July, 2010).

## Chapter 16

<sup>1</sup> Article is published at <http://www.fyeedu.net/> and based on a survey done by Fujian Normal University, College of Society and History.

<sup>2</sup> The Family Education Society of the China National Society of Early Childhood Education.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of China, we use Mandarin as the mother tongue.

## Chapter 17

<sup>1</sup> *Sakha* is the self-name for the indigenous people in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Northern Siberia. In the Russian language, they are referred to as *Yakut*.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Schrag, "Why Local Arts are Central to Mission," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, 24, no.4 (2006): 199-202. See [www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/24\\_4\\_PDFs/199\\_Schrag.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/24_4_PDFs/199_Schrag.pdf) (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Julisa Rowe, in her dissertation on "Ethnodramatology" (Western Seminary, 2004), addressed a variety of cultural drama styles and demonstrated the importance of



understanding and utilizing local styles in dramatic portrayals of Scripture stories.

<sup>4</sup> Pete Unseth (SIL) studied the effective use of proverbs in oral communication and says, “Local proverbs are often used in entertaining ways, but their most serious use is often in persuasion, whether in a legal setting or haggling a price in the market. When we want to persuade people to embrace God’s truth, we need to learn how to use some suitable local proverbs in appropriate ways.” Personal communication with Robin Harris, 30 July 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Fortunato, with Paul Neeley and Carol Brinneman, *All the World Is Singing: Glorifying God through the Worship Music of the Nation* (Tyrone GA/Bucks, UK: Authentic, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Ethnodoxology is the study of the worship of God among diverse cultures.

<sup>7</sup> See *Mission Frontiers*, May-June 2007, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/>.

<sup>8</sup> Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005, “Redeeming the Arts: The Restoration of the Arts to God’s Creational Intention.” *Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 46*. Produced by the Issue Group at the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization hosted by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand, 29 September to 5 October 2004.

<sup>9</sup> For a starting point for resources available, contact the authors through Heart Sounds International, <http://heart-sounds.org/>.

<sup>10</sup> Moody Bible Institute (Chicago, Illinois) and All Nations Christian College (England).

<sup>11</sup> The Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics (GIAL) in Dallas, Texas, features an ethno-arts concentration in their MA program. Similar training is available at the European Training Program (England) and Payap University (Thailand); Fuller Theological Seminary offers a number of courses for those in orality ministries or for training in music and arts; Liberty University’s MA in Ethnomusicology offers long-distance courses along with a summer residence requirement, which is convenient for missionaries on home assignment; and International Council of Ethnodoxologists one-week graduate course in Ethnodoxology is offered on a regular basis at various seminaries in the USA (see <http://www.worldofworship.org/Training/seminars.php>).

<sup>12</sup> Frank Fortunato, with Paul Neeley and Carol Brinneman, *All the World Is Singing: Glorifying God through the Worship Music of the Nations*; Brian Schrag and Paul Neeley, eds., *All the World Will Worship: Helps for Developing Indigenous Hymns* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.); “Redeeming the Arts: The Restoration of the Arts to God’s Creational Intention,” *Lausanne Occasional Paper, no. 46*, [http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP46\\_IG17.pdf](http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP46_IG17.pdf) (accessed 14 July, 2010); “Sounds of Global Worship”—the YouTube Channel for Heart Sounds International: <http://www.YouTube.com/user/HSIOM> (accessed 14 July, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Music and Arts Task Force of the International Orality Network; International Council of Ethnodoxologists; <http://www.worldofworship.org> (largest virtual library in the world for ethnodoxology); and Arts and Mission Task Force of the World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission, email [ArtsinMission@gmail.com](mailto:ArtsinMission@gmail.com) for information.

## Chapter 18

<sup>1</sup>“MT<sup>4</sup> Mobile School Pilot Project in Southern Sudan, An Interim Evaluation Report,” 5 February 2008, 13.

<sup>2</sup>Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 2006), 55.

## Chapter 19

<sup>1</sup>Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley, “Values and Development: *Gross National Happiness*,” *Gross National Happiness: A Set of Discussion Papers* (Thimphu: The Center for Bhutan Studies, 1999).

<sup>2</sup>Tandin Dorj, “Folktale Narration: A Retreating Tradition,” *The Journal of Bhutan Studies* 6(2002): 5-23.

<sup>3</sup>Brent Curtis and John Elderedge, *The Sacred Romance: Drawing Closer to the Heart of God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 6.

<sup>4</sup>Carol V. McKinney, *Globetrotting in Sandals: A Field Guide to Cultural Research* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 197.

<sup>5</sup>Chales H. Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness*. Unpublished Manuscript, 2002, 1:6

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:10-11.

<sup>7</sup>N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 38-39.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 38-42.

<sup>9</sup>Op Cit, McKinney, 215-216.

<sup>10</sup>David J. Hesselgrave, *Scripture and Strategy: The Use of the Bible in Postmodern Church and Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1994), 50.

## Epilogue

<sup>1</sup>Carol Coletta, “Innovative Cities,” <http://www.urbanophile.com/>.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/augustweb-only/13.0.html> (accessed 14 July, 2010).

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## Resources

The following is a condensed list of selected books and journal articles:

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The following selected websites are grouped for specific interests within the subject of orality:

Praying and informing:

[Http://www.ethne.net/](http://www.ethne.net/)  
[Http://www.finishingthetask.com](http://www.finishingthetask.com)  
[Http://www.go2southasia.com](http://www.go2southasia.com)  
[Http://www.imb.org/globalresearch/](http://www.imb.org/globalresearch/)  
[Http://www.peoplegroups.org](http://www.peoplegroups.org)  
[Http://thecall.com](http://thecall.com)

Strategy and informational:

[Http://conversation.lausanne.org/](http://conversation.lausanne.org/)  
[Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orality)  
[Http://www.echothestory.com/](http://www.echothestory.com/)  
[Http://www.heartstories.info](http://www.heartstories.info)  
[Http://www.internationaloralitynetwork.com](http://www.internationaloralitynetwork.com)

[Http://www.oralstrategies.org](http://www.oralstrategies.org)  
[Http://orvillejenkins.com/orality/index.html](http://orvillejenkins.com/orality/index.html)  
[Http://www.scripture-engagement.org/](http://www.scripture-engagement.org/)  
[Http://www.themissionexchange.org/downloads/eXcelerate09.pdf](http://www.themissionexchange.org/downloads/eXcelerate09.pdf)

#### Music and arts:

“Sounds of Global Worship”—the YouTube Channel for Heart Sounds International: [www.YouTube.com/user/HSIOM](http://www.YouTube.com/user/HSIOM)  
 GIAL World Arts courses: <http://www.gial.edu/dpt-langdev/world-arts.htm>  
 Heart Sounds International <http://www.heart-sounds.org>  
 International Council of Ethnodoxologists <http://www.worldofworship.org>  
 Music and Arts Task Force of ION - <http://groups.google.com/group/music-arts-task-force>

#### Training, curriculum, and deploying teams with a focus on the unreached:

[Http://www.cbstorying.org](http://www.cbstorying.org)  
[Http://www.e3partners.org/orality](http://www.e3partners.org/orality)  
[Http://www.fjseries.org/low/home.html](http://www.fjseries.org/low/home.html)  
[Http://www.OneStory.org](http://www.OneStory.org)  
[Http://www.simplythetory.com](http://www.simplythetory.com)  
[Http://www.siutaining.org](http://www.siutaining.org)  
[Http://www.storyrunners.com](http://www.storyrunners.com)  
[Http://www.visualstorybible.org/](http://www.visualstorybible.org/)  
[Http://www.water.cc](http://www.water.cc)  
[Http://www.WycliffeOneStory.info](http://www.WycliffeOneStory.info)

#### Story sets for storytelling:

[Http://www.oralstrategies.org](http://www.oralstrategies.org)  
[Http://www.st4t.org](http://www.st4t.org)  
[Http://www.ywamonestory.org](http://www.ywamonestory.org)

#### Focusing on women:

[Http://www.projecthannah.org/about/](http://www.projecthannah.org/about/)  
[Http://www.siutaining.org/Bridges\\_for\\_Women.php](http://www.siutaining.org/Bridges_for_Women.php)

#### Church planting resources:

[Http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/](http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/)  
[Http://www.miaoup.com/](http://www.miaoup.com/)

#### Media strategies and content distribution:

[Http://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com/pastors-support-materials](http://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com/pastors-support-materials)  
[Http://www.davarpartners.org](http://www.davarpartners.org)



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[Http://www.T4Global.org](http://www.T4Global.org)

[Http://www.twr.org](http://www.twr.org)

### Indigenous media strategies and tools:

[Http://www.createinternational.com](http://www.createinternational.com)

[Http://www.indigitech.net](http://www.indigitech.net)

### Secondary oral learners and discipleship:

[Http://averywillis.org](http://averywillis.org)

[Http://essentials.ccci.org/dashboard.php](http://essentials.ccci.org/dashboard.php)

[Http://www.churchstarting.net/biblestorying/](http://www.churchstarting.net/biblestorying/)

[Http://www.combarriers.com/CommunicationStyles](http://www.combarriers.com/CommunicationStyles)

[Http://www.dna-21.org](http://www.dna-21.org)

[Http://www.globalshortfilmnetwork.com](http://www.globalshortfilmnetwork.com)

[Http://www.learningtosoar.org](http://www.learningtosoar.org)

[Http://www.reallifeministries.com](http://www.reallifeministries.com)

[Http://www.story4all.com/](http://www.story4all.com/)

[Http://www.thejavaclub.org/training.html](http://www.thejavaclub.org/training.html)

[Http://www.truthsticks.org](http://www.truthsticks.org)

## Glossary for Orality Breakouts

*(THESE terms and definitions have been gathered from a variety of sources, including our flagship book, Making Disciples of Oral Learners. This is not an exhaustive list and the definitions are not universally agreed upon.)*

**Barriers:** The aspects of a culture, circumstances, or religion that hinder a listener in hearing, understanding, or acting upon the message of the Gospel. These are the ‘stumbling blocks’. Barriers are beliefs, practices, or experiences that might keep unbelievers from understanding or accepting spiritual truths. Prior experiences, such as with nominal Christians, may also pose barriers.

**Bible storytelling:** A generic term which includes the many forms of telling Bible stories, where Chronological Bible Storying is the main format. Single stories related to ministry needs, thematic story clusters in teaching and preaching, and even storying which begins with the story of Jesus are sometimes used according to need and strategy.

**Bridges:** The beliefs, practices, or experiences of a culture that can have a beneficial influence upon a person’s consideration of the Gospel. God-given opportunities for witnessing in which needs felt within the culture are met by the Christian faith. Bridges are discerned by studying the ‘worldview’. Bridges often provide openings for heightened interest and greater relevancy of the biblical message to a person’s worldview. The storyteller can intentionally target issues deemed significant to the listener.

**Broad sowing:** An evangelistic or media approach to provide spiritual content to a large audience.

**Chronological Bible Storying (CBS):** A method of sharing biblical truths by telling the stories of the Bible as intact stories in the order they happened in time. The person using this method leads the hearers to discover the truths in the stories for the purpose of evangelization, discipleship, church planting, and leader training. Jim Slack and J. O. Terry developed CBS when they saw the need for a purely oral approach to oral peoples. CBS is promoted globally by the IMB (International Mission Board) of the Southern Baptist Convention.

**Chronological Bible Storytelling:** The act of presenting biblical truth in story format—although the story may be deeply paraphrased or interrupted for teaching when an important issue occurs in the passage. The story may or may not be kept intact as a story. It follows a chronologically-organized timeline.

**Communication preference:** The preferred style or method of communication for an individual or group of people. There are two dominant poles in a communication preference continuum—oral and literate—and major differences between literate or print-oriented communicators and oral communicators in the way they receive information. See “literate communicator” and “oral communicator.”

**Crafting a story, story crafting:** Crafting Bible stories is shaping the stories from a literature format to an oral format and making the changes needed to maintain a clear focus on the story's main point(s), to give clarity in telling, and to make necessary changes for accommodating certain worldview issues and story continuity leading to the storying track objective of evangelism, discipling, leader training, etc. "Crafting Bible Stories for Telling," an unpublished booklet by J. O. Terry, is available in e-format by emailing [biblestorying@sbcglobal.net](mailto:biblestorying@sbcglobal.net).

**Functional illiterate/functional illiteracy:** UNESCO has recommended the following definition: "A person is functionally illiterate who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community, and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development." A person who has had some education but does not meet a minimum standard of literacy. The person reads poorly and without adequate understanding and lacks sufficient skills in literacy to function as a literate person in his or her society. Some statistics indicate that 70% of the world's population is either illiterate or functionally illiterate. See "illiterate" for comment on usage.

**Heart language:** See "mother tongue."

**Illiterate:** Not able to read and write. The person is illiterate who, in a language that he or she speaks, cannot read and understand anything he or she would have understood if it had been spoken, and who cannot write anything that he or she can say. Note: Because the term "illiterate" tends to be accompanied by negative connotations, an alternative to consider using is "non-literate." See "functional" and "oral preference."

**Literate:** The person is literate who, in a language that he or she speaks, can read and understand anything he or she would have understood if it had been spoken, and who can write anything that he or she can speak so that it can be read.

**Literate communicator:** One whose preferred or most effective communication or learning method is in accordance with literate formats. Literate format or style expresses itself through analytic, sequential, linear, and logical thought patterns. Many missionaries are literate communicators trying to reach oral communicators. See "oral communicator."

**Mother tongue:** A person's first language; a person's native language learned from birth; the language of the hearth and home; a person's heart language; the language a person understands best; the language of fear, grief, joy, love, devotion, and intimacy; the cherished language learned in infancy between mother and child.

**Non-literate:** An alternative term for "illiterate." See "illiterate."

**Oral Bible:** The term is used descriptively to refer to the knowledge of Scripture that people acquire by oral/aural means. The oral format of Scripture may consist of very small portions of the Bible, to Bible stories (which may be as few as thirty, or as many as 225 or more) that have been told, remembered, retold, and used. These can vary between societies depending on felt and/or actual needs, worldview, theology, and so forth. Having no access to a written Bible, these stories are the society's biblical framework for devotional use, evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and leadership development—in effect, these stories *are* their Bible. Furthermore, the hearing activities may also include listening to Scripture read aloud and listening to Bible stories and sermons. An oral Bible consists of what can be recalled from memory. One person's oral Bible, therefore, differs dramatically from another person's. Thus, Christian workers try to present oral learners a memorable, balanced set of oral stories from the Bible. They adapt to how oral learners process and retain information. In this latter emphasis the term is used with a programmatic connotation. In the name of "oral Bible," some ministries focus on providing audio recordings of existing written translations. Other ministries provide panoramas of told biblical stories that give the essential biblical story.

**Oral communicator:** Someone who prefers to learn or process information by oral rather than written means. (Thus, there are literate people whose preferred communication style is oral rather than literate, even though they can read.) Someone who cannot read or write and whose preferred or most effective communication and learning format, style, or method is in accordance with oral formats, in contrasted to literate formats.

**Oral learner:** Person whose mental framework is oral rather than literate and who therefore learns primarily or exclusively by oral means.

**Oral preference:** A preference for receiving and processing information in an oral format rather than print. That person may or may not be a reader. See "oral communicator."

**Orality:** Almost two-thirds of the world's population is illiterate (non-literate, preliterate) or has an oral preference (can't, won't, or don't read and write). The quality or state of being oral. The constellation of characteristics (cognitive, communicational, and relational) typical of cultures that function orally. See [http://www.oralitystrategies.org/strategy\\_detail.cfm?StrategyID=1&start=3](http://www.oralitystrategies.org/strategy_detail.cfm?StrategyID=1&start=3).

**People group:** A significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, or combinations of these. For evangelistic purposes, the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church-planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.

**Primary oral culture:** Cultures with no knowledge at all of writing.

**Primary orality:** The state of persons totally unfamiliar with writing. People who have never seen a word.

**Secondary oral communicators:** Can be defined as people who depend on electronic audio and visual communications (multimedia). In some developing countries people are moving directly from primary orality to secondary orality without passing through an orientation to print.

**Story crafting:** See “crafting a story/story crafting.”

**Story fellowship groups:** Gatherings to teach, learn, and practice Bible stories and how to apply them (theologically, pastorally, socially, etc.) in a relevant way to a particular oral people group.

**Storying:** The term “storying” is an attempt to make a strong statement about the value of the intact, uninterrupted Bible narrative as a valuable means of teaching God’s Word leading to salvation, church planting, discipling, leader training, and various ministry activities. Storying is not limited in purpose to teaching **non-literates**. It is used because it is reproducible by listeners and because the use of story helps to overcome resistance or hostility to traditional westernized teaching. See “Chronological Bible Storying.”

**Unreached people group (UPG):** More broadly, an ethnic group which does not possess a church and which does not have the presence of an indigenous Christian witness. A people, usually an ethnolinguistic group, with an historical culture, language, and often a geographical place of residence where there is little or no presence of Evangelical Christianity, especially in the forms of Bible, Christian gospel presentations, believers, baptisms, and churches. A people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians about to evangelize this people group without requiring outside (cross-cultural) assistance. A people group in which less than 2% of the population are Evangelical Christians. A group is considered “reached” if it has a viable, indigenous, self-reproducing church movement in its midst.

**Worldview:** The way a specific people views the world around them. Somewhat like wearing tinted lenses, members of a culture look *through* their worldview, not *at* it. A worldview is seldom apparent to its adherents unless it comes under question. A worldview consists of fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions about reality. A worldview forms the core of a culture, which guides people in how to act, think, believe, function, and relate. How people look at life and the world around them; a people’s view of the world. A profile of the way people within a specified culture live, act, think, work, and relate.

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