

How to Tell a Story

Story-telling is the most natural and universal way to convey a message. Across cultures people enjoy a story because they can relate to the emotions of a person who encounters a problem and then seeks resolution. Children love to hear stories from God's Word because each of these stories is essentially part of one story. It is the story about people with a problem and how God brings resolution to problems.

When sharing a story from the Bible try using some of these universal elements:

1. Relate to Humanity

Refer to the humanity of the characters in the Bible story and relate it to the everyday situations children find themselves in. Children everywhere can relate to the sadness of Naomi and Ruth having to leave their home or the fear of the apostles on a boat in a storm. How lonely the leper must have been when he could not be with his family or friends and how elated he was when he was made well.

2. Maintain a Sense of Anticipation

Maintain a sense of anticipation as you tell the story. A good story teller builds momentum in a story by building up curiosity about what happens next and then pausing a bit before revealing the answer. For example, you might get quieter and quieter as you dramatically tell about Jesus walking on the water. "The apostles on the boat were so frightened because they saw something approaching in the mist above the waves. What was it? (pause and squint your eyes like you are looking) They could not see clearly (pause and lean forward)...What is it? (pause and place your hand over your eyes to see better)...It seemed to move over the waves...(pause...pause)...the apostles thought it might be a ghost...(pause...pause)...Oh My! (and in a dramatic loud whisper...) It is JESUS

walking on the water!

3. Make It a Sensory Experience

Each of us, including the people in Bible times and the children you are teaching, experiences the world through the senses of hearing, smell, touch, taste and sight. As you tell Bible stories bring these senses into your lessons. What would it have sounded like when David played his harp for Saul? Have the children heard soothing music before? When the prodigal son was longing for the pig food what would that have smelled? Have they smelled something stinky lately?

4. Move With the Story

If there is movement in a Bible story then allow the children, or at least one child, to mimic this movement in demonstration. The Israelites marched around Jericho so let the children march around in a circle. The people of Jerusalem danced along with David and the ark was carried into the city. Mary and Joseph searched and searched for Jesus and finally found him in the temple with the teachers of the law. This could be a great time for one child to hide while the others try to find him.

5. Use Visual Aids God Has Provided

Use natural objects when possible. If we only tell stories using pictures that are on laptops or printed flip charts, then children may or may not ever see those pictures again. On the other hand, if you talk about removing the stone from the empty tomb while showing a rock you found on the church grounds then chances are greater that the children will see those same kinds of rocks throughout their lives. They are more likely to see a rock and remember the story of the empty tomb. The same can be said of the many natural objects around us like a weed to remember the parable of the soils or wood and nails to remember the cross.

6. Imagination is the Best Visual Aid

Imagination is the best visual aid. Although they can be useful, don't be too dependent on printed illustrations and computers. Children around the world enjoy the dramatic re-telling of stories. Shawls, sheets, towels or pillow cases can be wrapped around a child or draped over the head for impromptu costumes. Even a fairly large group of children can gather around in a circle and watch you or another volunteer use a stick to draw the story in the sand as you tell it. In a very small group draw simple faces on the tips of your fingers and use them as puppets. Little girls everywhere make dolls out of items like sticks and corn cobs and palm leaves. Ask the children to create some dolls to use in telling Bible stories.



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