

The Power of Story Telling



On my first day in a small village in Mukdahan province of Northeast Thailand, I was sitting in my host's house and noticed an eight year old girl who seemed to be leaning over a fence. When I observed her for a couple of more moments I realized she had fallen into a barb wire fence! I rushed out and picked her up, but her clothes were caught on the barb wire. The whole time she didn't utter a word, which I thought odd. Then I noticed that she had a large cut on her knee.. Yet still no sound from her mouth. Finally her mother walked up slowly and explained that her daughter, Mint, had epilepsy. I was struck with how casual the mother was about helping her daughter. I also noticed that the girl was filthy and unkempt. A day later she was still wearing the same clothes and the cut on her knee had gone untreated. Since our team was doing story training in the village, I decided to prepare the story of the man whose son had seizures from Mark 9. I chose this story because just as the demon was trying to destroy the boy by throwing him into water and fire, it seemed that something was trying to destroy Mint by throwing her into barb wire. The next day I visited Mint's house and noticed that her Grandma was having to watch a number of children as well as a young teenager who was holding a small baby. I told the Mark 9 story to them all and made a few comments before praying for them and then left.

Soon afterwards at the story training for some 80 participants we featured the story of the bent over woman from Luke 13. After telling the story and then doing a drama about it, a young man suddenly began to moan and groan in a very loud voice. People tried to console him, but the young man was inconsolable. This went on for a couple of minutes, making the whole congregation feel that some sort of demon oppression was taking place. I immediately went up to the young man, Seri, and asked what the problem was. Seri said, "You don't know me at all." I responded, "True, I don't know you that well, but I need to find out what is wrong. Please tell me." Seri described how he had, at 17 years old, decided to become a male prostitute and had travelled to Phuket where he worked for a couple of years. Then, seeking to fill a void in his heart, he even travelled to New Zealand, thinking that a foreign country would be the answer. Finally, at 21, he returned to Thailand and by God's grace Seri met Jesus. Now, at 25, he had walked with Jesus for four years and was attending our story training to know the Bible better. Seri told me, "When I heard and saw the story of the bent over woman being told, I began to reflect on how "crooked" my life had been before Christ and how He had straightened out my crooked and demonic lifestyle. Just now, I was not in any pain, but I was just processing at a very deep level all of the hurt that I had come out of and it came out through the moaning you heard.

I asked Seri if I could record his testimony and he agreed. We needed a quiet place to do it and so I started walking to my host's house, and we passed Mint's house and as I pointed at the house I casually mentioned how I had told a story to the grandma of a girl with epilepsy and a teenage mother. Seri suddenly became animated and asked, "Which house?" and I pointed again to the house with the barb wire around it. Seri then said, "That grandma is actually my mother and Mint is my niece! My older sister was driving a motorcycle with Mint on the back when she was 3 years old. Mint fell off the back of my sister's motorcycle and hit her head. She was in a coma for a week

and they thought she would die. After she came out of the coma she had epilepsy. She had gone to the local clinic and was taking daily pills, but she still had seizures.” I then asked, “What about the teenage girl with the baby?” Seri said, “Oh, that is my younger sister. She got pregnant last year at 14 years old.”

I have told this story many times, because it demonstrates the power of the word of God shared in an oral fashion. Seri had heard many propositional sermons in his four years as a believer and was impacted cognitively. But somehow hearing this story and seeing it performed in a drama struck not just his head, but also his heart, as well as his gut (his core). For many years, if someone cried after one of my Thai sermons, it probably was not due to my oratory, but most likely due to my poor Thai language! Now, however, I find that when I tell a seemingly simple Bible story in an animated yet accurate way, plus have the congregation review it together and then unpack it with observations and applications, I often see Thai touched at a deep emotional level.

Pray for the Bible story training that is taking place in various parts of Thailand, that we would learn how to communicate the word of God in a way that truly fits the learning style of Thai people. Pray also that the scriptures in story form would be used like a sharp knife to cut to the core of Thai hearts (Hebrews 4:12).

by Larry Dinkins
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