

# Learning a Bible Story

by Larry Dinkins

## A. Optimal Stories

These are less than 15 verses with limited dialogue, characters and a plot that is easily pictured as it develops. Examples: Widow and Jar of Oil (2 Kings 4:1-7), Lost Axe Head (2 Kings 6:1-7), Leper Cleansed (Mark 1:40-45), Jesus Calms the Storm (Mark 4:35-41), Blind Bartimeus (Mark 10:46-52), Widows Mite (Mark 12:41-44), Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), Two men at Temple (Lk 18:10-14).

## B. Learn the Story

### 1. Individual

- a. Read the Story Once (or listen to it being told/read/audio player)
- b. Read the Story OUT LOUD and try to put the story in your own words (natural and conversational telling; yet maintaining accuracy). Change pronouns into proper names for clarity. Note: If you know another language, read out loud from a Bible in that language which will prevent focusing on exact words and will allow a more natural selection of vocabulary and avoid a tendency towards rote memory.
- c. Close Your Bible and Tell the Story OUT LOUD as best as you remember it. If you falter or forget just keep telling until the end. Stand up as you talk and begin to add gestures and body movement.
- d. Read the Story OUT LOUD Another Time, and repeat "c".
- e. Tell and Check Until You Can Tell It Naturally, Yet Accurately. Note: You may find there are difficult parts in the story. If necessary, pause and devise some type of memory aid such as a prominent gesture, drawing the scene, an unusual association, acrostic, etc. this may help solidify the difficult parts in your mind.

### 2. Partners

If one person knows the story well, he or she can tell the story in parts and have the other person repeat the story.

### 3. Group

- a. One person tells the story in front of the whole group using clear gestures. The group breaks into small groups of 5-6 people and a leader (who has worked on the story before the session) retells the story with gestures. A volunteer retells the story and this process continues until all that want to tell the story have a chance to tell it.
- b. Start with small groups of 4-6 people sitting in a circle, one facilitator reads the story as the rest of the group listens and seeks to picture the story as it unfolds (closing your eyes at this stage is often helpful). A volunteer then stands up to retells the story as best as he/she can. The facilitator reads the story again and another volunteer retells the story. This process is continued until all have a chance to tell the story.
- c. When all members of your group have a good grasp of the story, you can stand in a circle and have one person start the story and then each person in turn tells a part of the story.

## C. Internalize the Story

In a training situation your time is limited, but at home you can do extensive research on the story. Check the context, authors intended meaning, geography, parallel scriptures, commentaries, cultural aspects, etc. (there are numerous Biblical tools for this purpose). Make a story board so you can see the divisions and movement between scenes clearly. Identify deeply with the characters and make them more "real" by entering into the story in a sensory way so that you get a sense of the geography, the kinetic movement, spatial locations, sights, sounds, smells, tactile sensations, emotions, etc. Taking time to reflect deeply and meditate on the details of the story will help you gain ownership and absorb the story for powerful retelling. However, the single most important way to learn and internalize a story is to retell the story often.