



South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists

Pathfinder Honour: Trainer's Notes

Christian Storytelling 1



Instructions to Trainers / Instructors of this Honour

Thankyou for being involved with this Honour. These notes have been developed to assist in teaching / instructing this honour. We recognise that there is much more information available and we are grateful that you should share your expertise.

Please remember that Honours are designed to develop our Pathfinders in many ways; their interests, their knowledge and their relationship with their Saviour and Creator. Your enthusiasm and creativity will have a huge impact on those doing the honour.

To complete an Honour, the following (where applicable) must be completed satisfactorily:

- Physical and Practical Requirements.
- Honour Workbook.
- Honour Assessment Sheet.

Additional Reference Material

http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Adventist_Youth_Honors_Answer_Book/Outreach/Christian_Storytelling

Acknowledgements

These notes have been written by Pr John Wells. They are based on the excellent outline that Clifford Warne presents in *The Magic of Story-telling*

Please see Bibliography at end of these Notes

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BEFORE YOU START

- Pray that God will help you.
- Prepare so that you may know what you want to say.
- Ponder over it so that it becomes your own.
- Present your lesson to God so that He may use it to help others. Children, especially young ones, do not learn more than one thing in one lesson so have only one aim in each lesson.

REQUIREMENT 1: Know the features of a good story.

1. The story requires a person (hero or heroine) or animal with a problem to be solved. The stories that we generally tell only last 10 -15 minutes and so they only need one main character with one main problem.
2. Types of problems:
 - a. Accomplishment story – the hero or heroine is struggling to solve the problem or achieve a purpose.
 - b. Decision story – a person struggles with forces for or against, which influence their decision.
 - c. Theme story – a person struggles to realise a truth of vital importance to their living.
3. The story needs conflict. Any TV program, movie or book that you have enjoyed watching or reading has this basic plot.
ACT I Get the hero up in a tree
ACT II Throw rocks at them
ACT III Get the hero out of the tree

Conflict creates interest in the story. This is why the stories of David, Esther, Joseph, Samson, Daniel and Ruth are so popular. This is why Uncle Arthur's Bedtime stories and the Jungle Doctor Stories are such favourites.

There are different types of conflict. Some of these are;

- a. Person against another person
- b. Person against their conscience
- c. Person against the forces of nature
- d. Person against God
- e. A person against their tradition

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4. The story must contain suspense. The audience enjoys themselves when they worry whether the hero is going to solve the problem or not. Suspense is:
 - A restricted time limit to solve the problem.
 - Limited possible solutions
 - Stimulating common fears of the audience. eg.
 - fear of height
 - fear of darkness
 - fear of a graveyard
 - fear of confined space
 - fear of snakes or spiders
 - By talking about something harmless and making it an unexpected menace. The character/s in the story doesn't know but the audience does.
5. Use dialogue in the story to allow the characters to 'live'. The people in the story must be real flesh and blood people with emotions, character habits etc. They must have motives that are clear, strong and convincing. Using dialogue is the best way to bring characters to life. It conveys who the person is and why they act the way they do.

The story teller's voice, language, speech, tone, feelings all convey the character of the hero. The most exciting dialogue is between contrasting characters.

REQUIREMENT 2: For each of the following categories, name two sources from which you have found material:

- a. **Bible Story**
- b. **Foreign missionaries (ie those who leave their home country).**
- c. **Adventist church history. Note: stories of your own local church are OK.**
- d. **Nature.**
- e. **Healthy Living.**
- f. **Christian character building.**

Here are some sources of stories to get you started:

1. **Yourself.** These are the personal experiences that you alone can tell. Kids and adults love to hear stories about when you were a little person.
2. **The Bible.** The Bible has over 500 different stories that we need to tell
3. **Nature.** Stories about what animals do or about what animals think are well loved by younger children
4. **Books.** This is a huge source of stories coming from every imaginable experience.
5. **Magazines and newspapers.** Share stories that have just happened. Talk about issues being faced by people today
6. **Internet.** The internet is a huge resource of all types of stories. The only problem is that it is a common source that is used by a large number of people.

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7. My personal best sources of stories are
 - Bible stories –I especially love retelling the parables in a modern setting.
 - Personal things that have happened to me
 - Doctor Paul White Jungle Doctor stories
 - Greatest Guide stories
 - Clifford Warne stories
 - Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories
 - Stories of history especially of our own church

REQUIREMENT 3: Outline the steps that you take in preparing a story for telling.

1. Choose a story that you feel confident and comfortable to tell.
2. Pray that God will be with you as you prepare the story. Be open to ideas that He will introduce in the preparation process.
3. Collect all of the story facts. Write down everything about the plot and the characters. You cannot use too much care and skill when laying down your approach to a person's conscience (*Reference: Paul White, Forward to 'The Magic of Story telling by Clifford Warne)*
4. Make each character in the story real living people.
5. Plan each of the scenes. Take each of the characters and work out who is the hero. Do the same with the problems. Work out the main problem. There are three questions you want to answer when you plan a scene.
 - a. What does the main character want?
 - b. Who and what stops them from getting it?
 - c. Select the pertinent material for the story. Focus on the characters and the problem they are dealing with and not on the location unless it is relevant to the story.
6. Build each scene to a climax which makes the audience want to hear more. You must maintain the interest in the story. Appeal to the senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.
7. Plot the final scene and climax. Remember the climax is the defeat of one of the opposing forces. It does not always leave everyone living happily ever after. It only settles the matter at hand.
8. Now go back and write the dialogue for each scene.
9. Next fill in the narration.

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10. Adapt the story by answering the following questions;
 - a. Who are the audience? The story must be adapted to the culture and background.
 - b. How long have you been given to tell the story? Adapt the time by:
 - Making the story shorter by cutting out unnecessary details;
 - Some of the dialogue.
 - Some of the place descriptions
 - Some of the detailed filling between one scene to another
 - Not giving a minute description of the clothes they are wearing
 - Make the story longer by:
 - Developing the characters more with more dialogue
 - Increased details about the mode of travel.
 - Increased details about their feelings
 - Describing the location in more detail.
 - c. Is the story for men, women or children? or a general audience?
 - d. What is the age of the children? Primary, Pathfinders or Youth
 - e. Where is the story being told? Is there enough space to tell the story? What equipment will you need to tell the story? Will you need a microphone?
 - f. In which part of the program is the presentation?
 - g. What do you hope to achieve? Entertain, teach, persuade, encourage action.
11. Does the story impart your intended message? Remember the moral can be attached to the story in different ways. Some are;
 - a. At the end of the story. This is the expected place for the highlighting of your purpose in telling the story. If you do, it is best if you keep it very short and simple. People have already listened to the end of the story and don't want a sermon.
 - b. At the beginning of the story as the introduction. You introduce your theme or purpose and maybe share a Bible text about it. Then tell the story and let the story bring out the purpose.
 - c. Make the message part of the dialogue of the characters in the story. This may be as part of the dialogue used at the end of the story.
 - d. Do what Jesus did. He told stories without outlining any moral. He challenged people to ask themselves the question. Why did he tell that story?
12. Practise the story out aloud. Make sure that you do this in a private place so that you can be yourself. Time yourself and find out how long it takes. Think about what you are going to do in presenting the story. Become familiar with it and enjoy yourself.
13. A story well-prepared is 90% given.

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REQUIREMENT 4: Know the methods of making your storytelling successful. This includes how to deal with nervousness.

1. Be confident. Smile. Stand up.
2. Commit yourself to the Lord. He will bless you as He promises
3. Be excited about your story. The audience will catch the spirit.
4. Look at the audience. Be prepared to look at different people in the audience so that you engage with them. It means that you will be able to gauge how the story is being received. It also means that you will be able to adapt to the audience because you will observe their level of interest.
5. Have complete control of yourself. Any movement attracts attention. All movement must have a reason. You are appealing to the imagination of the audience and movement brings them down to earth. Movement should either;
 - a. Illustrate – height, shape, size of something.
 - b. Emphasise – clenched fist, accusing finger etc
 - c. Use the whole body when presenting stories. Eyes, eye-brows and mouth make many facial expressions that bring characters to life.
6. Speak up so that everyone can hear.
7. When speaking dialogue:-
 - a. Face the way that the person is facing and then the other way
 - b. Contrast the voice to convey character;
 - solemn or dignified – lower
 - angry or excited - higher
 - c. Control volume to create mood;
 - If the person yells – YELL
 - If the person whispers - whisper
 - d. Varying the pace of speaking adds excitement and suspense;
 - suspense – slow
 - action – fast
8. When you reach the climax, STOP. (The audience has anyway). Each story has an aim – a reason for being told. It is like a road, and the ‘climax’ is the end. When you reach it, STOP.
9. Be well prepared, well rehearsed and well groomed. This gives you confidence. As you gain confidence you can relax with the story and the audience. Get into the story and the story will get into you.
10. Don't be afraid to use notes when you are telling the story. This really helps if you are feeling nervous or there are lots of complicated details to remember. Even the experts use notes at times.

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11. Finally, remember that all great storytellers do feel nervous at times. Nervous energy can be a good thing. Take note of the previous points. Mrs E G White writes in Counsel to Teachers p 254.

“Teacher, remember that the Lord is your strength. Strive to give the students ideas that will be to them a savour of life unto life. Teach by illustrations. Ask God to give you words to speak that all will understand”

REQUIREMENT 5: Know the different ways you can successfully present the message or purpose (ie what you want to teach people) of the story

1. Tell the story through dialogue. Let the characters speak. This is the method encouraged in this resource.
2. Tell the story as an onlooker. The storyteller is telling the events as they happened. This is especially appropriate in the retelling of historical events.
3. Act out the story by telling it in the 1st person. As if you are the person themselves. Often it is appropriate to dress up and increase the impact of the story.
4. Involve the audience in the telling of the story. This type of storytelling is a lot of fun. It keeps the audience with you and is appreciated by the younger members. You can use such methods as;
 - Ask some of the younger members of the audience to name the characters
 - Have specific words, sounds or phrases that pre-selected groups in the audience are required to say or make when a character in the story is mentioned.

An example is when telling the story of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:12,13)
Divide the audience into three groups. When the word:

- ‘Shepherd’ is used in the story the audience call out “Hello”
- ‘Sheep’ is used in the story the audience respond with “Baa”
- ‘Lamb’ is used in the story the audience respond with “Maa”

You have to be really ‘on your toes’ when you tell this type of story because you have to fit the audience responses into the story. It can be a lot of fun.

5. Tell a continuous story over a number of occasions. Use a large story where the main character has to deal with a number of problems. Always stop the story in the middle of a problem so that the audience will want to be at the next meeting to find out what really happened. This works really well when meeting with the same group of people over a short period of time.
When telling this type of story, end the story time in the middle of a problem with a pause. Then look at your watch and say something like “We have run out of time” or “Look at the clock! I must stop”
6. If you’re telling the story using pictures, make sure that everyone will be able to see them clearly. This works well with a small group of younger children.
7. Use repetition to emphasise certain things in the story. Especially when telling stories to younger children.

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REQUIREMENT 6: For a story you are to tell, make a written outline of the main points of the story.

Please refer to the Christian Storytelling 1 Workbook and the Christian Storytelling Honours Evaluation Form

REQUIREMENT 7: Successfully tell 8 stories. They must include at least one from each of the following categories. Please see Requirement 8 before proceeding.

- a. Bible stories.
- b. Foreign missionaries.
- c. Adventist church history. Note: stories of your own local church are OK.
- d. Nature.
- e. Healthy living.
- f. Christian character building.

Please refer to the Christian Storytelling 1 Workbook

REQUIREMENT 8: Of the 8 stories mentioned in Requirement 7, successfully tell a story at least once to:

- a. A group of children not over five years of age.
- b. A group of children not over twelve years of age.
- c. A group of teens aged from thirteen to sixteen years of age.

Please refer to the Christian Storytelling 1 Workbook

REQUIREMENT 9: Complete an evaluation form for at least two of the stories that you told and outline how you improved in your storytelling presentations.

Please refer to the Christian Storytelling 1 Workbook and the Christian Storytelling Honours Evaluation Form

REQUIREMENT 10. Present a list of not less than 15 stories that you can tell, 8 of which you have told.

Please refer to the Christian Storytelling 1 Workbook

MORE HELPFUL HINTS ON CHRISTIAN STORYTELLING

1. Eric Hare was a New Zealander who became an early missionary to Burma. He became a gifted storyteller and wrote the first resource notes for the Pathfinder honour. He also co-authored a book on storytelling with Arthur Spalding. Eric Hare listed seven principals of story telling that have been appreciated over the years:
 - a. Know your story
 - b. See your story
 - c. Adapt your story
 - d. Tell your story
 - e. Live your story
 - f. Feel your story
 - g. Have a climax

Both of these old resources have a great collection of stories that are still great to tell.

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2. Telling Bible Stories

When planning to tell a Bible story, plan to make it as interesting and as relevant as it is intended. Methods of doing this are;

- a. Know the story well
- b. Research the background to the story. Look for information about the location, the people, the way they lived, the houses they lived in and the historical context of the story. Do some research from the internet or in the local library and enrich the story.

For example. In the telling of the story of the Prodigal Son it is handy to remember that it was not culturally acceptable for an older man to run in public. He must never show his ankles in public. For the father to run to his son, he had to do both due to the type of clothing used by men at that time.

This helps us to see Jesus in a different light.

- c. Tell the story from a different character's point of view. Instead of David and Goliath, what about Goliath or one of David's brothers or even the King.
- d. Use dialogue to tell the story. Let the characters talk.
- e. Remember, whatever information you add to the Bible narrative, it should be true to character, true to background, and true to the spirit of scripture.
- f. Tell the story well and the audience will enjoy the retelling.

Story telling has been with us since Adam and Eve. It is a method that has given us the great stories of the plan of Salvation as illustrated down through the ages. Story tellers are needed today to tell the next generation. As Clifford Warne says on page 68 of his book *The Magic of Story-telling*:

“To learn to climb a cliff you must climb a cliff.

To learn aeroplane flying you must fly an aeroplane.

To learn to tell stories, tell stories!

A mosquito never gets a slap on the back until he gets to work; neither do we.

Take every opportunity to learn the skills of casting the magic web of a story.

Story tellers aren't born or taught; they grow. They grow when they tell stories”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Spalding, A W revised by Eric Hare. *Christian Storytelling*. Pacific Press Publishing Association. Mountain View California USA 1966

Warne, Clifford. *The Magic of Story-telling*. ANZEA Publishers. Scripture Union in East Asia. Sydney. NSW. 1971