

The Story

Rive Collins describes stories in this way:

“Stories and storytelling lie at the heart of the human experience. Stories have been passed down from generation to generation, both in spoken and written word, and continue to help form and shape who we are.

Stories help us reflect on the past, explain our present, and imagine our future. Sewn across time, story-threads bind individuals to families and families to the world, enabling us to experience healing in our lives and envision a beautiful and just world.

Stories have the power to enrich our lives, shape the way we perceive and experience the world, and reveal the wonders of the human spirit.

Stories and storytelling can be powerful tools in healing, building and nurturing relationships, as well as in planting seeds of hope and light for the future.”

We Use Stories Because Our Life is a Story

- Our lives are made up of stories. Some of us easily tell our stories and others hold them close, revealing little. But no matter how we choose to share them, the stories we tell help us to make sense of our world.
- Sometimes our life experiences can feel so difficult that our imaginations begin to shut down. We allow fear to be our guiding force and we can no longer envision ourselves any place other than where we currently appear to be. Change seems impossible.
- A story, as metaphor, provides us with a safe haven through which we “come to ourselves.” By speaking in terms of the symbols, characters and events of the story, we can teach ourselves about the issue without ever seeming to discuss the “topic.”
- Unlocking our imagination is one of the essential keys to regaining access to our amazing ability to create the life of our dreams. Join us as we explore the power of story and the art of imagination.

Story Defined

“Stories are how people make sense of themselves and their worlds. In young children’s spontaneous stories that they act out as they play, we can see how they believe people relate to one another, who they hope to become, and how they will behave. We can see adolescents play roles in their own and other people’s stories in order to figure out where they fit into their ever-expanding worlds. As adults, the true and imaginary stories we wish to tell and believe suggest we value most in this world. In a real sense, stories make people. (From: Shannon, P.(1995). *Text, lies, and videotape: Stories about life, literacy, and learning*. Portsmouth, NH:Heinemann.)

What are the gifts we receive from storytelling?

- Storytelling unlocks our imagination and our imagination sets us free.
- As we tell or listen to stories, every detail circulates through us – characters, landscapes, moods, meanderings of plot, etc...
- It is an enlivening experience to see each part of the story as an aspect of self.
- Powerful old story themes move through us bringing us back to life.
- To create or experience a wholesome spiritual story that truly meets the moment is a process that enlivens us from deep within.
- Listening to the stories all things tell helps children to keep and expand this skill, it leads into a natural understanding of metaphysics.

Exploring through storytelling engages the students by inviting them to use their imaginations to see how the story is alive in them. “When we personify images, gestures, and other artistic expressions, allowing them full autonomous identity, we make it possible for them to act as agents of change.” (Shaun McNiff)

When we explore what the characters and scenes are telling us, we are more able to see how the story is a part of our own life. Storytelling gives the students the opportunity to exercise their imaginations and strong imaginations are necessary for transformation. Without imagination, we cannot visualize anything greater than we already are. With imagination, we dream our world into being.

Different Ways to Share the Story

Exploring through Drama or Puppets

Drama, and/or re-enacting a Bible story, is an effective way to involve the students in the actual story. They can be the characters and experience, first hand, what it might have been like to be those people. Make sure the students are familiar with the story and instead of reading the story invite the students to retell the basic elements of the story in a way that they understand them. They do not have to stick to the details of the story but can use some of the metaphysical interpretation or deeper meaning of the story in their reenactment. If they need help getting started then begin by reading some of the lines of the story and then prompt them to continue with statements such as: Then what happened, How do you think they felt, What would you have done, etc.

Dramatizing the story in this way allows the students to really become part of the story and to begin to gain a deeper understanding of it and how they can use the story’s message in their everyday lives. Allowing the students to act out the story also helps to get it into their body and to remember the details more clearly.

The Creation Story, Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 for ages 5 to 8

Some ideas from: Musikgarten, "God's Children Sing"

First practice the motions so the children are familiar with them.

- 1st Day: Stationary movement with bursts of light moving high and low in all directions. Travel to dark corners and show light bursts out from there.
- 2nd Day: Free space, with water running everywhere. Experiment with stopping and running in different directions.
- 3rd Day: Stationary movement, with plants growing up from seeds, reaching for the light from low to high, and spreading side to side.
- 4th Day: Stationary movement as the sun is born with an explosion of movement. The sun moves across the sky and shines everywhere in all directions. The hands show the moon a smaller size and moving from low to high to low. Stars are shown by opening each hand in a twinkling gesture.
- 5th Day: Free space, making fish fins with the arms which move together to create a swimming movement. Extending the arms and moving them from the shoulders can create a flying movement.
- 6th Day: Animal movements suggested by the children. Try to include contrasting movements such as slither, bounce, trot, etc. Have the children greet each other as a gesture of humankind.
- 7th Day: Day of rest. Children can improvise.

Once you are satisfied that the children can follow the motions, invite them to use the motions to act out the story as you tell it.

Exploring through Movie Clips

Source, "Video Talks for Kids," by: Patricia Alderdice Senseman

"Children love to go to movie theaters to watch movies. In a new century full of media awareness, what better way to reach kids where they are than to use movies? By showing a clip from a popular movie, you immediately grab the children's attention. You meet them where they are. You begin with something that is familiar and lead them to discover a TRUTH PRINCIPLE."

Always preview the clip you are going to use. You will be able to more finely tune the point that you want to make by watching the clip ahead of time. And you won't be embarrassed by ignorance.

Set up the clip before you show it and follow up the clip after you show it. You may want to summarize what has taken place in the movie so far before you show a clip. You may want to review the events in a movie clip right after showing it. Have several introductory and summary statements prepared.

Some of the movie clips you may want to rewind and show twice. The action and dialog may go so quickly that the children may need to hear it twice. Show the clip once. Then tell the children what to listen for the second time.

A Word About Copyright Law

The US Copyright Act treats displays or performance of multimedia presentations, films, and videotapes by nonprofit organizations (including churches) to a small group of individuals as "public performances" even if no admission fee is charged. The fact that the church or one of its members may have purchased a copy of the film or videotape makes no difference. To avoid breaching the "public performance" prohibition in the Copyright Act, you must in each instance secure the copyright owner's permission or alternatively obtain an "umbrella license" from the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation. To learn more about umbrella license, contact the MPLC at 1-800-462-8855 or visit them on the web at www.mplc.com.

"The Empire Strikes Back,"

Show chapters 23, 26, 28, 29, 31 & 33 ONLY, (Approximately 15 min)

The movie clips are talking about recognizing the fact that there is a power within us that is greater than we are and we can use it to create good in ourselves and in the world.

Metaphysical Interpretation

The "Force" that is talked about in the Star Wars movies is a wonderful illustration about the nature of God. The "Force" is described as a power that is greater than us but is a part of each of us. It is like the power of God, omnipresent and omnipotent. The message of Star Wars is one that invites us to acknowledge this power within and to choose to use it for the greater good of all. Obi-Wan Kenobi tells Luke that the "Force" is "an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together."

Discussion can center on the force within us and how we use it.

Exploring through Music & Movement

It is said that music is a universal language. No matter where you are from or what language you speak – music is something that we can all relate to. From the wild beat of Latin music to the soothing sounds of classical, music has the ability to put us into a different state of mind.

How many of us use music to express our moods and our feelings? Create lessons that involve music are lessons that everyone can relate to.

Selecting the Story

~ Unity Worldwide Ministries, Youth and Family Ministry Guide

- After identifying the issue, look for a story that illustrates the issue.
- Consider which story best presents the issue on an age-appropriate level.
- Occasionally you may want to consider a different type of story experience, such as a 3-7 minute video clip that illustrates the issue, or an experiential activity that dramatizes the issue.
- The story, video clip, experiential activity or object lesson gives everyone a common experience and a base for discussion.
- Some stories have several points so you will want to be clear on the direction you wish to go. In a small program, a story that can be discussed on several levels works well because everyone can hear the story together and then break into small groups for an age-appropriate discussion and creative experience. You will probably need to word questions differently for each age.