

**— 100 —**  
**CREATIVE TECHNIQUES**  
**FOR**  
**TEACHING BIBLE STORIES**

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**The Pastoral Center**

## ***Dedication***

*To the colleagues who served on the Board of Directors of Phoenix Power and Light Company, Inc. (Phoenix Performing Arts Ministries) during my two terms (1993/1994 and 1994/1995) as President:*

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*... with gratitude for your commitment to telling the story in so many ways!!!*

*P.V.W.*

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# Overview

“I love to tell the story!” The words of an old hymn say it well. Throughout the centuries the church has told of God's love through the medium of the story. Storytelling has been, and continues to be, an integral part of the ministries of worship, education, nurture, and outreach of every parish.

Pause for a few minutes to think about storytelling. Take a piece of paper and a pen or a pencil. Divide the paper into five columns. Write one of the following lines across the top of each section:

- ▶ **WHY** tell stories?
- ▶ **WHERE/WHEN** are stories told?
- ▶ **WHAT** types of stories are used?
- ▶ **WHO** is the audience?
- ▶ **WHAT** are some methods of telling stories?

Next, take one minute per column and brainstorm a list of answers to each question.

For example, responses to **WHY** might include:

- ▶ Jesus was a storyteller;
- ▶ people listen to stories;

- ▶ stories are fun.

Ideas for **WHERE** could be:

- ▶ Sunday School;
- ▶ Vacation Bible School;
- ▶ Weekday classes.

**TYPES** include:

- ▶ Bible stories;
- ▶ folk tales;
- ▶ oral traditions.

Of course, the **WHO** is:

- ▶ everyone;
- ▶ people of all ages;
- ▶ US!

*100 Creative Techniques for Teaching Bible Stories* is a book that offers more than one hundred answers to the question "WHAT are some **TECHNIQUES** of telling stories?" Each of the ten chapters highlights a particular method of storytelling including Art, Banners/Textiles, Creative Writing, Dance/Gesture/Movement, Drama, Games, Music, Photography, Puppetry, and Storytelling. Each method contains ten ideas

for “telling the story” through this approach. Even though specific examples might be suggested, in general, each of the methods may be adapted to any story.

Provided in an easy to use format, each suggestion is organized into two parts—Materials and Method. “Materials” lists the required supplies and offers suggestions for advance preparation, where needed. “Method” contains directions for accomplishing the task.

Perhaps you have some questions about using this resource. Let’s consider a few ways that it will be helpful to the volunteer teacher leading a religion lesson in a parish setting.

Maybe you are one of those religious education volunteers who works from a prescribed curriculum or a purchased textbook to teach a class. The instructions are clear about what story to tell and the basic information that you need to convey, but you are looking for some way to make the lesson more meaningful, as well as more memorable. For example, at Christmas the lesson is easily determined, but you want to do something other than create the fifth annual Christmas crèche mobile.

Your assignment, for example, is to teach the annunciation—Gabriel’s announcement to Mary that she is to conceive and bear a son. Knowing the group you work with, you want to enhance the basic lesson you are given which focuses mostly on the comprehension of the angelic message. You want to involve the learners in the story so that they will appreciate the thrill and challenge of God’s plan for Mary’s life—and for their lives as well. That’s the point at which this book becomes an extremely helpful resource.

Thinking about the story of the annunciation, then, you would review the techniques presented in this book and look

at the specific options that would be most helpful for you to use. For example, you might want to focus on using body language to help participants enter into the feelings that Mary experienced in the presence of God’s messenger. Or, maybe creative writing would be an appropriate way for reflecting upon God’s plan for each life.

The techniques described can also be used to open, enrich, expand, or conclude any lesson when a teacher needs five or ten minutes of ideas to adapt the class schedule. You will use this book as an extension for enhancing, as well as for planning lessons.

Let’s consider another situation. You may be a religious education teacher who is free to select the story you want to tell based on the season of the church year or the focus of a particular program. However, just knowing the focus for a lesson is not enough. Effective teachers know that a lesson has key elements that guide student learning from the introduction of an objective to a meaningful outcome. They accept responsibility for planning each lesson, much like an accomplished cook plans a balanced menu from appetizer to dessert.

You decide, for example, that you want to focus on the stories of meals Jesus shared as preparation for a first communion class. The first one you choose is the “Feeding of the Five Thousand.” Knowing your group, you decide that you want to use an interactive approach to convey the importance of offering our gifts to God, like the little boy offered the five loaves and the two fish to feed the crowd. This book can help you plan each key element of a successful lesson.

You want to find something catchy to introduce the lesson and the objective. So you sift through the ten chapters contained in the book—filled with over one hundred suggestions—and decide to use music as an

opener. An idea in the chapter on “Telling the Story through Music” inspires you to write simple words to a familiar tune to introduce the message and sequence of the miracle God gave by the Sea of Galilee. Next you select drama and photography as the methods to recreate the meaning, deciding to improvise and video an “eyewitness account” of the miracle. To review the critical concept, you choose the creative writing approach of a “diamond poem,” using the words “hungry” and “fed” as the opposites in the suggested pattern. As closure, you will ask your students to draw a picture of a gift that they can give to God as they prepare to receive their first communion.

The beauty of this book is that no matter your teaching situation and no matter the lesson assigned, you can use and re-use the contents to find a fresh approach to telling the story and, ultimately, to help your learners make it their story. Jesus

used storytelling as his primary teaching tool. He improvised the lesson based on his listeners and their needs. While none of us can expect to teach like the Master, we can adopt a more flexible approach that allows creativity and innovation to guide our lesson preparation and presentation.

While the activities in *100 Creative Techniques* are mainly intended for learners in a classroom, they may be easily adapted for use by children, youth, and adults in small and large group settings. They are ideal for religious education classes, parochial school programs, vacation Bible school courses, confirmation sessions, intergenerational events, youth groups, retreat settings, family devotions, home schooling, and more.

As you use this resource, may you find many ways to share biblical stories, contemporary stories, historical stories, and your own personal stories in order to claim God’s story as your own.



# *Telling the Story through Art*

It's a good thing there are lots of stories to tell: there are so many art techniques to use to tell them! Any art method, such as papier mâché or plaster molding, pottery or printmaking, can be used to recite, review, or reinforce a story. Art projects offer an excellent way to educate for content, but more importantly, they provide an opportunity to explore and express thoughts and feelings through participation in the process.

The ten ideas presented in this chapter are only a starting point. Numerous other art methods should be incorporated into lesson preparation and presentation. For example, a rebus story activity might suggest drawing illustrations to represent words in the narrative, a creative writing exercise could recommend having the learners make a collage of their reactions and responses, and a puppetry project may direct the group to paint interesting characters, props, and scenery. Regardless of the method used, try telling the story through art!



## Acquire the Art

### *Materials*

---

- ▶ Art history books
- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Illustrations
- ▶ Pictures

### *Method*

---

Save and use art from a variety of sources: book jackets, bulletin covers, curriculum illustrations, and teaching pictures. Mount the pictures and highlight them as examples while telling a story, hang them on bulletin boards to introduce a theme, or use them as flash cards to help the students review a lesson. Include art from a variety of historical periods, which may be found on posters and prints as well as in reference materials and textbooks. Help the learners observe some of the ways in which artists through the ages have portrayed the scenes from various stories.

## Color with Chalk

### *Materials*

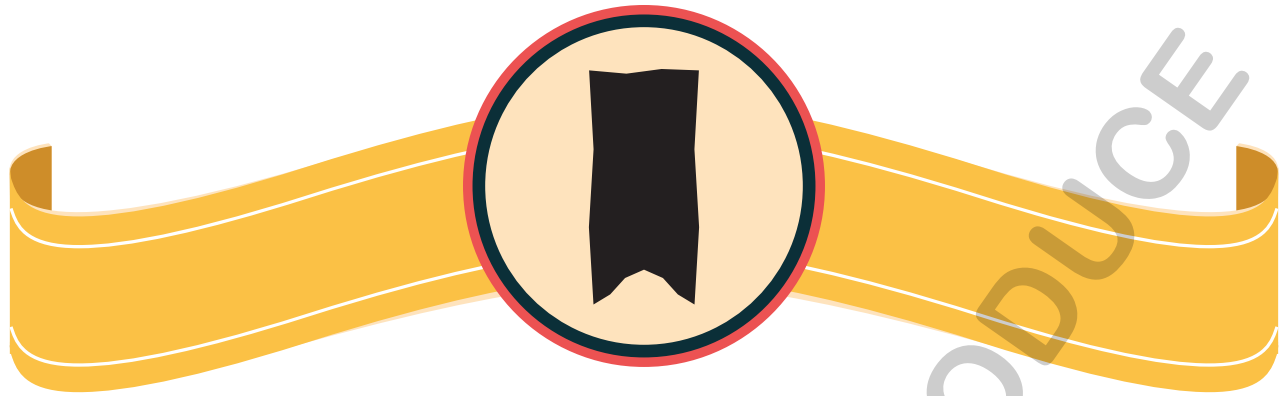
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- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Chalk
- ▶ Chalkboard or window(s)
- ▶ Containers for water
- ▶ Paper
- ▶ Pencils or pens
- ▶ Water

### *Method*

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Do a chalk talk on a traditional surface such as a chalkboard or on a unique background like a window. If windows are selected, use many panes to depict various parts of a Scripture passage. Be sure to obtain permission to use the glass and clean it when finished with the project. It may be helpful to sketch the design on paper before beginning the work on the windows. Use wet chalk to draw the pictures on the glass. Images can range from full scenes to stick figures. Pictures may be drawn at an appropriate point in the telling of the story, as an introduction to the theme, or as a review of a lesson or unit.



# *Telling the Story through Banners/Textiles*

Banners and textile projects, with and without words, may be used to proclaim messages pertaining to biblical themes. In essence, banners are stories illustrated on material.

Banners have interesting biblical and historical significance. Banners were carried by the Egyptians in 5,000 B.C. Streamers were attached to long poles and carried into battle to appeal to the gods for assistance. Romans attached banners to spears. The words "banner" and "standard" in the Old Testament seem to refer to modern day flags. Often made from wood, leather, or metal, they were used as a means of identification of a person, family, or group. During the Middle Ages, tapestries of wool, linen, and silk were an important part of the church. Not only were they beautiful works of art, they also served as insulation in cold buildings and as teaching tools for

the people, most of whom could not read or write. An image of the cross was first carried on Constantine's banner in the fourth century. It served as a morale booster for the early Christians.

Banners may be constructed from almost any fabric, even paper. The type of material is often determined by whether the piece will be used inside or outside. Color, a critical factor in the impact a banner will make, should be a consideration in selecting the material. The design can be sewn on by hand or machine, or glued into place. The space in which a banner will hang determines the size of the project. In a small space, use a banner that will not look crowded. In a large area, make sure it is big enough to be seen. Hang the banner on a dowel or curtain rod, broom handle or wire, or an object that accents the theme. ▶

Display banners in worship spaces, classrooms, social halls, and entrances, and in schoolrooms, gyms, and hallways. In the community, hang banners in empty storefront windows, on banner poles on the street, or carry them in community parades and neighborhood walks. At home, display banners inside and outside of the house.

Banners can be powerful means of communicating the message of God's love. Ten banner and textile suggestions for telling the story through this media are offered in this chapter. Projects range from items that can be made by individuals and pieces that could be put together by groups. Tell the story through banners!

## Begin with a Branch

### *Materials*

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- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Branches
- ▶ Items related to story

### *Method*

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Vary the material used in making a banner to match its theme. For example, when depicting Galatians 5, the Fruit of the Spirit, a Jesse Tree showing the lineage of Jesus, or the Genesis 1 Creation story, use a large branch or even a real or silk tree. Branches can become the base of a group project, and smaller limbs can be used for individual designs. Cut shapes from interesting materials, or use objects as symbols, and hang them on the branches. Celebrate the joy of Jesus' resurrection by decorating the limbs with bright streamers, tissue paper flowers, and other signs of new life.

Carry the branch banners in a procession, or plant them in appropriate containers and place them throughout the classroom, worship space, building, and grounds.

## Bring the Bags

### *Materials*

---

- ▶ Bags, resealable plastic
- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Construction paper
- ▶ Dowel rods
- ▶ Glue
- ▶ Items related to the story
- ▶ Ribbon, string, or yarn
- ▶ Tape

### *Method*

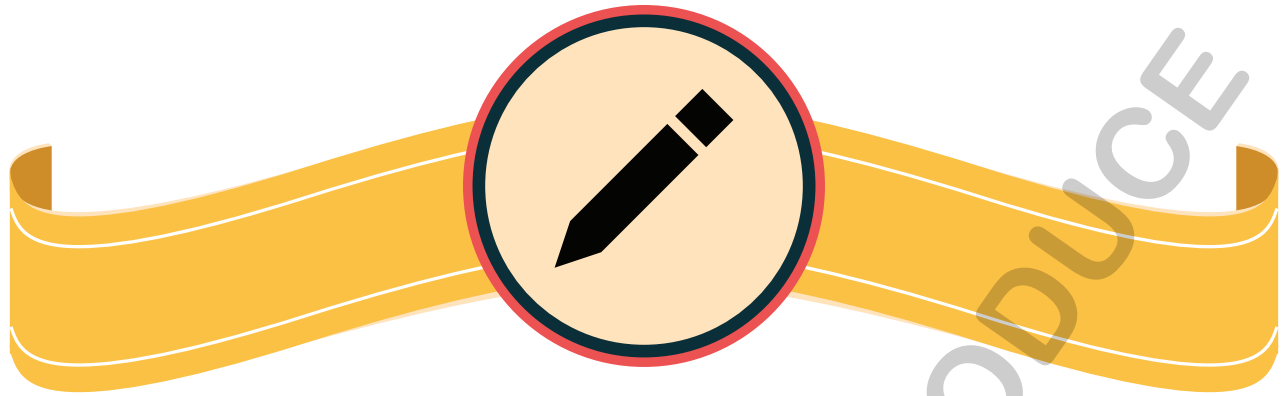
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Visualize the scenes or the sequence of a story by placing objects or pictures related to it in clear plastic bags. Join the bags together to form a long vertical or horizontal strip.

Begin by finding items or photos, or by drawing or constructing illustrations that represent the parts of the passage. For example, to highlight the parable of the sower and the seed use things such as rocks, thorns, and soil. Place one item in each baggie. Objects may be glued to construction paper cut to fit the inside of each bag. Seal the tops.

Tape the bags to each other, front and back, to create a long banner. Letters can be glued inside or outside the bags. Fold the top of the first bag over a dowel rod and tape it in place. Attach yarn, string, or ribbon to the ends of the dowel to hang the banner.

Although the see-through effect will not be achieved, paper and plastic bags, in various sizes, shapes, and patterns, may also be used as banner backgrounds.



# *Telling the Story through Creative Writing*

Tell the Bible story through poetry! Besides the rhyme and rhythm, the variety of styles of poetry make this a particularly attractive method to use with children, youth, and adults. Participants appreciate hearing the compositions of others.

Poetry can be used as a storytelling method for numerous lessons and in a number of learning situations. Ten ideas and activities to help participants explore biblical themes and concepts through poetry are provided. There are many other poetry formats and formulas to try, too. Experiment, express, and educate by telling the story through poetry.

## Celebrate God's Creation: Haiku

### *Materials*

---

- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Crayons, colored pencils, or markers
- ▶ Formula for Haiku poetry
- ▶ Paper
- ▶ Pencils or pens

### *Method*

---

A Haiku is an unrhymed Japanese poem of three lines. It is usually light and delicate in feeling and is concerned with something lovely in nature, especially the seasons of the year.

The formula for Haiku is:

- ▶ Line One: *Five syllables*
- ▶ Line Two: *Seven syllables*
- ▶ Line Three: *Five syllables*

Write Haiku poems that express praise to God for various seasons of the year. An example involving summer is:

**Warm temperatures  
Bright sun; Beautiful flowers  
Summertime is here.**

If desired, use colored pencils, crayons, or markers to draw illustrations that will enhance the theme.

## Clarify a Concept: ABC

### *Materials*

---

- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Formula for ABC poetry
- ▶ Paper
- ▶ Pencils or pens

### *Method*

---

ABC poetry is written in a short form and expresses strong emotion. The initial letters of the beginning words in the first four lines are written alphabetically, for example C, D, E, F or M, N, O, P. The first line does not have to begin with A.

In these two examples, the formula for ABC poetry is:

- ▶ Line One—Line Four: *Clauses beginning with four consecutive letters*
- ▶ Line Five: *A sentence beginning with any letter.*

Help children understand a biblical concept, such as faith, by writing ABC poetry. For example:

**Faith  
God's guidance  
Hope for the future  
Incredible love  
Belief in the Savior.**



# *Telling the Story through Dance/Gesture/Movement*

“Dance has the power to renew—to enliven—to draw a people together. Dancing people are people who can feel the Spirit quicken within them, and face the future with hope.” (Adelaide Ortegal, *A Dancing People*, p. 1.) Dance, therefore, is a powerful medium to use in storytelling. Symbolic expression of the human body sometimes reaches the hearts and souls of people more effectively than spoken or sung messages.

A traditional form of worship in the early Christian Church, dance can be used in conjunction with prayers, readings, and songs

to raise the level of spiritual awareness about the theme of most any Scripture story. Used in education, dance, gesture, and movement can help participants explore and experience a variety of concepts and themes.

Dance, both formal steps and informal actions, is available to everyone. Inexperienced and trained dancers can share equally in creating movements and pieces that range from simple to elaborate, from concrete to abstract. Ten learning activities using dance methods are suggested in this chapter. Declare the story through dance!

# Circle the Content

## Materials

---

- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Camera (optional)
- ▶ Envelopes
- ▶ Equipment to play music
- ▶ Index cards, 3" x 5"
- ▶ Pencils or pens
- ▶ Pictures of people using their hands to help people (optional)
- ▶ Projector (optional)
- ▶ Recording of "Healing Hands" by Elton John
- ▶ Screen (optional)

## Advance Preparation

---

Take or find pictures of people using their hands to help other people. (optional)

Practice projecting and coordinating the pictures and the background music. (optional)

Write one word of a Bible verse on each index card. Place the cards for each verse in a separate envelope. Some possible verses are:

- ▶ Matthew 8:3 – Healing the leper
- ▶ Mark 5:41 – Healing Jairus' daughter
- ▶ Mark 10:16 – Jesus blesses the children
- ▶ John 9:6 – Healing the man born blind
- ▶ Matthew 8:15 – Healing Peter's mother-in-law

## Method

---

Dozens of stories in the New Testament demonstrate ways in which Jesus included the people that most others excluded. Invite the participants to review Scripture passages that illustrate Jesus' actions and attitudes of including everyone in the circle of God's love.

Explain that the words of several Bible verses have been written on separate index cards and that they must be put in order before they can be read. Determine whether the students will work alone or in small groups for this portion of the activity. Distribute an envelope to each person or team. Tell the learners that the envelopes contain the words of a New Testament verse related to Jesus' care for people. One word of the verse is written on each card in the envelope. The challenge is to put the words together in the proper order to form the verse. Once the learners think that the words are in order, they may use a Bible to check their work. Provide time for everyone to finish this portion of the activity. Once completed, allow the students to share their passages.

Talk with the students about people today who need to be included rather than excluded. Mention individuals affected by AIDS, refugees from another country, people who are physically challenged, and so forth. Since Jesus is no longer on the earth, ask the group who can provide this important ministry. Of course, the answer is God's people today. Let the participants share their thoughts on this topic.

Play the song "Healing Hands" by Elton John and show the pictures of people using their hands to help other people. If there are no pictures, play the song and ask the group to listen to the words. Play the song again and invite the participants to illustrate this



theme in the form of a circle dance. Ask the students to hold hands and to form a circle, however, leave three or four people out of the ring. Turn on the music and invite those in the circle to move to an easy dance step such as:

**One step in, bend at the knee**

**One step out, bend at the knee**

**One step to the right, bend at the knee**

Direct the dancers to continue the movement, holding hands at all times. Remind them that if they drop hands it might permit the “left-out” persons to join the circle. Encourage the students to do the same dance, dropping hands for the second round and giving the left-out children an opportunity to step into the circle.

Talk about what it felt like to allow someone to come into the circle. Discuss ways that attitudes and behavior invite people in or keep them out of a variety of day-to-day activities. Remind the group that the Christian’s response should always be one of inviting people into the circle of God’s love.



# *Telling the Story through Drama*

Drama is a powerful method to use to tell stories – including Bible stories. Whether a person is a member of an audience, a student reading a script for a classroom exercise, or a part of the cast or crew of a local production, many layers of learning take place during involvement in dramatic experiences.

Ten suggestions, offering different methods for using drama, are provided. They range

from acting out skits and stories with various techniques and themes to preparing and presenting short scenes and situations on biblical concerns and concepts.

Regardless of the method used for conveying the information of the selected subject or script, use drama as a way to challenge the participants to learn Bible stories in engaging and entertaining ways.

## Add Some Action

### Materials

---

- ▶ Action story script
- ▶ Bible(s)

### Method

---

Start with any Bible story and add some action to tell it in a dramatic way. An “action story” includes gestures and movements to illustrate each line. Participants sit or stand facing the leader who tells the story and demonstrates the motions for the listeners. Words to be repeated can be written out on newsprint or on a chalkboard, or can simply be emphasized with the voice so that hearers understand the key words to repeat. Additional gestures and movements may be improvised by the group or by the leader. Select a Scripture passage and create an action story or try the one provided, which is based on Jesus’ interaction with Zacchaeus, recorded in Luke 19:1-10.

#### **Zacchaeus: Called by Christ**

Luke 19:1-10

#### **Jesus is coming!**

*(Cup hands to mouth)*

#### **Let’s all go see!**

*(Hold one hand over eyes and look around)*

#### **Zacchaeus was short**

*(Hold hand low to indicate short)*

#### **so he climbed a tree!**

*(Move hands in climbing motion)*

#### **Soon Jesus walked by,**

*(Walk in place)*

#### **the crowd was so great.**

*(Extend arms at sides)*

#### **Jesus told Zacchaeus:**

*(Place hand over eyes; look up)*

#### **Come down now! Don’t wait!**

*(Motion come down)*

#### **I’m going to come**

*(Point to self)*

#### **to your house today.**

*(Point away from self)*

#### **Go home; Get ready!**

*(Point in distance)*

#### **I’m on my way!**

*(Walk in place)*

#### **Zacchaeus I know**

*(Point to head)*

#### **all the ways you’ve sinned.**

*(Shake head “no”)*

#### **So believe in God**

*(Point up)*

#### **and begin again.**

*(Extend arm in gesture of invitation)*

#### **Zacchaeus was sorry**

*(Wipe tears from eyes)*

#### **for the wrongs he’d done.**

*(Shake head “no”)*

#### **He re-paid his debt**

*(Gesture distributing money)*

#### **to everyone.**

*(Point to many people)*

#### **He trusted Jesus**

*(Fold hands in prayer)*

#### **and made a new start.**

*(Shake head “yes”)*

#### **Little Zacchaeus had a**

*(Gesture short)*

#### **big change of heart!**

*(Place hands over heart)*



# *Telling the Story through Games*

People of all ages and abilities can enjoy and learn from games. Games are a great way to mix people, and in the process, to strengthen friendships and relationships. The current emphasis in game playing is on cooperation rather than competition. When people work together, instead of against each other, the elements of advantage and the fear of being eliminated are removed. Each player tends to

feel good about himself or herself and these feelings are shared with other participants.

Ten games, with many variations on formats, are suggested as storytelling tools. Most of these games may be led by people with no prior experience and no particular expertise. They do not require expensive equipment or time consuming preparation. Use any or all of these ideas to tell the story in interactive ways.

# Brief with Bingo

## *Materials*

---

- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Chalkboard and chalk or newsprint and markers
- ▶ Containers
- ▶ Copier or duplicating equipment
- ▶ Game markers such as buttons, paper squares, or pennies
- ▶ Paper
- ▶ Pencils or pens
- ▶ Ruler(s)

## *Advance Preparation*

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Divide a piece of 8 ½" x 11" paper into twenty-five squares to form a grid five squares by five squares.

Duplicate a Bingo sheet for each participant.

## *Method*

---

Create a game of "Bingo" to help participants learn facts and terms associated with a story.

Begin by brainstorming twenty-five words related to the theme. Print the list on a chalkboard or on a piece of newsprint. Discuss each idea as it is mentioned. Twenty-five possibilities for the story of Noah include:

- ▶ Altar
- ▶ Animals
- ▶ Ark
- ▶ Daughters-in-law
- ▶ Disobedience
- ▶ Door
- ▶ Dove
- ▶ Flood
- ▶ God
- ▶ Gopher Wood
- ▶ Ham
- ▶ Japheth
- ▶ Neighbors
- ▶ Noah
- ▶ Obedience
- ▶ Olive Branch
- ▶ Rain
- ▶ Rainbow
- ▶ Raven
- ▶ Shem
- ▶ Sin
- ▶ Thanks
- ▶ Two
- ▶ Water
- ▶ Wife

Supplement the participant's ideas with items from this list.

Distribute copies of the blank Bingo board and pencils or pens to all participants. Instruct the group to print one word or phrase in each square as it is read from the list they compiled. Explain that each participant should put the words in his or her own order, so that each Bingo game is unique. As the students print words on their game boards, the leader should write the word or phrase on a separate small slip of paper. Deposit the slips into a container from which they will be drawn randomly as play takes place. When all participants are ready, place game markers within sharing distance of each person. Play begins when the leader draws a word out of the container and reads it aloud. Each player uses a game marker to cover the place containing that word or phrase on his or her card. Play continues until one person has five spaces covered in a row, which could be diagonally, horizontally, or vertically. Repeat the game as long as players show interest or until everyone "Bingos" at the same time.



# *Telling the Story through Music*

Learn a song about an Old Testament person. Try an instrument that was mentioned in the Bible. Listen to a song to introduce a lesson. Attend a performance of a children's choir from another country. Write new words to an old tune to express an idea. These are just some of the ways in which music can be used to tell a story.

From the songs of Miriam and Mary, the praise of the Psalmists and Paul, to the hymns of the host of angels in Bethlehem and the hundreds of thousands of saints in heaven, the use of music is recorded throughout Scripture as a way to help people express a wide range of human feelings. In biblical times, as well as today, music plays a part at family gatherings and celebrations (Genesis 31:27; Luke 15:25), accompanies work (Isaiah 16:10; Jeremiah 48:33; Numbers 21:17), and finds uses in military strategies and victory celebrations (Exodus 32:17-18; Joshua 6:4-20; Judges

7:18-10; Judges 11:34-35; 1 Samuel 18:6-7). Music has always been part of worship (1 Chronicles 15:16; 23:5; 25:6-7; 2 Chronicles 5:11-14; Ezra 2:65; Nehemiah 12:27-43), and of mourning and lament (2 Samuel 1:17-18; 2 Chronicles 35:25; Matthew 9:23). Refer to concordances and Bible reference books for additional information about the uses of music throughout Scripture.

Today music is used extensively in the worship, education, outreach, and nurture ministries of congregations. It is an art form and a teaching tool which is familiar to both the educator and the pupil. Since it is a participatory learning activity, it is a good method to use to involve people in the storytelling process.

Ten ideas for telling the story through music are provided. They include many themes and techniques. Use them as springboards for telling stories in various situations and settings.

## Chant a Chapter

### *Materials*

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- ▶ Bible(s)

### *Method*

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Select a favorite Psalm and sing it antiphonally. Explain that antiphonal means that a hymn or Psalm is sung in responsive, alternating parts. This was often the way people in Bible times sang their songs as they worshipped in the synagogue. A well-known song that is commonly sung antiphonally is “Hallelu, Praise Ye the Lord.” One group sings “Hallelu” while the other group responds “Praise Ye the Lord.”

After the Psalm is selected, and the words and music are reviewed, divide the singers into two groups. One group will sing a phrase and then the second group will sing a line. Praise God by singing a Psalm antiphonally.

## Create a Concert

### *Materials*

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- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Hymnals

### *Method*

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Explore a theme, such as missions, through music. Provide a variety of hymnbooks and invite the group to search through them for songs which convey mission messages. Challenge each church school class to learn at least one song. Suggest that all of the selections be combined and that a concert for the congregation and the community be given. Feature the music of various ethnic groups and focus on themes such as love and justice at this special event. Incorporate opportunities for the audience to participate, too. Highlight the cause of missions and take an offering for a specific project.



# *Telling the Story through Photography*

Snap a photo; screen a film; sequence a series of pictures. Design a shoot; draw on a transparency; develop a documentary. Telling stories through techniques involving photography and projection includes many methods. Using photography to tell stories can also have many purposes. Pictures,

in numerous formats, can pique interest, present information, provide clarification, prompt discussion, and promote action. Ten suggestions for using photography as a storytelling tool are provided. Develop others to meet specific curriculum needs and classroom circumstances.



# Construct a Calendar

## *Materials*

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- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Calendar pages
- ▶ Calendars
- ▶ Construction paper
- ▶ Glue
- ▶ Magazine pictures
- ▶ Paper, 8 ½" x 11"
- ▶ Rings, clip-type
- ▶ Scissors

## *Method*

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Calendars contain interesting and informative items. Besides recording months, weeks, and days, listing holidays, and providing information about special events, calendars often display beautiful photographs. Regardless of the subject, there seems to be a calendar with pictures to illustrate it. Make and use calendar pages as a way to review Bible stories connected with church year, holiday, and seasonal themes.

Complete the illustrations in one or two sessions or prepare one picture a month and compile the calendar for use during the next year. Regardless of the time frame for construction, select one Bible story or verse for each month. Write one passage on each of twelve 8 ½" x 11" pieces of white paper. Cut photographs from magazines, old calendars, and previous church school materials and attach them to the pages to illustrate each verse. Glue each sheet to the center of a 9" x 12" piece of construction paper. Attach a blank calendar page for each month up-side-down on the backside of each picture. In the same place on all sheets of paper, punch holes in the top and bottom of each piece of construction paper. Reinforce the holes. After the pages are assembled, put clip rings through the holes. Use the calendars for curriculum enrichment and for classroom activities.



# *Telling the Story through Puppetry*

Puppetry is the art of bringing an inanimate object to “life” and communicating a message with it. This ancient medium has been used around the world to educate, to enlighten, and to entertain. In Southeast Asia, shadow puppets are tools that dramatize religious epics. In Europe, priests introduced the marionette to help people visualize Bible stories. In Africa, carved figures are devices that help to transmit oral history.

Puppets are used in congregations in worship, education, outreach, and nurture ministries.

They make announcements, play roles during children’s sermons, illustrate songs, teach Sunday School lessons, highlight seasonal programs, visit nursing homes, and much more.

Ideas for ten projects, which illustrate the story of Moses, focus on puppets that can be quickly and easily constructed from low-cost or no-cost readily available items. Six basic puppet styles—body, finger, hand, marionette, rod, and shadow are represented in the examples.

## Pop-up a Puppet

### *Materials*

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- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Construction paper
- ▶ Glue
- ▶ Markers
- ▶ Paper cups
- ▶ Pencils
- ▶ Scissors

### *Method*

---

Moses, an Israelite baby, was placed in a basket and hidden in the reeds to protect him from being killed by Egypt's Pharaoh. Found by Pharaoh's daughter, Moses was taken to the palace and raised as her son.

Illustrate this story with a pop-up rod puppet baby and basket. Gather a paper cup, pencil, scissors, glue, construction paper, and markers. Decorate a cup to resemble the basket. Push a pencil up through the bottom of the cup. Using construction paper, draw and cut out the shape of a baby. Glue it to the top of the pencil. Move the pencil up and down to hide or display the baby.

## Speak with a Shepherd

### *Materials*

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- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Construction paper
- ▶ Craft sticks or paint stirrers
- ▶ Fiberfil®
- ▶ Foam peanuts
- ▶ Glue
- ▶ Markers
- ▶ Paper plates
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Tape

### *Method*

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When Moses got older he worked as a shepherd. Talk about this part of Moses' life by making paper plate rod puppet sheep.

Using markers or construction paper, create a sheep's face on the backside of a paper plate. Add a three dimensional material, such as curled paper, foam peanuts, or fluffy stuffing, around the facial features to make the wool. Attach a craft stick or paint stirrer to the front of the paper plate and use the rod to operate the puppet.



# *Telling the Story through Storytelling*

"Storytelling is an art and, like all arts, it requires training and experience. However, anyone who is willing to take the time to find the right story and learn it well, and who has a sincere desire to share enjoyment of the story, can be a successful storyteller. A good part of our daily conversation is composed of stories, incidents, and anecdotes, for we are all storytellers a few steps removed from

professional storytellers. Our language is somewhat less formalized, but we still share our experiences and emotions." (Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene. *Storytelling: Art and Technique*. New York: Bowker, 1977.)

Spotlight the art of oral storytelling to help people hear God's Word in a "new" way. Try any or all of the ten techniques for "Telling the Story through Storytelling."

## Communicate with Color

### *Materials*

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- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Construction paper, various colors
- ▶ Fabric, various colors

### *Method*

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Think about the colors associated with a story and use them to help convey the message. Display or distribute pieces of colored fabric or paper at the appropriate places in the story.

In telling the narrative of Moses, for example, show a variety of colors to highlight various portions of the Scripture passage. Brown could illustrate the woven basket Moses' mother made, blue the water on which it floated, and green the bulrushes in which he was hidden. Purple might symbolize the royal palace in which Moses lived after Pharaoh's daughter found him, and red could stand for the bricks made during the difficult years in Egypt. Encourage the participants to experiment with using color to help tell a Bible story.

## Obtain an Object

### *Materials*

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- ▶ Bible(s)
- ▶ Bags, baskets, or boxes
- ▶ Object(s) related to story

### *Method*

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Use an object to introduce a story or several objects to illustrate various parts of a narrative. For example, display a crown of thorns at the beginning of a story about the crucifixion or show a stone at the start of the story of the empty tomb.

Another method would be to include bags, boxes, or baskets in the activity. For the account of the Ascension, place a picture of Jesus in one container, a cotton "cloud" in another, and a crown in the third. Distribute the bags to three different participants. Ask each person, one at a time, to remove the object inside. Invite the learners to guess the story to be shared. Another method would be to place all of the objects in one box. Remove each of them at the appropriate point in the story to serve as visual aids.

# Methods

## Art

Batik [Banners/Textiles]: Banner  
Chalk [Art]: Illustrations  
Diorama [Art]: Make  
Flannelgraph [Art]: Make  
Flip Chart [Art]: Make  
Illustrations/Pictures [Art]: Display  
Mobile [Art]: Make  
Mobile [Music]: Make to illustrate hymn stories  
Mural [Art]: Sequence Story  
Puzzle Pieces [Music]: Fit together to illustrate Christmas carols  
Puzzles [Art]: Make  
Rebus Story [Storytelling]: Write  
Rhythm Instruments [Music]: Construct  
Story Dial [Art]: Illustrate/Tell Story  
Video Box [Art]: Make

## Banners/Textiles

Bags [Banners/Textiles]: Combine as banner  
Batik [Banners/Textiles]: Make banners  
Branch [Banners/Textiles]: Banner background  
Computer [Banners/Textiles]: Make banners  
Fabric [Banners/Textiles]: Make banners  
Fabric pieces [Banners/Textiles]: Decorate individual pieces; combine as banner  
Paper [Banners/Textiles]: Make banners  
Ribbon [Banners/Textiles]: Combine individual pieces as banner  
Shade [Banners/Textiles]: Decorate as banner  
Stitching [Banners/Textiles]: Stitch design on banner  
Windsock [Banners/Textiles]: Batik banner

## **Creative Writing**

ABC [Creative Writing]: Write  
Alliteration [Creative Writing]: Write  
Cinquain [Creative Writing]: Write  
Couplet [Creative Writing]: Write  
Dada [Creative Writing]: Write  
Diamond [Creative Writing]: Write  
Haiku [Creative Writing]: Write  
Lantern [Creative Writing]: Write  
Quatrain [Creative Writing]: Write  
Rhythm Story [Storytelling]: Write  
Tanka [Creative Writing]: Write  
Words to familiar tunes [Music]: Write

## **Dance/Gesture/ Movement**

Body Sculpture [Dance/Gesture/Movement]:  
Positions  
Circle Dance [Dance/Gesture/Movement]:  
Exclude/Include People  
Creative Movement/Improvisation [Dance/  
Gesture/Movement]: Interpret poem/  
prayer/song/speech/story  
Dance-a-Thon [Dance/Gesture/Movement]:  
Raise money for a cause  
Folk Dance [Dance/Gesture/Movement]:  
Great Commission; Learn  
Game (Follow the Leader) [Dance/Gesture/  
Movement]: Lead/Play  
Gesture [Dance/Gesture/Movement]:  
Interpretation  
Popular Dance (Macarena) [Dance/Gesture/  
Movement]: Movements/Words to  
match story  
Ritual [Dance/Gesture/Movement]:  
Movement; Passing the Peace  
Sign Language [Dance/Gesture/Movement]:  
Sign/Story

## Drama

Action Story [Drama]: Gesture/Movement/  
Words

Characterization of Bible Passage [Drama]:  
Write Scripture script

Choral Reading [Drama]: Prepare or present

Costumes/Props [Drama]: Perform

Event [Drama]: Attend performance or  
watch video

Improvisation [Drama]: Improvise a story

Original Script [Drama]: Write

Role Play [Drama]: Situations

Scripts [Drama]: Try techniques

TV News Show Format [Drama]: Interview

## Games

Bingo [Games]: Make/Play

Board Game [Games]: Make/Play

Concentration [Games]: Make/Play

Cooperative Games [Games]: Learn/Play

Fact/Fiction Cards (Questions) [Games]:  
Make/Play

Follow the Leader [Dance/Gesture/  
Movement]: Sheep/Shepherd

Ice Breakers [Games]: Introductions/Play

Jeopardy (Questions) [Games]: Make/Play

Links (Construction Paper Chain) [Games]:  
Make/Play/Vocabulary Words

Lotto (Concentration) [Games]: Make/Play

Musical Chairs (Cooperative Games)  
[Games]: Play

Paper/Pencil Games [Games]: Alphabet  
Challenge ▪ Category Columns ▪ Code ▪  
Connect the Dots ▪ Crossword Puzzle ▪  
Matching ▪ Scrambled Words ▪ Tic Tac  
Toe ▪ Who Am I? ▪ Word Find ▪ Word  
Pictures ▪ Word Search

Questions (Fact/Fiction; Jeopardy) [Games]:  
Make/Play

Relay [Games]: Items related to story

Scavenger Hunt [Games]: Items related to  
story

Win, Lose, or Draw [Music]: New Testament  
stories/Music



## Music

Christmas Carols [Music]: Puzzle pieces  
Concert [Music]: Organize  
Field Trips [Music]: Attend performances  
Hymn Stories [Music]: Mobiles  
New Testament Music [Music]: Win, Lose, or Draw Game  
Old Testament Stories [Music]: Find songs  
Psalms [Music]: Chant antiphonally  
Recordings [Music]: Respond  
Rhythm Instruments [Music]: Construct  
Words to familiar tunes [Music]: Write

## Photography

Calendar [Photography]: Make  
Films [Photography]: Show  
Movies [Photography]: Make  
Overhead Transparencies [Photography]:  
Make  
Photographs [Photography]: Take  
Polaroid Pictures [Photography]: Take  
PowerPoint/Slide Show [Photography]:  
Produce  
Social Media Platforms [Photography]:  
Create  
Solar Prints [Photography]: Make  
Teaching Pictures [Photography]: Display

## **Puppetry**

Bottle Rod Puppet [Puppetry]: Make  
Finger Puppet [Puppetry]: Make  
Milk Carton Moveable Mouth Hand Puppet  
[Puppetry]: Make  
Paper Bag/Tube Puppet [Puppetry]: Make  
Paper Plate Rod Puppet [Puppetry]: Make  
Pop-Up Rod Puppet [Puppetry]: Make  
Shadow Puppet [Puppetry]: Make  
Sock/Styrofoam Ball Hand Puppet  
[Puppetry]: Make  
Spoon Rod Puppet [Puppetry]: Make  
Tube Rod Puppet [Puppetry]: Make

## **Storytelling**

Books [Storytelling]: Read and tell  
Color Story [Storytelling]: Tell  
Interviews [Storytelling]: Children and older  
adults  
Objects [Storytelling]: Object lessons  
Rebus Story [Storytelling]: Write  
Round Robin [Storytelling]: Create  
Rhythm Story [Storytelling]: Write  
Story Dial [Art]: Illustrate/Tell Story  
Storytelling Steps [Storytelling]: Learn  
Tape Recorded Stories [Storytelling]: Tape  
Various Methods [Storytelling]: Origami

# Resources

Note: Some are classic resources for the method

## Art

Erickson, Donna. *Prime Time Together ... with Kids – Creative Ideas, Activities, Games, and Projects*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989.

Mackenzie, Joy. *The Big Book of Bible Crafts and Projects*. Nashville, TN: Impact Books, 1981.

Stroh, Deborah. *Christ's Kids Create! 102 Favorite Crafts for Kids 4 to 14*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1992.

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Blair, Margot Carter and Cathleen Ryan. *Banners and Flags – How to Sew a Celebration*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977.

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Ortegel, Adelaide, SP. *Banners and Such*. Saratoga, CA: Resource Publications, 1980.

## Creative Writing

Keithahn, Mary Nelson. *Creative Ideas for Teaching: Learning through Writing*. Prescott, AZ: Educational Ministries, Inc., 1987.

Sutherland, Zena and May Hill Arbuthnot. "Poetry." *Children and Books, 7th Edition*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1986.

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Daniels, Marilyn. *The Dance in Christianity*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

De Sola, Carla. *The Spirit Moves – Handbook of Dance and Prayer*. Austin, TX: The Sharing Company, 1977.

Ortegel, Sister Adelaide. *A Dancing People*. West Lafayette, IN: The Center for Contemporary Celebration, 1976.

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Litherland, Janet. *Getting Started in Drama Ministry – A Complete Guide to Christian Drama*. Colorado Springs, CO: Meriwether Publishing Ltd., 1988.

Robertson, Everett. *Introduction to Church Drama*. Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1978.

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Fluegelman, Andrew, Editor. *The New Games Book: Play Hard, Play Fair, Nobody Hurt*. San Francisco, CA: The Headlands Press, 1976.

Grunfeld, Frederic V. *Games of the World: How to Make Them, How to Play Them, How They Came to Be*. Zurich, Switzerland: Swiss Committee for UNICEF, 1982.

Orlick, Tom. *The Cooperative Sports and Games Book*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

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Diagram Group for UNICEF. *Musical Instruments of the World*. New York: Facts on File Publications, 1976.

McLean, Margaret. *Make Your Own Musical Instruments*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 1988.

Wezeman, Phyllis Vos and Anna L. Liechty. *Hymn Stories for Children: Special Days and Holidays*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994.

## Photography

Le Baron, John and Phillip Miller. *Portable Video: A Production Guide for Young People*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982.

Wezeman, Phyllis Vos. *The Christmas Scene Revisited*. Brea, CA: Educational Ministries, Inc., 1991.

## Puppetry

Engler, Larry and Carol Fijan. *Making Puppets Come Alive*. New York: Taplinger, 1973.

Renfro, Nancy. *Puppet Shows Made Easy*. Austin, TX: Nancy Renfro Studios, 1984.

Wezeman, Phyllis Vos. *Puppet Projects for Scripture Stories*. Prescott, AZ: Educational Ministries, Inc., 1995.

## Storytelling

Bauer, Caroline Feller. *Handbook for Storytellers*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1977.

Sawyer, Ruth. *The Way of the Storyteller*. New York: Dover, 1951.

Shedlock, Marie L. *The Art of the Storyteller*. New York: Dover, 1951.

# About the Author

As a religious educator, Phyllis Wezeman has served as Director of Christian Nurture at a downtown congregation in South Bend, Indiana, Executive Director of the Parish Resource Center of Michiana, and Program Coordinator for ecumenical and interfaith organizations in Indiana and Michigan.

In academics, Phyllis has been Adjunct Faculty in the Education Department at Indiana University South Bend and in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. She is an Honorary Professor of the Saint Petersburg (Russia) State University of Pedagogical Art where she taught methods courses. She has also been guest lecturer at the Shanghai Teachers College in China.

As founder of the not-for-profit Malawi Matters, Inc., she develops and directs HIV & AIDS Education programs with thousands of volunteers in nearly 200 villages in Malawi, Africa including “Creative Methods of HIV & AIDS Education,” “Culture & HIV-AIDS,” and “Equipping Women/ Empowering Girls.”

Author or co-author of over 1,950 articles and books, she has written for over 80 publishers.

Phyllis served as President of Active Learning Associates, Inc. and as a consultant or board member to numerous organizations such as the American Bible Society, Church World Service, and the Peace Child Foundation; leader of a youth exchange program to Russia and the Ukraine; and Project Director for four Lilly Worship Renewal grants. She is the recipient of three Distinguished Alumni Awards and recipient of the Aggiornamento Award from the Catholic Library Association.

Wezeman holds undergraduate degrees in Business, Communications, and General Studies and an MS in Education from Indiana University South Bend.

Phyllis and her husband Ken (who met when they were in second and third grade in elementary school) have three children, five grandchildren, and a great-grandson.