

STORYTELLING THRILLS: WARMING HEARTS AND TEACHING LESSONS WHILE HAVING FUN!

By Rev. Mike Fonfara, D.Min.

Hello! Welcome to this brief primer on the art of storytelling. This is a valuable art. Its value shows-up in the pulpit, Sunday school lessons, at home with the family, in business, and almost every other area in life. The following pages present broad brushstroke lessons about storytelling.

What is storytelling?

Each person will experience telling stories differently. To me, storytelling captures the interesting aspects of life and presents them in fun ways for entertainment as well as educational purposes. What is your idea of storytelling?

Who tells stories?

From the very beginning of communications when cave-people grunted and drew simple wall pictures until today, everybody tells stories! You cannot watch TV, see a movie, read a book, enjoy late-night comics, study Scripture, worship, sing a song, work, talk to family as well as friends, and experience so many other daily activities without encountering stories. They surround us. Everyone capable of communicating tells stories. What stories do you tell?

What types of stories are being told?

Stories as wide as anyone's imagination exist in some form. People tell stories about their interest in others, personal lives, ideas, pets, sports, loves, and other subjects on an almost endless list of amazing items. Stories assume the genres of autobiography, biography, fiction, non-fiction, spiritual parables, Aesop's fables, preaching, gossip, and too many other forms to list. Do you have favorite genre for your stories?

Where can someone find stories?

Looking for a good story to tell? Here are some places to check: *The Holy Bible* (consider Jesus' parables); the Internet; Aesop's *Fables*; your life; TV news as well as other programming (especially PBS); social media (e-mail has lots of good stories floating around if you are very selective); history; and make up your own stories. Please refrain from using gossip as story sources. You hurt self and others by repeating gossip! What is your favorite story resource?

Why are biblical parables such good stories?

Jesus empowered His parables as life-changing stories to edify the soul. While people often forget facts, they seldom forget how something makes them feel. Parables touch more than just the intellect. They touch the emotions at a soul-deep level. That is why people remember them. Also, the parables challenge the audience in an immediate way by putting them into the center of familiar real life situations. Why do you like Jesus' parables?

What makes a story good?

Good stories are entertaining, meaningful, and heartwarming depending upon the storyteller's intent. They often answer the questions of a good newspaper column: who; what; where; when; and why?

Storytellers are not bound by the rules of grammar, inflection, and the like. They are bound by the rules of decency, manners, and respecting the rights of others. The good story is free from gossip, hurtful innuendo, and human disrespect. It contains clean humor, respect for the whole creation, and fascinating tale telling.

What makes a story good for you?

How can you tell a good story?

No one can discount the employment of good skills in storytelling. Poor presentation ruins a good story.

Use the following list of essential skills to ensure a good presentation.

- 1) **Know why you want to tell the story.** Is it for entertainment only, meant to illustrate a point, teach a lesson, bring a smile, or some other purpose?
- 2) **Be prepared by knowing your audience, memorizing your material, using a catchy introduction, employing appropriate voice control, insuring appropriate vocabulary, making eye contact with audience members, making body movement part of the show, timing punch lines for maximum effect, employing breath control for dramatic influence, exaggerating for humor, and be long enough to succeed while short enough to keep the audience's attention.** Do you know of any other essential skills or helpful sub-skills?
- 3) **Practice your storytelling skills by telling jokes.** Remember, good timing makes a joke while the opposite can kill it. Both joke telling and storytelling use the same skills.

Are you willing to become a better storyteller?

Want some resources to continue improving your storytelling art?

Many Internet websites offer good suggestions for storytelling. Type "storytelling tips" into the search bar and you are on your way. As always, be selective.

In my opinion, books on the subject are pretty weak. Why pay money for thin resources while the Internet provides education for the minimal costs of time, computer, program, and electricity?

Storytelling guilds and subject related organizations are great resources! The National Storytelling Network and the Network of Biblical Storytellers (Int'l) are worth looking up on the Internet depending upon your interests.

Will you take the time and do some research?

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