

Storytelling 101 Workshop: Have you heard the one about...?

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Definition of biblical storytelling:

Biblical Storytelling is a spiritual discipline that entails the lively interpretation, expression and animation of a narrative text of the [Bible] that has first been deeply internalized and is then remembered, embodied, breathed and voiced by a teller as a sacred event in community with an audience/congregation.¹

Luke 19:1-10 -- Jesus and Zacchaeus

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' ⁹Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

A rich tax collector (CEB www.biblegateway.com)

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through town. 2 A man there named Zacchaeus, a ruler among tax collectors, was rich. 3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but, being a short man, he couldn't because of the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. 5 When Jesus came to that spot, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay in your home today." 6 So Zacchaeus came down at once, happy to welcome Jesus. 7 Everyone who saw this grumbled, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." 8 Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I repay them four times as much." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today, salvation has come to this household because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 The Human One[a] came to seek and save the lost."

Luke 19:1-10 Direct translation from the Greek by Richard W. Swanson²

He went in; he was going to Jericho.

Look: a man, by name he was called Zacchaeus (Pure, Clean, Innocent).

He, he was head tax gatherer.

He, he was rich.

He kept seeking to see Joshua, who he is.

He was not able

because of the crowd,

because in height he was small.

¹ Definition by Dennis Dewey

² See Provoking the Gospel of Luke, A Storytellers Commentary



He ran ahead into the place in front;
he went up on a sycamore so that he should see him
(because he was about to go through that road).
As he went to the place, he looked up, Joshua did; he said to him:
Zaccheus. Hurry; come down.
Today in your house it is binding that I remain.
He hurried; he came down; he welcomed him; he rejoiced.
They saw, all of them did; they grumbled, they said:
With men who are non-observant he goes in to rest and take off the yoke of Torah.
He stood, Zacchaeus did, he said to haShem:
Look: half of my possessions haShem to the poor I continue to give.
If I falsely accuse some guy, I repay four-fold.
He said to him, Joshua did:
Today rescue to this house has happened,
since he (yes, even he) is a son of Abraham.
For he came, the son of adam did, to seek and rescue those
who are ruined.

Luke 19:1-10 -- Jesus and Zacchaeus (sense lines)

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through town.

A man there named Zacchaeus, a ruler among tax collectors, was rich.

He was trying to see who Jesus was,
but, being a short man, he couldn't
because of the crowd.

So he ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree
so he could see Jesus, who was about to pass that way.

When Jesus came to that spot, he looked up and said,
"Zacchaeus, come down at once.
I must stay in your home today."

So Zacchaeus came down at once, happy to welcome Jesus.

Everyone who saw this grumbled, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord,
"Look, Lord, I give half of my possessions to the poor.
And if I have cheated anyone, I repay them four times as much."

Jesus said to him, "Today, salvation has come to this household because he too is a son of Abraham. The Human One came to seek and save the lost."



Steps to Learning a Biblical Story

Hear it: Read it out loud, listen to a recording

Say it: Tell it in your own voice, use your own words, find an audience

Ask it: What questions are raised, what is unusual or different or funny, what is the structure, who are characters, where is the tension, what resonates with your own story,

Think it: Find the structure, write, draw, research, imagine, play, embody

Live it: Repeat, pray, rest, return, wonder.

Online Resources:

Network of Biblical Storytellers International: www.nbsint.org

The Network of Biblical Storytellers Canada: www.nbscanada.org/

Performance Criticism: biblicalperformancecriticism.org

Storytelling Resource: gotell.org

Books:

Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling by Thomas E. Boomershine (Abingdon Press, 1988)

