

**The Storyteller’s Handbook**

**Follow the Structure**

Make sure the story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. This will make it easy to follow for the people listening. A chronological order is also needed for the story to make sense to the person listening. Introduce your characters and describe your setting providing the context that the listeners need to stay engaged.

**Help the Audience Relate**

If the audience can relate to your story, then they can engage with it and it will be more effective and have a better impact. The story must compel them and when they feel a connection with the story, they will be excited to retell. Questions are a great tool for engagement but can also be a diversion from the main point so be careful. Jesus would ask questions? Jesus asked 135 questions while engaging with the crowds, the pharisees and His disciples. These questions appeared before during and after the stories. In Luke 12:22-28 Jesus asks a series of rhetorical questions cleverly placed to allow those who were listening to think and apply what is being said to themselves without disrupting the flow of the story with discussion. The people were able to relate, the ravens, the lilies and the grass all trust the creator to provide and so in turn could the listener.

**Characters**

Make sure the characters have significant descriptions. Hight, build, blue eyes dark hair, blond hair is not as important as the characters attributes but they must be consistent. I you describe a character at the beginning of the story as someone who has long curly hair even if it doesn’t make a difference to the story continuity is key to the description of a memorable character. It is important to give the characters realistic attributes. Do your best to highlight their best and worst qualities especially if the point of the story is how they change or if it is their demise. If they are honest, compassionate, dishonest, or selfish and it is important to the story highlight this and use repetition for emphasis.

**Integrate Emotion**

Happiness, anger, fear, sadness, surprise, disgust, use your voice as well as words to describe an emotion as well as tell us what it is. Emphasize your words by adjusting your voice. Your facial expressions when you say the words will also help to keep the audience engaged and sweep them up in the moment of emotion. If you are describing something happy smile as you speak, if it is sad lowering your voice and turning the corners of you mouth down slightly can change the tone of your voice. If the character becomes angry if your face looks angry it is very difficult to them portray a happy tone.

**Include Surprises**

A story with surprises keeps the audience interested in what is coming next these stories may or may not have been heard before. They also may have only been heard in part. Don’t’ be predictable but do not add what is not there. Challenge as Jesus did with the rhetorical questions, add suspense, when possible, highlight the uniqueness of the character or the situation. Add a caveat or a proviso describe requirements or specifications even limits that would not be tolerated. Please remember that shock value is not a surprise and appropriateness need to be applied.

**Information**

Include necessary information it is important that the audience captures the characters and the events. Important details provide context. Settings, times, locations, character motivations and characteristics are also important. A ‘by the way’ can keep the story flowing. Try to add something that the listeners may not know about the character or story E.g., The women at the well who had no name was named by the Catholic church so that she could be given a sainthood, they called her Photini which means bringer of light because she went back to the town and told the Gentiles about the man who told of all she had done. This would be additional info that may add to the story or not, but it could be secondary information that could be interesting the audience if added to the story as part of the storytelling process.

**Challenges and Conflicts**

Challenges and conflicts that the character overcomes need to be added to the structure and timing is everything in a story. Build up and intrigue can be a vital piece of the storytelling process.

**Purpose**

The catch the fire stories are monologues, imagined memories and conversations at particular moments throughout the characters life. They describe possible thoughts, feelings and emotions, historical facts with imagined surroundings. The purpose of the storytelling process is to inform or persuade and we can do this by entertaining. The plot, the flow, the description, and expression all lead to a memorable story. Our goal is to ignite an interest in the biblical stories. Making the biblical characters come to life in this way can make them less of a character in a book and more like you and me. The hope is that the listener will want more. It is the storyteller’s job to deliver the story in a memorable way so that the listener is intrigued to hear more and excited to tell others what they have heard.