Lesson Plan & Study Guide

Seminar Leadership
Storytelling

Walking with Jesus

iFOLLOW

The iFollow Discipleship Series

Seventh-day Adventist Church

Vervent

Center for Creative Ministry

Version 1.0 - 12/14/10

About the iFollow Discipleship Series
Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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www.ifollowdiscipleship.org

Seminar Leadership: Storytelling

This presentation is designed for people who desire to serve Jesus Christ and help lead others to Him.

Learning Objectives

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Content Outline

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Background Material for the Presenter

During the last ten years or so I have been involved in storytelling. Storytelling, I have discovered, is not necessarily an art. It's more paying attention than being creative. It's more looking for the details than a great delivery. No matter where we are, where we go, or who we are interacting with, we can find a good story to tell. It's not that every person has a story. Every person is a story.

When I have gone to the field collecting stories, the people usually tell me what they think I want to hear. One of the things I say to them is, "We don't need any more two-headed pastor stories. We have plenty of them." They would look at me and wonder if I was joking or if I was serious and there actually was a two-headed pastor somewhere.

The stories would usually be along the lines of: she baptized 200 people in one day; he built a church, all by himself; he learned to speak the native's language after two days... And, most of the time, when I finally talked to the individual none of what I had been told was anywhere

near the reality. Like an Inter-American Division leader once told me: "Every year they claim to baptize 10,000 people and there's only 5,000 people on their island..."

The great shock stories seem to be part of the past. David Livingstone's story is one of those shock stories. He was perhaps the most popular hero of the nineteenth century, a missionary doctor that spent a great deal of his life establishing Christian missionary activities in Africa. We have our own shock stories. Who hasn't heard the story of John Burden and the purchase of the track of land that now is Loma Linda University? Who is not acquainted with John Harvey Kellogg? Who doesn't get excited with the story of Harry Miller, the China Doctor? We also have Loretta Kress, J. Wayne McFarland, and Ferdinand Stahl?

For Christians the mother lode for storytellers is the Bible. A quick glimpse at the book of Genesis alone reveals more than 40 stories, depending on how we divide them. The Pentateuch contains enough stories—most of them are the core of our children's divisions program—to keep a Christian storyteller supplied for several years. But what about us, now? Do we have a story to tell? Can we still find a story?

More than 20 years ago I received a call from the Review and Herald Publishing Association. They wanted to know if my church was doing anything that would be worth printing on the Ingathering material for that year. One of my church members had begun her own ministry. She would collect second hand clothes and other materials and take them to the poor communities in Baja. She didn't think she was doing much. I didn't think that her story was really that interesting. Until I talked to her.

We don't know the story behind every face, the story sitting on the pews of our congregation until we talk to them. Some of the stories are great, gripping, compelling, exhilarating, thrilling. Other stories will break your heart and bring you down to earth. But each one has a story to tell.

We have followed two methods of collecting stories during the last twenty years or so. The first one is to go to the primary source and have them tell us their story. Get it directly from them. One of the keys is to take our time and pay attention. If they sense that we are in a hurry they will tell us what they think we want to hear and get it over with. If they sense that we are interested in their story, they will talk. Sometimes they will talk about things they hadn't talked about before. They will tell you things they felt but never had come to mind before.

A key part of listening is learning when to ask and asking the right questions. I usually prepare my questions ahead of the interview. The common who, when, where, why, etc. But I follow up my questions based on their responses. Some time ago we visited a Caribbean island looking for stories. We spent three days visiting sites, because the local leadership thought that was what we wanted to see: a big church downtown, the youth camp, the Union College, etc. We tried to get stories but we were never given the chance to sit

one on one with a person and interview them. The had a schedule and we had to stick to it. It was a total waste of time. Institutions, buildings, monuments, are not story material. As we were leaving the Union office we began to talk to the driver. That's where we found our story. During the last hour of our three day journey!

The first method, then, is talking to the people and listening. The second method, which is a variation of the first one, is to ask them to write their story. As if they were writing to a relative: their mom, their brother, their son. People open up when they talk to someone they love and consider dear to them. After they have written their story we proceed with the interview, asking them follow up questions to what they have written.

And what we find out is that the shock stories are still around. They would never appear in the *Washington Post* or the *Los Angeles Times*, but they are as moving as any of those old stories from the *Youth's Instructor* or *Guide Magazine*.

As Christians storytellers, our point or reference is the Bible. But telling the same Bible stories could become rather boring and tedious. How many times are we going to tell the story of Joseph? Have we found anything new about the stories of King David that are worth telling? I'd like to contend that there are always new gems to be found.

Robert Alter (*The Art of Biblical Narrative*) indicates that the biblical narrative found in most of the Old Testament stories could be classified as "type-scene". The notion being that there are certain fixed situations that are expected in the narrative. Thus a type-scene of a visit, for example, "should unfold according to the following fixed pattern: a guest approaches; someone spots him, gets up, hurries to greet him; the guest is taken by the hand, led into the room, invited, to take the seat of honor; the guest is enjoined to feast; the ensuing meal is described." (Alter, p. 51)

Alter suggests that in biblical storytelling the audience was acquainted with this formula. He compares it to our western movies: The sheriff always wears a white hat; his gun would have a unique quality about it—silver bullets, ivory handle, etc.; due to the bad guy's treachery, he would get the sheriff into an impossible situation—locked in an abandoned mine, tied next to a barrel of dynamite, etc.; the sheriff would always be an excellent marksman and posses a very fast draw; his sidekick would usually have some handicap—lack marksmanship, be a Mexican or a native American [how is that a handicap I have never figured, but compare Marshall Dillon's Festus to the Lone Ranger's Tonto or Cisco Kid's Pancho]. That formula is familiar to anyone who grew up watching TV from the 50s to the 70s. But, what to do about a sheriff that wears a black hat? Does that make him a bad guy? What if his sidekick is a child and chooses a rifle over a gun as in "The Rifleman"? Does the fact that the formula changes confuse us? No, we understand that it's a variation on the same theme. One of my favorite western movies is *My Name is Nobody*, where the "good guy" is a bad guy that is trying to eliminate the current fastest gun (Henry Fonda). Henry Fonda's character asserts that nobody is faster than him. Terence Hill's character introduces himself to Fonda's Jack Beauregard character with the statement "My name is Nobody."

The point is that if some of the steps or points are omitted or substituted for others, the audience still understand the thematic of the story.

The betrothal type-scene must take place with the future bridegroom, or his surrogate, having journeyed to a foreign land. There he encounters a girl—she is usually identified as a girl unless her name is given or identified as so-and-so's daughter—or girls at a well. Someone, either a man or the girl, draws water from the well; the girl or girls rush to bring home the news of the strangers arrival; a betrothal is concluded between the stranger and the girl, in most cases, only after he has been invited to a meal (Alter, p. 52).

The story of Ruth and the story of Saul follow some of the patterns but are distinctly unique. They are the "My name is Nobody" type-scene stories.

In the story of Ruth the narrator has changed the type-scene 180 degrees. We are dealing with a female character from Moab. But that element remains; she is far away from her land, looking for a better future in the form of a mate. Boaz instructs her "Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." (Ruth 2:8,9) Does it sound familiar? The audience must have wondered what was going to happen next. Who will she marry? Who are the girls going to tell? But it is Boaz who goes to town to settle the situation with Naomi's kinsman. The whole betrothal story revolves around food. Ruth becomes a matriarch by adoption becoming King David's great-grand mother.

The story of Saul chosen as king of Israel contains type-scene elements of a betrothal story. Saul is looking for his lost donkeys—for that he leaves his tribe's territory—and he decides to consult with the local seer, who happens to be Samuel. Samuel 9:11 indicates that "they met some girls coming out to draw water." The elements of the betrothal type-scene are present: a hero at the outset of his career in a foreign land meeting girls who have come to draw water from a well.

This is a variation of the story, what the audience would expect is for the girls to draw water—notice that it doesn't say that they drew any water, only that they were coming to draw water—or for the hero and/or his companion to draw the water for the girls, that they would run home with the news of the stranger's arrival, etc. Instead, Saul asked the girls for the seer. "He's ahead of you. Hurry now; he has just come to our town today, for the people have a sacrifice at the high place." (verse 12)

After leading the readers through familiar territory, the type-scene is aborted. Saul and his companion leave the girls at the well and rush to meet Samuel and Saul's tragic destiny. It's almost as if the story is telling us that the events will not have a happy ending. Consider all the other betrothal type-scene stories: they all seem to have a happy ending. The writer could have just told us that Saul went on to meet with Samuel and was anointed king. Instead we are led along the path of a betrothal type-scene story and then given

a twist, a new bone to chew on. This must have been meaningful to a Hebrew reader or listener in those days.

Appreciative Interviewing

Dr. David L. Cooperrider from Case Western Reserve University, developed a few decades ago, a management tool that is known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Appreciative Inquiry "is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential" (*A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry*, by David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney).

That is basically what we have used to find our stories. Here's why:

• Appreciative Interviews differ from traditional interviews in that the questions are simply guidelines that lead the person being interviewed to delve into the most creative, exciting, life-giving experiences that they have had in their life and work.

• It is not as important to answer every question as it is to tell a complete story, evoking the situation complete with details of what happened and the feelings involved. The goal is to help the person doing the interviewing experience as much as possible the situation being described.

• The interviewer's role is to LISTEN, occasionally prompting the interviewee to be more descriptive or to enlarge the story. IT IS NOT A DIALOGUE. This part of the process is a monologue by the person being interviewed.

Characteristics of an Appreciative Interview

• The Interview is based on an assumption of health and vitality. What you are seeking are incidents and examples of things at their best.

• The connection between the Interviewer and the person being interviewed is through empathy. Questions are answered in a way that evokes the feelings in the listener.

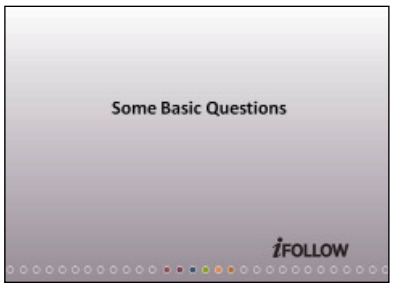
• Personal excitement, commitment, and care are qualities that are present when the interviewer and the person being interviewed are sharing stories of their personal peak experiences.

• Intense focus by the person listening to the stories leads to the experience of being fully heard and understood, a desirable effect from the close sharing that takes place.

• Generative questioning, guiding make up the role of the Interviewer. The skill is to encourage and question without interrupting the storyteller.

• Belief vs. doubt is the proper stance. This is not a time for skepticism or for questions that imply a need for "proof." The trust that develops from simply listening with interest and acceptance is a major positive affect of this process.

• Allow for ambiguity, generalization and dreams. These are stories being shared, not reporting of facts.



Some basic questions

• Tell me something about yourself. Where were you born, are you married, do you have any children, where did you go to school, etc.

• How did you get involved in this ministry?

• Tell me a story about a rewarding experience you have had since being a part of this ministry. What happened? Who was involved? What made it rewarding? What was the outcome for you? Why do you cherish this story?

• What is it that you value most about yourself as a person—a friend, a caregiver, a colleague, family member, etc.?

• What do you value about your work? Why do you believe your work is important?

• What do you believe is the core value of this ministry? What is it that is unique and essential that enables this ministry to be what it is?

• What three wishes do you have for this ministry in the future and for your work here?

• If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?

Putting the Story Together

Introduction—What you say during the first sentence of your story will likely determine whether your audience

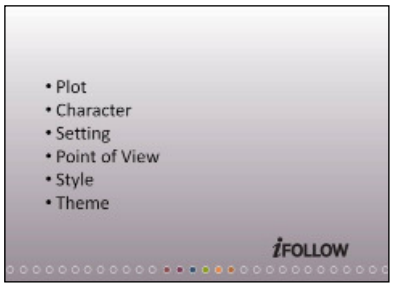
stays with you or decides to take a nap. It is not necessary to overkill your story promising what is not there. But there has to be something that captures the audience's imagination: Jakill had to walk three hours, one way, to get water for her household... Melita was 72 years old but she had a strong desire to learn to read and write... Martha had always wanted to be a school teacher, but she was barely able to finish elementary school...

Delivery—The main ingredient is sincerity. You must try to sell your story to your audience but that doesn't mean artificial or noisy enthusiasm. Your listener will know when you have a good story by your sincerity not your pyrotechnics. Be sensitive to your audience. Talk to them as if you were telling the story to a friend. If you can make them laugh, make them laugh. If the story makes them cry, let them cry. But do not make them laugh or cry just because of laughing or crying. The only thing they will remember later is that they laughed and cried.

Keep their attention—The message of the story should be well defined. It should have content, emotion, intrigue, entertainment, passion. But do not make these up if they are not part of the story. Try not to quote too many people and avoid dates, unless they are very significant. Nobody will care about a date in November unless it's Thanksgiving and December 12 means very little to most Christians in the U.S. but Christmas is a totally different story.

Conclusion—The story shouldn't end abruptly. The audience should be looking forward to the end of the story. It could be anticlimactic: Oz couldn't really give a brain or a heart. It could be heroic, dramatic: She was finally rescued through a hole in the roof of her house. It could end with a key scene: They couldn't go back home; this is home for them now. It could end with some final words: "I shall return." It could promise greater things to come: Melita not only learned to read and write, she is now going to high school!

Dr. Wilma McClarty, from Southern College, in her *Analysis of the Book of Esther as Literature*, provides these elements:



Plot: The sequence of events and their relation to one another. Plot usually involves conflict or struggle. In the book of Esther the conflict centers on Haman and Mordecai.

Character: What produces action. They are known to us through their actions. The characters in the book of Esther are: Esther, Haman, Mordecai, Ahaseurus and Vashti.

Setting: The place and time of the story. In this case the events take place in the kingdom of Persia during the reign of Xerxes.

Point of view: The way the story is told. The story of Esther is told through a third person's point of view.

Style: The language used to tell the story. In this case the elements of style are the use of symbols, the word choice and phraseology.

Theme: A generalization about the meaning of a story, whereas a plot is what happens. The *SDA Commentary* indicates four themes in the book of Esther: God's providence, the origin of the feast of Purim, the transitory nature of earthy power, and the union of divine power and human effort.

Characteristics of a Good Story

A single theme—Nothing confuses more than a story that has too many angles, too many twists and turns, too many characters, too many quotes… You know what I mean. If the story of a life guard dog is being told. Stick to the life guard dog. There may be other things that happen around this dog, but if they are not related to the story, you are only confusing your audience.

Develop the plot—The whole structure should make sense. Tell the story just the way you would tell somebody about what you had for lunch. Don't start with dessert, unless it was spectacular. There should be a situation, a conflict, a predicament, that is resolved at the end. Keep your audience in mind. A younger audience may require that you repeat some key parts of the story to them. Sometimes we as adults like to be reminded what the story was about.

Use of proper language—In story telling your language has to be descriptive enough to make people "see" what you are telling them. They must "feel" how cold or hot it was. They must "thirst" as the heroine in the story because she hasn't had a drop of water in two days. Even if you were retelling a Bible story, what you make the people "feel" is what they are going to remember later that day.

Stay faithful to the story—The biggest temptation is to try to make the story even more appealing than it actually is. This might help sometimes. But it is not recommended. Don't mix places for the sake of drama. You must be creative and use your imagination. Someone has said: "Imagination is to paint a picture in the mind, to invent ideas by seeing, because to imagine a thing is to imagine it." But stay within the limits of your story. A Bible story, told in an imaginative way will cause your listeners to ponder, to apply, and to understand their Bible better. But while it's OK to tell them King Solomon had 1000 wives and 4000 porcupines, don't leave young children with the impression that he "really" had 4000 porcupines.

Talk to your audience—Cable TV, Nintendo®, and Tivo have changed the way we see things. Everything is prepackaged for us. Even Bertolli brings to our table "authentic Italian cuisine." We definitely live in an age of instant gratification. No wonder it's more difficult to keep the attention of the audience. Story telling is now more difficult. Our audiences are more demanding, more sophisticated, less able to imagine or visualize abstract truths. This doesn't apply only to our children, it also applies to the adults in our

congregation. To get to the adults, talk to the children. Do whatever you can to capture their attention and their imagination. And the whole audience will get the message.

The right atmosphere—Sometimes it's not possible to choose the place where the story will be told but if you have any say on the matter, choose the best possible place. Time is the next important factor. Have enough time to tell your story. Don't rush it. Don't compress it. Do not leave things out for the sake of time. This might confuse some people. It might even confuse you. Have the listener comfortably seated in front of you. Unless it's part of your presentation, don't allow questions or interruptions. Look directly at the eyes of the audience. Nothing is more distracting than having the story teller looking at the ceiling or the floor while talking.

The intonation—Speak in simple language, quietly, and directly. Sometimes another language might be part of the story, or a very verbose way of talking, but if that is not the case, speak using simple, everyday, language. Speak loud enough for everyone to hear you clearly, even if you are using a microphone. Be careful to pronounce the words correctly, particularly odd and unusual words that might be part of your story.

Your expressions—Keep in mind that you are the "screen" the audience is looking at. Show emotion, concern, anger, frustration, joy, etc. to go along with your story. Make them "feel" the story. But try to do it in a natural way. Do not overkill your presentation.

That's all folks—When the story finishes, do not go on to something else. Everybody must know that the story has ended. Move out of the way. Sit down. Go back stage. Do anything to indicate that you are done. Do not follow up with announcements about the next story. Do not point up to a moral lesson. End the story and you are out.

What's the Best Method?

Sometimes I miss those days when we had picture rolls and even filmstrips. The teacher would stand in front of the group, place the picture roll on an easel, and tell us the story. Or the filmstrip would be projected on a wall—most of the time we didn't have a screen—and we would listen to the story. My daughter has never seen either. She belongs to the Wii generation. If she doesn't have a joystick, what's the point? I'm thankful that she is an avid reader and likes good books.

When it comes to telling the story we need to figure out how we are going to share it. Here's some options:

Narration—when it's a simple story, perhaps a known story of a Bible or missionary character. This keeps distractions to a minimum. Keeps the audience fixed on the narrator.

Participation—cards and charts might be used for this. Particularly when the story consists of some repetitive elements. I remember using this method at a General Conference

session when I had to tell the story of the three worthies to the junior class. I was telling the story, they were participating according to the card they got.

Visual aids—these are particularly useful when dealing with rare or unique object, artifacts, places, countries, etc. They may include pictures, objects, a very-very-short video, etc.

Characters—few things impress people more than having the story teller dressed up as a roman centurion. Unless he is talking about Dian Fossey's work with Gorillas. If you are going to dress up to tell a story, make the outfit relate to the story.

Dramatization—telling the story as a skit and using several people to tell it. This is very effective but it requires preparation, rehearsal, and dedication from all the participants.

Handouts in this Package

1. Seminar Leadership—Storytelling
2. Categorizing Bible Stories
3. Type-scene
4. Best Work in Your Ministry
5. Appreciative Interviewing

Additional Resources

Alter, Robert (1981). *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bonnett, James (2006). *Stealing Fire from the Gods: The Complete Guide to Story for Writers and Filmmakers* (2nd edition). Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions.

Campbell, Joseph (1988). *The Power of Myth*. New York, NY: Random House.

Cooperrider, David and Diana Whitney (2005). *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

O'Connor, Flannery, et al. (1969). *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Discussion Questions

1. What is one of your favorite stories from your childhood or youth?
2. What elements of that story make you still remember it?
3. How has time changed your perception of the message of that story?
4. What story has been told in your family from generation to generation?
5. What elements of that family story still applies today?
6. If you were to choose a story to tell today, what would it be? Why?
7. What do we get out of storytelling that we cannot get from a TV show?
8. When was the last time that you heard a good story? What made it good?
9. At church what kind of story would make you pay attention and keep you from reading the bulletin, your Bible, a brochure on the pew?
10. When was the last time that you came home from church and the only thing you remembered was one of the stories from the sermon? Why?
11. Would you rather have a sermon with many stories or a sermon without stories? Why?
12. When was the last time you didn't pay attention during the children's story hour?
13. If they ask you to tell a story next Sabbath, what story would you tell? Why?
14. What is the difference between telling Bible stories and telling inspirational stories during the children's story hour?
15. Should all the churches have a children's story hour?
16. How has technology and innovation affected the effectiveness of storytelling?
17. Is there a way to use technology and innovation to tell stories

Group Activities

Activity 1

Make a list of your favorite stories.
Some possibilities:

The Sword of Damocles
The blind men and the elephant
Robin Hood
Pocahontas
George Washington and his hatchet
William Tell
The brave 300
Joan or Arc
Shoot out at the OK Corral
Francis Scott Key
The Cuban missile crisis
The Titanic
Robin Hood
Pearl Harbor
9/11

Activity 2

Divide into groups and give them the following assignments.
1) Make a list of stories from the book of Genesis (or the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible). 2) Divide the stories into categories—you may make up your own categories.

Activity 3

In small groups or individually. Find the type-scene elements of the following betrothal—except for the last one—stories:

1. A Bride for Isaac (Genesis 24)
2. Jacob meets Rachel (Genesis 29:1-30)
3. Moses flees to Midian (Exodus 2:11-22)
4. Ruth meets Boaz (Ruth 2)
5. Saul is chosen king (1 Samuel 9)

Activity 4

Divide the group in pairs. Have each person interview his/her partner with the following questions. Have each person introduce the other one using the words that stand out from the interview [motivated, enthusiastic, progressive, alert, etc.]. Another option is have each person answer each one of the questions and then place all the surveys into a pile and choose them at random. Ask different persons to read the responses to the "interview."

Activity—Group Discussion

Considering what we have learned about Appreciative Inquiry, consider the story of Ehud in Judges 3:12-19. What can we say about this story? What motivated him? How did he influenced those around him? What positive change occurred due to his actions? On the other hand, how can we relate to his experience? How are his actions different from a current act of political terrorism? Consider Ehud's exchange with Eglon. What's the significance of his reference to him first as "O king" and later as "you"? Why is there so much detail in this story about Ehud's act against Eglon?

Group Exercises

Exercise 1
Divide the group in small groups of six persons each. Each person has one minute to share his/her storytelling experience. Name a moderator to share the best experience with the whole group.

Questions:

When was the last time that he/she had to tell a story and what what was the story told?

How well did he/she know the story?

What was the reaction of the audience to his/her story?

When was the last time he/she told a GOOD story?

What made it a GOOD story?

How was it different from the other stories?

What did he/she learn from that experience?

Exercise 2

Divide the group in twos and have each person interview the other following the AI method. Ask the whole group what were some of the key words that came out of the interviews. Write them on a board.

• Tell me something about yourself. Where were you born, are you married, do you have any children, where did you go to school, etc.

• How did you get involved in this ministry?

• Tell me a story about a rewarding experience you have had since being a part of this ministry. What happened? Who was involved? What made it rewarding? What was the outcome for you? Why do you cherish this story?

• What is it that you value most about yourself as a person—a friend, a caregiver, a colleague, family member, etc.?

• What do you value about your work? Why do you believe your work is important?

• What do you believe is the core value of this ministry? What is it that is unique and essential that enables this ministry to be what it is?

• What three wishes do you have for this ministry in the future and for your work here?

• If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?

Handout 1

Seminar Leadership—Storytelling

All human beings have an innate need to hear and tell stories and to have a story to live by... religion, whatever else it has done, has provided one of the main ways of meeting this abiding need. —Harvey Cox, *The Seduction of the Spirit*

God made people because he loves stories. —Yiddish proverb

The trouble with telling a good story is that it invariably reminds the other fellow of a dull one. —Sid Caesar

Time didn't start this emphasis on stories about people; the Bible did.
—Henry R. Luce, founder of *Time Magazine*.

People are hungry for stories. It's part of our very being. Storytelling is a form of history, of immortality too. It goes from one generation to another.
—Studs Terkel

Don't say the old lady screamed—bring her on and let her scream. —Mark Twain

We can tell people abstract rules of thumb which we have derived from prior experiences, but it is very difficult for other people to learn from these. We have difficulty remembering such abstractions, but we can more easily remember a good story. Stories give life to past experience. Stories make the events in memory memorable to others and to ourselves. This is one of the reasons why people like to tell stories.
—Roger C. Shank, from *Tell Me A Story*

As a means of education an important place was filled by the feasts of Israel. In ordinary life the family was both a school and a church, the parents being the instructors in secular and in religious lines. But three times a year seasons were appointed for social intercourse and worship. First at Shiloh, and afterward at Jerusalem, these gatherings were held. Only the fathers and sons were required to be present; but none desired to forgo the opportunities of the feasts, and, so far as possible, all the household were in attendance; and with them, as sharers of their hospitality, were the stranger, the Levite, and the poor.

The journey to Jerusalem, in the simple, patriarchal style, amidst the beauty of the springtime, the richness of midsummer, or the ripened glory of autumn, was a delight. With offerings of gratitude they came, from the man of white hairs to the little child, to meet with God in His holy habitation. *As they journeyed, the experiences of*

the past, the stories that both old and young still love so well, were recounted to the Hebrew children. The songs that had cheered the wilderness wandering were sung. God's commandments were chanted, and, bound up with the blessed influences of nature and of kindly human association, they were forever fixed in the memory of many a child and youth. —Ellen G. White, from Education, pp. 41, 42

Handout 2

Categorizing the Bible stories

Traditional

Primeval history—the origin of the world: Adam to Noah

Ancestral history—the origin of humankind: Noah to Abraham

Patriarchal history: Abraham and his descendants

By Theme

Historical—reflect historical occurrences: Treaty of Beersheba (Genesis 21:22-34)

Ethnographic—contain chiefly description of race and tribal relations: Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:20-34)

Aetiological—written for the purpose to explain something: Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-8)

Ethnological—reasons for relations of tribes: Reuben loses his birthright (1 Chronicles 5:1, 2)

Etymological—meaning of the names of races, wells, sanctuaries, and cities (Genesis 19:22)

Ceremonial—regulations of religious ceremonials: Passover story (Exodus 12:1-29)

Geological—explain origin or locality: Lot's wife turns into salt (Genesis 19:26)

Handout 3

Type-scene

a guest approaches

someone spots him

gets up

hurries to greet him;

the guest is taken by the hand

led into the room

invited to take the seat of honor;

the guest is enjoined to feast;

the ensuing meal is described

According to Alter, some of the most repeated type-scenes follow this pattern:

1. The annunciation of the birth of the birth of the hero
2. The encounter with the future betrothed at the well
3. The epiphany in the field
4. The initiatory trail
5. Danger in the desert
6. The discovery of a well or other source of sustenance
7. The testament of the dying hero

Handout 4

Best Work in Your Ministry

Think about a time when you were highly motivated and performed very well. In thinking about that story, what are the character traits that emerged from you?

What makes it enjoyable and exciting to do this work? What's going on when things are great?

Who has contributed to your success? What are some of the ways that this person has enabled you to do your best work?

Tell us about some times when you have done great work, which has significantly impacted performance within the congregation that you serve? What were the significant things you did to act as a catalyst for success?

Tell me something you have done this year, which you consider to be progressive or innovative? What key challenges did you face? What influence did you have?

What's the biggest positive change you've seen in yourself this year?

What three things do you wish for that would make you even more effective?

What passage of Scripture motivates you to serve and why?

Handout 5

Appreciative Interviewing

Dr. David L. Cooperrider from Case Western Reserve University, developed a few decades ago, a management tool that is known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Appreciative Inquiry "is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential." (*A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry*, by David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney)

That is basically what we have used to find our stories. Here's why:

• Appreciative Interviews differ from traditional interviews in that the questions are simply guidelines that lead the person being interviewed to delve into the most creative, exciting, life-giving experiences that they have had in their life and work.

• It is not as important to answer every question as it is to tell a complete story, evoking the situation complete with details of what happened and the feelings involved. The goal is to help the person doing the interviewing experience as much as possible the situation being described.

• The interviewer's role is to LISTEN, occasionally prompting the interviewee to be more descriptive or to enlarge the story. IT IS NOT A DIALOGUE. This part of the process is a monologue by the person being interviewed.

Characteristics of an Appreciative Interview

The Interview is based on an assumption of health and vitality. What you are seeking are incidents and examples of things at their best.

The connection between the Interviewer and the person being interviewed is through empathy. Questions are answered in a way that evokes the feelings in the listener.

Personal excitement, commitment, and care are qualities that are present when the interviewer and the person being interviewed are sharing stories of their personal peak experiences.

Intense focus by the person listening to the stories leads to the experience of being fully heard and understood, a desirable effect from the close sharing that takes place.

Generative questioning and guiding make up the role of the Interviewer. The skill is to encourage and question without interrupting the storyteller.

Belief vs. doubt is the proper stance. This is not a time for skepticism or for questions that imply a need for "proof." The trust that develops from simply listening with interest and acceptance is a major positive affect of this process.

Allow for ambiguity, generalization and dreams. These are stories being shared, not reporting of facts.

Some Basic Questions

Tell me something about yourself. Where were you born, are you married, do you have any children, where did you go to school, etc.

How did you get involved in this ministry?

Tell me a story about a rewarding experience you have had since being a part of this ministry. What happened? Who was involved? What made it rewarding? What was the outcome for you? Why do you cherish this story?

What is it that you value most about yourself as a person—a friend, a caregiver, a colleague, family member, etc.?

What do you value about your work? Why do you believe your work is important?

What do you believe is the core value of this ministry? What is it that is unique and essential that enables this ministry to be what it is?

What three wishes do you have for this ministry in the future and for your work here?

If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?