



**GROW YOUR
HEART BIBLE**

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When we were serving in Papua New Guinea, there was a pastor who brought his eight-year-old son, Ishmael, to one of our Bible storytelling trainings. Ishmael stood before the entire group of 50 pastors and leaders and accurately told four complete stories from Genesis and Exodus. When he finished, I asked his father, “How did he learn those stories? Tell us how you taught him so others will do it too.” His father said, “I am like a radio pastor in my village. I just go outside my house that is up on a hill and tell Bible stories to everyone in the village. My son listens to me tell the stories, and that’s how he learned them.” I said to the father, “Keep doing that. When your son is 18 years old and goes to a Christian school, he’ll already know the whole Bible! He’ll become a walking Bible!”

We believe the discipline of learning, telling and teaching Bible stories can lead to a generation of “walking Bibles” empowered by the Spirit of Jesus Christ to lead a worldwide advancement of the Gospel! This is the purpose and hope of this guide.

Do you own a Bible? Most Christians do; the Bible is by far the best-selling book in the world! In most places, for most people, God’s Word “is not too hard ... neither is it far off ... but ... very near” (Deuteronomy 30:11, 14). But really, how close is your Bible to you personally? Is it in your house? On your computer or cell phone? In your hands? Deuteronomy 30:14 says it should be closer still. Moses and the writers of Scripture want God’s Word to be in our hearts and in our mouths. This is what Heart Bible for the Nations is all about.

God bless,

Equipping Evangelist and his wife

LOOKING FOR WALKING BIBLES

“For this commandment ... is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven ... neither is it beyond the sea ... but the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.”

- Deuteronomy 30:11-14

Heart Bible for the Nations exists to glorify God by equipping people to know and share the Bible. We want to see the Bible in the hearts and in the mouths of the people of God until Jesus comes. We encourage Christians everywhere to intentionally grow their own personal heart Bible as a spiritual discipline.

To grow heart Bibles, we must learn to tell the stories of the Bible and develop a repertoire of stories – to put the Word of God in our hearts through Bible storytelling.

We believe that Bible storytelling is not just (and not even primarily) for a storyteller's audience. Bible storytelling benefits the storyteller first, and we will discuss the personal spiritual benefits in this guide.

Bible storytelling involves learning, telling and teaching Bible stories accurately. By “learn,” we mean internalize the stories so that we can retell them in our own words. This is different from word-for-word memorization or exposition.

This method works with other types of Scripture, but the focus of this guide will be on Bible stories for one good reason: stories are easier to learn than other types of biblical literature such as epistles, prophecy or poetry.



THE WORD OF GOD IN YOUR HEART

Before you begin learning to develop your heart Bible, we'd like to take you through this study, designed to help you use the Bible to shape your perspective about Bible storytelling. This study is adapted from training module one of Heart Bible for the Nations.

WHAT'S IN THIS STUDY?



PART I: THE WORD OF GOD

The Bible is not just a book. In this study, we explore what the Bible says about itself and how we ought to interact with it.



PART II: THE DISCIPLES' HEART BIBLES

We also look briefly at how the disciples' knowledge of God's Word made their ministry effective.

PART I: THE WORD OF GOD

How do the following verses describe the Bible as different from all other books?

2 Timothy 3:16

2 Peter 1:21

Matthew 4:4 – The Word of God is our bread for life.

1 Peter 2:2 – The Word of God is our milk.

Jeremiah 15:16 – The Word of God is food to eat and enjoy.





What makes the Bible different from other books?

Since the Bible is the Word of God and our spiritual food, how should we use the Bible in a way that is different from other books?

What do these verses say about the Word of God?

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

Colossians 3:16

Psalms 119:11

Joshua 1:8



A Heart Bible refers to all of the content of the Bible a person can recall by memory. This could include Bible verses, Psalms or other passages of Scripture. Learning and telling Bible stories is a little-known yet powerful way to grow a very large heart Bible to share with the world.

If you were on an island without a Bible, how many verses, stories, Psalms and other passages could you repeat by heart? How much time would it take to finish your heart Bible?

Given the Hebrew understanding of meditation, what are some ways to meditate upon the Word of God?

Meditate | Hebrew: *hagah* | verb

To utter, speak, muse

The word “meditate” in the Old Testament does not mean to think about something over and over again in silence. It almost always involves speaking the words out loud. The process of learning and telling a Bible story out loud is biblical meditation.

“My lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit” Job 27:4

“Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all the day long.” Psalm 35:28

“Therefore let Moab wail for Moab, let everyone wail. Mourn, utterly stricken, for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth.” Isaiah 16:7

“Like a swallow or a crane I chirp; I moan like a dove.” Isaiah 38:14a

In the ESV, *hagah* is translated as “meditate” 6 times, “study” twice and “imagine” twice. But it is clear from the remaining 15 uses (utter, mutter, roar, speak, talk), that in Hebrew, speaking and meditation are intimately connected. Consider Joshua 1:8:

“This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do all that is written in it.”

Joshua is commanded to keep the book of the law in his mouth. It is through this lens that we make sense of the command to meditate on it day and night. Meditation means speaking, not quiet introspection. Meditation is active, and its closest relative is speaking. We meditate when we speak scripture to ourselves. This is meditation: to think and tell.

PART II: THE DISCIPLES' HEART BIBLES

What do these verses tell us about the disciples and the impact of their ministry?

Acts 4:13

Acts 5:27-28

Acts 17:6



What are some differences between the disciples and us today?

Why do you think the disciples made such a powerful impact even without much education or access to the Scriptures?

How can we put the Word of God in our hearts?

POSSIBLE WAYS TO USE HEART BIBLE FOR THE NATIONS

- Sunday School
- Open air or street evangelism
- Home cell groups or Bible studies
- Preaching Series
- Christian Counseling
- Children or youth ministries
- Home visits, hospital or prison visits
- Missions trips
- Homeschooling
- Casual conversation
- Church Planting



If you have been a Christian all your life, have read through the Bible countless times, and have dozens of verses memorized ... If you are a pastor, youth leader, Sunday school teacher, disciple maker, parent, grandparent, a new Christian, a Christian without much church community to speak of ... in short, if you are a Christian, growing your Heart Bible for the Nations is for you.

WELCOME TO THE MOVEMENT

Progressing through this guide will take you on the first steps of growing your personal heart Bible. We hope that you will become a walking Bible, able to take the Word of God with you wherever you go and share its stories from your heart.

We believe you cannot say you have learned a story (or any passage) of the Bible until you are able to retell what it says in your own words. To learn a story is to internalize and personalize its message so you can tell it to others. This discipline can be done with any passage of Scripture. However, we start with stories because they are easier to internalize.

An easy place to start is with your favorite Bible story – a story you already know well. Read through the story, then practice telling it with your Bible closed. Next, find someone to tell it to – a friend, family member, etc., even someone who doesn't follow Christ. Think to yourself, “Who needs to hear this story?” Don't worry if you aren't able to tell it perfectly. Explain to your listener what your goal is and keep practicing. Once you are able to tell the story with little to no preparation, congratulations! You have the beginnings of a heart Bible.

GROWING YOUR HEART BIBLE

STEP 1: HOW TO LEARN A BIBLE STORY

1. Pray that God will help you to learn and tell His Word.

2. Read the narrative out loud and listen to a recording of the story.

3. Visualize the characters and the scene. Picture the places they go. Imagine the sights, sounds, smells, feelings etc.

4. Close the Bible and tell whatever you remember out loud, in your own words.

5. Cross-check with the Bible. How did you do? What did you leave out? Imagine your audience. Would you need to adjust some of the words so they can understand better?

6. Read or listen to the story again and make your corrections. Be patient. Learning and telling Scripture will become easier with experience.

7. Practice in front of someone and ask them for feedback. There's something special about practicing with people. You'll discover how the story will "take on life" inside your heart when you tell it to people. Always remember to focus on the scenes you see and not on the written words of the page.



Here we outline a suggested process for learning Bible stories. Some of the stories in the Bible are easy while others are not. When a story is easy, you might be able to learn it simply by reading or listening to it a few times. However, if the story is long or very complicated, you may need to consider some creative ways to help your memorization, like drawing or acting out the story.

What do you find difficult about narration (retelling a story in your own words)?

Consider your learning style. Are you an auditory, visual, kinesthetic or written learner? Brainstorm ways you could use your strengths to learn a story. For example, draw the story, act it out, create motions, put the story to music, etc.

STEP 2: HOW TO TELL A BIBLE STORY

Once you have learned a Bible story and are able to retell it accurately in practice (after rehearsing it with someone three to five times), you are ready to tell the story in a “live” situation. Try these nine tips as you go.

Who in your life needs to hear the Bible story you have learned? This could be a friend, family member or even someone you meet on the street.



1. Keep your Bible closed when you are introducing the story. Then, open it when you are telling the story and keep it open until you finish. This is especially important if your audience doesn't read. The signal of the open or closed Bible lets everyone know when you are talking or when God is.

2. Keep any introductions brief. Introductions might be necessary for background, but keep the introduction to no more than three sentences. Many times, you will better capture the attention of your audience if you simply start telling the story without any introduction.

3. When you tell the story, only tell the story. Do not preach, add comments, explanations or extra noises and effects during the story. The goal is to transmit an “oral Bible.”

4. Memorize the first and last words of the story. Knowing how you will begin and end will give you confidence during the rest of the story.

5. Use names of people in the story more than pronouns to make it clear who you are talking about. Say, “Jesus,” “Mary” or “the disciples” more than “he,” “she” and “they.”

6. Speak the quotes of the story. For example, instead of, “When the disciples saw Jesus walking on water, they were afraid because they thought he was a ghost,” say, “When the disciples saw Jesus walking on water, they were afraid and cried out, ‘It’s a ghost!’”

7. Keep still, with your feet planted. Don’t shift your feet or sway. If you are going to move a few steps, do it deliberately and no more than a few times.

8. Look at your audience and communicate God’s message to them personally. It is possible to talk *at* people rather than *to* them. Connect God’s Word to people who need Jesus.

9. Speak loudly, clearly and with confidence. The Word of God is powerful and will speak for itself, but God wants us to be bold and courageous.

STEP 3: HOW TO TEACH A BIBLE STORY

The third key aspect of Heart Bible for the Nations is teaching.

You'll need to resist the temptation to answer questions for your audience. Instead, guide them to discovering the answers for themselves. First, listen to your audience as they talk about what they've discovered before sharing what you have learned from the story.



These questions can be used in almost any context:

1. What did you like or not like about the story? What captured your attention?
2. What is God like in the story?
3. What are the people like in the story?
4. What do we learn from the story?
5. Who needs to hear this story?

Why might it be valuable to let your listeners come to conclusions about a story themselves?

What other questions might you ask to guide your listeners to biblical conclusions about the stories you tell?

STEP 4: KEEP GOING

JESUS IS LORD OF ALL SERIES

- Jesus heals a paralytic
(Mark 2:1-12)
- Jesus calms the storm
(Mark 4:35-41)
- Jesus heals a man filled with demons
(Mark 5:1-20)
- Jesus heals a woman and rises a girl from the dead
(Mark 5:21-43)
- Jesus feeds five thousand people
(Mark 6:30-44)
- Jesus heals a blind man
(Mark 10:46-52)



Now you are ready to build a growing library of Bible stories in your heart to share with your church, family, friends and others. Learn, tell and teach the set of stories above called the "Jesus is Lord of All" series. Reach out to let us know how you are doing!

What is your plan? What will you do next? Write your ideas here and share them with others.

STORY SETS

Here are some sample story sets to keep you going:

The Birth stories of Jesus

- The angel Gabriel visits Mary (Luke 1:26–38)
- Mary visits Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–45)
- Jesus is born (Luke 2:1–7)
- The shepherds and the angels (Luke 2:8–20)

How to come to Jesus

- Jesus heals a paralytic (Luke 5:17–26)
- A sinful woman anoints Jesus (Luke 7:36–50)
- Ten healed of leprosy (Luke 17:11–19)
- A rich young ruler (Luke 18:18–30)
- A blind man comes to Jesus (Luke 18:35–43)
- Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10)
- The thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–43)

Hope Restored

- Elisha and the Widow's Oil (2 Kings 4:1–7)
- Elisha and the Shunammite Woman (2 Kings 4:8–17)
- Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son (2 Kings 4:18–37)
- Naaman Healed of Leprosy (2 Kings 5:1–14)
- Jesus Raises a Widow's Son (Luke 7:11–17)
- Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (Luke 7:1–10)
- Messengers from John the Baptist (Luke 7:18–23)

Five Brave Women

- Trouble in Egypt (Exodus 1:5–14)
- The Hebrew Midwives (Exodus 1:15–22)
- The Birth of Moses (Exodus 2:1–10)

OUR TRAININGS

It is our great joy to walk alongside our brothers and sisters as we grow our heart Bibles together *for the nations*.

Do you long to see your church and community filled with and empowered by the Bible? Our vision for Heart Bible for the Nations is to see multitudes of believers trained and equipped to internalize and share the Bible.

If this resonates with you, then we encourage you to consider inviting a Heart Bible for the Nations trainer to your church.

Each training module takes fifteen hours to complete, and we recommend that each module be spread out over two and a half days.

Reach out to Equipping Evangelist at equipping.evangelist@owm.org to schedule a training.

First Module: “Gateway” — What is a Heart Bible and why is it important?

We learn the meaning and value of growing a heart Bible as a spiritual discipline. We discover how to learn, tell and teach simple Bible stories. After the training the participants will be required to learn, tell and teach a series of six stories from the Book of Mark in order to receive a certificate and continue in training with HBN.

Third Module: “The Big Story” — How do we grow a Heart Bible for the Nations?

We learn, tell and teach more difficult Bible stories. After the training, the participants will be required to learn, tell and teach a series of twenty-two stories from Genesis to the ascension

of Jesus in order to receive a certificate and continue with HBN training.

Second Module: “Evangelism” — How do we evangelize using Bible stories?

We learn how to use Bible stories as a bridge to the good news. We practice with 15 Bible stories as examples. This module involves an evangelism outreach activity during the training.

Fourth Module: “The Power of God’s Stories” — How do we study Bible stories for preaching and teaching?

We learn principles and tools for studying narratives in order to discover their theological themes for the purpose of preaching and teaching.



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