

# HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY

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When telling your story of God's work during your mission project, avoid the temptation to "wing it." Too often, "winging it" means that you will:

1. speak too long
2. tell stories that interest you, but bore your audience
3. overuse "ummm . . .," "ah . . .," and other "nothing" words that put your listeners to sleep.

If you want people to listen to your stories and care about your mission experience, you need to care enough to **prepare**.

## ■ **Who is your audience?**

- Your presentation will need to be different for a children's Sunday School class than for an older adult Sunday School class or for a collegiate Bible study. Tailor your presentation – stories, pictures, music, etc. -- to fit the audience.
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## ■ **What stories will you tell?**

- Choose stories that show God at work, not just stories about what you learned about yourself (i.e. "I learned I could live without my curling iron for two weeks!").
  - Choose two or three stories for each presentation that emphasize your point about the work God is doing in the country you visited.
  - Whenever possible, choose stories that show the host culture and lifestyle in a positive light. If you share, for example, that you had to shake the ants off of your bread at breakfast each morning, most of your audience will only remember the ants and not God's work in your ministry.
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## ■ **How will you tell your stories?**

- Share your story in the first person (if appropriate), using active and vivid verbs (Ex: "On the road to the village, our truck crawled in and out of potholes the size of small craters" instead of "Then we went to the village.")
- Set a 3 to 5 minute time limit for each story. Your audience's attention will wander after about 4 minutes.
- Avoid using
  - vague generalizations about your experience (Ex: "It was so awesome!" versus "It was awesome when our translator who had been overtly negative about the gospel asked for a Bible.")

- Using the real names of your country of service or of missionaries, national believers/seekers, or villages/towns/cities if you served in a restricted access country.
- foreign words that you do not translate
- abbreviations of locations (city names, for example) or other items foreign to your audience (names of foods, etc.)
- names of holidays or other items connected with your host culture/religion which are unfamiliar to your audience (Ex. If you say, "Ramadan happened while we were there," but you fail to explain that Ramadan is the month of fasting that Muslims observe as a religious ritual, your audience may think it Ramadan is like the state fair.)
- names of missionaries or nationals who you do not introduce fully to the audience.

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■ ***What is the Bible truth that you want your audience to remember when they leave your presentation?***

- Scripture must be the foundation of your presentation. Otherwise, you are simply giving a travelogue that any non-believer could give.
- Your stories should illustrate truths from the Bible. The Bible is not meant to illustrate your stories (i.e. the Bible is the cake, not just the icing on the cake).

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■ ***How do you want the audience to respond?***

- Determine what response you want before you speak. Do you want the audience to leave with only warm fuzzies about your mission experience, or do you want a more committed response?
  - Do you want people to pray for your people group? Challenge them audience to pray and explain how to pray for a people group.
  - Do you want the audience to consider going on mission? Challenge them to go and tell them of opportunities.
  - Do you want the audience to increase their giving to missions? Challenge them to give up eating a meal at a restaurant or buying a new CD or new clothes and to put that money toward international missions – possibly toward a ministry need among your people group.

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■ ***What audio-visual aids will you use?***

- A picture is worth a thousand words, but some are not worth showing. Select a few high-quality photos or 3-5 minutes of video about your mission experience.
- As with the stories you choose, make sure the pictures or video segment makes your point of what God is doing in your host country. If you show a picture of the tarantula that camped out in your bedroom, your audience will remember only the huge spiders in your host country and not what God is doing there.
- Power Point is also good for presentations, but not all churches or collegiate groups have the technology to present Power Point.
- Be sure to order the A/V equipment you will need several weeks in advance, especially if the equipment must be ordered from a university A/V department.

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### ■ ***How do you get started?***

- Brainstorm about your memories and make random notes.
  - Take a plain piece of paper, write the title and the biblical foundation at the top.
  - Now make random notes about your mission experience that fit the foundation you selected.
- From your brainstorming notes, choose 2-3 stories to tell and write out each story completely, or record them on audiotape.
- Time the story to make sure it fits the 3 – 5 minute time limit.
- Write out your entire presentation, so you know what you will say, and have smooth transitions from point to point.
- Ask a friend, minister, or professor to listen to your presentation to make sure it is interesting, relevant, and easy for your audience to understand.