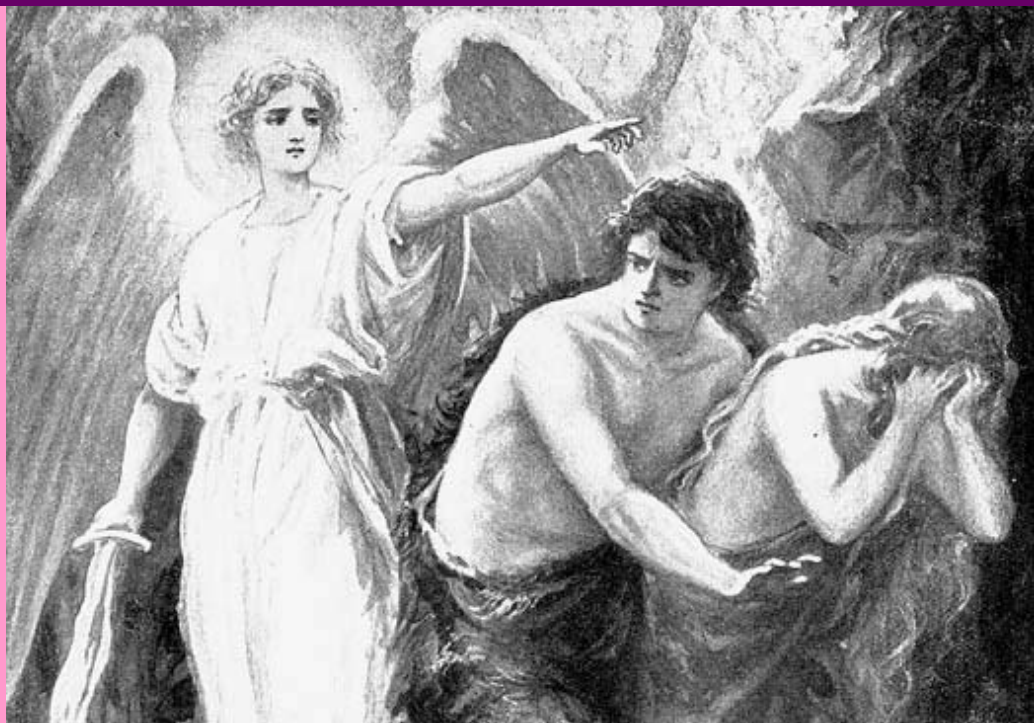




# Women of the Bible Storying Manual

*Community  
Health  
Evangelism*





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## BIBLE STORYING EXPLANATION

**BIBLE STORY TITLE:** See the specific story question sheet

**BASED ON:** Give the reference for the actual story

**THEMES:** See the specific story question sheet

**PREPARATION:** In preparation ahead of time, it is well to read the story out loud, so you can both see the words and hear them spoken. After reading the story, close your eyes and imagine you are looking at the story taking place as you practice retelling the story out loud to check your memory. Then reread the story out loud to note where you made mistakes and try again. Repeat this process until you can tell the story smoothly and accurately. Usually this takes about four times total. Stand and move around as you take the role of various speakers. You may use your own words, but stick exactly to the content of the Bible story.

**INTRODUCTION:** Each story question sheet will include background information that is helpful for the story teller to give the audience so that they will better understand the story that is being told.

**STORY:** Here the story teller tells the story in his/her own word as described above. It is fine for the story teller to act out the story during the telling. Alternatively, a group of actors from the group can be prepared to act out the story, as the story is being told verbally.

**DISCUSSION:** (Use some of these questions, and add your own.)

1. **Observation questions:**
  - a. Who were the characters in this story?
  - b. What happened first?
  - c. Then what happened?
  - d. And so on, to the end of the story. Ask factual questions. Don't ask any questions that were not specifically answered in the story. Those will come later.
2. **Retelling the story:** Would anyone like to retell the story of . . . ?  
Let people know that they have had no chance to practice, so no one is expected to tell everything exactly like you told it. There is no need to point out mistakes made by the second story teller. Each person in the audience will be checking his/her own memory. However, it is fine for the original story teller to correct any significant mistakes made in the original telling of the story, that may have shown up in the retelling of the story.
3. **Interpretation questions:**
  - a. These questions may be more difficult. Therefore, possible interpretation question have been included on the specific story question sheets.
  - b. It is fine for the story tellers to substitute or add questions of their own if they wish to do this. It is a good idea for story tellers to know ahead of time which questions they think are essential. If discussion is going long, it may be necessary to leave out some of the less important questions.
  - c. It is often good to finish interpretation question by asking the group for other ideas. Commonly they will move on to application, which can lead the story teller to move to application questions.
4. **Application questions**
  - a. See suggestions on the specific story question sheet.
  - b. Appreciate any other applications the group suggests.
5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. This prepares the audience for #6 below. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of . . .

**Used in:** Adult Bible Storying, Adolescents/Bible Storying and in Bible Storying/Teens

**Adapted from:** *The Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version (NirV)*. 1998. International Bible Society.

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Created by [Global CHE Network](#) and LifeWind International

**TITLE:**  
**BASED ON:**  
**THEME:**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.
2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.
3. **Interpretation questions:**
  -
4. **Application questions:**
  -
5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of ....

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**Adapted from:** *The Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version (NirV)*. 1998. International Bible Society.





**TITLE: The Creation of the First Woman**

**BASED ON: Genesis 2:18-25**

**THEMES: Love, Marriage, Beauty**

**INTRODUCTION:** Ask about the previous story of the creation of Man.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- Why didn't God name all the birds and animals Himself, rather than waiting for man to do it?
- Everything God had created before was "good". Why was it "not good" for man to be alone?
- What made a helper to be "suitable for man"?
- Why did God choose to use the man's rib to make a woman, rather than using the dust of the ground, as He had before?
- How did the man feel about the woman?
- Who said, "For this reason a man will leave father and mother and be united to his wife"?
  - Why would God choose to say this?
- Why were the man and the woman not ashamed of their nakedness?

4. **Application questions:**

- Why does God sometimes wait for you to take action, rather than doing the thing He has in mind, without you?
- God said it was not good for man to be alone. Does this mean that being unmarried is a bad thing?
- What would make a man or a woman a suitable marriage partner for you?
- If you are married, how do you feel about your husband or wife?
- If you are married, what application would you make for yourself from God's statement, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife"?
- Do you think that the idea that woman was made out of the man's rib means that men are superior to women? What other meaning might it have?
- Most of us think being naked is a bad thing. Why do you think that is?

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of The Creation of the Woman.

**Used in:** Adult Bible Storying, Adolescents/Bible Storying and in Bible Storying/Teens

**Adapted from:** *The Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version (NirV)*. 1998. International Bible Society.



**TITLE: Eve and the First Sin**  
**BASED ON: Genesis 3:1-7**  
**THEMES: Sin, Rebellion, Deception, Group thinking**

**INTRODUCTION:** Man and Woman had just been created. They were living in a beautiful garden called the Garden of Eden. They were very happy taking care of God's garden. God had placed only one restriction on their activity. They were not allowed to eat the fruit from one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- Was the serpent another wild animal, or something different?
- When the serpent asked, "Has God said...?", what did he want the woman to think?
- How well did the woman understand God's rule?
- What made the forbidden fruit seem desirable?
- If the man was with the woman, why was he not doing any of the talking?
- What do you think the forbidden fruit tasted like?
- How did the "opening" of the man and woman's eyes make them realize that they were naked?
  - How did the fig leaves change this nakedness?

4. **Application questions:**

- How do you think Satan may make himself appear to you?
- What kinds of things encourage you to question God?
- How well do you understand what God requires of you?
  - Are you completely obeying what you do understand of God's requirements?
- What makes sins seem appealing to you?
- When you are part of a group, do you let others do the talking and the thinking for you? If so, why?
- When you sin, what does it "taste" like initially?
  - Does this "taste" change over time?
- The man and woman realized that they were naked? How do you feel when you realize that you are a sinner, too?

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Eve and the First Sin.

**Used in:** Adult Bible Storying, Adolescents/Bible Storying and in Bible Storying/Teens

**Adapted from:** *The Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version (NirV)*. 1998. International Bible Society.



**TITLE: Rahab and Spies**  
**BASED ON: Joshua 2:1-24**  
**THEME: Taking a risk for God**

**INTRODUCTION:** Joshua and all Israel were camped on the east side of the Jordan River. They were ready to cross the river and attack the cities on the west bank. The first major city they would come to was Jericho.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- Why didn't God just let the spies go undetected?
- How do you think Rahab was warned that the spies at her house had been reported?
- Why was Rahab, a prostitute, willing to take such chances to hide the spies and lie to the king of Jericho?
  - How do you think God responded to the faith that Rahab showed?
- How do you think the spies felt when Rahab spoke of the people's fear of Israel and Israel's God that had gripped Jericho?
- What do you think Rahab's family thought when she gathered them into her house?
- What do you imagine Joshua was thinking when there was not report from the spies after four days?
  - How would his thinking have changed when he got the report of the spies?

4. **Application questions:**

- What have you learned about God when you were going through a hard time?
- Have you ever had to choose between the safe expected choices and doing what God seemed to be asking you to do?
  - What was God's reaction to your choice?
- When have you been in awe of what God was doing in the lives of people you thought would be the last to respond to God?
- What helps you persuade other people to take an action that is critically important to them?
- How do you feel when you are waiting on God for an answer and all you hear is silence?
  - How would you feel if God gave a dramatic answer when you had almost given up hoping?

Note: The New Testament Book of Hebrews (11:31) lists Rahab the Harlot as one of the all time heroes and heroines of faith.

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Rahab and the Spies.

**Used in:** Adult Bible Storying, Adolescents/Bible Storying and in Bible Storying/Teens

**Adapted from:** *The Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version (NirV)*. 1998. International Bible Society.



**TITLE: Ruth Leaves Moab**  
**BASED ON: Ruth 1:1-21**  
**THEMES: Commitment, Faith, Self-sacrifice**

**INTRODUCTION:** After Israel conquered most of Palestine, Israel was ruled by a series of judges. These judges achieved their authority by taking leadership in times of crisis. Between the judges, there were times where everyone chose to do what was right in his own eyes. The laws given by Moses were known, but often they were not followed.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- What did you notice about the character of each of the three women?
- How do you think Naomi felt when her husband and both her sons died?
- How did Orpah and Ruth feel when their husbands died?
- Why did Ruth not leave Naomi? What would have happened to Naomi if Ruth had left, along with Orpah?
- Do you think Ruth had an easy time living with Naomi? Why or why not?
- What character qualities do you see in Ruth?
- 

4. **Application questions:**

- Which of the characters in this story is the most like you? Why?
- What things have happened to you that could have made you bitter?
- How do you feel when people who have experienced the same things you have gone through, react more bitterly than you do?
- Do you have any problems relating to your in-laws? If so, why do you think this happens?
- When you do things for others to meet their needs rather than your own, how does this affect your attitude to them? How does it affect you?
- When you actively demonstrate Ruth's characteristics, how could it affect your daily relationships, especially your relationships with your in-laws?

Note on what happens later in Ruth's story. To keep Naomi and herself from starving, Ruth takes the risk to pick up grain left behind by those harvesting. She is noticed by a kind, rich farmer, who is a relative of Naomi. Ruth accepts Naomi's instruction about the right things to do culturally. Boaz falls in love with Ruth and marries her. Ruth becomes one of the ancestors of King David, and ultimately, of Jesus Christ.

- How do you think the end of this story was related to the beginning?

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Ruth Leaving Moab.

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**TITLE: Hannah's Promise**  
**BASED ON: 1 Samuel 1:4-20**  
**THEMES: Childlessness, Marriage relationships, Prayer**

**INTRODUCTION:** At the time of this story, the Jewish people worshiped God in a tent that was pitched in the town of Shiloh. Everyone who could, would try to go to Shiloh at least once each year to worship. Elkanah and his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah lived in Ephraim, not far from Shiloh. Peninnah had several children, but Hannah had not been able to have any children.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- How do you think Peninnah felt about Elkanah's love for Hannah?
- Do you think Elkanah's words made Hannah feel better? Why or why not?
- How do you think Hannah felt when Eli accused her of being drunk?
- How could Hannah be sure that God was going to answer her request?
- How do you think Hannah felt about Samuel?
  - How easy was it going to be for her to keep her promise to God?

4. **Application questions:**

- How do you feel when you are not as loved or as well liked as someone else around you?
  - How do you treat this other person?
- How successful are you when you try to comfort another person you know well, when they are sad?
- Have you ever been falsely accused when you were already very sad?
  - If so how did you feel?
- When you make a request of God, how confident are you that God hears you?
  - Do you think making a promise to God at the same time you make a request makes it more likely that God will grant your request?
  - Why or why not?
- If you do make a promise to God, what will God do if you don't keep your promise?

After word: Hannah did present her son, Samuel to the Lord. He became a great prophet and leader of Israel.

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Hannah's Promise.

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**TITLE: Abigail**  
**BASED ON: 1 Samuel: 25:14-35**  
**THEMES: Reversing bad choices, Wisdom**

**INTRODUCTION:** David lived for several years as a fugitive, before he became king. During this time, he had to feed himself and six hundred men. Rather than steal the things they needed, they provided protection for local residents and received gifts of food in return. One wealthy recipient of David's service, named Nabal, refused to give any food, and answered the request of David men with mean sarcasm. David was so angry that he was on his way to kill Nabal and all his people. However, Nabal was married to an intelligent and beautiful woman, named Abigail.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- What do you think it was like for Abigail to be married to a man like Nabal?
- How do you think Abigail felt when she approached David?
  - Why did Abigail take the blame for her husband's choices?
  - Was it right for Abigail to say such bad things about her husband?
- Why did Abigail say, "Since the Lord has kept you, my master, from bloodshed..." before David had said what he was going to do?
- How do you think Abigail knew that David was going to become the king?
- Why did David praise God for Abigail's coming to him, rather than first praising Abigail herself?
- How do you think Abigail felt about David when he and his men turned back?
- How would you summarize Abigail's characteristics?

4. **Application questions:**

- Do you know of women who are married to difficult men? If so, how can they manage?
- When you are very afraid, how easy is it for you to take the blame for others?
- When is it ever right for a woman to criticize her husband?
- Have you been able to treat others as if they are going to do the right thing before they actually did it? If so, what was the effect?
- Looking at Abigail's characteristics, how would it affect your relationships if you began to actively demonstrate those same characteristics?

Note: When Abigail told Nabal what had almost happened, Nabal had such a fright that he died. With a clean conscience, David then took Abigail as his wife.

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Abigail.

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**TITLE: The Widow of Zarephath**  
**BASED ON: 1 Kings 17:7-24**  
**THEMES: Trust, Recognizing truth**

**INTRODUCTION:** Elijah was a prophet of God in the nation of Israel. This story happened during the reign of Ahab, one of the most evil Kings Israel ever had. God introduced Elijah to Ahab by telling Elijah to announce that God said Israel would get no rain until Elijah prayed for it to rain again. Then God told Elijah to hide by a remote brook. To keep Elijah's location a secret from the men King Ahab sent looking for him, God had ravens bring food to him while he was hiding. The country of Sidon bordered Israel.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Example – Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so on...?
2. **Retelling the story:** Would anyone like to retell the story of The Widow of Zarephath?
3. **Interpretation questions:**
  - Do you think the widow's desperate circumstances had anything to do with the drought in Israel?
    - If so, why was God causing the people of Sidon to suffer for the sins of Israel?
  - If this woman looked really hungry, how do you think Elijah knew that she was the widow God had prepared to give him food?
    - How do you think the woman felt when Elijah asked her for water?
    - Why did Elijah persist in asking for food, even after the widow explained her situation?
    - If the woman had refused to give Elijah "her last meal," what would have happened?
  - If Elijah had been wrong about the continuing flour and oil, what would have happened?
    - How could the widow trust Elijah's words anyway?
  - When the widow's son died, why did she still address him as a "man of God"?
  - Why did she ask, "Did you come to remind me of my sin, and kill my son?"
    - What does this question tell you about the widow's view of God?
  - When Elijah prayed for the boy, how do you think Elijah was feeling?
  - When the boy came back to life, how did the widow's view of Elijah (and the God he served) change?
4. **Application questions**
  - How do you feel if you know you are suffering because of what other people have done wrong?
    - How does suffering for the sins of others make you feel about God?
  - Do you think people who are really poor should be asked to give anyway? Why or why not?
    - If poor people refuse to give, what effect does their refusing have on them?
  - Do you think giving guarantees prosperity to the giver? Why or why not?
  - When bad things happen to you, how often to you say to yourself, "I deserved this?"
    - How do you feel about God when he gives you punishment you deserve?
    - How do you feel about God when he gives you grace that you do not deserve?
  - What do you expect to happen when you pray for others?
  - What does this story teach you about God?
    - Based on this lesson about God, what might you want to do differently?
5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of The Widow of Zarephath.

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**TITLE: The Shunammite Woman's Generosity**  
**BASED ON: 2 Kings 4:8-17**  
**THEME: Generosity**

**INTRODUCTION:** By this time God had used Elisha to do amazing miracles. He had also set up a dramatic military victory for Israel. So Elisha was well established as the chief prophet of God in Israel. It is also important to know that it was very disgraceful to be a married woman in Israel who could not have children.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- What caused the Shunammite woman to think Elisha was a holy man of God?
- What prompted this rich woman to think of building a prophet's chamber?
  - How do you think the Shunammite woman felt about the prophet's chamber after she and her husband finished it?
- Why did the woman not have any requests when Elisha asked what he could do for her?
- When Elisha told the woman she was going to have a son, why did the woman have trouble believing this would happen?
- How do you think the woman felt about being pregnant?
  - How do you think she felt when her son was born?

4. **Application questions:**

- How can you recognize servants of God who need special service or support?
- How do you decide if a need is one you should meet, or is something for someone else to provide?
- When you have been part of meeting a need for someone else, how did it feel to you?
- Are you more likely to do something nice for another person if you are hoping they do something special for yourself in return?
  - What do you suspect that God thinks about this kind of giving?
- Has God ever surprised you by giving you something you really needed or wanted, but for which you were afraid to ask?
  - How did you feel about the gift?
  - How did you feel about God?

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of The Shunammite Woman's Generosity.

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**TITLE: The Shunammite Woman's Faith – Elisha Heals a Dead Boy**  
**BASED ON: 2 Kings 4:18-37**  
**THEME: Focusing your faith**

**INTRODUCTION:** Elisha, the prophet, had received generous treatment from a rich Shunammite woman. This woman had convinced her husband to build a small room on her roof for Elisha to use when he visited. In return, Elisha had prophesied that the woman and her husband would have a son after years of infertility.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- How do you think the Shunammite woman felt when her son died on her lap?
- Why did the woman put her dead son on Elisha's bed?
- Why did the woman not tell her husband that their son was dead before she went to Elisha?
- Why did the woman first tell Gehazi that everything was all right?
- How do you think the woman felt when Gehazi tried to push her away from clinging to Elisha's feet?
- Why did Elisha send Gehazi ahead with his own staff to lay it on the boy's face?
  - Why did this not work?
- How do you think Elisha was feeling as he prayed for the boy, and then stretched himself out on top of the boy two times?
- What do you think the Shunammite woman said, as she later reported what had happened?

4. **Application questions:**

- When have you felt like God had deserted you?
  - When you felt this way, did you reach out to God or run away from God? Why?
- What kinds of things distract or block you when you are seeking God?
  - How do you usually handle these distractions or blocks?
  - What do you learn from this story about how you should handle these distraction or blocks differently?
- How do you respond when a plan fails, when you had hoped that it would bring God's solution to a problem?
- When God does answer your prayers, what is the best way to explain this to other people?
  - How can you prepare for the different ways others may respond?

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of "The Shunammite Woman's Faith".

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**TITLE: Deborah and Jael**  
**BASED ON: Judges 4:6-10, and 12-24**  
**THEMES: Courage, Leadership**

**INTRODUCTION:** During the period of the Judges, God used the nations around the Israelites to punish them for unfaithfulness. When they repented, God sent various judges to rescue Israel from their oppressors. Before this story, Israel had been cruelly oppressed for 20 years by the Canaanites. The Canaanites were led by their king, Jabin, and by an army commander named Sisera. The Canaanite army was strong because it had 900 iron chariots that could cut down many foot soldiers. At the time of this story, Deborah, a woman prophetess, was leading Israel and deciding disputes.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.
2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.
3. **Interpretation questions:**
  - Why did Deborah send for Barak instead of leading the army of Israel herself?
  - How could Deborah be sure the Lord would enable defeat of the Canaanites?
  - Why was Barak unwilling to go to battle if Deborah did not also come?
  - How do you think Barak felt about sharing the glory of victory with a woman?
  - Why did Sisera leave his chariot and run?
  - How do you think Jael felt when Sisera arrived at her tent and went to sleep?
  - How do you think Jael felt as she aimed the tent stake at Sisera's head?
  - How do you think Barak felt when he saw Sisera's body, and thought of the prophecy that Deborah has made?
4. **Application questions:**
  - Which of the main characters in this story is somewhat like you? Why?
  - What is the best way for you to involve others in God's plans?
    - Are you willing to work with them, as well as share ideas?
  - Have you watched God destroy evil people? If so, what did it show you about God?
  - How important do you think women are in carrying out God's plans?
  - What things you think are not good for women to do?
    - Do you think God agrees? Why or why not?
  - What do you learn about God from the roles He empowered women to take in this story?
5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Deborah and Jael.

**Used in:** Adult Bible Storying, Adolescents/Bible Storying and in Bible Storying/Teens

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**TITLE: Esther's Courage**  
**BASED ON: Esther 4:7-5:4**  
**THEMES: Courage, Persecution, and Protection**

**INTRODUCTION:** Esther was a beautiful Jewish woman who had been adopted by her uncle, Mordecai. Mordecai and Esther kept it secret that Esther was Jewish. Esther was chosen to be Queen of Persia, because she was both beautiful and she was good at listening to advice. Meanwhile, Mordecai uncovered and prevented a plot to kill the king. But Persia was a powerful and corrupt empire. The person just under the king in authority was an evil man name Haman. He hated Jews and especially Mordecai, because Mordecai would not bow to Haman the way other men did. He paid the king to issue an edict to kill all the Jews. Mordecai went to the king's gate to mourn in sackcloth and ashes. Esther heard Mordecai was outside the palace and sent one of her servants to find out what was wrong.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- What do you think Esther expected Mordecai to say when Esther explained her problem to him?
- What impresses you about the answer Esther gave to Mordecai's reply?
- How did Esther feel while she waited outside the throne room? When the king accepted her warmly?
- Why did Esther only ask the king to attend a banquet, rather than asking for more?
- How do you think Esther felt about God when she walked away from the throne room?

4. **Application questions:**

- What kinds of things might people say about your character? Would they be right?
- When someone else challenges your reasoning, how do you feel? How are you likely to respond?
- How important is it to you – To ask for God help in a crisis? – To ask for others to fast and pray, too?
- Would you have been willing to do what Esther did? Why or why not?

Notes on How Esther's story turned out:

The banquet went extremely well and the king again offered Esther anything she wanted. But Esther only asked both the king and Haman to another banquet the next night. Haman was thrilled to be invited to these banquets, but when he saw Mordecai on his way home that night, it spoiled his joy. So Haman's wife told him to build a gallows 75 feet high on which to hang Mordecai in the morning, But when Haman saw the king the next morning, the king had had a dream that wakened him and prompted him to read records of the good deeds of his citizens. The king had read the account of Mordecai's blocking the plot to kill him. So before the Haman could ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai, the king asked Haman what should be done for a person that the king wanted to honor. Haman thought the king meant him, so he suggested putting the man in the king's robe, and having a high official shout the man's praises while leading the man around the capital on the king's own horse. The king then ordered Haman to do this for Mordecai. At the end of the day Haman was miserable, but only had time to dress and go to Esther's second banquet. When Esther finally told the king that Haman was trying to kill Esther and all her people, the king was so angry that he had Haman hanged on the gallows that Haman had made for Mordecai. This rescue of the Jews is now celebrated with the Jewish feast of Purim.

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Esther's Courage.

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**TITLE: The Widow's Offering**  
**BASED ON: Mark 12:41-44**  
**THEMES: Giving, Values, Equal dignity**

**INTRODUCTION:** The authority of Jesus was being heavily attacked at this point in his ministry because the Jewish leaders perceived that Jesus was claiming to be God. The answers Jesus was giving to their attacks were so good, they were drawing great respect from those who were watching and listening.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- Do you think Jesus knew what was going to happen when he sat down across from the offering box?
- How could people tell how much money others were putting in?
- How much did the temple's function depend on the donations of rich givers?
- Why were there not rich people who put in everything they had?
- How do you think the widow felt about putting in her two little coins?
- How would she have felt about her gift after Jesus' evaluation of her giving was made known?
- After Jesus made his comments, how do you think the rich people felt?

4. **Application questions:**

- Do you think Jesus is watching you as you give?
- Are you more like the rich people or the poor widow, in the way you give?
- Do you want people to know what you are doing as you give?
- Are you giving all you can?
- What would Jesus say about your giving?
- Money is not the only thing you can give to God. What other kinds of giving come to your mind, and how important do you think they are to God?

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of The Widow's Offering.

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**TITLE: Mary's Submission**  
**BASED ON: Luke 1:26-38**  
**THEMES: Faith, Submission**

**INTRODUCTION:** This story happened during the time the Romans controlled all of Palestine, the area that is not Israel and Jordan. The Mary and Joseph who are mentioned in this story had ancestors who were important Jewish leaders and kings, but both Mary and Joseph were poor people who were not considered important in their time. Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, who was old and childless, had become pregnant after an angel had predicted the coming birth to her husband.

**STORY:** Tell the story

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Example – What happened first? What next? And so on.
2. **Retelling the story:** Would anyone like to retell the story?
3. **Interpretation questions:**
  - Why did the angel Gabriel start out by saying, "Do not be afraid"?
  - What about Mary had "found favor with God"?
  - What effect do you think being pregnant would have on Mary, when she was not married?
    - The angel said great things about Jesus. How would this help Mary in the short term?
    - In the long term?
  - Mary asked, "How can these things be, since I am a virgin?" When Gabriel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you", what do you think this answer meant to Mary?
  - How would the pregnancy of Elizabeth have made it easier for Mary to believe what Gabriel said?
  - Mary appears to have been given a choice of whether to submit to God's will or not. What do you think most women in Mary's position would have done?
    - Should Mary have asked Joseph first? Why or why not?
  - How do you think Mary was feeling at the end of this story?
4. **Application questions**
  - How do you think you would feel if God talked to you through an angel?
  - Would you be surprised if God said He had found favor with you? Why or why not?
  - If God asked you to do something you thought would be hard for you, would you be willing to do it?
    - Why or why not?
  - If you have chosen to do hard things in obedience to God, what were the short and long-term effects?
    - What did God do to make it easier for you to obey?
  - Can you think of times when you refused to submit to God's will? If so, what was the result?
  - Do you sometimes wait for the approval of others before you say "yes" to God? Why or why not?
  - What do you learn from the example of Mary's submission?
  - How do you want to feel at the end of your life, when you look back at how you responded to God's will?
5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Mary's Submission.

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**TITLE: Elizabeth's Prophecy**  
**BASED ON: Luke 1:39-45**  
**THEMES: Joy, Faith, Encouragement**

**INTRODUCTION:** Elizabeth was married to a priest named Zechariah. They were both godly old people, but they had no children because Elizabeth was barren. When Zechariah was serving in the temple, the angel, Gabriel, met him and told him that his prayer was going to be answered. Elizabeth was going to have a son, who was going to have the special role of calling people in Israel back to God. Because Zechariah had trouble believing that this could happen, God caused Zechariah to be unable to speak until the baby was born. Elizabeth had a cousin named Mary, who was engaged to a man named Joseph. While Elizabeth was pregnant, Gabriel appeared to Mary, to tell Mary that she was going to have a baby while she was still a virgin. This holy baby, whom she was to name Jesus, was going to be the Son of God. Mary had consented to let this happen.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Example – What happened first? What next? And so on...?
2. **Retelling the story:** Would anyone like to retell the story of Elizabeth's Prophecy?
3. **Interpretation questions:**
  - How do you think Mary was feeling when she left home to see Elizabeth?
  - Do you think Mary expected Elizabeth to believe her story about how she became pregnant?
  - How could Elizabeth be so sure that what she was saying was true?
  - Elizabeth's baby was miraculous too, and had been announced by the same angel. Why was Elizabeth so sure that Mary's baby was more special than hers?
  - How do you think Mary felt when she heard what Elizabeth had to say?
    - Do you think Mary felt she had a right to be praised the way Elizabeth did? Why or why not?
  - Why did God use Elizabeth to encourage Mary at this time?
    - How do you think Joseph felt about Mary's pregnancy?
4. **Application questions**
  - To whom do you turn when you are confused and do not know what to do?
    - Why would you choose this person?
    - If people sometimes come to you with their problems, why do they choose you?
  - What would you have said to Mary if you had been there in place of Elizabeth?
  - If God asked you to say something you feared your hearers would not accept, how could you make them more ready to listen to you?
  - Are you ever jealous when God is doing something very special for someone else? Why or why not?
  - How do you respond when others praise you more generously than you think you deserve?
  - How have others encouraged you when you were feeling really discouraged?
  - What do you need to change to make yourself a more effective encourager?
5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Elizabeth's Prophecy.

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**TITLE: Mary and Martha**  
**BASED ON: Luke 10:38-42**  
**THEMES: Service, Expectations, Listening**

**INTRODUCTION:** This story takes place toward the end of the ministry of Jesus. Lots of people knew about his remarkable teaching and his power. Jesus was so busy that times when he could rest were very special.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- How do you think Martha felt when Jesus accepted her invitation to a meal?
  - What kind of a meal did she want it to be? Why?
- Why didn't Martha ask Mary to help her, instead of asking Jesus to push Mary for her?
- Who was Martha blaming for Mary's not helping more with the preparations?
- What do you think of Martha's attitude to Jesus?
- What do you think of Jesus' attitude to Martha?
- What would have been a better action for Martha to take than the one she chose?

4. **Application questions:**

- How do you try to impress Jesus?
- How do you respond when someone you had counted on is not helping in the way that you expected?
- How does being very busy affect your choices?
- What do you learn from Jesus' attitude toward Martha?
- Jesus said Mary had chosen what is better, listening instead of serving. What changes does this suggest to you in the way you should relate to Jesus?

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Mary and Martha.

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**TITLE: Mary Anoints the Feet of Jesus**

**BASED ON: John 12:1-11**

**THEMES: Extravagant generosity, Handling criticism, Communication**

**INTRODUCTION:** Jesus was at the end of his ministry on his way to Jerusalem for the last time. Bethany was a little village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Just a few days before, Jesus had raised to life a man named Lazarus, after Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days. Lazarus had two sisters named Martha and Mary. The chief priests and Pharisees were furious about the awesome reputation Jesus was gaining, and were plotting to kill Jesus as soon as they could.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Examples: Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so forth.

2. **Retelling the story:** Have someone repeat the story for the group.

3. **Interpretation questions:**

- What was the mood of the scene at the beginning of the story?
- How do you think Mary felt when Judas voiced his criticism?
- What do you think the crowd thought of the answer Jesus gave?
- How do you think the mood of the scene changed as the crowd grew?
- Do you think Jesus knew that Lazarus was in danger?
  - If so, how do you think Jesus felt?

4. **Application questions:**

- With which character in the story do you most identify?
- Do you ever claim concern, for a reason different from what you are really thinking?
  - If so, what do you think Jesus thinks of what you are saying?
- When you are with someone who is being hurt by another person's criticism, how do you respond?
- How do you resolve your tension when you don't understand what someone else has said?
  - What if you don't understand what Jesus has said?
- How do you feel when someone else is gaining popularity you used to enjoy?
- What do you do when you sense that you or someone around you is in danger?

Note of what comes next: Jesus rides publicly into Jerusalem, surrounded by throngs of people responding in many different ways.

5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Mary Anointing Jesus.

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**TITLE: Mary Magdalene**  
**BASED ON: John 20:10-18**  
**THEMES: Grief, Expectations, Joy**

**INTRODUCTION:** We first met Mary Magdalene in the gospel of Luke when she was part of a group of women healed by Jesus who followed Jesus, along with his male disciples. In Mary Magdalene's case, Jesus had cast seven demons out of her. She became a very close follower of Jesus. She was one of four women including Mary, the mother of Jesus, who were at the foot of the cross when Jesus died. Mary had gone to visit the tomb of Jesus before daybreak on Easter Sunday morning, but found the stone rolled away from the tomb and the body of Jesus missing. Mary then ran to find Peter and John to report that the body of Jesus was missing. The disciples ran to the tomb to confirm what Mary had said.

**STORY:** Tell the story carefully, but with energy.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Example – Who are the characters in this story? What happened first? What next? And so on.
2. **Retelling the story:** Would anyone like to retell the story of Mary Magdalene?
3. **Interpretation questions:**
  - Do you think Mary Magdalene had any hope that Jesus was alive? Why or why not?
  - What do you think was her first thought when she saw the two angels inside the tomb?
  - What was behind the question from both the angels and from Jesus; “Why are you crying?”
  - Why did Mary not recognize Jesus at first?
  - What does Mary's recognition of Jesus, when he called her name, tell you about their relationship?
    - Do you think Mary thought she deserved to be a friend of Jesus? Why or why not?
    - How do you think Mary's past demon possession affected their relationship?
  - Why would Jesus not want Mary to hold him?
    - Why was it important that Jesus gave Mary another mission to do, instead of letting her hold on?
    - What do you think the disciples thought of Mary's credibility?
4. **Application questions**
  - If you had been in Mary Magdalene's position at the beginning of this story, how would you have been feeling?
  - How does your view of reality change when you are feeling hopeless?
  - When something unexpected happens, do you see that as a good sign or a bad one? Why?
  - How do your expectations affect what you notice?
  - If Jesus were to call your name, how would you recognize his voice?
  - Do you think your past draws you to Jesus, or tends to keep you apart from him? Why?
  - If you were to see Jesus, would you want to hug him? Why or why not?
  - What mission do you think Jesus might be giving you to do?
    - What will improve your credibility as you carry out this mission?
5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Mary Magdalene.

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**TITLE: Dorcas Raised to Life**  
**BASED ON: Acts 9:36-42**  
**THEMES: Service, Healing, Witnessing**

**INTRODUCTION:** The early Christian church had been going through a period of persecution. Their deacon, Stephen, had been stoned. Believers had been scattered away from Jerusalem to avoid trouble. However, one of the church's main persecutors, Saul of Tarsus, has just converted to Christianity. Peter had been traveling around Palestine and was now in Lydda where he had just been empowered by the Holy Spirit to heal a paralyzed man.

**STORY:** Tell the story.

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Observation questions:** Example – Who were the characters in the story? What happened first? What next? And so on...?
2. **Retelling the story:** Would anyone like to retell the story of Dorcas?
3. **Interpretation questions:**
  - What do you think motivated Dorcas to do good things and help the poor?
  - What do you think people thought about God's justice when Dorcas got sick and died?
  - When Dorcas died, why did the believers still think there was reason to call Peter to come?
  - How do you think Peter responded to the scene when he entered the room with the body of Dorcas?
  - Why did Peter ask the mourners to leave while he prayed for Dorcas?
  - How do you think Peter felt when Dorcas came back to life?
  - How do you think the believers and the widows told the story of Dorcas' return to life?
    - Which people do you think would have been most likely to believe in the Lord, based on the story of the healing of Dorcas?
4. **Application questions**
  - What motivates you to help others in need?
  - What do you think of the justice of God when people you think are very good, are suffering?
  - When do you think it is too late to ask for God's help?
  - How does the panic and grief of others around you affect your ability to focus on what God wants you to do?
  - When is it better for you to pray alone, rather than in a group?
  - Have you seen God give you an amazing answer to prayer? If so, how did you feel?
    - How do answers to prayer that you have experienced affect the way others respond to your testimony?
    - If you exaggerate the truth, what effect do you think this will have on those who hear your story?
5. **Practice:** Divide into pairs to practice telling this story. During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Dorcas' Return to Life.

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