


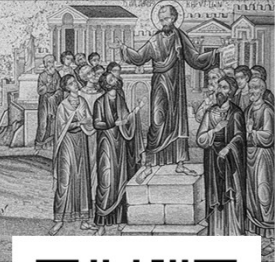
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
ELCA



I Love to Tell the Story


Mark G. Vitalis Hoffman
SEPA 2025

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SEPA Love Revolution
September 2025 Workshop

I Love to Tell the Story

[Mark G. Vitalis Hoffman](#)



- [Workshop PowerPoint Handout](#)
- [Let the Hearer Understand Mark 4:30-32 Sample](#)
- [Mark 4:30-32 Comparison Exercise](#)


English Bible Translation Resources

Translations

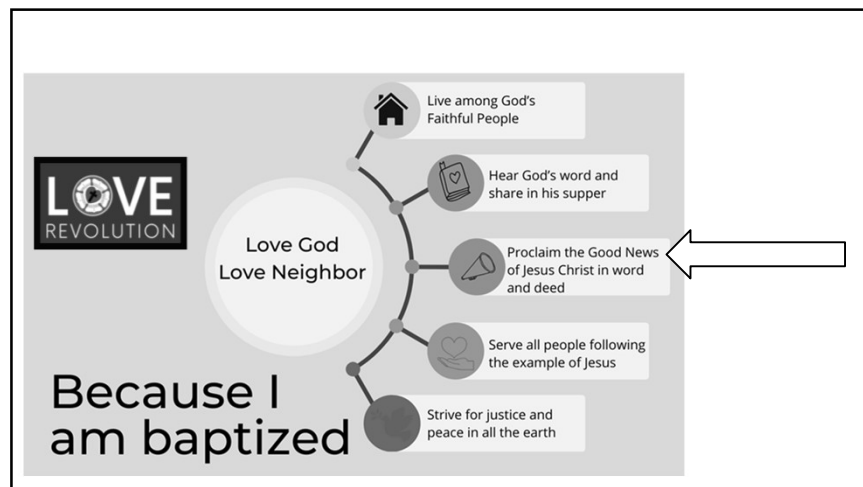
- [MOU Hoffman List of English Bible Versions](#)
 - Listing by 'literal' / 'dynamic'
 - Check end of page for Recommended Versions to Consult and Compare
- [BibleGateway](#)
 - Great resource for access to 62 English versions as well as other languages
 - Can display all versions of a single verse in parallel by clicking on Book ch:vs in all versions
 - Provides publisher's information on the version
- [Wikimedia](#) provides information on a version's background
- [NET Bible \(Lumina\)](#)
 - Provides variety of resources, but most helpful will be access to the NET Bible translation no
 - Allows parallel view of some versions; has matching word highlighting
- [STEP Bible](#)
 - Similar to NET Bible, which it includes, but with different tools and resources; has matching
 - Available as a free download for Windows, Mac, Linux, Apple, Android
- [YouVersion Bible App](#) for Apple, Android mobile
 - Over 3004 versions!

Other Resources

 NBSI The Network of Biblical Storytellers International	A wonderful organization worth joining if you want to do more with biblical storytelling! Check out the Resources
 GoTell Tom and Amelia Boomershine provide weekly discussions of the RCL texts. I especially recommend Tom Boomershine's Story Journey which you can buy or download for free HERE	



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What does “Proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed” mean to you?

- Give someone a Bible
- Give someone food
- Give money to church and other charitable organizations

4

What does “Proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed” mean to you?

- Invite them to your church
- Tell them, “Turn or burn!”
- Tell them to accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior

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What does “Proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed” mean to you?

- Read 1 Corinthians 15.3-8 to them:
 - For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.
- Teach them the Apostles’ Creed
- Tell them what the gospel is in terms of Lutheran theology
- Tell them a story when you experienced God’s presence
- Tell them a Bible story that has been meaningful to you

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I love to tell a story ... I love to tell THE STORY!

Goals for this presentation

- Identify storytelling strengths and gain skills in storytelling
- Gain confidence in telling a faith story when you experienced God
- Learn and be able to tell a biblical story that is significant in your faith journey

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Storytelling 1: BE READY to tell a good story!

- You have three minutes total max to tell your story (or two short stories)
- You were there and a significant part of the story
- As you look back at it, it was a positive (encouraging, happy, good learning) event that you enjoyed and/or appreciated
- One option is to tell a story from back in the day when you were in school
- Could be a story that you have told many times
- The goal of this exercise is for others to help you identify your story-telling gifts and style
- After each person tells their story, others in the group describe what they found most effective and memorable about **how** the person told the story
 - We mostly want this to be an encouraging experience, but if there were things that really detracted from the person’s storytelling, do provide constructive criticism
 - Consider: pacing, interaction, humor, intensity, gestures, tone, variation, MIT

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What did you learn? Who has a good story?

Hopefully you were encouraged to realize that:

- We all have good stories we can tell
- We each have various storytelling strengths

How can we incorporate storytelling into our proclaiming of the Good News of Jesus Christ?

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Storytelling 2: BE READY to tell a God story!

- You have three minutes total max to tell your story
- Tell about a time when you felt God's presence in some way
- It could be when you were God's presence for someone or someone was God's presence for you or you experienced God in a significant way
- After each person tells their story, the others in the group describe what they found most effective and memorable about **what** was the most important thing (MIT) in the person's story

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Who has a good God story?

- Why are such stories / testimonials powerful?
- Do telling such stories 'count' as proclaiming the Good News?
- What are the dangers for telling such personal stories?
- What is the difference between telling our God stories and telling a story directly from the Bible?
- How do the biblical stories inform our God stories?
- How can telling your story and a Bible story create a conversation?

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Storytelling 3: Let's tell a Bible story!

The Parable of the Mustard Seed: Mark 4.30-32

Jesus has already gained quite a reputation as a teacher and a healer. Earlier in this scene, he had to get into a boat and teach the huge crowds gathered on the land. He presented a parable of the Soils and the Seed (which he had to explain to his disciples) and a saying about a lamp put under a basket and a parable about a seed growing secretly.

³⁰ Jesus also used to say:

"How should we liken the dominion of God?

Or with what parable should we present it?

³¹ ... As a seed! Of mustard!

Which, when it's sown on the earth—

though it is **smallest** of all the seeds that are **on the earth**—

³² and when it's sown,

it sprouts up

and becomes the **greatest** of all the ... herbs

and forms great branches,

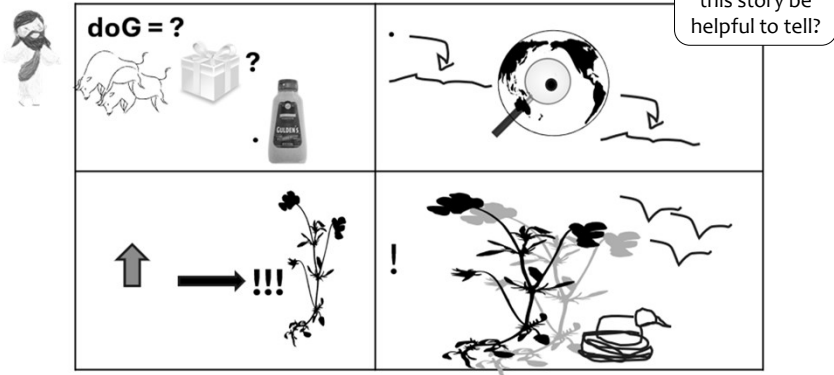
so that under its shade

the birds **of heaven** are able to nest.

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Storytelling 3: Let's tell a Bible story!

The Parable of the Mustard Seed: Mark 4.30-32



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Storytelling 3: Let's tell a Bible story!

What is a story or Bible passage that helps you interpret or understand your God story?

- What is a story or Bible passage that helps you interpret or understand your God story?
- In your groups, talk about what Scripture shapes or speaks to you God story.

REMEMBER:

'Performing' or re-presenting a biblical passage is not acting but interaction.

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How does one go about 'memorizing' a Bible story or passage?

- What is the goal of 'memorizing' a biblical text?
- What does it mean to become a biblical storyteller?

REMEMBER:

The goal is *not* to memorize word-for-word.
The goal is to learn the text *by heart*!

Roughly...
75% of words
90%+ of content

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Steps for learning a biblical story

1. Getting familiar with the story: Identify details
2. Choosing the translation
3. Visualize the story: cartoon panels as a memory aid
4. Structuring the text: sense units, logical connections, highlighting of themes and repetition
5. Memorizing the passage: use a "memory palace," imagine a video and reporting what you see
6. Performing the passage: Perspective, Distance, Action / Staging, Diction-Pace, Diction-Tone, Gestures, Externals

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1: Getting familiar with the Biblical Story

- Read the story > Create a list of key elements in the story
- Tell the story to a partner using check-off sheet
- Switch roles

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2: Establishing Text of Biblical Story

- Consult various translations of the passage
 - BibleGateway online
 - Text Browser / Verse Lookup in Accordance
- Identify any significant differences
- Consult Greek, NET Bible notes, commentaries
- Choose a translation or adapt one in light of your findings
 - It is not a matter simply of one you like best but which one best reflects the Greek (Hebrew) and effectively communicates orally

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3: Remembering the Biblical Story

- Draw the story in 3 or 6 panels like a cartoon
- (Artistic skill does not matter!)
- Don't include any words
- After finishing your drawing, use it to retell the story
- (Use the key element check-off sheet)

REMEMBER:

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4: Structuring the Biblical Story

- Lay out the text in sense units
 - This is most easily done using copy/paste in a Word doc)
- Indent the text based on primary and subordinate clauses
- Identify any chiastic patterns
- Use different style or color highlights to identify recurring words or themes
- Use this to help visualize / memorize text

REMEMBER:

- The goal is *not* to memorize word-for-word.
- The goal is to learn the text *by heart!*

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5: Memorizing the Biblical Story

- Try using movement
- Create a 'memory palace'
 - E.g., imagine the story as a house, and as you walk through the house, visualize elements of the story appearing in sequence
- Run a video of the story in your head and simply describe what you see
- Paste the text into a Word doc; remove all spaces and punctuation; convert all letters into capital letters > practice reading the text

REMEMBER:

The goal is not to memorize word-for-word.
The goal is to learn the text *by heart*!

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Narrative Characterizations & Performance Implications

- Perspective
- Distance
- Action / Staging
- Diction-Pace
- Diction-Tone
- Gestures
- Externals
- >> Performance!

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Narrative Characterizations & Performance Implications

- Perspective: Identify where the narrator is objectively describing the scene and where 'interior' views are provided. (I.e., when does the narrator display an omniscient perspective by telling what characters are thinking or feeling or relating events that are unknown to characters within the story?)
Are there narrative comments providing extra information to the hearer?
 - *How will you embody emotions expressed in the story?*
 - *How will you share the narrative comments that are not really part of the story line?*

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Narrative Characterizations & Performance Implications

- Distance: Imagine you are filming the story. When would you have distant views or close-ups? (E.g., if you noted the uses of the historical present, these would be points where the camera was closer to the action.)
 - *How will you try to express distance or nearness?*
- Action / Staging: Identify the movements and actions within the story. Again think of filming the story and locating where characters would be standing and moving.
 - *How will you as the performer move on the stage?*
 - *If needed, is there a way you want to designate inside and outside, etc.?*

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Narrative Characterizations & Performance Implications

- **Diction-Pace:** What is the pace at which the narrative proceeds? Are there parts that should go more quickly or slowly than normal? Are there pauses you want to insert into the narrative to make it more effective dramatically?
 - In your translation, italicize parts where you want to slow down the speaking.
 - Insert line breaks and ellipsis (...) to indicate where pauses should be.
- **Diction-Tone:** Identify the emotions and attitudes of the characters within the story. Also consider the attitude of the narrator apart from the characters.
 - How do you want to work with your tone as the performer in relationship to the emotions and attitudes of the characters?
 - What volume do you use? Does it change? (Does it match the parts you bolded in your text?)
 - What is your tone as the narrator? Serious? Easy-going? Sincere?

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Narrative Characterizations & Performance Implications

- **Gestures:** Do characters within the story perform certain actions? Are there narrative details that suggest actions by the performer?
 - How will you choose to enact (or not) movements of characters within the story? (E.g., if a character kneels, what do you want to do?)
 - What do you want to do with things like *καὶ εὐθὺς* and *ἰδοὺ*?
 - What are you going to do with your hands, arms, eyes, head, etc.
- **Externals:** What other things can be done to enhance the effectiveness of your performance?
 - Do you want to use any props or not?
 - Do you want to use any musical accompaniment?
 - Are there other visuals you want to include to complement (or subvert) the story?
 - What about the background information that is not part of the text but may be needed by a modern hearer? Do you include it in the text or provide some other means of sharing it?

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Narrative Characterizations & Performance Implications

- **Performance:** Remember that you are not “acting”! Acting usually assumes a ‘wall’ between the actor and audience. Rather, you are re-presenting or performing the text in such a way to maximize engagement and interaction with the audience.
 - Are there times when you will step into the audience space?
 - Consider whether you want to identify someone in the audience with someone in the text. (E.g., if Jesus has a conversation with someone in the text, do you want to single out someone as if they were that person? I.e., will you look at that person directly?)
 - If the text occurs in the context of a crowd, will your audience function as the crowd?

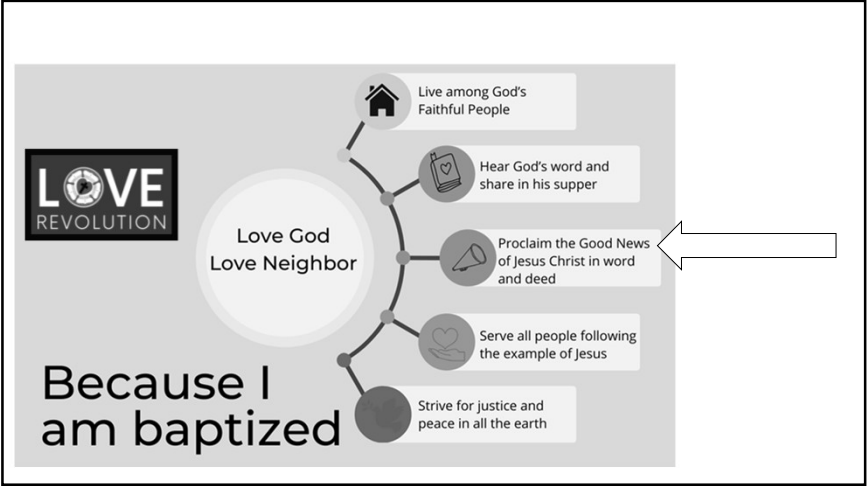
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Performing a text!

In each group:


- One or two volunteers to perform the designated passage
- One person serves as ‘director’ to monitor group process
- Others serve as prompters
- Look over the translation options and choose one that you will use
- We will have a reading using the script
- Prompters help performers ‘memorize’ the passage
- Directors and prompters will help block out the performance
- Performance!

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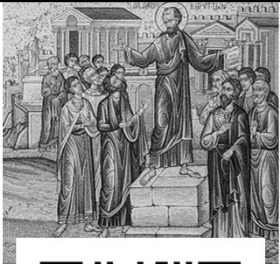
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