

In Answer to the Call: *I Am a Christian Storyteller!*

By Kendra Phillips
June 12, 2013



The young and old, male and female, unlearned and highly educated...spread the good news of the Gospel through the art of storytelling. More than being "*just another storyteller*," Christian storytellers are called.

The Choice of the Yielded Believer

In a vision the prophet Isaiah heard God ask, "Who shall I send? Who will go for us?" And Isaiah's response was to say, "Here am I. Send me." (See Isaiah 6:1-13.) Every believer is saved to serve. We are "ipso facto" witnesses for God from the moment of conversion. God uses all true believers who are willing to offer loving service. The choice of "how to perform" the service is left to you.

Faithful Christians from all walks of life, professions, nationalities, and denominational groups use stories, mainly bible stories, to pass on the values and principles of the Christian heritage and God's inspired word. Bible-based stories are told because they so *perfectly* provide an understanding of life's big concepts (i.e., God, trust, service), as well as offer solutions to life dilemmas. "*The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding*" (Psalms 119:130).

*Thy testimonies are wonderful:
therefore doth my soul keep them.
Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou has founded them forever.*

(Psalms 119:129,152)

Bible-based storytelling is a craft requiring practiced skill. **Christian storytelling** also requires skill; however, it involves much more than just practicing the oral tradition. Choosing to be a Christian Storyteller may very well make the teller "the instrument" God uses to provide someone with a sense of hope, to create a shared vision among people or perhaps lead a lost soul to Christ.

All the great truths in the Holy Scriptures center on Christ. Rightly prepared and presented, the objective of all stories told by Christian storytellers is to lead the listeners to a better understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Christian Storytelling has the capacity to accomplish this, this genre of telling is considered an important and viable out-reach ministry...a ministry whose content never grows old or becomes out-of-date.

The Double Blessing of Storytelling

Wisdom, guidance, encouragement—all the tools people need to endure in today's world—are in the Bible. Those tools cannot easily be imparted to people who don't have a relationship with the LORD unless put in some format in which they can understand and receive it. Christian storytelling allows these tools to be extended to others in a spirit that greets the listeners in love,

as only the power of God's love can lead to repentance, obedience, and understanding of the Gospel.

"*Right thinking* is inspired when the teller uses Christ-like approaches--approaches that meet people right where they are. Everybody is receptive to a story. Jesus sought an avenue to every heart. By using a variety of illustrations, He not only presented truth in its different phases, but appealed to the different hearers. Their interest was aroused by figures drawn from the surroundings of their daily life. None who listened to the Saviour could feel that they were neglected or forgotten. The humblest, the most sinful, heard in His teachings a voice that spoke to them in sympathy and tenderness" wrote E.G.White.

Perhaps the most exciting thing about Christian Storytelling is its *dual transformative power*. The teller, who recognizes the tremendous privilege of telling the Lord's sacred stories, is also changed by the awesome responsibility. New insight into old stories is gained as the storyteller studies of the scriptures in preparation of telling. There are times when the Holy Spirit points out new stories to the teller--stories that have been there for centuries, but stories people have not paid much attention.

You come to a place where you acknowledge that you are one of God's elite few--the ones who yearn to make the world a better place, the ones who want to show ordinary people how to live extraordinary lives. You will find an inner peace in that role and a sense of rightness about it. You will come to understand that the privilege of telling the sacred stories is indeed an awesome responsibility, as through it you possess the power of influencing lives.

Every word of God is full of Divine life and power. Be assured when the storyteller seeks to use the Holy Scriptures as the LORD used them, they will do for the teller what they did for Jesus. There is no greater ministry on the earth. It responds to the storyteller's faith.

Divine Purpose Membership

The call to do storytelling is part of the Great Harvest. "He will send forth laborers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:38). When a person accepts the role of Christian storyteller they become both a laborer and an instrument of the Lord, bringing souls to Jesus by the stories that they tell. They are in good company as they follow the ancient oral tradition. "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Psa. 68:11).

We welcome you to the family of Christian Storytellers. Our hope is that this experience will allow you to take part in making the world a better place, bringing healing to human-kind and

And in my dream...

St. Peter cracks open the gate and asks me, "Why should I let you in? What have you done for the cause of Christ?"

Without hesitation, I boldly respond, "Like the Lord, I told the sacred stories whenever there was a need to illustrate God's truth."

The gates swung open wide.

banishing the darkness that plagues the world by imparting the wisdom of the illuminating Word of God.

"Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you" (I Thess. 1:11-12).

Storytelling in one of the most successful means of awakening an interest, securing attention, teaching, illustrating and enforcing important truths. Christ, the greatest of all teachers, recognized this, and therefore made constant use of this method of instruction. "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them"(Matthew 13:34).

The Awesome Responsibility of Storytelling

Good Christian Storytellers are not born or made. They evolve over time, based on their dedication to excellence and their willingness to serve God and others. They are considered good because of their commitment to telling the stories of God in a way that people will hear them, be inspired by them and use the information shared to grow spiritually. It is an awesome responsibility to take the Word of God and put its meaning into the format of a story, and good tellers know this.

A good teller is also a committed believer, one who prepares and practices his/her performances with one commandment always upper-most in their mind: "I will keep God before me at all times" (Psa. 16:8). If there is any other emphasis in bible storytelling...well, both the teller and the audience loose.

Para-phrasing for the Christian Storyteller simply means that the story is told in modern day English. There is never any attempt to provide deeper definition of the story or to interpret it's meaning in an effort to advance denominational doctrine. The Word of God need only be spoken in a language the listener can understand. The Holy Spirit will do the rest...and a good teller is comfortable with that.

About the Author

Kendra Phillips is a writing professional who's her gift of expression takes many forms, most notably those of writer, storyteller and speaker and lifestyle coach.

Kendra plays a lead role in the Wise Sisters Network, an organization whose projects encourage disadvantaged women who lack relationship-support with the know-how to overcome life challenges. She believes deeply in the power of the oral tradition—*storytelling*—and the power of faith-filled words to educate, inspire and inform, and to do so with great insight and sensitivity. In Kendra's own words, *"The most powerful stories in the world are the ones with storylines build upon Godly principles. And it's easy to find them. They're in the Bible."*

Kendra lives in Southfield, Michigan, where she is the mother of two adult daughters and the grandmother of two "wonderful little treasures." She was added to the Lord's Body in 1984 and has been a practicing Christian for over 30 years. Write to her at: wordartist.kendra@gmail.com.