

Scripture By Heart

Handouts:

- 1) The stories of the course in episodes
- 2) Goals and Plan for the course

Week 1 – The Shema

Review goals for the course and for this class: check out their goals

Learning the story

Lion hunt ending with the Shema (Deut. 6.4-9)

Experience of learning by heart: recite the Shema in response and have them tell it to each other

Intro to learning by heart

Listening to the story

Meditation on the Shema: the Bible as sound, the centrality of memory, call to tell

The movement of the Shema in relation to the love of God:

Love

Keep words of God in your heart

Tell them to your children

Bind them on your body

Write them on your doorposts

Connecting with the story

Share with your partner the ways you have loved God in your life

Telling the story

Plan for a Scripture by heart group in each church

Preparation and follow up – 1. learn birth narrative

2. Recite the Shema every day

Week 2 – Birth narrative

Learning the story

Telling of the story they have learned in pairs

Review by verbal repetition and have them tell again. Celebration!

Structure of memory: sensory registers, short term and long term memory

The episodic structure and verbal threads in Luke 2:1-6

Listening to the story: the meaning of the story in its original context

Caesar and the census in 6 A.D. after the deposition of Archelaus
The revolt of Simon, the Galilean, and the suppression of the revolt
Quirinius and the Syrian legion
Connections with David: city, house of David, Messiah
The description of the couple: how would Mary's pregnancy have been regarded by the audience? What would they have projected about family response? What does the audience know about the baby from the earlier story? The audience's relationship to Mary from the earlier story: tell the story of the annunciation and the Magnificat
Implications of their reception in Bethlehem: failure or acceptance by family
The implications of the child being born in Bethlehem: the story of David's anointing by Samuel in Bethlehem: I Sam 16:1-, 4, 13: tell the story of David's anointing by Samuel. Bethlehem in Matthew who quotes Micah 5:2. The context in Micah: prophecy of destruction of Jerusalem in 3.

Connecting with the story

Your own birth story
The births of your children

The birth of Barak Obama and the political resonance of his birth story: someone who understands the lives of common people who are oppressed.

Telling the story

Tell the story to each other and share what it meant to you

Preparations for the next class: learn the story of the paralytic.
Start a journal

Week 3 - Healing of the paralytic

Learning the story

Learning the story with images: draw pictures
Tell the story to two partners

Memory and spiritual life

Learning to know God and learning the stories of God
Memory and intimacy
Memory and crisis

Episodes and verbal threads

Connections to the structure of memory: episodic and semantic

Listening to the story

Resonance of this story with a 1st century Jewish audience: the scribes. History of the story: addition of the scribes

The ancient connection between sickness/physical disability and sin: John 9

The experience of sin in biblical narrative: the man and woman in the garden
The cleanliness tradition: being able to show your face in the presence of God and other people and being excluded because of impurity: Leviticus
The redefinition of forgiveness: something that the son of humanity has the authority to do and, therefore, everyone can do this, everyone has the authority to forgive sins
The voice of Jesus: how did Jesus' voice sound in the telling of the story?

Connecting with the story

When have you felt paralyzed?
When have you experienced shame?
When have you forgiven yourself or someone else?
Share that experience with your partner (someone you don't know) and then hear the story told by your partner to you as the paralytic. Partner, simply tell the story.

Praying with the stories

Introduction to praying with the stories
Tell the story to yourself as a meditation and notice when something connects for you with a feeling, a memory, or a possibility. When you notice that happening, go back to that place in the story and imagine yourself present there and pay attention to what happens.

Telling the story

Tell the story to someone in your family this week just asking them to listen to you

Preparation: 1) learn the story of Jesus and Peter walking on the water
2) Do an inventory of your memory: what parts of the story of God do you know by heart?
3) Pray with the story of the paralytic as the paralytic, the scribes, or the friends and write down what happened in your journal.

Week 4 – Walking on the water

Learning the story

Learning the story with movement and gestures
Tell it to three partners (groups of four; tell the story twice with two tellers each telling half of the story (14.22-27 and 14.28-33)

Memory and community formation: the community function of shared memories

Listening to the story

Introduction to performance criticism and the recovery of the sounds of the stories in their original context
The storyteller: volume, tempo, attitude (Man of little faith), point of view

The story:

Characters

Plot

The audience

Culture and language

Norms of judgment

Freedom of the audience

Do a quick analysis of this story with your partner

Comparison of Matthew's retelling of the story with Mark's

Tell Mark's version of the story (6.47-52)

The centrality of Peter: what does it do in the larger story of Matthew?

Connecting with the story

What have been your most graphic experiences of fear?

My story of the tiger

Fear of heights

Dreams of falling: a car falling off the bridge

The trail on the north rim of the Grand Canyon

When have you tried a new adventure?

Jumping off a high diving board

When have you seen a ghost? The joke of the drunk Englishman in the grave.

The way you can tell if you have made a connection is if you can feel it in your gut.

Praying with the story

What happened in your praying with the story of the paralytic last week?

Telling the story

Tell the story to your partner and tell it this week to someone in relation to their fears.

Preparation: learn the story of Bartimaeus

Do a performance criticism analysis of the story of Bartimaeus

Pray with one of the stories we have learned

Invite your pastor to come next week

Week 5 – Bartimaeus

Learning the story

Learning the story with music: drum, guitar, piano, organ. Have the instruments present and have someone play one or more and someone else tell the story. Everyone experiment with telling the story with music in groups of four.

Memory and spiritual formation: broadening and deepening your memory of Scripture will broaden and deepen your relationship with God. It also makes it possible for people in the congregation to hear the stories with greater depth and engagement.

Listening to the story

The story in Mark: James and John as an immediate comparison. Tell both stories together. What are the verbal threads connecting the two stories? What is the impact/meaning of this contrast?

Details: the name, Bar-Timaeus. Timothy. The meaning of Jesus' name. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Is this a healing story or a discipleship call story? The features of both in this story

The dynamics of volume and tempo

Dynamics of distance in relation to Bartimaeus: give him reality as a person. Try it with your partner now.

In what way does Jesus set us free, triumph over our adversaries? The spiritual powers of evil, enmity, paralysis, blindness.

Connecting with the story

When have you been desperate for help? My appendicitis, the accident.

When have you directly asked Jesus for what you want?

What would you ask for now?

Praying with the story

When have you prayed, "Jesus, have mercy on me."? The Jesus prayer: in Russian, English. A suggestion is to pray this prayer regularly, every hour, for the next week. Practice the presence of Christ. In the process, ask for what you want and then listen to God's response.

Telling the story.

The history of the recital of the Bible in worship

Oral culture: chanting by heart with lots of gestures, musical accompaniment, and high audience involvement and response, improvisation.

Manuscript culture: chanting with minimal gestures, no musical accompaniment, more contemplative. Involvement of memory still central; more restricted improvisation and retelling.

Print culture: disappearance of chant, vernacular languages, realistic reading. Often some preparation.

Document culture: monotone, objective reading with no preparation: purpose is the rendering of the data. The printing of the text in bulletins. No audience interaction.

The formation of a Scripture by heart group in your church.

Steps in the introduction of scripture by heart

Make an announcement and invitation. Tell the story of the original character of the Scriptures.

Have a training period so that people have a chance to learn

Set up a schedule for people to sign up
A monthly meeting

Plan the mini-epic telling for the last class. Make a list on a flip chart of who is going to tell which stories.

Preparations: learn Mark's resurrection narrative

Week 6 – Resurrection

Tell the story to a partner

Listening to the story

The women and their role in antiquity

The dynamics of distance in relation to the women

The resurrection as a complete reversal of expectations: make a list

Defeat>victory

Death>life

Shame>honor

Hope lost>hope restored

Sadness>joy

The reversal of the motif of the Messianic secret: not to tell, to tell. Go, tell!

The character of the angel and his commission to the women

Connecting with the story

When have been afraid to tell? My first telling at Union, my first workshop at NYTS, my first time of telling the whole Gospel at the first NOBS festival: transformative experiences all.

When have you experienced the transformation of bad to good?

Praying with the story

In every loss, there is a victory, in every death, a resurrection, in every shame, the possibility of honor.

Pray with your deaths and losses and actively ask God to show you the resurrection possibilities in these.

Telling the story

A mini-epic telling: everyone telling a short part of the six stories and any related stories we have learned to tell.

A commissioning

Go, tell every week in worship, in your life and work.