

Fear Stories

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These fear stories, especially told as a set, can take the audience on a journey through a people's fear, and the proof, time and time again, of a God who is bigger than their fears. The "Fear Not" story set has been used effectively as part of an orientation course for new field personnel. They may also be useful in encouraging persecuted believers.

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Exodus 14-God Saves His People From the Egyptians

Exodus 14:1-31

Based on the NLT (2004)

Transition

God's people, Abraham's descendants, had been living in Egypt for many years, where they were enslaved. God heard their cries for help and sent his spokesman* Moses to lead them out of Egypt and back towards the land he had promised them through their ancestor Abraham. Finally, the king of Egypt allowed the descendants of Abraham to leave Egypt. As they were leaving, God told Moses where to make their first camp, by the shores of a sea...*

Exodus 14:5-6, 9

When word reached *the king of Egypt* that the *descendants of Abraham* had fled, *the king* and his officials changed their minds. "What have we done, letting all those...slaves get away?" they asked. So *the king*...called up his troops...The Egyptians chased after them with all the forces in *the king's* army—all his horses and chariots, his charioteers, and his troops. The Egyptians caught up with the *descendants of Abraham* as they were camped beside the shore...

Exodus 14:10-14

As the king approached, the *descendants of Abraham* looked up and panicked when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. They cried out to *God*, and they said to Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness?... What have you done to us?... Didn't we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, 'Leave us alone!... It's better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!'" But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch *God* rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. *God* himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."

Exodus 14:15, 17, 19-22

Then *God* said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving!... And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will charge in after you... Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and *God* opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land... So the *descendants of Abraham* walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!

Exodus 14:23, 26-28

Then the Egyptians...chased them into the middle of the sea... When all the *descendants of Abraham* had reached the other side, *God* said to Moses, "Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back and cover the Egyptians and their chariots and charioteers." So...Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but *God* swept them into the sea... Of all the Egyptians who had chased *them* into the sea, not a single one survived.

Exodus 14:31

When the *descendants of Abraham* saw the mighty power that *God* had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him. They *believed** in *God* and in his servant Moses.

Why This Story?

The exodus from Egypt and entrance into the Promised Land were marked by Abraham's descendants' lack of faith and fear that God would not fulfill his promise to them to protect them and help them conquer the Promised Land. Many people today live with a similar underlying fear.

This story has been effectively used as part of a larger "Fear Not" story set. These fear stories, especially told as a set, can take the audience on a journey through a people's fear, and the proof, time and time again, of a God who is bigger than their fears. The "Fear Not" story set has been used effectively as part of an orientation course for new field personnel.

Story Crafting

To avoid confusion about who "Pharaoh" is, we have said "king of Egypt" instead.

chariots

We've included the reference to chariots and charioteers in order to add interest to the story and help paint a picture of what the scene by the shore looked like.

However, some languages and cultures may not have anything similar to a chariot, and it may not be helpful to include this in the story. You may omit references to chariots and charioteers if it is confusing or does not add interest to the story.

God

Most references to God in this story are actually "Yahweh," the personal Hebrew name for God (translated LORD in English versions of the Bible). Since "Lord" may be an unfamiliar religious term to some, we have changed these references to "God." If your audience has a name for God like the descendants of Abraham did (Yahweh, meaning "I am that I am"), you may use it in place of LORD (Yahweh), but be careful that your

audience understands that there is only one true God.

Israel has been changed to *descendants of Abraham* in this story to connect it with previous stories of Abraham and to avoid any negative attitudes towards the present day state of Israel.

Egypt

We have included the country name Egypt because the "Fear Not" story set includes more than one story which refer to this country. If your audience has trouble remembering this country name or if having this name in the story distracts from the story line, you may use a generic term like "the country from which they traveled."

Harden the hearts of the Egyptians

This figure of speech means to "make stubborn." This may not translate literally into your language, so you may either say "to make stubborn," or you may use an equivalent figure of speech in your language.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of these words.

Spokesman*

Choose a term for 'prophet' that adequately describes the prophet's function. A prophet:

1. receives a call from God;
2. takes God's message to men because he had been given it by God himself;
3. has as his only priority bringing the Word of God to men.

We chose 'spokesman' because, in English, it can convey these three meanings but doesn't carry the unwanted connotation of a fortuneteller. If you use a religious term, be sure that it has meaning that the average hearer will understand.

Abraham's Descendants*

We've chosen to use this in place of "Israelites," "Jews," and "Hebrews" to show the epic storyline from Abraham. This term helps connect the stories, and helps the audience see that all of these different terms for the Jews really refer to the same people. In addition, it alleviates any prejudices people or cultures might have towards the Jews.

Belief*

This describes man's response to God's promise. It probably implies more than mental agreement, but putting one's faith/confidence in God.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words for **God, Spokesman, Abraham's descendants/Israel,** and **belief** that you have in previous stories.

Story Set Themes

Fear

Victory

Numbers 13-14: The People refuse to enter the Promised Land

Number 13:25-33, 14:1-20, 26-36

NLT 2004

Introduction: God had used Moses and Aaron to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and to the land that God had promised to Abraham. The people arrived at the entry to that land and Moses sent 12 men to check out the land. Two of the men who went were Joshua and Caleb.

Numbers 13:25-33

After exploring the land for forty days, the men returned...*and said*, “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there...”

Caleb *said*, “Let’s go at once to take the land... We can certainly conquer it!”

But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed... So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. We even saw giants there... Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that’s what they thought, too!”

Numbers 14:1-4

Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. “If only we had died in Egypt...” they complained. “Why is *God* taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt?”

Numbers 14:5-9

Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel*... Joshua... and Caleb... tore their clothing. They said to all the people of Israel, “The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land... It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. Do not rebel against *God*, and don’t be afraid of the people... They have no protection, but *God* is with us! Don’t be afraid of them!”

Numbers 14:10-13

But the whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glorious presence of *God* appeared to all the *Descendants of Abraham** at the *Tent of Worship*. And *God* said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? Will they never believe me, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them? I will disown them and destroy them... Then I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they are!”

Numbers 14:17-20

Then Moses said: “Please, *God*... *forgive** the sins of this people...” Then *God* said, “I will *forgive* them as you have requested.”

Numbers 14:28-34

God said to Moses: “Now tell them this... Because you complained against me, every one of you who is twenty years old or older ... will die. You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb... and Joshua... You said your children would be carried off as plunder. Well, I will bring them safely into the land, and they will enjoy what you have despised... Because your men explored the land for forty days, you must wander in the wilderness for forty years—a year for each day, suffering the consequences of your sins.’ I, *God*, have spoken!”

Why This Story?

These fear stories as a set have been used effectively as part of an orientation course for new field personnel. Fear is a major factor for many people who venture into the unknown to follow God's leading.

Story Crafting

Aaron

If Aaron has not been introduced in your story set, you may want to omit him from this story.

Israelites

You must decide on what term to call the people. See the below note on Descendants of Abraham.

God

We have replaced the references to LORD (Yahweh) with *God*, to avoid confusion. If your audience has a name for God like the descendants of Abraham did (Yahweh, meaning "I am that I am"), you may use it in place of LORD (Yahweh), but be careful that your audience understands that there is only one true God, and that he is the God Moses serves.

Flowing with Milk and Honey

Your people may have another way of saying that the land is rich and will provide all that the people need. This figure of speech may be replaced by a local one that conveys the same meaning.

Tent of Worship

If your people know what the tabernacle was, you may use that word. Otherwise, you need a way to describe its purpose that makes sense to the people.

Wilderness

Depending on your culture and land, you may need to describe the wilderness as a desert place. It is not a jungle.

Grasshoppers

These creatures are edible and would be a small mouthful. Be sure your story illustrates that the people felt very small and insignificant next to the giants.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of the following terms.

Israel*

The word Israel has a number of different uses or meanings in the Bible.

1. It may refer to the name that was given to Jacob after he wrestled with the angel.
2. It may refer to the descendants of Jacob.
3. It may refer to the actual land of the Northern Kingdom when David's kingdom was divided into two parts after the death of Solomon.
4. In the New Testament, it refers to the descendants of Judah (Southern Kingdom) or to anyone considered to be an heir to the covenant God made with Abraham. Those who adhered strictly to the religious laws were considered Israelites.
5. It is used as the name for all the land given by God to Abraham and his descendants who were the chosen people. It refers to the land included in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

Today, Israel is the name of the country formed as a homeland for the Jewish people after 1948. For many people, this name is loaded politically and they have difficulty separating the current political meaning from the scriptures. Therefore, you may wish to use another word or term for Israel or Israelites. Some that have been used successfully include:

Promised Land

Northern Kingdom (for Old Testament stories)

The country

The land of the Hebrews

The Hebrews

God's people or God's chosen people

Israelites/Descendants of Abraham*

We've chosen to use this in place of "Israelites," "Jews," and "Hebrews" to show the epic storyline from Abraham. This term helps connect the stories, and helps the audience see that all of these different terms for the Jews really refer to the same people. In addition, it alleviates any prejudices people or cultures might have towards the Jews.

Forgive*

Some languages don't have an adequate word for 'forgive.' If that's the case, understanding what 'forgiveness' means is imperative to translating it correctly. Forgiveness involves two people, one of whom has done something wrong to the other and offended him. The one who was offended sets aside his rights and does not punish the other as he deserves. He does not seek revenge. If the other repents of his behavior and accepts the forgiveness, the relationship between the two is restored and the guilt is removed. With God, forgiveness is available to all and dependent on a penitent heart in that the person stops his actions and turns towards God with an attitude of faith and repentance. This results in a restored relationship between God and man.

Here are some idioms used in the New Testament to describe "forgiveness." Your language may have a similar idiom, and if so, you may use that to create a word picture for your audience.

to wipe away the sins of someone

to lift up the sins of someone

to loose, release

to throw away

to cover over

to pass by

to take away

to turn one's back on

Worldview

Falling face down in front of the people usually means that those who do it are acknowledging a higher authority in order to make a request. The prayer occurs later so it is unclear if this is just showing their obedience to God or if they have started praying at this point. You would want to describe this so that your people understand that they are worshipping God.

Tearing of clothes usually indicates mourning or sadness at a loss. Here it could also indicate a loss of honor.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words for **descendants of Abraham, forgive, and Israel** that you have been using in other stories.

Story Set Themes

Fear

Honor/Shame

Obedience

Mediator

Relationship

Forgiveness

Victory

1 Kings 18-Obadiah Meets Elijah

1 Kings 18:1-16

Based on the NLT (2004)

Transition

After everyone except Joshua and Caleb who was 20 years old or older died, the descendants of Abraham did finally enter the land promised them, and they eventually had kings to rule them. Some of the kings followed God, but many did not. One king, Ahab, did what God considered evil, even more than any of the kings before him. So Elijah, who was God's spokesman*, told King Ahab that there would be no rain until he gave the word. Then God hid Elijah from King Ahab.*

1 Kings 18:1-2

Later on, in the third year of the drought, God said to Elijah, "Go and present yourself to King Ahab. Tell him that I will soon send rain!" So Elijah went to appear before Ahab.

1 Kings 18:2-6

Meanwhile, the famine had become very severe in *that country*. So Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. (Obadiah was a devoted follower of God. Once when *Ahab's wife* had tried to kill all of God's spokesmen, Obadiah had hidden 100 of them in two caves. He put fifty spokesmen in each cave and supplied them with food and water.) Ahab said to Obadiah, "We must check every spring and valley in the land to see if we can find enough grass to save at least some of my horses and mules." So they divided the land between them. Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

1 Kings 18:7-8

As Obadiah was walking along, he suddenly saw Elijah coming toward him. Obadiah recognized him at once and

bowed low to the ground before him. "Is it really you, my *master* Elijah?" he asked. "Yes, it is," Elijah replied. "Now go and tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'"

1 Kings 18:9-14

"Oh, sir," Obadiah protested, "what harm have I done to you that you are sending me to my death at the hands of Ahab? For I swear...that the king has searched every nation and kingdom on earth from end to end to find you. And each time he was told, 'Elijah isn't here,' King Ahab forced the king of that nation to swear to the truth of his claim. And now you say, 'Go and tell your master, "Elijah is here."' But as soon as I leave you, the Spirit of God will carry you away to who knows where. When Ahab comes and cannot find you, he will kill me. Yet I have been a true servant of God all my life. Has no one told you, my *master*, about the time when *Ahab's wife* was trying to kill God's spokesmen? I hid 100 of them in two caves and supplied them with food and water. And now you say, 'Go and tell your master, "Elijah is here."' Sir, if I do that, Ahab will certainly kill me."

1 Kings 18:15

But Elijah said, "I swear by God Almighty, *whom I serve*, that I will present myself to Ahab this very day."

1 Kings 18:16

So Obadiah went to tell Ahab that Elijah had come, and Ahab went out to meet Elijah.

Why This Story?

This story has been used effectively as part of a larger “Fear Not” story set. This set may be used as part of an orientation course for new field personnel.

Story Crafting

God

We have replaced the references to LORD (Yahweh) with *God*, to avoid confusion. If your audience has a name for God like the descendants of Abraham did (Yahweh, meaning “I am that I am”), you may use it in place of LORD (Yahweh), but be careful that your audience understands that there is only one true God, and that he is the God Elijah serves.

Master

In the NLT Obadiah calls Elijah “my lord,” which is a title of respect. We have changed this to *master* in order to reduce confusion. You may use any term of respect here, but you may want to use the same term here as you do in the next line, when Elijah ironically turns the statement around to Obadiah and asks him to go find *his* master.

Sir is a term of respect used for Elijah. Use an appropriate term of respect here.

...**Swear by God Almighty** is Elijah’s way of asserting that he is speaking truth. If this phrase is not said or understood in your culture, you may change it to reflect that Elijah was stating emphatically that he was speaking truth.

God Almighty

The original text says “the Lord of hosts,” with “hosts” referring to large armies. Translator’s helps agree that using the phrases “Lord Almighty” or “Lord All-Powerful” is closer to the meaning of this title for God.

Whom I serve replaces “in whose presence I stand,” because it more nearly describes what the phrase actually means.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of the following terms.

Descendants of Abraham*

We’ve chosen to use this in place of “Israelites,” “Jews,” and “Hebrews” to show the epic storyline from Abraham. This term helps connect the stories, and helps the audience see that all of these different terms for the Jews really refer to the same people. In addition, it alleviates any prejudices people or cultures might have towards the Jews.

Spokesman*

Choose a term for ‘prophet’ that adequately describes the prophet’s function. A prophet:

1. receives a call from God;
2. takes God’s message to men because he had been given it by God himself;
3. has as his only priority bringing the Word of God to men.

We chose ‘spokesman’ because, in English, it can convey these three meanings but doesn’t carry the unwanted connotation of a fortuneteller. If you use a religious term, be sure that it has meaning that the average hearer will understand.

Spirit of God/God’s Spirit*

The Hebrew *ruach* [spirit] can have the physical meanings ‘wind’ or ‘breath.’ It also can mean ‘power’ or ‘authority’ that God gives to someone to do extraordinary things. The concept of ‘holy’ refers to people or things that belong to God, are consecrated to him, or are like him. Often, however, Scripture translations use ‘God’s Spirit’ because many languages do not have a word for ‘holy’ that adequately expresses the concept.

Worldview

Obadiah showed respect to Elijah by bowing down before him. If this is not the way to show respect in your culture, or if it conveys the wrong meaning, you may leave out this action and simply show by Obadiah's words that he was showing respect to Elijah.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words for “**descendants of Abraham,**” “**spokesman,**” and “**God's Spirit**” that you have been using in other stories.

Story Set Themes

Fear

1 Kings 19-Elijah Flees to Sinai

1 Kings 19:1-17

Based on the NLT (1996)

Transition

After Elijah challenged and killed the spokesmen of the false god, and God proved himself to be the true God, God sent rain and gave Elijah special strength and he ran ahead of King Ahab all the way back to the city where Ahab lived.*

1 Kings 19:1-2

When *king* Ahab got home, he told *his wife* everything Elijah had done and that he had slaughtered the *spokesmen* of the *false god*. So *his wife* sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods also kill me if by this time tomorrow I have failed to *kill you* like those whom you killed."

1 Kings 19:3-4

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life...He went on alone into the desert, traveling all day. He sat down under a...tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, *creator God*," he said. "*Kill me, I might as well be dead.*"

1 Kings 19:5-8

Then he lay down and slept under the...tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel* touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" He looked around and saw some bread...and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again. Then the angel of the *true, creator God* came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, *because* there is a long journey ahead of you." So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to...the mountain of God.

1 Kings 19:9-10

There he came to a cave, where he spent the night.

But the *creator God* said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Elijah replied, "I have zealously served *you*, the *true, creator God* Almighty. But the *descendants of Abraham** have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars*, and killed every one of your *spokesmen*. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

1 Kings 19:11-13

"Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the *creator God* told him. And as Elijah stood there, the *creator God* passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the *creator God* was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the *creator God* was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the *creator God* was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And the *creator God* said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

1 Kings 19:14-17

He replied again, "I have zealously served the *true, creator God* Almighty. But the *descendants of Abraham* have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your *spokesmen*. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too." Then the *creator God* told him, "Go back the way you came, and travel to a *certain place*. Then *God* gave *Elijah* several tasks to do when he arrived there.

Why This Story?

This story works very well as a sequel for *Elijah and the Prophets of Baal* for animistic people groups, or for groups who need to see a power encounter between the almighty, creator God, and lesser ‘gods.’ This story, as part of a larger “Fear Not” story set, has been used effectively as part of an orientation course for new field personnel.

Story Crafting

God

Some languages have a word for a god which is not the “creator/almighty God.” For example, English differentiates the all-powerful, sovereign God from a “lesser” god by the use of a capital letter. The word for the “lesser” god should be used when talking about “Baal” in this story. When talking about the Creator God (Yahweh), use a term that is recognized as a title for the all-powerful, creator, sovereign God so that there are no misunderstandings about which god is being referred to. In this story we’ve used “creator God” and “true God” as a way of showing that he is sovereign. If your audience has a name for God like the descendants of Abraham did (Yahweh, meaning “I am that I am”), you may use it here, but be careful that your audience understands that there is only one true God, and that he is the God Elijah serves. **“Kill me, I might as well be dead.”** This is the way we rendered “for I am no better than my ancestors.” Translator’s Handbooks says that this latter phrase means that Elijah’s ancestors are dead, and he might as well be with him. We’ve chosen the simpler rendering to avoid distracting discussion on the use of the word “ancestors.”

We’ve included that Elijah traveled 40 days and nights to add interest to the story, but if you find that it is too much detail for

your audience, you may simply say “several days.”

Mountain of God

This mountain is Mt. Sinai, where Moses received the commandments and where God revealed himself to his people when they left Egypt. This is a special mountain, and you could indicate that by saying “mountain of God,” “God’s mountain,” “a holy mountain,” or “a special mountain”.

I have zealously served you, the true, creator God Almighty. We have included *you* in this sentence to ensure that the audience understands that Elijah is talking to God himself.

Elijah wrapped his face in his cloak so that he would not see God, as it was believed that if he did, he would die. You may make this explicit in the story if it would not be readily understood.

The NLT states that when Elijah went to the entrance to the cave, a voice spoke to him. We have identified this voice as God (which is an acceptable addition of implicit information) so there is no confusion about who is speaking to him.

We’ve simplified the ending of the story so that it will be easier to remember and retell; however, we think it is important to show that God gave Elijah some tasks to do instead of allowing him to continue in his discouragement.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of these words.

Spokesman*

For the ‘prophets of Baal,’ you may need to choose a different term, or at least identify which prophets you are talking about (“prophets of the Creator God” versus “prophets of the lesser god”).

Often, prophets of a pagan god did not bring messages from that god, but simply performed certain rituals and sacrifices for that god, so it may be preferable to use a different term here for “prophet” than you used for Elijah.

Angel*

If you have a Bible translation, your best option would be to use the word in the translation, unless no one outside the church understands it. If you don’t have a Bible translation, your challenge is to find a word that accurately conveys the meaning of the original. An ‘angel’ is a supernatural, spiritual being who is a messenger from God. Angels appear to humans in human form, they are inferior to Jesus, and they often come with a specific message or to do a specific task. If there is no word in the language for ‘angel’ that a non-believer would understand, you could translate this as ‘messenger of/from God,’ ‘envoy of God,’ or perhaps ‘ambassador of God.’ Be aware, though, that ‘prophet’ also conveys those meanings. You might have to add ‘spirit (messenger from God)’ to this description.

Descendants of Abraham*

We’ve chosen to use this in place of “Israelites,” “Jews,” and “Hebrews” to show the epic storyline from Abraham. This term helps connect the stories, and helps the audience see that all of these different terms for the Jews really refer to the same people. In addition, it alleviates any prejudices people or cultures might have towards the Jews.

Altar*

An altar may refer to a place where animals are killed and burned as an offering to God, or a place where incense is burned. It is often built of stones, perhaps like a table or small platform.

Intra-Story Cohesion

We have included that Elijah says that the descendants of Abraham have broken their covenant with God. The audience will best understand this if they have heard stories about God’s covenant with his people throughout the years. If your audience is not familiar with this covenant, you may omit this phrase from the story to omit unnecessary information.

Use the same words and phrases for similar things as the *Elijah and the Prophets of Baal* story. (eg “**Creator God,**” “**god,**” names of people and places)

Story Set Themes

Fear

Victory over Evil

2 Kings 4-Elisha Helps a Widow and Her Two Sons

2 Kings 4:1-7

Based on the NLT (2004)

Transition

After Elijah, God appointed another spokesman for himself named Elisha.*

2 Kings 4:1

One day the widow of a member of the group of *God's spokesmen* came to Elisha and cried out, "My husband who served you is dead, and you know how he *honored God*. But now a creditor has come, threatening to take my two sons as slaves."

2 Kings 4:2-4

"What can I do to help you?" Elisha asked. "Tell me, what do you have in the house?"

"Nothing at all, except a flask of olive oil," she replied.

And Elisha said, "Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors. Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting each one aside when it is filled."

2 Kings 4:5-6

So she did as she was told. Her sons kept bringing jars to her, and she filled one after another. Soon every container was full to the brim!

"Bring me another jar," she said to one of her sons.

"There aren't any more!" he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing.

2 Kings 4:7

When she told *Elisha* what had happened, he said to her, "Now sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on what is left over."

Why This Story?

This story shows God's provision for his people, if we simply trust Him.

This story is also a part of a larger "Fear Not" story set that has been effectively used in new personnel orientation.

Story Crafting

God

We have replaced the references to LORD (Yahweh) with *God*, to avoid confusion.

If your audience has a name for God like the descendants of Abraham did (Yahweh, meaning "I am that I am"), you may use it in place of LORD (Yahweh), but be careful that your audience understands that there is only one true God.

Fearing God refers to someone who has respect for God's power and holiness. If the phrase "fear God" does not translate well literally into your language, you may need to simply say "he had respect for God," or "he honored God."

If one of your culture's storytelling devices is repetition, you could repeat the woman's actions of filling the jar two or three times in the story, with as much detail as you would like, to add interest for your audience. For example, you could say something like, *Her son brought a jar to her, and she filled it with oil. When it was full, he brought another jar to her, and she filled it with oil. And he brought another, and another. Finally she said, "Bring me another jar," but he said, "That was the last one!"...*

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of this word.

Spokesman*

Choose a term for 'prophet' that adequately describes the prophet's function. A prophet:

1. receives a call from God;
2. takes God's message to men because he had been given it by God himself;
3. has as his only priority bringing the Word of God to men.

We chose 'spokesman' because, in English, it can convey these three meanings but doesn't carry the unwanted connotation of a fortuneteller. If you use a religious term, be sure that it has meaning that the average hearer will understand.

Worldview

Elisha was the leader of God's spokesmen, and the widow's former husband was subservient to Elisha. Therefore, the woman would have spoken respectfully to Elisha.

Many cultures dictate caring for widows, and many cultures would agree that Elisha actually had a responsibility to care for her since her husband was one of his group.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same word for "**spokesman**" and "**God**" that you have used in previous stories.

Story Set Themes

Fear
Provision

2 Kings 6-Elisha and the Army of Angels

II Kings 6:8-23
NLT 2004

Introduction: Elisha was a spokesperson for God for the kings and peoples of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

II Kings 6: 8-10

When the king of *a neighboring country* was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, “We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place.”

But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, “Do not go near that place, for the *enemy* is planning to mobilize their troops there.” So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he would be on the alert there.

II Kings 6:11-14

The king of *the neighboring country* became very upset over this. He called his officers together and demanded, “Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?”

“It's not us, my lord the king,” one of the officers replied. “Elisha, the *spokesman for God* in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!”

“Go and find out where he is,” the king commanded, “so I can send troops to seize him.”

And the report came back: “Elisha is at *a certain city*.” So one night the king of *the neighboring country* sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.

II Kings 6:15-17

When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. “Oh, sir, what will we do now?” the young man cried to Elisha. “Don't be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!” Then Elisha prayed, “O *God*, open his eyes and let him see!” *God* opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.

II Kings 6:18-20

As the *enemy* army advanced toward him, Elisha prayed, “O *God*, please make them blind.” So *God* struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked.

Then Elisha went out and told them, “You have come the wrong way! This isn't the right city! Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are looking for.” And he led them to the *capital city*.

As soon as they had entered *the capital city*, Elisha prayed, “O *God*, now open their eyes and let them see.” So *God* opened their eyes, and they discovered that they were in the middle of *the capital city*.

II Kings 6:21-23

When the king of Israel saw them, he shouted to Elisha, “My father, should I kill them? Should I kill them?”

“Of course not!” Elisha replied. “Do we kill prisoners of war? Give them food and drink and send them home again to their master.” So the king made a great feast for them and then sent them home to their master. After that, the *neighboring country* raiders stayed away from the land of Israel.

Why This Story?

This story works very well for groups who need to see that God has protection that might be invisible to our eyes. These fear stories as a set have been used effectively as part of an orientation course for new field personnel.

Story Crafting

God

When talking about the Creator God (Yahweh), use a term that is recognized as a title for the all-powerful, creator, sovereign God so that there are no misunderstandings about which god is being referred to. If your audience has a name for God like the descendants of Abraham did (Yahweh, meaning “I am that I am”), you may use it here, but be careful that your audience understands that there is only one true God, and that he is the God Elisha serves.

Man of God

It may be less confusing to just say Elisha. You do want to identify him as a Man of God and as a spokesperson for God.

Lord

Here the word *lord* is used as a title of respect. You want to use a title that indicates respect and that is not related to divinity. In some cultures, *lord* would only be used as a term for a god.

In Your Bedroom

This would have been a small dark inner room. Some cultures don't have a separate bedroom. You want to indicate that even on his bed or even in the place where he went to sleep to make sure that the people understand that this was supernatural.

Chariots of Fire

These are located between Elisha and the enemy army. The city was set on a hill.

Follow me

Because the men were blind, they had to follow the sound of Elisha's voice.

Open—eyes—see

Elisha uses the phrase twice. The first is so that his servant will have his spiritual eyes opened and the second is so that the enemy soldiers will have their physical eyes open. Make sure that your people understand the difference in the story.

My Father

The king shows his respect for Elisha. Elisha is not the king's father. Find a way in your culture to address Elisha with this respect. You may select a more general term like “sir” if the people are confused.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of these words.

Spokesman*/ Prophet*

Choose a term for ‘prophet’ that adequately describes the prophet's function. A prophet:

1. receives a call from God;
2. takes God's message to men because he had been given it by God himself;
3. has as his only priority bringing the Word of God to men.

We chose ‘spokesman’ because, in English, it can convey these three meanings but doesn't carry the unwanted connotation of a fortuneteller.

If you use a religious term, be sure that it has meaning that the average hearer will understand.

Angel*

If you have a Bible translation, your best option would be to use the word in the translation, unless no one outside the church understands it. If you don't have a Bible translation, your challenge is to find a word that accurately conveys the meaning of the original. An ‘angel’ is a supernatural, spiritual being who is a messenger from God. Angels appear to humans in human form, they are inferior to Jesus, and they

often come with a specific message or to do a specific task. If there is no word in the language for 'angel' that a non-believer would understand, you could translate this as 'messenger of/from God,' 'envoy of God,' or perhaps 'ambassador of God.' Be aware, though, that 'prophet' also conveys those meanings. You might have to add 'spirit (messenger from God)' to this description.

Israel*

The word Israel has a number of different uses or meanings in the Bible.

1. It may refer to the name that was given to Jacob after he wrestled with the angel.
2. It may refer to the descendents of Jacob.
3. It may refer to the actual land of the Northern Kingdom when David's kingdom was divided into two parts after the death of Solomon.
4. In the New Testament, it refers to the descendents of Judah (Southern Kingdom) or to anyone considered to be an heir to the covenant God made with Abraham. Those who adhered strictly to the religious laws were considered Israelites.
5. It is used as the name for all the land given by God to Abraham and his descendents who were the chosen people. It refers to the land included in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

Today, Israel is the name of the country formed as a homeland for the Jewish people after 1948. For many people, this name is loaded politically and they have difficulty separating the current political meaning from the scriptures. Therefore, you may wish to use another word or term for Israel or Israelites. Some that have been used successfully include:

Promised Land

Northern Kingdom (for Old Testament stories)

The country

The land of the Hebrews

The Hebrews

God's people or God's chosen people

Samaria may also be used but would need to be defined as the name for the capital of the Northern Kingdom which at times referred to the whole kingdom.

Intra-Story Cohesion

You need to set the story into some sort of context. If you have not done stories on any of the kings and prophets (spokesmen), you will need to use a longer introduction so that your audience will understand who Elisha is.

If you have not previously discussed the split of the kingdom into the North and South, you may want a longer introduction that explains this. Example: At some time previous to this story, the people in the north rebelled against the king leading to a division of the peoples. They became two countries each having a king. Elisha was a spokesperson for God who gave messages from God to the king of the Northern Kingdom.

Be sure that you have used the same terms for prophet, God, Israel, that you have used in other stories.

Story Set Themes

Fear

Victory over Evil

2 Chronicles 20-God Saves His People from Their Enemies

II Chronicles 20:1-20

NLT 2004

Introduction:

Before the time of this story, the country had divided into two countries, each with a king. At this time, the king of the Southern Kingdom which included Jerusalem was a good king who tried to lead his people to worship God and obey God's laws.

II Chronicles 20:1-4

...several armies declared war on the king. Messengers came and told the king, "A vast army from the south is marching against you...they have already reached the border. The king was terrified by this news and begged God for guidance. He also ordered everyone in the kingdom to begin fasting. So people from all the towns...came to Jerusalem to seek the God's help.*

Transition: The king gathered the people in the House of Worship. He stood before them and prayed. He reminded God of all that He had done for His people. Then he said,*

II Chronicles 20:11-12

"...they have come to throw us out of your land, which you gave us as an inheritance. O our God, won't you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help."

II Chronicles 20:13-18

As all the men of the country stood before God with their little ones, wives, and children, God's Spirit took control of the men standing there...He said, "Listen... This is what God says: Do not be afraid... for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow, march out against them...But*

you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch God's victory...Go out against them tomorrow, for God is with you!"

II Chronicles 20:18-19

Then the king bowed low with his face to the ground. And all the people...did the same, worshiping God. Then worship leaders stood to praise God with a very loud shout.

II Chronicles 20:20-25

Early the next morning the army...went out...On the way the king stopped and said, "Listen to me, all you people...! Believe in...God, and you will be able to stand firm..." The king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to God...*

"Give thanks to God; his faithful love endures forever!"

At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, God caused the attacking armies...to start fighting among themselves. So when the army of the king arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, all they saw were dead bodies lying on the ground as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped. The king and his men went out to gather the plunder...There was so much plunder that it took them three days just to collect it all!

II Chronicles 20:26-30

On the fourth day they...praised and thanked God there. Then all the men returned to Jerusalem, with the king leading them, overjoyed God had given them victory over their enemies. They marched into Jerusalem to the music of harps, lyres, and trumpets and they proceeded to the House of Worship. When all the surrounding kingdoms heard that God himself had fought against the enemies of the king, the fear of God came over them. So the kingdom was at peace...

Why This Story?

These fear stories as a set have been used effectively as part of an orientation course for new field personnel.

Story Crafting

The Two Kingdoms

The introduction gives a suggested way to introduce that the people had divided into two kingdoms. If your people are confused by this, you may need an additional explanation.

The King

Jehoshaphat is a difficult and foreign name. You don't need to use it unless you are doing a study on the different kings.

Jerusalem

If the name of the city of Jerusalem has not been, and will not be, introduced in your story set, you may want to simply replace it with "the capital." However, if you are planning several stories where Jerusalem appears, you may want to use the city's name. If this is the story in which you are introducing the city, you may want to add a phrase like "the capital city."

The King's Prayer

You will want to read the entire prayer and note how many times the king repeats things for emphasis. If repetition is a story-telling device for your people, you will want to include these repetitions in the king's prayer. Keep in mind that you want your listener to be able to learn and repeat the prayer to others.

God

We have replaced the references to LORD (Yahweh) with *God*, to avoid confusion. If your audience has a name for God like the descendants of Abraham did (Yahweh, meaning "I am that I am"), you may use it in

place of LORD (Yahweh), but be careful that your audience understands that there is only one true God.

God's Spirit took control of one of the men standing there

The original text says that the Spirit of God "came upon" one of the men. This is a phrase which may not translate well literally into another language. When God's Spirit "comes on" someone, it takes control of that person.

King Jehoshaphat...and all the people...worshiped God

The text states that the king and all the people bowed low with their face to the ground. This was a form of worship. You can describe the worship or just say they worshiped God.

Harps, lyres, and trumpets

If these musical instruments do not exist in your culture, instead of trying to describe them and adding too many details to the story, you may want to simply say "musical instruments." The specific instruments that they were playing are not as important as the fact that the people were worshipping God.

Fear of God refers to someone who has respect for God's power and holiness. If the phrase "fear God" does not translate well literally into your language, you may need to simply say "respect for God."

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of these words.

Place of Worship*/House of Worship*

The temple was the unique Jewish place of worship. If the word for 'temple' in your language only refers to a specific religion's place of worship, you may choose to change the word to something more general, like

‘place of worship.’ Even the word ‘temple’ in English has such religious connotations that few people truly understand what it means.

Fast*

Most references to fasting in the Bible refer to going without food and drink in order to worship God, or as part of one’s worship to God. In some cases, fasting may refer to changing the kinds of food one eats. (We’ve indicated in each story which kind of fasting is referred to in that story.) In the Bible, there are three main reasons to fast:
to show grief and penitence
to show humility
to ask for help and guidance from God.

Although many religions practice this, you may find that the word in your language only refers to fasting for a particular god or in a particular religion. If that is the case, you may need to explain the concept in the story rather than use a specific term.

God’s Spirit*

You can translate this term directly as ‘God’s Spirit.’ The meaning here specifically is that this man was suddenly and fully possessed by God’s Spirit. The Hebrew *ruach* [spirit] can have the physical meanings ‘wind’ or ‘breath.’ It also can mean ‘power’ or ‘authority’ that God gives to someone to do extraordinary things.

Believe*

This describes man’s response to God’s promise. It probably implies more than mental agreement, but putting one’s faith/confidence in God.

Worldview

Different cultures and religions place different values on fasting. In this story, the people fasted in order to ask for guidance from God. Include that the people fasted in

order to seek guidance from God if it adds credibility or value to the story. If not, you may simply say that the people came to Jerusalem to seek God. Some peoples believe that fasting means no intake of anything into the body. Biblical fasts took many different forms. You might want to discuss this with your people if they have fasting as a religious practice.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words for **place of worship** and **fast** that you have used in previous stories. Refer to Jerusalem in the same way that you have in previous stories.

Story Set Themes

Fear

Worship

Relationship

Victory

John 9-Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

John 9:1-38
NLT 2004

***Transition:** Jesus had been in Jerusalem for an important religious festival which was now over. He remained in Jerusalem and talked with the religious leaders.*

John 9:1

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.

John 9:6-12

Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes. He told him, "Go wash yourself in a certain pool... So the man went and washed and came back seeing! His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said he was, and others said, "No, he just looks like him!"

But the beggar kept saying, "Yes, I am the same one!" They asked, "Who healed you? What happened?" He told them, *all that had happened.*

John 9:13-17

Then they took the man who had been blind to the *religious leaders**, because it was on the *day of worship** that Jesus had made the mud and healed him. The *religious leaders* asked the man all about it. So he told them *all that had happened.*

Some of the *religious leaders* said, "This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the *day of worship.*" Others said, "But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?" So there was a deep division of opinion among them...

John 9:18-23

The *religious* leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents. They asked them, "Is this your son? Was he born blind? If so, how can he now see?"

His parents replied, "We know this is our son and that he was born blind, but we don't know how he can see or who healed him. Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the *religious* leaders, who had announced that anyone saying Jesus was the *promised savior** would be expelled from the *house of prayer**. That's why they said, "He is old enough. Ask him."

***Transition:** The religious leaders confronted the healed man again and he repeated all that Jesus had done for him. They became so angry with him and his answers that they made him leave their house of prayer.*

John 9:35-38

When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, "Do you believe in the one* who came to reveal God and redeem man?"

The man answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him."

"You have seen him," Jesus said, "and he is speaking to you!"

Yes, *Master**, I believe!" the man said. And he worshiped* Jesus.

John 9:39-41 (optional)

Then Jesus told him, "I entered this world...to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind."

Some *religious leaders* who were standing nearby heard him and asked, "Are you saying we're blind?"

"If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty," Jesus replied. "But you remain guilty because you claim you can see."

Why This Story?

This story gives an example of how to answer when confronted by authorities. Having such an example could help decrease fear, as believers can practice giving answers in the same way as this man did.

Story Crafting

Because this story belongs to a “fear” story set, we have not included John 9:2-5. However, if you feel it is necessary for your theme or story set to include either the section in which Jesus says that the man was not born blind because of his parents’ sin, or that Jesus said he was the light of the world, you would want to include verses 2-5.

We have omitted the name of the pool to simplify the story.

The man repeats at each confrontation all that Jesus did for him. If repetition is important in your culture, you may include this in the story.

If you use this story to deal with fear, you may want to stop at the point where the man worships Jesus. If you are using it for evangelism, you may want to continue to the end of the passage.

Day of worship , Place of prayer

We have changed the Jewish religious terms (Sabbath, synagogue) to more general terms which can be readily understood by those not familiar with Jewish culture. “Place of prayer” is distinguished from the temple, which is called “Place of worship” in other stories. You may use any term for “place of prayer” which connotes a place where people meet together regularly to pray and study religious teachings. This is not to say that you may substitute names of specific religious places such as mosque or temple that are used in other religions.

Son of man

The title “son of man” is best understood by an audience who is familiar with the Daniel 7 prophecy of the son of man. Jesus uses this title for himself often. Because most audiences do not understand this title, we usually replace the title with “I” unless we know they are familiar with the Daniel 7 story. Because of the context of the phrase here, we cannot do that. However, we would like to include the man’s confession and worship of Jesus. Therefore, the story teller has several choices for translation, based on what this title actually means:

- 1) You can use “son of man” if your audience is familiar with that title and understands its significance.
- 2) Commentators agree that in this context, Jesus was at least partially referring to the “son of man’s” role as a revelation of God to man, someone whose lowliness and suffering has led to our salvation.
- 3) Commentators also agree that Jesus was identifying himself as the judge from Daniel 7 (See the very next verses in John 9 in which Jesus mentions a judging role.)

It is most likely that the man’s response of worship to Jesus’ confession of being the son of man himself means that he has responded to the part of the title that refers to Jesus’ revelation of God and redeemer of mankind. In this case, you may want to translate this title with an explanation. For example, you may say something like “Do you believe in the one who came to reveal God and redeem/save mankind?”

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a more complete discussion on these words.

Religious Leaders*

Both Pharisees and Sadducees were Jewish religious parties at that time. Many scribes and priests were members of one of these

sects. If possible, it is best to keep these sect names as generic as possible—‘religious leaders.’ We have also used the term for ‘synagogue leader’ in the epistles story set. If you use a term for ‘religious leaders’ used in a major religion here, be sure that those names do not refer ONLY to a member of that specific religion.

Promised Savior*

‘Savior,’ as used in the New Testament, means ‘one who saves from spiritual and eternal danger.’ Often, the wholeness of man includes both physical and spiritual aspects which are difficult to distinguish, but the actual term ‘savior’ in the New Testament is used only for Jesus as a spiritual deliverer. ‘Promised Savior’ is also the word we’ve chosen to use for the English version of the stories as the term to describe who Jesus is—the Messiah, the Christ, the Promised Savior. Some languages do not have an appropriate personal noun that expresses the idea of savior, and it needs to be translated ‘the one who saves,’ or ‘the saving person.’

Followers*

If the language has an understood term for the devoted followers of a guru, you may use that term here. We’ve designated the twelve disciples as ‘closest followers’ and the other disciples simply as ‘followers.’ You may want to differentiate between the two groups in the same way, as well.

Master*

The original ‘Lord’ in the New Testament has the connotation here of ‘master,’ ‘supreme head,’ or ‘owner.’ At a surface level, this is a title for a respected man, such as ‘sir.’ In some stories, as noted in the story, the original “Lord” is an indication of the speaker’s affirmation that Jesus is God. In those cases, a word that would be used to show Jesus’ authority over us and our allegiance to him should be used.

Worship*

Worship’s foundation is the idea of ‘service,’ shown through showing awe and wonder to God (*IVP New Bible Dictionary*).

Different cultures and languages have different words for worship, some of which refer only to certain ceremonies or rituals one must do. In every story in this story set where ‘worship’ is used, it implies more than just performing rituals; it includes the heart of love, awe and wonder of the worshiper for God. Be sure that the word or combination of words you choose for worship includes this idea.

Worldview

Some cultures may be offended by the fact that Jesus spit on the mud that was placed in the man’s eyes. If this is the case, you may omit the fact that Jesus spit on the mud.

Intra-Story Cohesion

This story would be best understood by an audience who is familiar with the Daniel 7 story about the son of man.

If you include the section in which Jesus describes himself as the light of the world, it would be a good connection to also include a prophecy story in which the promised savior is described as someone who would heal the blind.

Use the same words or phrases for “religious leaders,” “promised savior,” “followers,” “worship,” and “master” as you have used in other stories.

Story Set Themes

Fear

Relationship

Grace

Savior

Honor/Shame

Matthew 14-Jesus Walks on Water

Matt 14:22-33

NLT 2004

***Transition:** Jesus and his closest followers* had gone across the lake in a boat to an isolated place but large crowds had followed them by land. Jesus took care of the crowds and then gave them something to eat.*

Matthew 14:22-23

Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his *closest followers* get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home *on foot as they had come*. After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

Matthew 14:24-27

Meanwhile, the *closest followers of Jesus* were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. When the *closest followers* saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost*!" But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"

Matthew 14:28-31

Then Peter, *one of the closest followers*, called to him, "Sir, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." "Yes, come," Jesus said.

So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, *Master*!*" he shouted.

Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith*," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

Matthew 14:32-33

When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then the *closest followers* worshiped* him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

After they had crossed the lake, they landed *near a town*.

Why This Story?

These fear stories as a set have been used effectively as part of an orientation course for new field personnel.

This story has also been used as a hook story to remind someone in distress to look only to Jesus for healing and comfort.

Story Crafting

This story set is intended for an audience that has a basic understanding of the Bible. In a basic panorama, we would usually not jump so far in the Bible from one story to the next, but this story set has a more topical focus.

Peter refers to Jesus as Lord twice. The first time may be a title of respect such as Sir. The second time, he uses Lord in the biblical sense of recognizing Jesus as Lord. If you wish, you may replace both these words with Master or you may leave the first as Sir and the second as Master.

Be sure that you indicate that Jesus was walking on the water, not floating above it nor wading through it. The Lake was very deep.

Note that the wind stopped immediately meaning that the lake became calm again.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of the following words.

Ghost

This word is used in the original text of the New Testament only twice. It can be, but isn't necessarily, the spirit of someone who has died. Choose a term that means a spirit that people might see that would cause them to be afraid.

Closest Followers*

If the language has an understood term for the devoted followers of a guru, you may use that term here. We've designated the twelve disciples as 'closest followers' and the other disciples simply as 'followers.' You may want to differentiate between the two groups in the same way, as well.

Master*

The original text here uses the term "Lord." Often, "Lord" is simply a title of respect to any person. Because of the context of this story, this title may have a fuller meaning than simply the respectful "sir." If your language has a respectful title for God, you may use it here. If not, a term that implies that this person is one to whom we owe allegiance and who has authority over us should be used.

Faith*

This describes man's response to God's promise. It probably implies more than mental agreement, but putting one's faith/confidence in God.

Worship*

Worship's foundation is the idea of 'service,' shown through showing awe and wonder to God (*IVP New Bible Dictionary*).

Different cultures and languages have different words for worship, some of which refer only to certain ceremonies or rituals one must do. In every story in this story set where 'worship' is used, it implies more than just performing rituals; it includes the heart of love, awe and wonder of the worshiper for God. Be sure that the word or combination of words you choose for worship includes this idea.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words for **closest followers**, **master**, **faith**, and **worship** that you have used in other stories. If you use the title “Son of God” in this story, it might be helpful for your audience to be familiar with the birth story or the baptism story with the same title or concept in it, so that it’s not a totally new idea to your audience.

Story Set Themes

Fear

Power (over nature)

Hook

Savior

Son of God

Relationship

Acts 18-Paul in Corinth

Acts 18:1-18, 1 Corinthians 1:1
Based on the NLT (2004)

Transition

After Jesus ascended into heaven after his resurrection, his followers spread out everywhere sharing the Good News of salvation through Jesus. Paul had been traveling from place to place, sharing the Good News in many cities. He arrived in Corinth, where he began practicing his trade, which was tent making. As usual, he also sought out the descendants of Abraham in order to tell them about Jesus.*

Acts 18:5-6

...He *told them* that Jesus was the *Promised Savior**, But when they opposed and insulted him, Paul *protested* and said, “*If you cut yourselves off from God, you yourselves must take the blame for it. From now on I will go speak to everyone else.*”

Acts 18:7-11

Then he left and went *to someone’s home who was not a descendant of Abraham, but who worshiped God and lived next door to Abraham’s descendants’ place of prayer.* ...The leader of the *place of prayer*, and everyone in his household believed* in Jesus. Many others in Corinth also heard Paul, became believers*, and were baptized*. One night *Jesus* spoke to Paul in a vision* and told him, “Don’t be afraid! Speak out! Don’t be silent! For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me.” So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the *message from God.*

Acts 18:12-16

Later... some descendants of Abraham went against Paul and brought him before the governor for judgment. They accused

Paul of “persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to our law.” But just as Paul started to make his defense, *the governor* turned to Paul’s accusers and said, “Listen...if this were a case involving some wrongdoing or a serious crime, I would have a reason to accept your case. But since it is merely a question of words and names and your *own religious* law, take care of it yourselves. I refuse to judge such matters.” And he threw them out of the courtroom.

Acts 18:17

The crowd then grabbed...the *descendants of Abraham’s religious leader**, Sosthenes, and beat him right there in the courtroom. But *the governor* paid no attention.

Acts 18:18

Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the *believers* and went to *another area.*

Epilogue (from 1 Corinthians 1:1)

Years later, Paul identifies Sosthenes, the former Corinthian religious leader, as a fellow believer.

Why This Story?

God gives Paul a promise and keeps it. Paul believes his promise, stays, and fruit is produced. This story has been effectively used as part of a story set about fear (called “Fear Not”) for short term teams who will probably meet opposition and might even see violence. This story provides encouragement to persevere even in difficult circumstances and in places that seem hostile to the gospel.

Story Crafting

Paul protested is the meaning of the idiom “Paul shook the dust from his clothes.” Some cultures may not understand what it means to shake the dust from one’s clothes, so it might be best to state what Paul was doing, protesting, without using an idiom.

We have replaced the idiomatic phrase, “your blood is upon your own heads” with *If you cut yourselves off from God, you yourselves must take the blame for it*. This makes the phrase easier to understand and translate, and is an acceptable rendering of the idiom, according to translator’s helps. If *cut yourselves off from God* is difficult to understand, you may use a phrase such as *lost from God*, or *cause yourselves to perish*.

The word “preach” used in the original text means that he strongly urged or warned them. Because the word “preach” in English is a religious word, we have chosen to use the more generic word “speak.” You may choose to use a word that also includes the connotation of warning or urging. Throughout this story set, we have changed the word “preach” to a word with less religious connotation. Most of the time, we have replaced “preach” with “speak” or “tell” (which often is actually a more literal translation); but where we have used a different word, we have noted why.

We have omitted Paul’s meeting of Priscilla and Aquila because they do not reappear in this story set, and therefore do not play a role in the plot-line of the story.

We have included 1 Corinthians 1:1 as an epilogue to encourage believers that even those who at one time were opposed to the Gospel may become believers. Although it is unclear whether the Sosthenes in 1 Corinthians 1:1 is the same as the one in Acts 18, many commentators believe that it is.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of these words.

Descendants of Abraham*

We’ve chosen to use this in place of “Israelites,” “Jews,” and “Hebrews” to show the epic storyline from Abraham. This term helps connect the stories, and helps the audience see that all of these different terms for the Jews really refer to the same people. In addition, it alleviates any prejudices people or cultures might have towards the Jews.

Promised savior*

‘Savior,’ as used in the New Testament, means ‘one who saves from spiritual and eternal danger.’ Often, the wholeness of man includes both physical and spiritual aspects which are difficult to distinguish, but the actual term ‘savior’ in the New Testament is used only for Jesus as a spiritual deliverer. ‘Promised Savior’ is also the word we’ve chosen to use for the English version of the stories as the term to describe who Jesus is—the Messiah, the Christ, the Promised Savior. We’ve chosen, for the audience’s first exposure to the gospel, to use a consistent term for Jesus’ role in God’s redemptive plan throughout the story set. Later, it could be helpful to introduce other terms that have similar meanings (such as ‘Christ,’ ‘Messiah,’ ‘Promised King,’ ‘Anointed One,’ etc.). Some languages do not have

an appropriate personal noun that expresses the idea of savior, and it needs to be translated ‘the one who saves,’ or ‘the saving person.’

Place of Prayer*

This term is used for ‘synagogue’ in order to differentiate it from ‘place of worship,’ which is used for ‘temple.’ The Jewish synagogues were found wherever Jews lived throughout the ancient world, and they were a place where Jews could come together to pray and fellowship, even though they could not worship in the fullest sense in the temple.

Believers*

After Pentecost, the people who followed Jesus were also called ‘believers.’ We’ve used that term to emphasize the fact that people became followers of Jesus through belief in him.

Baptize*

This word is an important term in the Bible and needs to be thought through carefully before attempting to translate. If you have a Bible translation, you may choose to use what the translation uses. If the translation uses the borrowed term (as we also borrow the term from the Greek *baptizo*), but no one understands it, you might want to consider explaining the term. If you are working with long-term believers, you need to see with what term they feel most comfortable. If you need to find a term for some reason, a careful study of the meaning of the concept of ‘baptism’ is needed. The Greek word means to ‘put inside or under water,’ or ‘to wash in a spiritual sense.’ John’s baptism was done when a person wanted to stop sinning and obey God so God would forgive his sin. In baptism in the church, a person also makes a public demonstration of his commitment to Jesus and his union with him.

Vision*

Visions refer to a supernatural experience in which a divine revelation is given to a person when they are awake, whereas ‘dreams’ are what God causes people to see when they are asleep. If your language only has one word for ‘vision’ and ‘dream,’ you may want to specify whether the person was awake or asleep when they received the message from God.

Worldview

As you describe Corinth, you may want to emphasize the characteristics of the city that are common with noted characteristics of where you live!

Story Set Themes

Fear

Life transformation

Persecution

Victory