

S-TAT

Epistles
Story Set

Galatians 2

Galatians 2:7-21

Based on NLT

Introduction

God sent Paul to share the good news about Jesus to all the people who were not descendants of Abraham. God even showed Peter that anyone could become a follower* of Jesus when he sent Peter to Cornelius' house. Peter and the leaders of Jesus' followers agreed that anyone, anywhere could become a follower of Jesus, no matter what their religion, or language, or ethnicity may be, but there were some people who were teaching that anyone who wanted to become a follower of Jesus had to follow the religious laws of Abraham's descendants. Paul strongly opposed these people, and he wrote a letter to the new followers of Jesus in Asia to remind them about the truth about following Jesus...*

Galatians 2:7-8

The leaders of Jesus' followers saw that God had given me the responsibility of sharing the good news about Jesus with everyone---even those who were not descendants of Abraham, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of sharing with those who were descendants of Abraham...The same God who worked through Peter as God's messenger (apostle) to Abraham's descendants also worked through me as God's messenger (apostle) to others.

Galatians 2:9

In fact, Peter and the other leaders... encouraged me to keep sharing with those who were not descendants of Abraham...

Galatians: 2:11-13

But when Peter came to *your area*, I had to oppose him to his face, *because* what he did was very wrong. When he first arrived, he ate with the *all the believers**. But afterward, when some *descendants of Abraham* came, Peter wouldn't eat with *those who weren't descendants of Abraham* anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on *following their religious laws*. As a result, *others* followed Peter's hypocrisy...

Galatians 2:14-16

When I saw that they were not following the truth of the *Good News about Jesus*, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "...we know that a person is made right with God by *believing** in Jesus..., not by obeying the law. And we have believed in *Jesus*, so that we might *have a right relationship** with God (*So that we might be a part of his kingdom*) because of our *belief in him*, not because we have obeyed the law, *because* no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law."

Galatians 2:20-21

Instead, my old self was killed alongside of Jesus as he was nailed to the planks of wood. It's not me who lives anymore---any life I have is Jesus living in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not treat the grace* of God as meaningless, *because* if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for *Jesus* to die.

Example crafted story (transcribed from a told story)

We know that God sent Paul to tell the good news about Jesus to everyone, especially people who were not descendants of Abraham. And he went to a place in Asia, and he began to teach the good news about Jesus. A lot of people who were not descendants of Abraham believed and became followers of Jesus. And Peter came---and he saw this happening, and he also saw that this good news about Jesus was for everyone, not just the descendants of Abraham. So he spent time with these new believers. There were some people who were followers of Jesus who thought that everyone who believed in Jesus had to follow the religious laws of the descendants of Abraham. They came to this area and they made Paul very angry because they were saying things that were not true about the good news about Jesus, and they were trying to enslave people with this religious law; but Peter was afraid of them. He was afraid that they would start to criticize him so he stopped even eating with these believers who were not descendants of Abraham. Paul saw that and he came right up in front of Peter's face and said, "Why are you acting like such a hypocrite? You don't follow these laws---why are you expecting these people to follow the laws? You know that religious laws don't make you right with God. We believed in Jesus---and our old self and our old ways and our old religious laws---they were nailed to the cross next to Jesus. That old person is not alive anymore---any life I have is Jesus living in me. And if you start to say you have to keep some religious law to make us right with God, then there's no reason why Jesus would have had to die, and the grace of God is meaningless."

Story Crafting

In order to clarify the concept of *being made right with God*, in some places we have used the phrase **right/good relationship with God** to describe what happens when we are *made right with God*.

You may choose to, as we have, to describe the *cross* as **planks of wood** to clarify for an audience who may not know what a *cross* is.

You may choose to say **have a relationship with God**, or **be a part of God's kingdom**, depending on what the theme of the rest of your story set is. **Being a part of God's kingdom** implies having a good relationship with God, so both phrases are interchangeable.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Descendant 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.

Follower/believer*

These words may be interchangeable in these stories. **Follower/believer** denotes a person who has chosen to believe in and follow Jesus exclusively. We have chosen to not use a word such as *Christian*, which may have unwanted connotations in certain cultures, and may even be understood wrongly. In some South Asian cultures, **believer** may refer

to a person who worships outside of the “traditional,” historical church.

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.

Relationship*

Some languages may not have one term for ‘relationship,’ or the term has unwanted connotations. Some languages express the idea in terms of action. TEV translates Genesis 15:6 as ‘Abram put his trust in the LORD, and because of this the LORD was pleased with him and accepted him.’

Grace*

The term “grace” needs to be translated carefully, according to its context. In these contexts, “grace” refers to God’s favor shown to undeserving people, in regards to his salvation freely given. One of the best ways to translate this is “God has acted towards me in a loving and kind way,” or “God has shown his love for us by accepting us as his people through Jesus.”

Worldview

In this biblical culture, eating together was a symbol of equality and acceptance. The original audience understood that for Peter to eat with the believers, it meant that he accepted them even though they were not descendants of Abraham. If your audience will not automatically understand this, you may need to explain it in the story.

Intra-Story Cohesion

This story is best understood if your audience has already heard the Acts story of Peter and Cornelius.

Use the same terms you have been using for **descendants of Abraham, grace, belief, believers/followers, relationship.**

Story Set Themes

Epistles

Freedom (from the law)

Grace

Relationship

New Life

Galatians 5

Galatians 5:16-6:2

Based on NLT

Introduction

Paul shared with the believers about what happens when we live by following God's Spirit*.*

Galatians 5:16-17

So I say, let *God's Spirit* guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful* nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

Galatians 5:19-21

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: *you commit all sorts of immoral and impure sins*. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not *have a relationship* with God*. (*be a part of God's kingdom*)

Galatians 5:22-23

But *God's Spirit* produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *Religious laws don't even speak about these things, because God's Spirit is above those laws!*

Galatians 5:24-26

Those who belong to *the Savior** Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and *killed* them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, *let's follow the Spirit's leading* in every part of our lives. *Don't become*

conceited, or think about yourself more than others, or be jealous of one another.

Galatians 6:1-2

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are *guided by God's Spirit* should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of *Jesus*.

Example crafted story (transcribed from a told story)

If you remember, in our last story Paul and Peter were in Asia and Paul confronted Peter and spoke to him very clearly about the good news about Jesus. We know about those things because Paul put them in a letter that he wrote to all the believers in Asia. In the letter he talked about how our old lives were nailed to the cross, and how we lived a new life because Jesus lived in us. He was talking about God's Spirit living in us new believers. He continued to write to those believers in Asia, telling them, "You should let God's Spirit guide your life. You see, the old passions---desires we had before we knew Jesus---they were also nailed to the cross with Jesus. We used to do evil things, but now if you follow God's Spirit you do good things, and people can see the joy and love that you have. They'll see a peaceful life that's good and gentle. There may be some people---some believers---who don't allow God's Spirit to control their lives. They may be overcome by some sin. You---you who are allowing God's

Spirit to live in you and showing the fruit of what that's like---you should very gently and humbly bring that person back to the right path. As fellow believers, we should share each other's burden and point them to Jesus.

Story Crafting

We've chosen to use the word **cross** in this story, as that seems the least awkward. However, if your audience does not understand the term **cross**, you may have to describe it as *two planks of wood*.

You may want to use a different way of describe what the human nature does. It may be best to unpack this a bit and say something like, "People are sinful, so they do evil..."

You may choose to say **have a relationship with God**, or **be a part of God's kingdom**, depending on what the theme of the rest of your story set is. **Being a part of God's kingdom** also implies having a good relationship with God, so both phrases are interchangeable.

If producing **fruit** is not a natural way in your language to describe the *fruits of the spirit*, you may choose to describe it differently, such as *But God's Spirit produces these kinds of characteristics....*

It is very difficult for people to remember a list of *fruits of the spirit*. In our crafted story, we described some good characteristics of people who live guided by the Spirit, rather than list them.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Believers*

These words may be interchangeable in these stories. **Follower/believer** denotes a person who has chosen to believe in and follow Jesus exclusively. We have chosen to not use a word such as *Christian*, which may have unwanted connotations in certain cultures, and may even be understood wrongly. In some South Asian cultures, **believer** may refer to a person who worships outside of the "traditional," historical church.

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.

Sin*

Sin refers to an act of disobedience to God. Be sure that the word you use here does not mean that someone has failed to perform a religious act (i.e. alms, ritual prayer, following religious dietary rules, etc.). If necessary, you can use 'disobedience.'

Relationship*

Some languages may not have one term for 'relationship,' or the term has unwanted connotations. Some languages express the idea in terms of action. TEV translates Genesis 15:6 as 'Abram put his trust in the LORD, and because of

this the LORD was pleased with him and accepted him.’

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. 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.’

Worldview

Remember that a culture may have a different “list” of **immoral and impure sins** than you are expecting. If needed, you may list some biblical sins.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same terms for **believers, God’s Spirit, sin, relationship, savior** that you have been using throughout the story set.

Story Set Themes

Epistles

Relationship

God’s Spirit

Philemon/Colossians

Philemon 4-6, 8-10, 16-19;

Colossians 3:1-2, 11, 13-15

Based on NLT

Introduction

After years of traveling and preaching the Good News of Jesus, Paul was imprisoned in Rome. While Paul was imprisoned, many people came to him to hear about the good news. One of these people was a runaway slave whose name meant "useful." "Useful" became a follower of Jesus, and served Paul while he was in Rome. Useful had run away from his master, Philemon, who also happened to have decided to follow Jesus as a result of Paul's teaching. Paul decided that Useful should go back to Philemon, but sent along a letter with him for Philemon.

Philemon 4-6

I always thank my God when I pray for you, Philemon, because I keep hearing about your *belief** in our Master* Jesus and your love for all of God's people. And I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your *belief* as you understand and experience all the good things we have in *Jesus*.

Philemon 8-10

That is why I am boldly asking a favor of you. I could demand it in the name of *Jesus* because it is the right thing for you to do. But because of our love, I prefer simply to ask you. Consider this as a request from me—Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner for the sake of...*Jesus*. I appeal to you to show kindness to my child, *Useful*. I became like his father in the faith* (*because he has chosen to believe in Jesus*) while *I've been here in prison*.

Philemon 16-19

He is no longer like a slave to you. He is

more than a slave, *because* he is a *well-loved* brother, especially to me. Now he will mean much more to you, both as a man and as a brother in...*Jesus*. So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, PAUL, WRITE THIS WITH MY OWN HAND: I WILL REPAY IT. AND I WON'T MENTION THAT YOU OWE ME YOUR VERY SOUL!

Transition

Paul sent this letter to Philemon along with a letter that was to be read to all the believers in that area. In the letter to the believers, he wrote,*

Colossians 3:1-2, 11

Like Jesus was raised to life, you also have new life because you believe in him. So...desire what God has for you in heaven, where Jesus our Savior sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things that are from heaven, not the things that are from earth. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a descendant of Abraham* or not, whether you follow religious laws or not, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Jesus is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.*

Colossians 3:13-15

Be tolerant of each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, Jesus forgave you, so you must forgive others. More important than anything else, love each other, because it's love that makes us all unified. And let the peace that comes from Jesus, our Savior, rule in your hearts...because you are called to live in peace...*

Example crafted story (transcribed from a told story)

We know that Paul was imprisoned by the Roman authorities; he was put under house arrest. But people came to him to hear the good news about Jesus, and one of these people was a runaway slave. His name meant “useful.” Useful came and served Paul while he was in Rome. The master that Useful had run away from was also a believer, and had come to follow Jesus through the teachings of Paul. And so Paul decided to send Useful back, and he sent him with a letter to his former master. And in the letter Paul said, “I thank my God for you because I hear about your faith and your love for all of God’s people. Now I’m going to ask you a favor. I could demand it of you in the name of Jesus because it’s the right thing for you to do, but I’d rather just ask you. Show kindness to my child Useful. You see, I became his father in the faith while I was in prison, and he became your brother. He’s no longer a slave to you; he’s more than a slave. So welcome him as if you were welcoming me.” So Paul sent that letter to Useful’s master. In that area there were many believers, so Paul sent a letter to be read to all the believers in that area, and Paul said, “You’ve been raised to new life with Jesus, so set your sights on the realities of heaven, and don’t think about whether you’re a descendant of Abraham or not, you follow religious laws or not, if you’re a slave or if you’re free---Jesus is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. Forgive anyone who offends you. Remember---Jesus forgave you, so you should forgive others. Live in harmony. Let the peace that comes from Jesus rule in your hearts, because you are called to live in peace.

Story Crafting

We have used the meaning of Onesimus’ name, *Useful*, rather than requiring our audience to remember a new and different name. This also allows the audience to glean meaning from his name, like the original audience was able to do.

Onesimus’ situation explained in the letter to Philemon provides a useful backdrop for understanding Paul’s letter to the Colossians. By combining Onesimus’ story with parts of Colossians, it provides new insights into Paul’s advice to the Colossians.

Words/Phrases to

Consider

Belief/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.

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.

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. 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.’

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

Your audience’s culture may not have slaves; however, they may have servants. The slaves referred to in these stories are actually owned, and not free. Be sure that your audience understands that Onesimus was not simply a servant, but an owned slave.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words for **belief/faith, master, savior, and descendants of Abraham** that you have been using throughout the story set.

The introduction to this story is important so that your audience can put the story in its context.

Story Set Themes

Freedom

New life

Peace

Forgiveness

Epistles

Colossians 3

Colossians 3:16-4:6

Based on NLT

Introduction

In the letter Paul sent with the runaway slave, Useful, to the believers who lived in his home area, Paul said something that could shock people. He said that slaves should obey their masters! He wasn't suggesting that slavery was a good thing; he was talking about how someone should live his new life as a follower of Jesus. This is what he said:*

Colossians 3:16-17

Let the message about *Jesus*... fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom *Jesus* gives. Sing...songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of *our Master** Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:18-19

Wives, submit to your husbands, *because this is the right thing* for those who belong to *Jesus* to do, and, husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

Colossians 3:20-21

Children, always obey your parents, *because this pleases our Master Jesus*. Fathers, do not *overly criticize* your children, or they will become discouraged.

Colossians 3:22-24, 4:1

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Serve them sincerely because of your *love and respect for Jesus*. Work willingly at whatever you do, as though

you were working for *our Master Jesus* rather than for people. Remember that...the Master you are serving is *Jesus*. Masters, be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master—in heaven.

Colossians 4:5-6

Live wisely among those who are not believers*, and make the most of every opportunity you *have to share with them*. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive (*interesting and pleasant*) so that you will have the *true* response for everyone.

Example crafted story (transcribed from a told story)

When Paul sent the letter back to the runaway slave's master telling him to treat this runaway slave as his brother now, he wrote another letter to really all the believers in that area, and in the letter he described a new way of living--- a living in which whatever you do or you say, when you're a follower of Jesus you do it as if you're representing Jesus himself and you give thanks to him in everything. And then believers should let this message about Jesus fill their lives. If you're a wife, you should respect and submit to your husband---if you're a husband, you should love your wife. You should always treat her well. If you're a son or a daughter, you should obey your parents, because that pleases God. And if you're a parent you shouldn't discourage your children. And he talked about even slaves obeying their masters in everything---not as if they're serving their master but as if they're serving Jesus. Because everyone has a master. The slave and the slave master have a master in heaven. Paul said, "Live wisely. Live in a way so that you can make the most of every opportunity

that you have when you are speaking to non-believers, so that people would be attracted to this good news about Jesus—that you would have the right response for everyone.”

Story Crafting

We chose to say *overly criticize your children*, rather than “frustrate,” in order to make clear what “frustrating” a child might entail. For the same reason, we said *love and respect for Jesus* rather than “reverent fear of the Lord.”

Colossians 3:18-4:6 is a list of examples of what Colossians 3:16-17 asks us to do. In the told story, we made that clear by introducing the list with *And then believers should let this message about Jesus fill their lives*.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Follower/Believer*

These words may be interchangeable in these stories. **Follower/believer** denotes a person who has chosen to believe in and follow Jesus exclusively. We have chosen to not use a word such as *Christian*, which may have unwanted connotations in certain cultures, and may even be understood wrongly. In some South Asian cultures, **believer** may refer to a person who worships outside of the “traditional,” historical church.

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.

Worldview

Passages like these have been used by people to say that the Bible condones slavery and other forms of oppression. Therefore, it is even more important to include the implicit information about *letting this message about Jesus fill their lives*. If you need to state that Paul was not condoning slavery, as we did in the introduction, you may do so.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words for **followers/believers**, and **master** that you have been using in the story set.

This story will be best understood if your audience has already heard the Philemon/Colossians story.

Story Set Themes

Epistles

Freedom

Submission

Ephesians 2

Ephesians 2:1-10, 19-22

Based on NLT

Introduction (from Acts 19:23-41)

Paul wrote letters to other groups of believers too. One of these groups was in Ephesus where Paul had spent several years teaching the good news about Jesus. Ephesus was famous for its grand temple to the goddess Diana. Much of the city's economy revolved around the temple. In fact, when Paul was in Ephesus, some of the men who made artwork for temple idols* accused Paul of speaking against the temple. A huge crowd gathered, but Paul was spared.*

After Paul left, the believers in Ephesus continued to have strong belief, but they also continued to live under the shadow of the Temple of Ephesus. Paul wrote to them so that they could understand about the great power of Jesus and their special relationship* with him.*

Ephesians 2:1-3

Paul said, "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying Satan*—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to act that way too,...and since we were humans like everyone else, we were, like everyone else, going to be punished because God was angry because of our sins.*

Ephesians 2:4-6

*But God... loved us so much, that even though we were *spiritually* dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Jesus, the Promised Savior*, from*

the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) He *actually* raised us from the dead along with Jesus and gave us spiritual life in order that we could rule in unity with him in heaven.*

Ephesians 2:8-10

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it...we are God's masterpiece of art. He has created us anew in...Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Ephesians 2:19-22

Now, you are members of God's family. Together, we are his house,...And the cornerstone is ...Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a special home for him. Through Jesus you... are also being made part of this home where God lives by his Spirit.*

Example crafted story (transcribed from a told story)

Paul had also gone to another city in Greece called Ephesus, and told people the Good News about Jesus there. If you'll remember that it was in Ephesus where these temple artisans gathered a group of people together to try to cause a riot against Paul because they said he was speaking against the temple.

Ephesus was the sight of one of the ancient wonders of the world---the Temple of Diana. The whole city was dominated by the temple, and it was thought that there was an image of Diana that had come down from heaven and was in the temple. These artisans made their living by creating pieces of art that were used in worship of Diana.

The believers in Ephesus grew and continued to grow. After Paul left, he wrote them a letter to remind them of the great power of Jesus---because they continually lived under the shadow of this temple. And Paul wrote to them and said, "You know, before you heard about Jesus, you were dead because of your sins. But God loved us so much that even though we were spiritually dead, he gave us life when he raised Jesus from the dead. It's God's grace that saved you. He raised us from the dead along with Jesus, and now we're seated with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Jesus. God saved you by his grace when you believed. And, you see, there's nothing you can do to take credit for it, because it's like God is the great artisan who's made us as a masterpiece and he's created us new. And now you are the temple of the living God.

Story Crafting

We have used the term *spiritual life* several times in this story to emphasize that the story refers to not physical, but spiritual, life and death.

This story is a beautiful example of how we, as God's creation, and now as a temple for him, are masterpieces of art. This is in sharp contrast to the hollow "masterpieces" that the temple artisans made for the goddess Diana.

Words/Phrases to

Consider

Believers/Followers*

These words may be interchangeable in these stories. **Follower/believer** denotes a person who has chosen to believe in and follow Jesus exclusively. We have chosen to not use a word such as *Christian*, which may have unwanted

connotations in certain cultures, and may even be understood wrongly. In some South Asian cultures, **believer** may refer to a person who worships outside of the "traditional," historical church.

Idol

This refers to a man-made image of a spiritual being, which is often worshiped. Idols were often made of wood, silver, or gold.

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.

Relationship*

Some languages may not have one term for 'relationship,' or the term has unwanted connotations. Some languages express the idea in terms of action. TEV translates Genesis 15:6 as 'Abram put his trust in the LORD, and because of this the LORD was pleased with him and accepted him.'

Sin*

Sin refers to an act of disobedience to God. Be sure that the word you use here does not mean that someone has failed to perform a religious act (i.e. alms, ritual prayer, following religious dietary rules, etc.). If necessary, you can use 'disobedience.'

Satan*

This name refers to the spiritual being, whom God created, who is the leader of the evil spiritual beings who decided to rebel against God. You may need to qualify the name 'Satan' with 'leader of the evil spirits' if 'Satan' is unknown to your audience.

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. 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.’

Grace*

The term “grace” needs to be translated carefully, according to its context. In these contexts, “grace” refers to God’s favor shown to undeserving people, in regards to his salvation freely given. One of the best ways to translate this is “God has acted towards me in a loving and kind way,” or “God has shown his love for us by accepting us as his people through Jesus.”

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

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same terms for **believers/followers, idols, belief, relationship, sin, Satan, Promised**

Savior, grace, and God’s Spirit that you have been using throughout this story set.

Your audience will best understand this story if they are familiar with the story Paul’s in Ephesus from Acts 19.

Story Set Themes

Epistles
New Life
Grace

Ephesians 4

Ephesians 4:1-16

Based on NLT

Introduction (from Acts 20:13-38)

The last time Paul met with the leaders of the Ephesian church, he bade them a tearful farewell, and he told them to lead and teach the believers in Ephesus. Later, Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus,*

Ephesians 4:1-3

...I beg you to lead a life that pleases God, because he has called you. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other...Make every effort to keep yourselves united in God's Spirit...*

Ephesians 4:4-6

Because there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Master, one faith*, one baptism*, and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.*

Ephesians 4:7, 11

However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Jesus...Now these are the gifts Jesus gave to the church*: the *personal representatives of Jesus* (apostles), the *spokesmen** (prophets), the *proclaimer of Good News* (evangelists), and the *overseers* (pastors) and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Jesus. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in *him*, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Jesus.

Ephesians 4:14-15

Then we will no longer be immature like

children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like *Jesus*, who is the head of his body, the church.

Ephesians 4:16

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Example crafted story (transcribed from a told story)

The last time Paul met with the leaders of the believers who were in Ephesus, he prayed with them and he spoke to them and gave them a call to be the right leaders of this group of believers. Later he wrote to them again, and in the letter, he wrote to them and he said, "Jesus has given you the gifts that you need to lead God's people. You see, he's gifted some people to go out to new places to share the gospel, and he's gifted some people to speak special messages from God, and he's gifted some people to share this good news about Jesus with everyone and anyone. He's gifted some people to be the leaders of God's people, and he's gifted some people to teach God's people. You see, you as the leaders---the teachers---your responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work. To build up this church---this body of Jesus. He'll make the whole body fit together perfectly. Each part will do its own work, and the other parts will work together, and you'll have those parts grow so that the whole body---the church---will be healthy and growing and full of love.

Story Crafting

We have chosen to explain the terms *apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors* so that an audience unfamiliar with these titles will understand the function of each role within the church.

It's not easy to remember a list, so we have tried to give enough description that the audience will remember what each role does.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Believers/Followers*

These words may be interchangeable in these stories. **Follower/believer** denotes a person who has chosen to believe in and follow Jesus exclusively. We have chosen to not use a word such as *Christian*, which may have unwanted connotations in certain cultures, and may even be understood wrongly. In some South Asian cultures, **believer** may refer to a person who worships outside of the "traditional," historical church.

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.

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.

Faith/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.

Baptism*

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. Some ideas for translating this term include:

1) to wash someone in water to make him ceremonially clean;

2) to wash someone with water as part of their initiation into the religious community;

3) 'bath,' with a qualification such as 'bath of enlightenment' (Tamil) or 'bath of dedication;'

4) using the word for a custom in the culture that refers to ceremonial washing to make something ritually clean;

5) using the borrowed term with an appositional 'unpacking of meaning,' i.e. 'he was baptized,' 'he was ceremonially washed.'

Keep in mind that in many cultures and religions, people ceremonially wash often to remove sins. You may need to specify that this is a once for all ceremony.

Church*

If the word 'church' in the language conveys something different than the New Testament definition, you might choose to explain the term in a phrase instead of using the word 'church.' In the New Testament, the word never actually refers to a building, but to a group of people who believe in Jesus. In the New Testament, 'church' may refer either to a group of believers who live in one place, or to the wider community of the whole church of Jesus.

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.

Apostle*

Apostles are appointed by Jesus himself as his representative. Their main functions are to preach the Good News, to be founders of the church, to hold spiritual authority in the church, and to be a witness to the fact that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. If your language has an accepted term for "apostle" that is readily understood by all, you may use that term here.

However, if your audience is un-churched or new believers, they may need further explanation, and a different term may be helpful to them. Some suggestions are:

representatives of Jesus Christ

(special) messengers of Jesus Christ

sent-people of Jesus Christ

Whatever term you choose should imply that these people are in a position of trust and authority.

Worldview

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same terms for

believers/followers, God's Spirit,

master, faith, baptism, church,

spokesman, and apostle that you have

used throughout the story set.

Your audience will best understand this story if they are familiar with the story of Paul in Ephesus from Acts 19-20.

Story Set Themes

Epistles

God's Spirit

Gifts of the Spirit

Body of Christ

Ephesians 6

Ephesians 1:19-23, 6:10-18

Based on NLT

Introduction (from Acts 19:13-16)

When Paul first went to Ephesus, God gave him power to perform miracles. When some other people saw this, they tried to cast out an evil spirit using Paul and Jesus' name, but the evil spirit said, "I know Jesus, and I have heard of Paul, but who are you?" Then the evil spirit jumped on them and beat them severely.*

As Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, he warned the believers to live according to God's Spirit* and to live in God's power.*

Ephesians 1:19-23

I...pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised *Jesus* from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand...He is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else...God has put all things under the authority of *Jesus* and has made him head over *the church**, and in fact head of all things. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by *Jesus*, who fills all things...with himself.

Ephesians 6:10-12

...Become strong by letting him make you strong. Put on all of God's armor (those things that he gives you so that you can fight against evil) so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of Satan...We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in

this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:13-17

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand *firm*, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness*. (*Use all of the things that God gives you to fight against evil--the truth about God will be like a belt around your waist, enabling you to run fast. Your right relationship with God will be like a protection for your chest.*) For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, (*Your trust in God will be like a shield for you that stops the fiery arrows that Satan tries to throw at you.*) hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on *the salvation that God has given you* as your helmet, and take the sword *which God's Spirit gives you*, which is the *message that comes from God*.

Ephesians 6:18

Pray in *God's Spirit* at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Example crafted story (transcribed from a told story)

So also while Paul was in Ephesus, there were people who saw that God had given Paul power to do great miracles and even cast out demons. There were seven exorcists who thought that they

would use the name of Jesus and of Paul to cast out a demon. The demon turned on them and beat them severely, and they ran out of the house. After that, all the people brought their books of incantations and witchcraft and burned them so that everyone could see. In Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus he wrote, "I pray that you'll understand God's great power. Everything is under the authority of Jesus. At the same time, you're not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil spirits, demons, mighty powers in the dark world. So when the evil one—Satan---comes and attacks you, you put on God's armor---a spiritual armor---so that you can resist him. Stand your ground. Dress yourself with the body armor of God's righteousness. The fact that you are right with God---that truth is your belt. Your shoes are the peace that comes from the good news about Jesus. Fiery arrows that Satan would send your way--deflect them with the shield of belief in Jesus---your faith. The fact that Jesus has saved you from all of your sins is like a helmet that will protect you. And when the enemy attacks, use the words of God that you've learned like a sword, and you pray in God's Spirit all the time, and persist in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Story Crafting

We have explained the analogy of putting on God's armor as *using all of the things that God gives you to fight against evil* so that people will understand the meaning behind the phrase **God's armor**.

We've explained each piece of God's armor in relation to relationship with God, which is how we describe the concept of **righteousness**.

We've described the **Word of God** as *the message that comes from God* so that it can be more understandable for our audience.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Evil Spirit*

'Evil spirit' refers to spiritual beings who serve Satan as his agents, being under his authority. These spiritual beings have power to oppress a human being and even take control of him. We know from the Bible that evil spirits were created by God and chose to disobey him. It seems that many South Asian languages do not have a term that can express that adequately. (Their 'evil spirit' may refer to a dead person's spirit that 'haunts' people.) Try to choose a word that refers to an independent spirit being that is evil and opposed to God. If there is one, you can also use a neutral word for an independent spiritbeing and add a qualification like 'spirit from Satan,' or 'bad/evil spirit.' Be aware that extra explanation might be necessary during the discussion time.

Believers*

After Pentecost, the people who followed Jesus were also called 'believers.' We've used that term in the story set to refer to Jesus' followers after Pentecost and to emphasize the fact that people became followers of Jesus through belief in him.

Church*

If the word 'church' in the language conveys something different than the New Testament definition, you might choose to explain the term in a phrase instead of using the word 'church.' In the New Testament, the word never

actually refers to a building, but to a group of people who believe in Jesus. In the New Testament, 'church' may refer either to a group of believers who live in one place, or to the wider community of the whole church of Jesus.

Story Set Themes

Epistles

Holy Spirit

Spiritual Warfare

Righteousness*

The Old Testament idea of righteousness is based on relationship between God and man, or between man and man.

'Righteousness' refers to holiness. The CEV (Contemporary English Version) translates this concept in Isaiah 53:11 in the following way:

...he will take the punishment for the sins of others, so that many of them will no longer be guilty.

In other words, 'righteousness' takes away guilt.

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

Intra-Story Cohesion

This story is best understood by an audience that is familiar with Paul and his journeys in the book of Acts.

Use the same key phrases that you have been using throughout the story set.

1 Corinthians 1, 3

1 Corinthians 1:7-13, 3:1-3, 21-23

Based on NLT

Introduction

As Paul was traveling sharing the good news about Jesus, he went to Corinth and spent some time there. Corinth was a major trading center at that time. Many people came from all over the world to Corinth to do business and make their fortunes. As such, Corinth boasted of a quite a diverse population. As might be expected, the believers in Corinth reflected the diverse ethnicities of the city. This sometime caused divisions in the church.

Several key leaders came to Corinth to share the Good News about Jesus. We know of Paul, Peter, and the eloquent speaker, Apollos. The Corinthian believers had begun justifying the divisions in the church by saying they followed different leaders. Paul wrote a stern letter to them in reply.*

1 Corinthians 1:7-9

...You have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Master* Jesus...He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when *he* returns. God will do this, *because* he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus our Master.

1 Corinthians 1:10-12

...Live in harmony with each other. Don't divide yourselves into different groups. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose...but instead, some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow

Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Jesus."

1 Corinthians 1:13

Has Jesus been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, *killed* for you? Were any of you baptized* in the name of Paul? Of course not!...

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

...when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to people *who are guided by God's Spirit**. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in *following Jesus*. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your *natural, evil human desires*. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful* *human nature*? Aren't you living like people *who belong to the world*?

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

So don't boast about '*belonging to*' a particular human leader, *because actually* everything belongs to you—whether Paul or Apollos or Peter, or the world, or life and death, or the present and the future. Everything belongs to you, and you belong to Jesus, and Jesus belongs to God."

Example crafted story

Paul continued to travel and to tell the Good News about Jesus. He came to a city called Corinth. Corinth was a really important city. It was the major trade

center in the whole area. People came from all over to do business there and to make their fortune. Paul stayed there for quite some time and many people believed in Jesus, and a church was formed there. It was a church from all different sorts of people groups. Paul eventually left Corinth, and other leaders came. Apollos came---he was an eloquent speaker---and shared the Good News. Peter came and shared the Good News. But these Corinthian believers were very divided. They would justify their divisions by saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Paul," or "I follow Peter." Paul heard about what was happening in Corinth and he wrote them a letter. He said, "You have everything you need---you have every spiritual gift you need for you to grow up and live in harmony with each other. Don't boast about following me, or following Apollos, or any other human being. Everything belongs to you because you belong to Jesus and Jesus belongs to God.

Story Crafting

Paul was explaining to the Corinthian church that it was their sinful, human nature that was causing divisions in the church. He explained to them what they could do in order to be united together again. Because storying an epistle can be challenging, we have chosen to use only key verses, keeping the story short, memorable, but to the point.

Some of the Corinthian "back story" was included to help the listener better understand the letter's original audience.

We have chosen to describe a "spiritual person" as someone *who is guided by God's Spirit* to describe what a "spiritual

person" does for those who may not be familiar with the term.

We have chosen to use *natural, human desires* to describe what a "sinful nature" is for those who may not understand the term.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Church*

If the word 'church' in the language conveys something different than the New Testament definition, you might choose to explain the term in a phrase instead of using the word 'church.' In the New Testament, the word never actually refers to a building, but to a group of people who believe in Jesus. In the New Testament, 'church' may refer either to a group of believers who live in one place, or to the wider community of the whole church of Jesus.

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.

Baptized*

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. Some ideas for translating this term include:

- 1) to wash someone in water to make him ceremonially clean;
- 2) to wash someone with water as part of their initiation into the religious community;
- 3) 'bath,' with a qualification such as 'bath of enlightenment' (Tamil) or 'bath of dedication;'
- 4) using the word for a custom in the culture that refers to ceremonial washing to make something ritually clean;
- 5) using the borrowed term with an appositional 'unpacking of meaning,' i.e. 'he was baptized,' 'he was ceremonially washed.'

Keep in mind that in many cultures and religions, people ceremonially wash often to remove sins. You may need to specify that this is a once for all ceremony.

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.

Sinful*

Sin refers to an act of disobedience to God. Be sure that the word you use here does not mean that someone has failed to perform a religious act (i.e. alms, ritual prayer, following religious dietary rules, etc.). If necessary, you can use 'disobedience.'

Worldview

Intra-Story Cohesion

This story is best understood by an audience who has heard about Paul and his experience in Corinth.

Use the same key words you have been using throughout the story set.

Story Set Themes

Epistles
New Life
Unity
Holy Spirit
Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 2

1 Corinthians 1:17-18, 2:1-7, 13-14

Based on NLT

Introduction

The society in Corinth was obsessed with status and had a very defined class system. There were two ways to obtain status: making a lot of money, and winning a lot of debates. In fact, many philosophers came to Corinth and started debating schools where they taught people how to debate. One of the first things a Corinthian was taught was to belittle his opponent and to puff himself up by boasting about his wealth and previous debate victories. The Corinthian church grew up from out of this culture. As such, Paul continually reminded them about humility and relying on the power of Jesus rather than on human wisdom...*

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan...I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus *the Promised Savior**, the one who *died for you*.

1 Corinthians 1:17-18

...Jesus sent me... to preach the Good News about him—and not with clever speech, so that the real message of his death in order to take our punishment... would not lose its power. The message of his death and resurrection is foolish to those who are headed for destruction because they fail to recognize the power of this message! But we who are being saved know that this message is the very power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:3-5

I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of *God's Spirit**. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:6-7

Yet when I am among mature believers, I do speak with words of wisdom, but not the kind of wisdom that belongs to this world or to the rulers of this world, who are soon forgotten. No, the wisdom we speak of is the mystery of God—his plan that was previously hidden, *but now he's revealed to us so that we can share in his splendor*.

1 Corinthians 2:13-14

When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by *God's Spirit*, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths...It all sounds foolish to *people who aren't guided by God's Spirit* and they can't understand it, *because only those who listen to God's Spirit can understand what the Spirit means*.

Example Crafted Story

So, people in Corinth were obsessed with their status in society. The whole Corinthian society was stratified, and everybody knew their place. The only way you could move up in society was to make a lot of money, or to become a great speaker or debater. Many philosophers came, and they started

debate schools in Corinth, and they taught people to boast about how many debates they won and how smart they were---to belittle their opponent. And Paul continually warned the Corinthian church against thinking in that way. He wrote them a letter, and he said, "When I came to you I didn't use impressive wisdom or lofty words. I told you plainly about Jesus because Jesus sent me to tell you the Good News about him---not with clever speech, because he did not want to take away from the power of the cross. The cross is just foolishness for unspiritual people, but we know that it's the very power of God. When I came to you I came to you timid, trembling. Everything I said was plain. I only relied on the power of God and the Holy Spirit. When I say things like this---that you shouldn't use words that come from human wisdom---that you should speak words given by God's Spirit, I expect you to understand those things because you are a spiritual person. People who have no spiritual understanding can't receive these truths. It sound like foolishness to them, but you---you can understand what God's Spirit speaks."

Story Crafting

Because this story is not a chronological narrative, we can arrange the information in a way that flows better and makes it easier to remember.

Words/Phrases to

Consider

Church*

If the word 'church' in the language conveys something different than the New Testament definition, you might choose to explain the term in a phrase instead of using the word 'church.' In the New Testament, the word never

actually refers to a building, but to a group of people who believe in Jesus. In the New Testament, 'church' may refer either to a group of believers who live in one place, or to the wider community of the whole church of Jesus.

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. 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.'

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

An audience who lives in a similar culture will find it easy to understand and relate to the culture of Corinth. If your audience does not come from a similar culture, further description of debating may be necessary.

Intra-Story Cohesion

This story is best understood by an audience who has heard about Paul and his experience in Corinth.

Use the same key words you have been using throughout the story set.

Story Set Themes

Epistles

New Life

Holy Spirit

Wisdom

Revelation

Revelation 13:1-14, 16:13-16, 19:11-21, 20:1-15, 21:1-6

Based on NLT

Introduction

Jesus' followers continued to tell others the Good News about Jesus. Many of them suffered and were killed for their belief*. One of Jesus' followers, John, was with him while he was on the earth. John was imprisoned on a deserted island because he told others about Jesus. When John was an old man on this island, God gave him a precious gift. God showed him what will happen when Jesus comes back at the end of this world as we know it.*

Revelation 16:15

John knew that Jesus is coming back! And Jesus said to him, "Look, I will come as unexpectedly as a thief! Happy are all who are watching for me, who keep their clothing ready so they will not have to walk around naked and ashamed."

Revelation 13:1-15

In his vision, John said that he saw...a beast rising up out of the sea...Satan* gave the beast his own power and throne and great authority. (Sometimes we call this beast the 'antichrist.')*...People worshiped* Satan for giving the beast such power, and they also worshiped the beast. "Who is as great as the beast?" they exclaimed. "Who is able to fight against him?"...And the beast was allowed to wage war against God's chosen people and to conquer them. And he was given authority to rule over every tribe and people and language and nation. And all the people who belong to this world and did not believe in Jesus worshiped the beast...Then I saw another

beast come up out of the earth...*He acted as a spokesman* for the first beast.* He exercised all the authority of the first beast. And he required all the earth and its people to worship the first beast...He did astounding miracles*, even making fire flash down to earth from the sky while everyone was watching...And with all the miracles he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast, he deceived all the people who belong to this world...Then *it was* commanded that anyone refusing to worship *the first beast* must die.

Revelation 16:14, 16

The beast, the spokesman, and their evil spirits gathered all the rulers of the world in one place to wage war against Almighty God himself...to a place with the...name Armageddon.*

Revelation 19: 11-21

Then *John* saw heaven* opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was *Jesus*---named Faithful and True, *because* he judges fairly and wages a righteous* war. His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns...The armies of heaven...followed him on white horses. From his mouth came a sharp sword...On his robe...was written this title: King of all kings and Lord* of all lords...Then I saw the beast and the kings of the world and their armies gathered together to fight against the one sitting on the horse and his army. And the beast was captured, and with him the false *spokesman* who did mighty miracles on behalf of the beast—miracles that deceived all who had accepted the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. Both the beast and his false *spokesman* were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Their entire army was killed by the sharp sword that came from the mouth of the one riding the white horse. And the vultures all gorged themselves on the dead bodies.

Revelation 20:1-4

...Satan *was*...bound...in chains for a thousand years...Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished...And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for proclaiming the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their forehead or their hands. They all came to life again, and they reigned with *Jesus* for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:7-15

When the thousand years come to an end, Satan will be let out of his prison. He will go out to deceive the nations...in every corner of the earth. He will gather them together for battle—a mighty army, as numberless as sand along the seashore. And *John* saw them as they went up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded God's people...But fire from heaven came down on the attacking armies and consumed them. Then *Satan*, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake..., joining the beast and the false *spokesman*. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever...Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire...And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life---*that book that shows who has chosen to follow Jesus*---was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:1-6

Then *John* saw a new heaven and a new earth, *because* the old heaven and the old

earth had disappeared...And *he* saw the *chosen* city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. *John* heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, *because* what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And he also said, "It is finished! I am...the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life..."

Example Crafted Story

This story starts with one of Jesus' followers who also went everywhere telling people about him. His name was John. He was one of Jesus' closest followers who walked with him when he was on earth. John was imprisoned because he told people about Jesus, and he was sent to a desert island. When he was an old man on that desert island, God gave him an amazing gift---he gave him a vision about the end of time as we know it and about how Jesus will return. So John described for us what's going to happen at the end of time. He quoted Jesus during this vision. Jesus said, "When I come, I'm going to come like a thief comes in the night. You won't know when I'm coming, but what's important is that you are ready when I come, so that you won't be ashamed when I do come. And John described what the world was like just before Jesus

comes back. In that world, Satan has great power. In fact, Satan will bring up someone that John described as a beast. Others call him the Antichrist. And Satan will give him huge power. He'll be a ruler over many nations. He'll even have his own prophet*—John called this prophet the second beast. And this second beast will perform amazing miracles in the name of the first beast, and he'll make people worship the beast. He'll even make a huge idol of the beast, and he'll make people worship the idol of the beast. And if you don't, you'll be killed. And many people will be beheaded because they refused to worship the beast. This beast will gather an army together and he and his prophet will gather this army in one place to wage war against God. They'll come and gather in a place we call Armageddon. And John described as he watched this huge army gathering at Armageddon---and he looked up and he saw the heavens opened. And he saw a white horse with a rider. He described the rider as having eyes that were burning like flames, and the words coming out of his mouth were like a sword. And as he rode out, the armies of heaven followed him. On his robe was written his title: the king of kings---the lord of lords. It was Jesus. As he came out to meet the prophet and his armies, the beast and the prophet were captured and they were thrown into a lake of burning fire that burned for eternity. And then Jesus turned, and with his voice he killed everyone in the enemy army. Then Satan was taken, and he was bound up, and he was imprisoned for one thousand years. And after that every person who had died because they refused to worship the beast---those who were beheaded---they were raised back to life. And they reigned in peace over

all the earth with Jesus for a thousand years. At the end of the thousand years, Satan was allowed to go free. He deceived the nations and turned them away from Jesus. Satan gathered a huge army, greater than all the grains of sands on the seashore, to wage war against Jesus. They came to the plains outside the city where Jesus was. John described the huge army that was there, and as they arrived and settled, fire came from heaven and utterly destroyed the army. And Satan was taken and thrown into the lake of burning fire where he was to be tormented along with the beast and the prophet of the beast for eternity. And then Jesus took death itself and threw it into the lake of fire. Then, every person, from the beginning of time until that moment, who had died was raised back to life, and they were judged. If you were a follower of Jesus and believed in him, then your name was written in the Book of Life. But if your name was not in the Book of Life, you were taken and thrown into the lake of fire. Then John described how the earth and the heaven as it was disappeared and a new heaven and a new earth replaced it. There was a voice from heaven that called out, "Now God lives among his people. He will be their God and he will live with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more suffering, no more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain." And Jesus turned to John, and he said, "I am the beginning and the end. Write all these things down so that everyone will know that if they will come to me and follow me they can live with me forever.

Story Crafting

This story is meant to be a broad summary of the second comings of Jesus as described in Revelation. It is meant to show the listener that Jesus is all-powerful and victorious as king in the end, and that those on his side win. As a broad summary, many events were omitted from this story. However, we have insured that this summary presents an accurate portrayal of the plotline.

We have re-chronologized Jesus' statement that he is coming like a thief in the night to the beginning of the story so that it can set up the events that follow.

We have chosen to use the name for the antichrist that John himself uses---the *beast*.

We have chosen to simply identify the dragon as Satan himself, and the rider on the white horse as Jesus, in order to reduce confusion for our listeners.

We have described the Book of Life for those listeners who may not be familiar with the term.

In the crafted story, we have chosen to interpret the sword that comes out of Jesus' mouth and that kills the enemies as the "Word of God"---his voice itself, as many commentaries also interpret it.

Words/Phrases to

Consider

Followers/Believers*

These words may be interchangeable in these stories. **Follower/believer** denotes a person who has chosen to believe in and follow Jesus exclusively. We have chosen to not use a word such as

Christian, which may have unwanted connotations in certain cultures, and may even be understood wrongly. In some South Asian cultures, **believer** may refer to a person who worships outside of the "traditional," historical church.

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.

Satan*

This name refers to the spiritual being, whom God created, who is the leader of the evil spiritual beings who decided to rebel against God. You may need to qualify the name 'Satan' with 'leader of the evil spirits' if 'Satan' is unknown to your audience.

Worship*

Worship's foundation is the idea of 'service,' shown through showing awe and wonder to God. 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.

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.

Master/Lord*

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.

Miracles*

This words refer to powerful deeds; a happening that evokes awe; something that points to a truth beyond itself.

Evil Spirits*

'Evil spirit' refers to spiritual beings who serve Satan as his agents, being under his authority. These spiritual beings have power to oppress a human being and even take control of him. We know from the Bible that evil spirits were created by God and chose to disobey him. It seems that many South Asian languages do not have a term that can express that adequately. (Their 'evil spirit' may refer to a dead person's spirit that 'haunts' people.) Try to choose a word that refers to an independent spirit being that is evil and opposed to God. If there is one, you can also use a neutral word for an

independent spirit being and add a qualification like 'spirit from Satan,' or 'bad/evil spirit.' Be aware that extra explanation might be necessary during the discussion time.

Heaven*

Heaven can refer to the sky, or to the place where God and his angels live, depending on the context. When it refers to the place where God lives, it is also the ultimate destination of believers. If your language does not have an adequate word for 'heaven,' or if the hearers do not understand adequately the concept of heaven at this stage, you can replace it with 'the place where God lives.'

Righteous*

The Old Testament idea of righteousness is based on relationship between God and man,

or between man and man.

'Righteousness' refers to holiness. The CEV (Contemporary English Version) translates this concept in Isaiah 53:11 in the following way:

*...he will take the punishment
for the sins of others,
so that many of them
will no longer be guilty.*

In other words, 'righteousness' takes away guilt.

Worldview

Many cultures attach significance to colors. Be aware of what the color white would indicate in your culture.

Some cultures may have an end-times story or prophecy. Be aware of what that story is, because some may be similar to this story.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words for all the “words and phrases to consider” that you have been using throughout the story set.

This story is a full-circle ending for a story set that begins with the Son of Man story. Your audience will understand this story best if they have some idea of Jesus as King.

Story Set Themes

Epistles

End-times Prophecy

Kingship of Jesus

New Life

Victory over evil

Victory over suffering