



George Vimensi Minang - Cameroon  
*My Experience with Biblical Storytelling*

It all started in 2007 when I was writing my thesis for graduation from the Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary Ndu. My research topic was ‘A Critical Approach to Contextualizing the Gospel message in the Cameroonian local church.’

From my research, I realized that the gospel is not really relevant to many grassroots people in their cultural settings. Much attention is not really given to the culture of the people vis a vis the local languages, songs, folktales (stories) rituals, celebrations and attire. This led me to ask, “How can we help our people to see the gospel as relevant to them in their cultures?” It is evident that a ‘new touch’ is needed in the presentation of the gospel to the majority of people who are not literate.

As I began to search for this new touch, storytelling came up as a major form through which we can present the gospel to our oral culture people in their context. This is because each tribe has a storytelling tradition. From the book “Perspective on World Christian Movement” (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1992) I read Tom Steffen’s article on ‘Why Communicate the Gospel through Stories?’ (pages 375-383.) I also discovered the web address of the Network of Biblical Storytellers in a magazine from the Seminary library. I started browsing the web site. It gave me a lot of information on biblical storytelling and I was encouraged the more to tell Bible stories.

When I got out of Seminary, I took the challenge one Sunday in 2008 and presented a sermon in story form in Njenka Baptist Church, Bali Nyonga NW Region of Cameroon. The response from the Christians was very touching and encouraging. I then contacted Dr. Tracy Radosevic who encouraged me and recommended that I should get the book, *Story Journey* by Tom Boomershine. Through the help of my teacher and friend, Mr. Lance Rundus, I got the book two years later in August 2010.

All along, I had been telling the stories in my own way, but when I started studying Story Journey, it opened my eyes to the art of biblical storytelling the NBS way. I was excited with my new discoveries so much that I wanted to share them with others. On December 30, 2010, I organized my first biblical storytelling workshop in Ntenka Baptist church, Ndop. Twelve people attended and left with great testimonies about biblical storytelling.

I am writing this from the Gambia as a participant in the Biblical Storytelling Institute run by the Network of Biblical Storytellers (NBS). God has given me the opportunity through sponsorship by the NBS Board to take advantage of the training in the West Africa Region for pastors, Christian educators and laity. I have had the good fortune to meet and learn from professional biblical storytellers like Aunty Juliana Rowe, Rev. Dr. Tom and Rev. Amelia Boomershine, Rev. Tim Coombs, Rev. and Mrs. Richard Rice and Aunty Thelma Ruffin Thomas. My life and ministry have been greatly enriched through the workshops and plenary sessions they led. When I get back to Cameroon, I will spare no effort to share the skills of biblical storytelling with other pastors and laity. My little group will grow and I will increase the number of workshops I do. I thank God for all in the NBS family who made funds available for me to attend this Institute. It is my prayer that one day, we will have a similar Institute in Cameroon.

Post Script:

Since returning to Cameroon,

George writes: On the 8th of April I will be speaking to over 500 children in a Children's Camp. They are going to be hearing lots of biblical stories. This morning I have just introduced another pastor to Biblical storytelling. In a nearby village he has a congregation of over 60 people but only about 10 are literate. I have handed the other copy of Paul Koehler's, "Telling God's Stories With Power" to him as a gift. He is excited and has promised to be in my next workshop. His name is Pastor Ngankeng Divine from Grace Baptist Church, Ntankoh.

Juliana's response: This is wonderful news! So good to see how you are scattering the seeds of biblical storytelling by bringing another pastor into this ministry right away upon your return to Cameroon. I can see that you don't want that flame to go out, and to that end you have quickly found another piece of wood and put it in the fire to get a bigger flame for a bigger shine! May God bless everything you do to His honor and glory! Happy to see that the other copy of the Paul Koehler book has found a home in the hands of a Pastor whose congregation is primarily 'oral culture.' I know he will put it into good use. Have discussions with him as to what he has discovered as useful in the book, and share your insights with him. This way you will be helping each other and keeping his interest in biblical storytelling alive. I will definitely get in touch with him.

I wish you well with the children. That repetition method works very well with them in a simple story. Would love to know how you fare. One important point I forgot to include in my report on working with the children before the competition at GPI on March 24, is this: In the Temptation story where Jesus was taken to a high mountain, I said to these Gambian children, 'you know when you stand on a mountain and look down, you see everything below' and the teacher, Susan Smith said, "These Gambian children have never been on a mountain, the Gambia is flat!" How profound! Then I quickly came back with, 'you have all been to the Tower 22, and in unison they said, 'yes,' and I said, 'you see all of Banjul on one side and Ser-rakunda on the other side.' They all said, 'yes!' Then I continued with the story. It is amazing how one needs to be aware of so many things about the people we tell stories to and to use examples of what they know and can relate to when we prepare them for the story. Blessings...