

Storytelling

Quarter 7 | Lesson 13 | Life Skills

1. **Connecting:** Tell stories about pictures.

2. **Teaching:** Learn storytelling skills from the parable of the vineyard workers (Matthew 20:1–16).

3. **Responding:** Tell stories and learn about telling God's story.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- Pencils
- Memory Verse Poster
- Student Pages
- *The NIV Action Study Bible*

Teacher Devotion

Hear this, you elders; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your ancestors? Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation.

Joel 1:2–3

When the prophet Joel spoke these words, locusts were ruining Judah's crops. The greedy and consuming locusts were a picture of what the people of Israel had become. They worshipped other gods and abused the poor. They had forgotten God and cared only about themselves. God used the locusts to get His people's attention. Joel knew that unless the story was told and people learned from it, future generations would repeat the same mistakes.

Think about your own story. If possible, write it down. What brought you to the Lord? What good things and difficult things have happened in your life? What has God taught you through them? Your story is part of a much larger story—God's story. And His story is not finished yet. Give Him honour by sharing the story of what He has done in your life. Share your place in His story! Your part in God's story can transform future generations—but only if you tell it.

Lesson Time

1. **Connecting:** Tell stories about pictures.

Greet your students warmly. As the students arrive, ask them to share about any opportunities they had to do public speaking. You can even have them share short speeches.

When you are ready to begin class, divide the class into 4 groups. Tear out the pictures at the end of the lesson, and give each group 1 copy of the picture.

- **Last time, we learned some helpful public speaking skills. What were the most important things we learned?**

Allow 2–3 students to share their thoughts.

Today we will learn about a special kind of public speaking—storytelling. Telling good stories is so common for many of us that we do not even think about it. But we all know people who tell great stories and people whose stories are not as interesting to listen to. Today we will learn how to be good storytellers!

A good story creates a picture in our minds. We see the action and know the characters. Good storytellers can make stories seem so real that you feel as if you had experienced the story yourself!

Let's tell some stories now. Look at your group's picture. Together, you will create a story about the picture.

Explain that the groups will tell stories about their pictures. The first student will start the story and share 1 sentence about what is happening in the picture. Then the next student will add a sentence, and then the next. Give the groups 4–5 minutes to do this activity. Then ask 2 groups to share their stories with the class.

- **Which of these stories were the most interesting? Why?**
- **Why do you think stories are important?**
- **Why do you think some stories are easier to remember than others?**

Stories communicate information in a way that is easily understood. So stories allow us to share complicated ideas and emotions. They help us remember events well. They help people to connect with each other as they share experiences and emotions. Stories can teach us lessons and help us deal with difficult situations. Stories are also entertaining.

- **What are some of your favourite stories?**
- **Why do you like them?**

Today we will talk about storytelling and learn how to tell stories from the greatest storytellers of all time.

2. Teaching: Learn storytelling skills from the parable of the vineyard workers (Matthew 20:1–16).

The Bible is God's story. You may remember that the Bible was originally shared as 1 generation told the stories to their children, who told the stories to their children, and so on. Eventually, it was written down and put into a book. God's story has been shared, remembered, and treasured for thousands of years.

- **Why do you think God uses stories to share His love for us?**

While Jesus was on earth, He often used stories to teach His followers. The stories He told are called parables, which are simple stories that illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson.

- **Why do you think Jesus chose to use stories to teach His followers?**

Teacher Tip: Not all stories are histories. Many stories are for enjoyment or to illustrate a point. The stories might communicate an event or an emotion. Remind the teens of Philippians 4:8, which they learned in Lesson 11. If the story supports what is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, or praiseworthy, it helps others to think of the things God has called us to think of.

Listen to this story that Jesus told His disciples. As you listen, think of what characteristics of good storytelling Jesus used in His story.

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, "You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?"

"Because no one has hired us," they answered. He said to them, "You also go and work in my vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first." The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. "These who were hired last worked only one hour," they said, "and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day" But he answered one of them, "I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

Matthew 20:1–16

Teacher Tip: If it is helpful, explain to your students that a denarius is money.

- Did you like the story? Why or why not?

Jesus' story is simple. The characters and events are easy to understand, and listeners can remember the details from the beginning of the story until the end. The language is clear and direct. When you tell a story, it is important that the reader can follow the events and understand what is being said.

- What made the story simple?
- Do you think telling this story in a simple way helped Jesus to communicate His message? Why or why not?

Jesus' story is also about something that could really happen. His message is truthful and not exaggerated. If you are telling a real story, it is important to share details while also remaining truthful to what happened. Even when you are telling a story you have made up, it is important that your listeners can believe that the story you are telling could really happen. When you tell a good story, your listeners can imagine how they would feel if they were in the situation.

- What parts of the story made it seem real?
- Do you think telling this story that seemed like it could happen helped Jesus to communicate His message? Why or why not?

Jesus' story is also emotional. We can understand the surprise of the last workers and the anger of the first ones. These are emotions we have all experienced and can understand. When you tell a story that includes emotions, it helps your listeners to understand the story and the characters better.

- Were the emotions in this story believable? Why or why not?
- Do you think using emotions in the story helped Jesus to communicate His message? Why or why not?

Jesus' story also has a valuable message. Not all stories have messages. Some are just for fun. But stories that have meaningful messages are easy to remember and help the listeners to learn.

- What message does Jesus' story have?

Guide the students to understand that Jesus is sharing that everyone is equal. Whether you trust and believe in Him at the beginning of your life or at the end, you will receive the same reward—His forgiveness and the gift of eternal life.

- Do you think you understood the message more clearly because it was told through a story? Why or why not?
- What other storytelling skills did Jesus use?

If the students do not mention them, share that He used details and conversation between characters.

Jesus told meaningful and memorable stories because He understood how important stories are and how to tell good ones. You can tell good stories, too. Besides those we saw in Jesus' story, here are some other good tips to help you become a good storyteller.

Teacher Tip: When appropriate, have the teens give examples to illustrate these tips.

Use details to describe when and where the story takes place. This helps the listeners feel that they are part of the story.

Use a lot of emotion and vary your tone of voice to make your story more interesting to the listeners. Match your tone of voice to the emotion of the words. If you want, you can use different voices for different characters.

Use movements and facial expressions. You can even act out some of the actions. This makes your story more interesting for the listeners.

Use details to describe the characters, too. This will help your listeners to get to know who they are, what they are like, and what they think and feel.

Tell the truth. Be careful not to lie or exaggerate if you are telling a story based on actual events. Just like in public speaking, credibility is important.

Practice! The more you tell stories, the better you will become at telling them.

3. Responding: Tell stories and learn about telling God's story.

You can all be great storytellers. You know stories that are worth sharing with others—for enjoyment or to help others learn and grow.

Think of a story that you would like to share. It could be a favourite Bible story, a story you heard and enjoyed, a story from your own life, or a story you make up.

Give teens a minute to think. Then have them find partners for the activity.

Tell your story to your partner. It should be short, only 1–2 minutes. Try to use some of the storytelling skills you have learned. When you are done, your partner will share the most important part of your story in 1 sentence. Then he will tell a story, and you will share the most important part of his story in 1 sentence.

As the students share their stories, walk around the room to listen. Encourage the teens by showing interest. When they are done, ask the following questions:

- **Did your partner understand the main idea of your story?**
- **If so, what skills did you use to help her remember?**
- **If not, what do you think you could improve to make your story clearer and more memorable?**

Optional: If you are using the Student Pages, the students can write or draw their stories on their pages.

The Bible is filled with powerful and memorable stories. Listen to what the psalmist said about telling stories.

Have a student read Psalm 71:15–18 aloud from the Bible. If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long—though I know not how to relate them all. I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone. Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.

Psalm 71:15–18

- **What kind of stories do you think the speaker of this passage told?**

Guide the students to understand that the psalmist told stories about what God had done in his life. We know this because he says, “To this day I declare your marvellous deeds,” “I will proclaim your righteous deeds,” and “I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.”

- **According to this passage, why is it important to the storyteller to tell these stories?**

God told His story in the Bible, and Jesus told stories to His followers. These stories help us to understand more about who God is and what He has done for us. We read about love, war,

forgiveness, lies, betrayal, reconciliation, and so much more. There are many exciting stories in the Bible that you can share with others.

You are an important part of God's story, too. That is a great story to share!

Close class with this blessing based on Psalm 71:15–18.

Blessing: May you honour God by telling His story and your own. May you see His marvellous deeds in your life, and may you know that you are an important part of His story.

Family Connection: Encourage the students to ask a family member, "What is your favourite story?" Teens should ask to hear the story and listen respectfully to it.

Lead the children in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"What a Beautiful Name" by Hillsong Worship: <https://youtu.be/r5L6QIAH3L4>