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# Oral Culture and Digital Natives: What the American Church Can Learn from the Mission Field

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

ORAL CULTURE AND DIGITAL NATIVES:  
WHAT THE AMERICAN CHURCH CAN LEARN FROM THE MISSION FIELD

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
PAMELA JEAN HISCOCK BRAMAN

PORTLAND, OREGON

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Portland Seminary  
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on February 16, 2018  
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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## DEDICATION

To Marsh, who is a source of life to me, always.

To Mom & Dad, who believe in me, always.

To Jenn, our daughter, always.

## ACKNOWLEDEMENTS

I could not have completed this doctorate without a number of people who journeyed with me.

I am deeply grateful for the love and support of my family. My husband Marshal has cheered me on, kept me going, driven the car (while I read or wrote), handled a cross country move virtually without me, cooked, cleaned, and made me laugh at the most crucial of moments. When I was convinced I couldn't get it done, he assured me I could. He has sacrificed significantly for this dissertation to become a reality. My parents, Phil and Elaine Hiscock, have supported me in a myriad of ways throughout this journey as well, praying, cheering me on, giving, and even editing (my father has edited my papers since elementary school. It seems appropriate that he edit the last of my school papers). Our daughter, Jennifer Anang, has also encouraged, being sweetly sensitive to "not bothering me" when she knew I was knee-deep in research or writing. I love you all.

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each other, and kept each other going. I value each of you deeply, and don't know if I would have finished without you. Thank you Janene Zielinski, Jacqueline Bland, Madleine Sara, and Brenda Nagunst.

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## ABSTRACT

Digital Natives (those who have grown up with technology) are not just a new generation, they are a new culture which learns in a different way than the literate culture of preceding generations, but with significant similarities to oral cultures. Because of this, storytelling training models effectively working within oral culture can be utilized with Digital Natives for the successful training of emerging leaders within the Church.

Section 1 describes the problem: Digital Natives differ greatly from the generations before them, including the way they learn. This creates a challenge to the Church in developing new generations of Christian leaders. Section 2 examines a variety of methods that the Church is using to train Digital Natives for leadership, and asks whether or not they are fully connecting with this new culture. Section 3 examines primary oral cultures, and how they differ from literate culture, then makes the case that digital culture and oral cultures have much in common, and therefore what is being learned about effective training in oral cultures in the developing world can be utilized with Digital Natives. Sections 4 and 5 lay out the non-fiction book proposal that arises from this thesis: a series of workbooks, plus additional online companion material, for training Digital Native leaders using biblical storytelling. Section 6 lists out the many possibilities for future research in this area. The artifact is the first three workbooks in a series called *The Story Leadership Initiative*, plus the online companion material.

## SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM

### **Introduction**

Superintendent Pam has a problem. She oversees denominational churches in western New York, and is looking ahead at a substantial portion of pastors retiring in the near future. Forty-two percent of the pastors under her oversight are over fifty-five years old. Churches want spiritually mature pastor-leaders when their pastor leaves, but there are very few people in the pipeline to replace these pastors. Two significant churches have had openings for months because the needed pastors are not to be found. She's done a nationwide search, but knows that the problem of retiring pastors is even worse for others, resulting in a shortage of skilled ministers. To compound the problem, the number of young pastors coming into the denomination is small, and Jack is typical of those younger pastors who are coming in: he believes that because he has a seminary degree, he's been fully trained for ministry. When asked to attend further training, he writes on his notepad (which he leaves behind) "blah, blah, blah" indicating his displeasure with the training. The church that he has been given to pastor is shrinking. Outreach is not effective. He believes that creating a good website will bring people in. He does not understand that he is being ineffective in ministry. Pam would like to find a replacement for him, but the reality is she cannot even fill the empty spots right now. Jack will stay, but unless there is some way to engage him in training, his church will continue to suffer.

This dissertation presents realities and challenges, as well a way forward, when it comes to preparing a new generation for leadership within the church. The primary

context is the Free Methodist denomination within the northeastern United States, and the primary audience is older pastors who may be willing to invest in training younger ones.

Digital Natives (those who have grown up with technology<sup>1</sup>) are not just a new generation, but a new culture with significant similarities to oral cultures. Because of this, storytelling training models effectively working within oral culture can be utilized with Digital Natives to successfully train emerging leaders within the Church. This includes learning that is visual, social, and interactive.

In this first section, the realities of the emerging generations will be explored. How technology rewires the brain will be examined, as will the impact of this reality. The different culture of those who have grown up with technology will be noted, including how they learn differently than previous generations.

### **Church Leadership Realities**

The church in the United States is in a leadership crisis. Boomers (those born between the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s), form the second-largest generation in American history and boomers are both aging and retiring. Boomers make up a significant percentage of pastors. The millennial generation (defined as those born in the early 1980s to the early 2000s), though larger than the boomers, do not appear to be stepping up to fill the shoes of aging pastors.

When George Barna published his 1992 findings in *Today's Pastors*, the median age of Protestant clergy was 44 years old. One in three pastors was under the age of 40, and one in four was over 55. Just 6 percent were 65 or older. Twenty-five years later, the average age is 54. Only one in seven pastors is under 40, and half are over 55. The percentage of church leaders 65 and older has nearly tripled, meaning there are now more pastors in the oldest age bracket than there are

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<sup>1</sup> While a broad of definition “technology” includes machinery from long ago, for the purposes of this paper “technology” includes digitally based machinery that is now common in homes: computers, smart phones, televisions, gaming systems, etc.

leaders younger than 40 . . . The upward climb did not begin in the 1990s. In 1968, 55 percent of all Protestant clergy were under the age of 45—that is, the *majority* of all church leaders were in their 20s, 30s and early 40s. In 2017, just 22 percent are under 45.<sup>2</sup>

If half of all pastors are over fifty-five, the Church is in desperate need for a younger generation to rise up and prepare to take on pastoral leadership within the church. What if this does not happen? A 2014 blog and podcast bluntly explains: “There will be more pastoral vacancies than qualified candidates.”<sup>3</sup>

One challenge is the general lack of millennial engagement in the Church.

A 2013 study by the Barna Group found that “Millennials (those 30 and under) stand out as least likely to value church attendance; only two in 10 believe it is important”<sup>4</sup> The Pew Research Center’s 2014 Religious Landscape Study found: “More than a third of adults in the millennial generation (35%) now say they have no religion, up 10 points from 2007 . . . Roughly a third (34%) of older millennials (now ages 25-33) identify as unaffiliated, up from 25% among this same cohort in 2007 (when they were 18-26).”<sup>5</sup>

Attempts to get millennials (as well as younger generations) back to church abound: updating technology, using social media, preaching in blue jeans, changing

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<sup>2</sup> “The Aging of America’s Pastors,” Barna Group, March 1, 2017, accessed August 2, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/aging-americas-pastors>.

<sup>3</sup> Thom Rainer, “The Impending Retirement of a Generation of Pastors,” ThomRainer.com, October 17, 2014, accessed July 31, 2017, <http://thomrainer.com/2014/10/impending-retirement-generation-pastors-rainer-leadership-076>.

<sup>4</sup> “Americans Divided on the Importance of Church,” Barna Group, March 24, 2014, accessed July 21, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/americans-divided-on-the-importance-of-church/#.V-hxhLVy6FD>.

<sup>5</sup> “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project, May 12, 2015, Chapter 4: The Shifting Religious Identity of Demographic Groups, accessed July 21, 2017, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape>.

theology, modeling authenticity in a public way. But is it working? Based on attendance, it appears that it is not.

Thom Rainer, in his book “The Millennials” concludes, “Religious institutions have failed to be a force in the lives of the millennials.”<sup>6</sup>

For the Church to not only survive but thrive as the boomer generation retires and hands over the reigns of church leadership, it is imperative to understand how to connect with millennials and younger generations. They must not only be reached with the good news of Jesus, but their leadership must be developed in ways that allow a new generation of healthy, godly Christian leaders to rise.

In order to do so, the Church must first understand this emerging generation and culture, beginning with the shaping influence of technology.

### **Digital Immersion**

When describing a generation growing up surrounded by technology, educator Marc Prensky coined the term *Digital Native* in an article published in 2001. The term, which includes millennials<sup>7</sup> and younger,<sup>8</sup> has taken hold in our culture. Prensky wrote:

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<sup>6</sup> Thom S. Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), Kindle, Location 1671.

<sup>7</sup> There is some debate about whether or not all millennials should be included in the term “digital natives,” particularly older millennials. It could be argued that access to technology was not available to all. Alternatively, it could be argued that differences in access to technology did not ultimately matter, because the entire millennial generation became a new culture, adapting to the cultural norms around them. This paper will not dwell on this argument, since in recent years, at least 95% of teens age 12-17 are online. (Janna Anderson and Lee Rainie, “Main Findings: Teens, Technology, and Human Potential in 2020,” Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech, February 28, 2012, accessed August 2, 2017, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/02/29/main-findings-teens-technology-and-human-potential-in-2020>.) Functionally, the new generation is immersed in technology.

<sup>8</sup> Note that while the terms “millennials” and “digital natives” have wide acceptance, authors use other terms for people within this age bracket. Gen Y, Gen iY, Gen Z, Net Gens, and Gen Me would all be groups that would fit within the largest category of “digital natives.” Various researchers, focused on

Our students today are all “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games, and the internet . . . Digital Natives are used to receiving information really fast. They like to parallel process and multitask. They prefer their graphics before their text rather than the opposite. They prefer random access (like hypertext). They function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards. They prefer games to “serious” work . . . They’ve been networked most or all of their lives. They have little patience for lectures, step-by-step logic, and ‘tell-test’ instruction.<sup>9</sup>

This immersion in technology has only increased since Prensky first wrote. A

Kaiser Family Foundation study discovered that:

Young people have increased the amount of time they spend consuming media by an hour and seventeen minutes daily, from 6:21 to 7:38—almost the amount of time most adults spend at work each day, except that young people use media seven days a week instead of five. Moreover, given the amount of time they spend using more than one medium at a time, today’s youth pack a total of 10 hours and 45 minutes worth of media content into those daily 7 1/2 hours—an increase of almost 2 1/4 hours of media exposure per day over the past five years.<sup>10</sup>

Two different 2017 studies determined that millennials are spending over five hours a day on their smartphones,<sup>11</sup> with 73% of millennials going to sleep with their smartphones, 82% of millennials checking their smartphones within an hour of getting up and 43% of millennials feeling that they must take their smartphone to the bathroom.<sup>12</sup> A

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different characteristics, will use differing terms. For the sake of this paper, the focus will be upon those that characteristics that impact the ways digital natives (including millennials) learn.

<sup>9</sup> Marc Prensky, *From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom: Hopeful Essays for 21st Century Learning* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012), 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Victoria J. Rideout, Ulla G. Foehr, and Donald F. Roberts, “Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds,” The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, January 2010, page 2, accessed July 20, 2017, <http://www.kff.org/other/event/generation-m2-media-in-the-lives-of>.

<sup>11</sup> “What Mobile Payments Expansion Means for Merchants,” BizReport, accessed July 25, 2017, <http://www.bizreport.com/2017/05/study-millennials-spending-5-hours-each-day-with-phones.html>.

<sup>12</sup> “The 2016 Smartphone User Behavior Report: Millennials & Their Smartphone Habits,” Coupofy, accessed July 25, 2017, <http://www.coupofy.com/millennials-smartphone-behavior-report-2016>.

study published in 2011 determined: “seven out of ten millennials say the cell phone is vital in their lives.”<sup>13</sup>

Does immersion in technology make a significant difference in the life of those immersed? As one author put it: “technology is like the air.”<sup>14</sup> It’s easy to breathe technology in, use it, expel it. Particularly for the Digital Native generation, technology is a part of life that’s assumed, not evaluated.

Researchers are discovering some of the ramifications of this new immersion in digital technology including:

- “attention spans are shorter. . . Kids today have attention spans that lie somewhere between 6-8 seconds.”<sup>15</sup>
- “For the first time ever, we can speak of a worldwide youth generation.”<sup>16</sup>
- “They’re the first generation that doesn’t need leaders to get information, with access to every piece of data you can imagine.”<sup>17</sup>
- “The creative revolution in cyberspace . . . is also about the question of who gets to control the shaping of culture . . . Creators no longer need to rely on the old gatekeeper . . . Digital technology allows creators ‘to route around’ the traditional intermediaries.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 746.

<sup>14</sup> Don Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World* (New York NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 2008), Kindle, Location 587.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 647.

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Tim Elmore, *Gen iY: Secrets to Connecting with Today’s Teens & Young Adults in the Digital Age* (Atlanta, GA: Poet Gardener Publishing, 2015), Kindle, Location 260.

<sup>18</sup> John G. Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital: How Children Grow up in a Digital Age* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 125.

- “Power dynamics are shifting in many . . . contexts to favor the individual and the nimble, small, ad hoc group as against the large, slow-moving institution. This shift in power relates to the long movement in history against certain forms of hierarchies. At the same time, new hierarchies are emerging.”<sup>19</sup>
- “‘Children think differently from the rest of us. They develop hypertext minds. They leap around. It’s as though their cognitive structures were parallel, not sequential.’ This is one way that digital immersion has literally rewired brains under 40.”<sup>20</sup>

But why is immersion in technology making such an impact? As the last quote indicated, one significant reason is that technology is rewiring brains.

### **Brains Rewired**

In naming Digital Natives, Marc Prensky backed up his term with brain research: “Today’s students think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors . . . ‘Different kinds of experiences lead to different brain structures,’ says Dr. Bruce D. Perry of Baylor College of Medicine.”<sup>21</sup>

Don Tapscott, in his book *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World* writes: “Evidence is mounting that Net Geners process information and behave differently because they have indeed developed brains that are

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<sup>19</sup> Palfrey and Gasser, 287.

<sup>20</sup> Tapscott, 2076

<sup>21</sup> Marc Prensky, *From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom: Hopeful Essays for 21st Century Learning* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012), 3-4.

functionally different than those of their parents. They're quicker, for example, to process fast-moving images than their parents are."<sup>22</sup>

C. Shawn Green has discovered that regularly playing action video games can change the capacity of the brain: "Many studies demonstrate that action video game play improves visual attentional skills, such as the ability to find a particular target from within a large field of view when the target is surrounded by task-irrelevant distracting items . . . action video games can give rise to benefits on a wide array of tasks that rely on perceptual/ attentional abilities."<sup>23</sup>

Video game playing affects the brain. It improves hand-eye coordination, quickens reaction times, and benefits peripheral vision. It improves spatial skills, the ability to mentally manipulate a 3-D object . . . researchers found that a surgeon's game-playing experience was a better predictor of his or her future success at laparoscopic surgery than was years of experience! John Seely Brown, director emeritus at Xerox PARC and a visiting scholar at USC, argues that games like World of Warcraft have a positive impact on learning . . . "It's learning to be—a natural by-product of adjusting to a new culture—as opposed to learning about. Where traditional learning is based on the execution of carefully graded challenges, accidental learning relies on failure. Virtual environments are safe platforms for trial and error. The chance of failure is high, but the cost is low and the lessons learned are immediate."<sup>24</sup>

Considering the number of people playing video games, this impact is significant. In 2005, video games worldwide sales were \$8.4 billion.<sup>25</sup> In 2017, that total has surpassed \$100 billion.<sup>26</sup> "Today's average college grads have spent less than 5,000 hours

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<sup>22</sup> Tapscott, 29.

<sup>23</sup> C. Shawn Green and Aaron R. Seitz, "The Impacts of Video Games on Cognition (and How the Government Can Guide the Industry)," *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 2, no. 1 (October 1, 2015): 4, doi:10.1177/2372732215601121.

<sup>24</sup> Tapscott, 102-103.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Nate Lanxon, "China Just Became the Games Industry Capital of the World," Bloomberg.com, June 1, 2017, accessed November 17, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-06-01/china-just-became-the-games-industry-capital-of-the-world>.

of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours playing video games (not to mention 20,000 hours watching TV).”<sup>27</sup> What is this teaching their brains? That learning through trial and error is more exciting, engaging and valuable than learning from reading a book.

The nature of the internet is also retraining those who use it. The eye has the ability to take in multiple tracks at once without being overloaded—an ability that the ear does not have.<sup>28</sup> Technology trains us to look—and learn—differently.

Time, Inc, published a study in 2012 that used both biometrics and point of view camera glasses to understand how brains were functioning differently between Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants (those who use digital technology, but did not grow up with it). The findings included:

Digital Natives switch their attention between media platforms (i.e. TVs, magazines, tablets, smartphones or channels within platforms) 27 times per hour, about every other minute . . . Digital Natives more frequently use media to regulate their mood—as soon as they grow tired or bored, they turn their attention to something new . . . More than half (54%) of Digital Natives say “I prefer texting people rather than talking to them” compared with 28% of Digital Immigrants . . . One major implication of these findings is that Digital Immigrants are intuitively linear—they want to see a beginning, middle, and end to stories. For natives, stories still need a beginning, middle and end, but they will accept it in any order . . . “This study strongly suggests a transformation in the time spent, patterns of visual attention and emotional consequences of modern media consumption that is rewiring the brains of a generation of Americans like never before,” said Dr. Carl Marci, CEO and Chief Scientist, Innerscope Research.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Marc Prensky, *From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom: Hopeful Essays for 21st Century Learning* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012), 3-4. This observation was in 2001.

<sup>28</sup> New World Encyclopedia Contributors, “Visual Culture,” *New World Encyclopedia*, accessed June 30, 2017, [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Visual\\_Culture](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Visual_Culture).

<sup>29</sup> “Inc. Study Reveals That ‘Digital Natives’ Switch Between Devices and Platforms Every Two Minutes, Use Media to Regulate Their Mood,” TimeInc.com, April 8, 2012, accessed July 20, 2017, <https://www.timeinc.com/about/news/press-release/time-inc-study-reveals-that-digital-natives-switch-between-devices-and-platforms-every-two-minutes-use-media-to-regulate-their-mood>.

While neuroscience is still in the early stages of understanding exactly how our brains are changing, the evidence is clear that they are:

In 2008, Gary Small of the University of California at Los Angeles Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior promoted the idea that Digital Natives' brains are hardwired differently since they were exposed to different digital products early . . . Since then, other studies have backed up the idea in specific ways. Data from the same University of California at Los Angeles brain institute, for example, says that Digital Natives' brains were more actively engaged while scrolling through a webpage than while reading printed text. Social interactions, friendships and civic activities may operate differently in the brain, too, researchers at the University of Minnesota say.<sup>30</sup>

While technology may increase certain abilities, technology has its drawbacks as well. The clearest example: “While Generation Y grew up with slightly longer attention spans, Generation Z has an attention span of 6-8 seconds . . . What’s more, approximately 11 percent have ADHD.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Digital Native Culture**

Every generation is different from the last. But immersion in technology is taking our society beyond the traditional generation gap. Due to the influence of technology, Digital Natives are creating an entirely new culture. What does this new culture look like?

One clear characteristic of Digital Natives is that they are **social**. “According to research conducted by author Josh McDowell, nearly half of this young generation tests high on the “I” profile of the DISC personality assessment test. The “I” on the profile stands for Influencer—in essence, a people person. . . In fact, the total amount of leisure

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<sup>30</sup> Carolyn Crist, “On the Mind: What Science Says About Digital Natives,” Pastemagazine.com, April 10, 2017, accessed July 25, 2017, <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/04/on-the-mind-what-brain-science-says-about-digital.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Elmore, *Gen iY*, 2388.

time many kids spend with (social) media is ‘the equivalent of a full-time job.’”<sup>32</sup>

“Gathered data on 16,846 college students who completed a questionnaire measuring extroversion. . . This trait rose markedly, with the average 1990s college student scoring as more extroverted than 83% of students in the 1960s.”<sup>33</sup> Isolated learning will not connect with Digital Natives - although “social” will need a new definition, including digital ways of gathering. To a Digital Native, social interaction includes texting and all forms of social media. It is possible now to be highly “social” while never leaving your home.

This social characteristic of millennials is a large umbrella for a number of other descriptions of them.

Dr. Tim Elmore, in researching younger Digital Natives (Generation iY or Z), includes these social observations:

- “They Want to Belong Before They Believe... Their basis for making decisions is more relational than logical.
- “They Want a Guide on the Side Before They Want a Sage on the Stage... They hunger more for relationship than for information—even relevant information.
- “They Want to Use but Not Be Used by Others... They don’t want to be a project or the target of some marketing campaign.”<sup>34</sup>

Don Tapscott, an expert on the role of technology in business, has found that collaboration is an important expectation of Digital Natives<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Elmore, *Gen iY*, 728.

<sup>33</sup> Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me - Revised and Updates: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (New York, NY: Atria Books, 2006), Kindle, pg. 123.

<sup>34</sup> Elmore, *Gen iY*, 963-1004.

<sup>35</sup> Tapscott, 1470.

Dr. Jean Twenge adds another characteristic connected to Digital Native's relational side, and one that will further challenge the present day Church: they expect equality."GenMe have been taught equality since we were babies, if not by our parents, then by TV."<sup>36</sup> With only 11% of congregations in the United States being led by women, this expectation of equality is one more place where a gap exists between Digital Natives and the church.<sup>37</sup>

While this social aspect of learning for Digital Natives may seem an easy connection point for them and the Church, the way the Church usually teaches actually alienates them: "The one-way communication from pulpit to pew is not how millennials experience faith."<sup>38</sup> Ways of being social, that are intuitive to Digital Natives, must be incorporated into church life, if new generations are to connect.

There is one significant open door for ministry leaders to work with Digital Native leaders. A LifeCourse study determined that when it comes to input from others at work or in education, Digital Natives' relational bent makes them desire "hands on guidance" as well as mentors.<sup>39</sup>

Beyond being social, Digital Natives are highly **experiential**. "They Want an Experience Before an Explanation... We should ask ourselves, 'How can I say it

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<sup>36</sup> Twenge, *Gen Me*, 228.

<sup>37</sup> David Masci, "The Divide over Ordaining Women," Pew Research Center, September 9, 2014, accessed August 2, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/09/the-divide-over-ordaining-women>.

<sup>38</sup> "How Technology Is Changing Millennial Faith," Barna Group, October 15, 2013, accessed August 2, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/how-technology-is-changing-millennial-faith>.

<sup>39</sup> Neil Howe and Reena Nadler, "Why Generations Matter: Ten Findings from LifeCourse Research on the Workforce," February 28, 2012, accessed December 6, 2016, [www.lifecourse.com](http://www.lifecourse.com).

creatively and experientially?”<sup>40</sup> Part of the experiential expectation is an assumption that anything worth doing should be fun. Elmore writes: “they want to play before they pay . . . results have to come quickly, or they may lose interest.”<sup>41</sup> Tapscott includes “entertainment” as one of eight norms for the generation (with this expectation coming in all aspects of life, including education and work environments).<sup>42</sup>

But it’s more than fun that’s wanted when it comes to experience. “They want a transformation, not merely a touch . . . experiences that literally transform them in the process. No doubt, it’s a tall order, but the bar is constantly rising.”<sup>43</sup>

Beyond being social and experiential, the research is in: Digital Natives are both **self-confident** and **self-focused**. While the reasons are debated (too many awards? too much self-esteem talk? did easy access to abortion mean that every child was wanted and special?) the evidence is clear.

Psychologist Jean Twenge goes so far as to say they are narcissistic. She has statistical research to back up that claim. In her studies of millennials she finds that “data from all sources show an increase in NPI (Narcissistic Personality Disorder) scores.”<sup>44</sup> Even those who are not strictly narcissists are supremely confident (many would say over confident). Research by Thom Rainer confirms this. In a survey of 1200 millennials,

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<sup>40</sup> Elmore, *GeniY*, 963-1004.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Tapscott, 1470.

<sup>43</sup> Elmore, *GeniY*, 963-1004.

<sup>44</sup> Jean M. Twenge and Joshua D. Foster, “Birth Cohort Increases in Narcissistic Personality Traits Among American College Students, 1982–2009,” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 104, accessed July 3, 2017, doi:10.1177/1948550609355719.

including representation of most subgroups, 96% agreed with the statement, “I believe I can do something great.”<sup>45</sup>

In *Generation Me*, Dr. Twenge includes these descriptors of the millennial generation:

- Individualistic: “GenMe doesn’t just question authority—they disregard it entirely.”<sup>46</sup>
- Self-focused: “By 2008, the most frequent self-esteem score for college students was 40—the highest possible score and thus “perfect” self-esteem.”<sup>47</sup>
- Ambitious: “Young people also expect to make a lot of money. In a 2011 survey, 16-to-18-year-olds expected their starting salary to be \$73,000, which they assumed would rise to \$150,000 once they were established in their career. However, the median household income in 2009—for all adults—was \$50,000.”<sup>48</sup>
- Different work habits and ethic: “In a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers survey, only 29% of GenMe said they expected to work regular office hours. The MTV survey found that 81% of GenMe thinks they should be allowed to make their own hours at work.”<sup>49</sup> “In the 2012 MTV poll, 80% of GenMe’ers said they thought they deserved to be recognized more for their work, and 92% said their company was lucky to have them as an employee. And 76% of GenMe said they thought their boss could learn a lot from them, compared to only 50% of boomers—despite boomers’ 30 additional years of work experience.”<sup>50</sup> “Another study found that manual workers in 2006 were willing to lift or carry only 70% as much as workers tested prior to 1991. This is the logical outcome of our modern cultural system that emphasizes self over duty. In past eras, working hard at a job was (at least for men) the only way to be a respected member of society. Now it is often seen as boring and restrictive.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 377.

<sup>46</sup> Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me*, 34.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 267.

The Nielsen Norman Group found that “Millennials seem to be highly confident in their approach to digital interfaces, even when encountering radically new design patterns. This contributes to their tendency to be error-prone.”<sup>52</sup>

At odds with (or due to) this self-confidence and self-focus is **high anxiety**. Dr. Twenge writes: “I gathered data on 40,192 college students and 12,056 children aged 9 to 17 who completed measures of anxiety between the 1950s and the 1990s. I was stunned by the size of the changes. Anxiety increased so much that the average college student in the 1990s was more anxious than 85% of students in the 1950s and 71% of students in the 1970s.”<sup>53</sup>

One more descriptor: **suspicious**. “97 studies reporting data from 18,310 college students . . . The results showed a remarkably clear change: college students increasingly believed that their lives were controlled by outside forces.”<sup>54</sup> Tapscott uses the word “scrutiny” as a generational norm.<sup>55</sup> Digital Natives have grown up with the internet. Because of that, many are naturally wary, believing much of the world is a scam. In many ways they have rightly learned to question what they see and read. At the same time they have high expectations, which are often impossible to meet. When those high expectations are not met, cynicism creeps in. This suspicion, skepticism, cynicism or doubt can lead to a lack of trust of all except the tribe of friends that they have built (including online friends and celebrities they trust), or only trusting themselves.

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<sup>52</sup> Kate Meyer, *Millennials as Digital Natives: Myths & Realities*, January 3, 2016, accessed December 6, 2016, <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/millennials-digital-natives>.

<sup>53</sup> Twenge, *Generation Me*, 145.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>55</sup> Tapscott, 1470.

Interestingly enough, in the midst of this suspicion, Digital Natives trust, or at least are heavily influenced by the new influencers.

### **The New Influencers**

When looking back through western history, those who are deemed to have most influenced society are scientists, philosophers, religious, military, or political leaders. Michael Hart, in his book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential People* includes only six people in the artist-storyteller category (Shakespeare tops the artist list at number 31).<sup>56</sup> Ian Cheney, a filmmaker, in a 2017 series of articles on “The 30 Most Influential People in Western History” writes: “no artists or musicians make the list . . . I simply cannot make the case that any one artist or musician changed the West’s development . . . this list . . . has 11 political and military leaders, seven philosophers, six scientists, and four inventors . . .”<sup>57</sup>

Contrast that to Time’s “The 100 Most Influential People in the World 2017.” One of the five categories on Time’s list is “Artists,” mentioning seventeen individuals (including actors, novelists, film directors, musicians and visual artists). In addition, thirteen artists and storytellers are included on the other four lists. A full thirty percent of Time’s list easily falls into the artist-storyteller category. Beyond those thirty, there are more on the list who use modern digital storytelling in such a way that it has greatly

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<sup>56</sup> Michael H. Hart, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History* (New York: Citadel Press, 1978), vii-x.

<sup>57</sup> Ian Cheney, “The 30 Most Influential People in Western History,” *Construction Literary Magazine*, Culture, accessed July 20, 2017, <http://constructionlitmag.com/culture/30-most-influential-people-western-history>.

impacted their influence.<sup>58</sup> For example: Would the organizers of the Women's March have succeeded were it not for the digital storytelling of Facebook?

While influence is not something that can be measured with scientific accuracy, the difference in the historical list from the current one is striking. Why does it appear that the artist-storytellers are influencing our lives in a far more significant way today than they have in the past? Because of what has been presented thus far: Digital Natives are driven visually and socially, and this results in the modern-day storyteller having great influence.

All of this leads to some additional characteristics of Digital Natives.

They are **innovators**. In the creative realm, norms for this generation include: “freedom (‘choice is like oxygen to them’) . . . customization . . . speed . . . innovation.”<sup>59</sup> Much of the book *Born Digital* focuses on the creative characteristics of Digital Natives. Descriptors authors Palfrey and Gasser use of Digital Natives include: creators, innovators, and learners (due to an increased level of engagement with information globally).<sup>60</sup> As innovators, Digital Natives are **visual, creative, and story-driven**. The hyper-text culture created by technology has created **non-linear** thinkers, who are used to having many options each step of the way.

Finally, Digital Natives' self confidence, social drive, access to information, and ability to create while bypassing traditional gatekeepers, have also created in this generation a love for and expectation of **flat, non-hierarchical structures**. If much of

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<sup>58</sup> Nancy Gibbs, “TIME: The 100 Most Influential People 2017,” *Time*, April 20, 2017, accessed July 20, 2017, <http://time.com/collection/2017-time-100>.

<sup>59</sup> Tapscott, 1470.

<sup>60</sup> Palfrey and Gasser, 1.

the Church is hierarchical in structure, with an understanding that the pastor (or board, or bishop) is the authoritarian decision maker, this creates one more gap between Digital Natives and the Church.

Digital Natives are forming a new culture, with their brains operating differently than those who have gone before. Just as cross-cultural trainers on the mission field now ask how to best train those in oral cultures, those in the digital age must ask how best to train Digital Natives. In other words, with this new culture and the rewiring of the brain, what are the implications for how Digital Natives learn?

### **New Ways of Learning**

Marshall McLuhan, a prophetic voice in the early days of media studies, had this to say in a book published in 1988: “In a global information environment, the old pattern of education in answer-finding is of no avail: one is surrounded by answers, millions of them, moving and mutating at electric speed.”<sup>61</sup>

Brains being rewired amounts to Digital Natives (and even Digital Immigrants now immersed in technology) learning in new ways.

In “A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future,” Daniel Pink writes:

The last few decades have belonged to a certain kind of person with a certain kind of mind—computer programmers who could crank code, lawyers who could craft contracts, MBAs who could crunch numbers. But the keys to the kingdom are changing hands. The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind—creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. These people—artists, inventors, designers, storytellers,

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<sup>61</sup> Marshall McLuhan and Eric McLuhan, *Laws of Media: The New Science* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 239.

caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers—will now reap society’s richest rewards and share its greatest joys.<sup>62</sup>

Tim Elmore concurs:

iY kids thrive on this (“right brain”) kind of thinking. They are nonlinear. They prize relationships. They love to make connections between people and ideas and to get their hands on what they’re learning about. They thrive on pictures and stories, and their eyes glaze over when requested to just sit still and read or listen...more and more, our world is driven by right-brain thought: imagination, story, music.<sup>63</sup>

It would be simple to conclude that our “right brains” are being further developed by technology, while our “left brains” are stagnating. Unfortunately, from a neuroscientific viewpoint, it’s not that simple: “Polarities of left and right brain are broadly invoked in art, business, education, literary theory, and culture, but owe more to the power of myth than to the scientific evidence.”<sup>64</sup>

While neuroscience is still exploring the way Digital Native’s brains are physically different than brains of the past, it is helpful to know that functionally Digital Natives are behaving in ways that have been associated with the “right brain.”

For example, Digital Natives are **visually driven**. The number of YouTube searches now surpasses all search engines except Google.<sup>65</sup> As the Time study discovered, Digital Natives are no longer linearly focused. Part of that shift is due to the shift from reading a line to looking for the picture.

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<sup>62</sup> Daniel H. Pink, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-brainers Will Rule the Future* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006), Kindle, Introduction, Location 111.

<sup>63</sup> Elmore, *Gen iY*, 3464.

<sup>64</sup> Michael C. Corballis, “Left Brain, Right Brain: Facts and Fantasies,” PLoS Biology, January 2014, accessed July 25, 2017, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3897366>.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Thomas, *Deconstructing Digital Natives: Young People, Technology, and the New Literacies* (New York: Routledge, 2011), Kindle, Location 4439.

A study of Net Gen college students showed that they learned much better from visual images than from text-based ones. Students of a Library 1010 class at California State University (Hayward) tended to ignore lengthy step-by-step text instructions for their homework assignments, until the instructors switched their teaching methods to incorporate more images. The results were dramatic: students' scores increased by 11 to 16 percent.<sup>66</sup>

This shift from word to image is everywhere:

Text messaging is morphing into iconic messaging. As our world becomes more complex and uncertain, Generation Z intuitively wants to simplify communication. Instead of sending text messages, their messages are morphing into images, symbols and icons. Many now send emojis instead of words. They have strong filters and want content to be shared and understood rapidly.<sup>67</sup>

Images are replacing words . . . We see this in advertising, in media programs and in road signs . . . The ratio of time spent on the internet or video games to time spent reading has ballooned to 60 to 1. Libraries now spend more money on non-print media than on books and magazines. In short, images are the language of connection in the 21st century—not words.<sup>68</sup>

Working vocabulary is shrinking. “According to World Watch magazine, the working vocabulary of the average fourteen-year-old has dropped measurably since 1950. The average middle school student then possessed a vocabulary of twenty-five thousand words. In 1999, the average was ten thousand words.”<sup>69</sup> Is this a sign that the next generation is less intelligent? Or could this be a sign of the seismic societal shift to an entirely new culture?

In a world of hyperlinks, where an individual can search for one piece of information and end up in a very different place, Digital Natives are also **learning interactively**.

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<sup>66</sup> Tapscott, 106.

<sup>67</sup> Elmore, *Gen iY*, 2388.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 4570.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 911.

Internet screen time: Does it affect the way Net Geners absorb information? A 2006 study of Net Geners certainly suggests it does. Researchers played the same newscast in four different ways—as a traditional radio newscast, as an online newscast played with one click, as an interactive Webcast where you click to get each news item, and as a Webcast that included links for details. Net Geners remembered less from the traditional newscasts—told from beginning to end—than they did from the interactive versions that gave them a chance to click to hear the news or learn more details.<sup>70</sup>

And it's not just interaction with the screen. While a Digital Immigrant may view people interaction as very different from screen interaction, Digital Natives experience it all together. Just as they see texting as being social, they also see true learning - whether in a room of people, or on a blog with comments – as woven together in the interactive realm. “They do not just observe; they participate. They inquire, discuss, argue, play, shop, critique, investigate, ridicule, fantasize, seek, and inform.”<sup>71</sup>

### Summary

Digital Natives are not only a new generation, but also a new culture, and they learn in altered ways than the generations preceding them. They are more social, experiential, innovative, self-confident, self-focused, anxious, and cynical than their parents and grandparents. They best learn in non-hierarchical, creative, visual, non-linear environments. Sitting in a traditional classroom, reading traditional books, taking traditional tests will not work; neither will sitting in church pews taking notes.

Here, in this interactive learning space, is an opportunity for the Church: “Three out of four millennials would like a leader to come beside them and teach them

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<sup>70</sup> Tapscott, 104.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 21.

leadership skills.”<sup>72</sup> But does this mean that the Digital Native wants to be taught leadership skills in a traditional way, with a leader pouring information into the one they are mentoring? No. Digital Natives have learned from the internet to pick and choose in their learning, to ask questions, to push back, to question the ‘experts.’ The internet has flattened the world so that hierarchies seem irrelevant. “A true global generation of youth is emerging. Technical barriers are falling, which is ‘flattening’ the world, as New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman puts it . . .”<sup>73</sup>

If current leaders in the church are to effectively mentor Digital Native leaders in ministry, a new way of training will need to be formed and utilized, which includes learning that is visual, social, and interactive.

In the second section, current modes of leadership development within the Christian world will be examined to ask whether these modes are being effective with these emerging generations.

In the third section, oral culture will be examined, with a special focus on the work of Walter Ong, in order to compare the new digital culture with that of oral cultures. Finding that oral culture has many similarities to digital culture, a way forward is clear: Learn from those working with oral cultures on the mission field in order to know how to best train the emerging digital generation. What will be discovered is that telling the stories of Scripture, along with questions for contemplation and discussion in community, images which can be easily remembered, and hands-on applications, can be an effective, transferable tool for spiritual formation and leadership development within the new generation of Digital Natives. Story-based learning allows for creativity, non-linear

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<sup>72</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 648.

<sup>73</sup> Tapscott, 647.

thinking, interacting with mentors, and experiential application, which can bridge the gap between the Bible, the Church and Digital Natives, allowing for a new generation of leaders and pastors to be trained.

## SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

### **Introduction**

Training the next generation of Christian leaders, particularly those who have grown up surrounded by technology, (section 1) is a significant challenge. Many who see that the emerging generation is different, are concerned.

In the face of this concern are many Christian leadership training opportunities. The best training programs, recognizing the changing culture, have added elements that better connect with Digital Natives. Are the changes being made enough to make a significant difference? This section examines different modes of leadership training, with specific programs serving as examples. Special attention has been paid to modes of leadership training that are prevalent within the culture of the Free Methodist denomination. Formal academic education, short conferences, ministry cohorts, individual study, and denominational ordination will all be examined. The examples chosen are considered by some to be the best leadership training programs in the evangelical world. Are what these programs doing enough to make a difference?

### **The Academic Model:**

#### **Portland Seminary Doctorate of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation**

Academia in the United States is, perhaps, the most traditional, western, literate-driven model of leadership development available. While the study of leadership is relatively new, the idea that leaders will be raised in academia is not. As an example: while it is not a requirement that the President of the United States be college educated, only one President in the last 116 years (Truman) did not have a college degree, and 70 percent of Americans believe that a college degree is “very important” for the President

to have.<sup>74</sup> In addition, certain colleges have been more significant leadership training grounds than others. Nearly one-third of United States Presidents and half of all Supreme Court Justices have attended an Ivy League school.<sup>75</sup> It would seem that there is an assumption in the United States that colleges and universities, and in particular Ivy League institutions, are places where leaders, at least within the political and judicial realms, are trained.

Understanding this, it is appropriate to ask: what happens in these halls of learning? Book and lecture left-brain learning drives the classroom setting in most institutions.

Because this paper is particularly focusing on the leadership development of Digital Native Christian pastors and church leaders, the Doctorate of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation at Portland Seminary warrants examination. It is a program that, in many ways, is flexible and cutting edge, adapting to the times. It is not simply book and classroom learning. In what ways has it adapted to the technologically driven world in which Digital Natives reside?

First, much of the program is delivered through technology. Weekly classes take place through video conferencing (Zoom). Weekly posts (short papers) are uploaded on the web so that others in the class must read and comment. Class members stay in touch and get announcements via Facebook.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Domenico Montanaro et al., “Does Having a College Degree Matter in a President?” PBS, February 18, 2015, accessed October 13, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/college-degree-matter-president>.

<sup>75</sup> “Ivy Leaders,” Forbes, April 2, 2009, accessed October 13, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/2009/04/02/politician-education-elite-leadership-ivy.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Much of the content of this section comes from the personal notes of the author who was a participant in the cohort.

Second, there is a significant relational component to the program. George Fox University, of which Portland Seminary is a part, has a tag line of “Be Known.” For the Doctor of Ministry, this relational component plays out in students going through the program in a cohort of 12 to 18 people, with a mentor who teaches weekly and also plans the cohort’s four one-week retreats. This provides two years of almost weekly online interaction, as well as four weeks of intensive face-to-face time. In addition, each student is paired with a prayer partner, with whom they are to connect weekly.<sup>77</sup>

Third, there is a clear experiential component, as field experience is required each semester of the first two years. In addition, the dissertation is usually one that focuses highly upon the individual student’s home ministry context, allowing immediate application of what is being learned.

While all of these components somewhat adapt to Digital Natives and their new learning, the core of the curriculum continues to be driven by reading and writing. According to the syllabi for the Leadership and Spiritual Formation Cohort #1 (2015-2017), each semester contained eight credit hours. During a sample semester (Fall 2015), required reading included 13 specific books, plus an additional 2000 pages of student selected material. Out of the expected 315 hours of work expected, over 80% directly related to reading or writing. The traditional drive of the academy (and the requirements of accrediting bodies) continues to keep academic leadership development in a pre-Digital Native mode.

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<sup>77</sup> “Leadership & Spiritual Formation,” Doctor of Ministry in Leadership & Spiritual Formation Portland Seminary, accessed October 22, 2017, <https://www.georgefox.edu/seminary/programs/dmin/lstf/index.html>.

### **The Short Conference Model:**

#### **Willow Creek Leadership Summit**

The Willow Creek Leadership Summit is a worldwide phenomenon. While thousands gather at the Willow Creek Church campus in South Barrington, Illinois, hundreds of thousands gather at over 600 simulcast locations in the United States<sup>78</sup> with additional sites around the globe. An estimated 400,000 people attended the 2017 Summit.<sup>79</sup> The event is two full days of training. The schedule is filled with people at the top of their field, training in their areas of expertise. In 2017, 14 highly qualified leadership experts, all with outstanding communication skills, presented. The Summit utilized and engaged a variety of technologies including the technology needed to simulcast the event, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, a Summit App, a blog, online giving and registration, and a digital bookstore.<sup>80</sup> Conference attendees could sign up for continuing leadership resources throughout the year being delivered to each person's email inbox, continuing this virtual training experience.

In addition, art, music, drama, comedy, and spoken word poetry punctuated the two days. A variety of organizations had commercial-type spots in the schedule, often telling the organization's story. Most main presenters wove at least one story into their presentation, as an illustration of a principle. One presenter focused entirely on her own story: Immaculee Ilibagiza, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide. She told her powerful

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<sup>78</sup> "The Global Leadership Summit: Thursday-Friday, August 10-11, 2017," Willow Creek Association, accessed October 18, 2017, <https://www.willowcreek.com/events/leadership/2017-Domestic-A/#/>.

<sup>79</sup> Much of the content of this section comes from the personal notes of the author who attended the 2017 Summit.

<sup>80</sup> From the personal notes of the author.

personal story of forgiveness. This story format was consistent with Ms. Ilibagiza's more oral, storytelling culture.

In many ways, Willow Creek is working hard to appeal to Digital Natives. The Summit, due to its size and scope, is an event, a happening, which can make an individual feel that they are experientially part of something larger than themselves. It is an event tied in to social networking. It is a visually driven event, filled with creativity and the arts. It is an event that can inspire.

At the beginning of the conference, pastor and host Bill Hybels made the statement: "Everyone wins when a leader gets better. And you are about to get better. You just watch."<sup>81</sup> This is a bold, visionary purpose statement for the Conference. It's also a statement that contains an underlying assumption about leadership development: that by *watching* (and listening) you can be shaped and formed as a leader. The Summit rests on this assumption: that leadership development happens when a leader comes and watches and listens, and then goes home with this knowledge and applies it.

Certainly, some people will do this. The Summit provides a host of follow up tools that attendees can sign up for to access, and if they access these resources immediately, applying what they have learned, then the training may be helpful in the long-term. However, research suggests that for most people, what is learned in a "corporate training event" environment will soon be forgotten:

While forgetting depends on many factors, research shows that, on average, students forget 70 percent of what we teach within 24 hours of the training experience . . . Professor Henry Roediger and his laboratory at Washington University in St. Louis are doing the pioneering work in this area . . . Dr. Roediger's research shows that when you force a learner to recall information in

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<sup>81</sup> From the personal notes of the author.

the hours and days after training, then they are much, much more likely to retain that information in the long run.<sup>82</sup>

And so the questions remain: what is the best way that Digital Natives will learn how to be excellent Christian leaders? Digital Natives are social and experiential. Is online social activity related to a “tribe” of almost half a million people, relational enough? Is two days of informational training enough? Is being part of a large event, watching and listening, experiential enough? It would seem that the answer, for the vast majority of people, is no.

In addition, Willow Creek’s commitment to excellence might actually push a portion of the cynical Digital Natives further away, as they wonder if what they see on the screen is authentic or a veneer.

### **The Ministry Focused Cohort Model:**

#### **Arrow Leadership, Emerging Leaders Stream**

The Arrow Leadership Program, begun in 1991 by Dr. Leighton Ford, seeks to “develop leaders who are led more by Jesus, who lead more like Jesus, and who lead more to Jesus.”<sup>83</sup> The Emerging Leaders Stream focuses specifically on Christian leaders between 25 and 40, with a minimum of three years of ministry experience, and seeks to develop their calling, character, and competencies.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Art Kohn, “Brain Science: Overcoming the Forgetting Curve,” Learning Solutions Magazine, April 10, 2014, accessed October 20, 2017, <https://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/1400/brain-science-overcoming-the-forgetting-curve>.

<sup>83</sup> “About Us,” Arrow Leadership, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.arrowleadership.org/about-us/mission-vision-and-values>.

<sup>84</sup> “Emerging Stream,” Arrow Leadership, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.arrowleadership.org/program/emerging>.

A 2017 downloadable Arrow brochure outlines the key elements of the program.<sup>85</sup>

They include: creating a personalized leadership plan, participating in three residential experiences, being in a spiritually vital safe setting, virtual learning, a 360 degree assessment, dynamic trainer practitioners, intensive mentoring, being part of a peer cluster, and key supporter participation. The Arrow program is in partnerships with certain colleges and seminaries, and credit at both the master's and doctoral level is available upon completion of the program.

In most ways, the program has little changed since it began in 1991.<sup>86</sup> A circa-1997 brochure lays out the aspects of the Arrow program. The brochure reads:

The . . . Arrow Leadership program is a multi-level program combining extensive reading, personal coaching, group learning with peers, on-site experiences, skills training, contemplation and prayer. **Leadership Assessment:** A battery of evaluation tests is given each . . . **Development Plan:** This plan includes specific areas that will be strengthened . . . **Mentors:** Mentors and young leaders meet monthly . . . **Peer Clusters:** Each young leader is part of a smaller group . . . **Seminars:** Four one-week long seminars bring all of the participants together to learn and interact with some of the leading Christian thinkers . . . **Structured Field Experiences:** these field experiences normally consist of urban evangelism and cross-cultural ministry . . . **Projects:** Young leaders are asked to design and implement one ministry project yearly and present the results. **Assignment:** Regular readings, journaling . . . add to the base of knowledge for the young leader . . . **Academic Degree:** The Arrow Program is accredited by Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary . . .<sup>87</sup>

A key question that arises when looking at how little the program has changed over the years is: was Arrow so ahead of its time when it began that it anticipated what Digital Natives would most need for training, or is the program one that is not adapting to

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<sup>85</sup> "Arrow Brochure," May 2013, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.arrowleadership.org/program/emerging>.

<sup>86</sup> "History," Arrow Leadership, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.arrowleadership.org/about-us/history>.

<sup>87</sup> The brochure is in the possession of the author of this paper. There is no author listed, nor copyright information.

the new culture? Oddly, the elements that have been dropped from the program since Dr. Ford's retirement are those that might have most connected with experiential Digital Natives: the structured field experiences and the projects. Perhaps Dr. Ford was truly ahead of his time. Interestingly, woven in to founder Leighton Ford's leadership is the practice of storytelling, something that connects with Digital Natives. In 1994, in his book titled, *The Power of Story*, he wrote: "Each of us has a story . . . the story of our lives. At some point in our journey through life, our story collides with the Story of God . . . The Story produces a Vision, which then transforms Character, resulting in evangelism."<sup>88</sup> Perhaps his love of story has grown out of his global connections and networks. Dr. Ford has spoken "around the globe . . . in thirty-seven countries on every continent"<sup>89</sup> and continues to mentor globally. His use and love of story has continued through the years. In a book published in 2008, he wrote: "Each of us is part of a Greater Story, and behind our stories is a Storyteller . . ."<sup>90</sup> Perhaps Dr. Ford's words are prophetic in terms of leadership development.

While elements of the Arrow program connect with the more experiential and social Digital Natives, and while Arrow's subject matter may be highly practical in nature, with much of it dealing with needed information or skills not taught in traditional seminaries, many of the teaching methods are those of a traditional western classroom: extensive reading, writing, sitting in a classroom listening to and interacting with an instructor, taking notes. Arrow's model of leadership development seems to have much in

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<sup>88</sup> Leighton Ford and James Denney, *The Power of Story: Rediscovering the Oldest, Most Natural Way to Reach People for Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 11.

<sup>89</sup> "The Attentive Life," InterVarsity Press, accessed October 21, 2017, <https://www.ivpress.com/Search?q=Leighton%2BFord>.

<sup>90</sup> Leighton Ford, *The Attentive Life: Discerning God's Presence in All Things* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 11-13.

common with Portland Seminary. This should not be a surprise, due to the fact that Arrow is in partnerships with colleges and seminaries to grant credit for Arrow, and each of those colleges and seminaries continue to be bound by the requirements of accrediting bodies.

### **The Individual Growth Model:**

#### **Book and Workbook Options for Leadership Development:**

##### **John Maxwell's *Developing the Leader Within You***

While the above group learning opportunities are available for those who wish to develop as Christian leaders, many men and women will look for simpler, cheaper, or more individualistic ways to grow. Reading books, or completing workbooks, is one such option.

Christian leadership guru John Maxwell has numerous books to choose from. For the purposes of this paper, the workbook accompanying the book *Developing the Leader Within You*, will be examined.

Maxwell's books and workbooks are full of memorable sayings and insights into leadership. In Day One of the workbook, the format is set for the remainder of the book: exercises include finishing sentences, multi-choice questionnaires, doing self-evaluation, and making lists (for example, in week one, you are to list the people you lead and the people you follow).<sup>91</sup> Five levels of alliterated leadership are taught (Position, Permission, Production, People, Personhood).<sup>92</sup> In just one day's workbook assignment a

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<sup>91</sup> John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader within You Workbook* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 2001), Kindle, Location 134.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

huge amount of information is conveyed, which is meant to be applied by the individual as they work through it on their own. There is no assumption that this will be discussed with others. The training is not social or innovative, and any experiential elements rest solely upon an individual taking what they are learning and applying it on their own. Clearly, this method of leadership development does not mesh well with social, experiential, innovative Digital Native culture.

### **The Ordination Process Model:**

#### **The United Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Church, and the Assemblies of God**

While “leader” and “ordained” are certainly not synonyms, in most churches the expectation is that a pastor is both the leader and ordained. It is therefore appropriate to ask if denominational ordination processes are effectively training Digital Native leaders.

The ordination process of three denominations is examined: United Methodist, Wesleyan, and Assemblies of God.

The United Methodist Church, a mainline denomination, has the most traditional track towards ordination. Ordinands who will be ordained as an elder (those ordained to “word, sacrament, order, and service”) must have completed a Masters of Divinity from a seminary approved by the denomination before being ordained.<sup>93</sup> In addition, they must work with their local judicatory (called an Annual Conference) to complete local requirements. In the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, this also includes a determination that the candidate has “a demonstrated readiness for

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<sup>93</sup> “Starting Candidacy,” General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, accessed October 22, 2017, <https://www.gbhem.org/clergy/candidacy/starting-candidacy#begin>.

ministry”<sup>94</sup> and an evaluative final ordination interview. Beyond the seminary experience, there does not appear to be any cohort, social, or innovative learning piece to this process. There is an experiential component - the ministry residency - but the quality of this residency seems to be left entirely up to the location where the candidate for ordination is assigned.

The Wesleyan denomination has a traditional ordination track that focuses on education in an approved Wesleyan college or seminary, but it also allows for ministerial training to be done through denominational non-accredited training programs. The FLAME program offers online classes, which include traditional reading and assignments to be done, for those over the age of 28 and “whose circumstances prohibit ministerial education in a preferred degree program.”<sup>95</sup> It would appear that the Wesleyan denomination has created an alternative to the traditional classroom for those who can’t attend, but has made no significant attempt to create new or different learning experiences for Digital Natives.

The Assemblies of God denomination is by far the least restrictive of the three denominations examined. In the Assemblies, “ordination (is) a recognition of spiritual leadership.” With the Holy Spirit gifting and leading, the church acknowledges what the Spirit is already doing.<sup>96</sup> That recognition begins with a credentialing process in the local district. In the New York Assemblies of God district, the credentialing process includes

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<sup>94</sup> “Ordination Question Preamble,” New York Annual Conference, November 3, 2012, accessed October 22, 2017, <http://www.nyac.com/ordinationquestionspreamble>.

<sup>95</sup> “Educational Pathways to Ministry,” Resource Center, Wesleyan Church, accessed October 22, 2017, <https://resources.wesleyan.org/ministerial-preparation>.

<sup>96</sup> “Pentecostal Ministry and Ordination,” Assemblies of God, accessed October 22, 2017, <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Topics-Index/Pentecostal-Ministry-and-Ordination>.

an application, a background check, passing a written examination, and an interview.<sup>97</sup>

There are also educational requirements, which differ according to whether or not the pastor has a Certificate of Ministry, a License to Preach, or is Ordained.<sup>98</sup> While no degree is required, a total of 27 courses are required for ordination, less for the certificate or license. In addition to the coursework, a total of two years of successful ministry are also required before a pastor may then apply for ordination.

Even in a denomination which is known to operate more by the Spirit than by the law (or denominational regulations), and one that states that ordination is simply a “recognition of spiritual leadership,” it is interesting to note that at least in the New York district, ordination is still heavily weighted with traditional coursework.

When it comes to the ordination tracks of the three denominations examined, it is clear that the idea first discussed in this section - that leadership is developed through academic work - is ingrained and assumed.

### **Missional Ministry Models and Leadership Development**

An additional comment should be made about the missional movement, using 3dm (3 Dimensional Ministries) as an example. In many ways, the missional movement addresses the new digital native culture. 3dm’s model of ministry is highly relational, focused on discipleship, with discipleship being defined as “learning to live like Jesus did.”<sup>99</sup> It is experiential and non-linear, with participants in their LifeShape Huddles

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<sup>97</sup> “Credentialing Steps,” New York Ministry Network, accessed October 22, 2017, [http://nydag.org/pastors/credentialingprocess/credentialing\\_steps](http://nydag.org/pastors/credentialingprocess/credentialing_steps).

<sup>98</sup> “Educational Requirements for Credentials,” New York Ministry Network, accessed October 22, 2017, [http://nydag.org/pastors/credentialingprocess/educational\\_requirements](http://nydag.org/pastors/credentialingprocess/educational_requirements).

<sup>99</sup> “About,” 3D Movements, accessed March 3, 2018, <https://3dmovements.com/about/>.

being expected to put into practice what they are hearing from God.<sup>100</sup> It is purposeful and hands-on with Missional Communities working together for some greater purpose.<sup>101</sup> The bulk of leadership development, however, is focused upon leaders who will lead these discipleship groups or missional communities, all gatherings under 100. 3dm now has a book entitled “Leading Kingdom Movements,”<sup>102</sup> but whether or not the concepts in the book can actually produce leaders who can lead churches larger than 100, or churches that have not grown organically within this model, remains to be seen.

An example of the struggle is Mission Point Church, founded by 3dm board chair Jo Saxton. The church launched in a movie theater in 2014, with the hopes of becoming a large-church hub for 3dm. As of March 2018, Mission Point Church has approximately 40 people attending every week in a coffee house. Saxton no longer pastors the church, and has given herself full time to speaking at events around the country.<sup>103</sup>

### Summary

As demonstrated in section one, Digital Natives are social, experiential innovators, who learn best in a visual, interactive, non-linear, and story-driven way. In addition, they are cynics who often see the methods of the past as irrelevant, and look with suspicion upon things done with excellence, wondering if it is authentic (particularly

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<sup>100</sup> Mike Breen and Steve Cockran, *Building a Discipling Culture* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM, 2009), 25-40.

<sup>101</sup> Mike Breen and Alex Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities: A Field Guide* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM, 2010).

<sup>102</sup> Mike Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements: The Everyman Notebook on How to Change the World* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2013).

<sup>103</sup> This information comes from the author’s personal knowledge, having been a part of the 3dm Minneapolis Hub from 2011 to 2016, plus a conversation with Jean Beaden, staff member of Mission Point Church.

in the absence of having a personal relationship with the person or organization). The bulk of the efforts within the United States church world at developing leaders, even those efforts that are working hard to stay up-to-date, are not adequate. The problem, it would seem, is that current models are being updated, rather than innovative models being launched. Training the new brain-rewired Digital Native will take new models, not merely updating the old.

## SECTION 3: THE THESIS

### Introduction

Current Christian leadership development programs, education, and conferences rely upon large amounts of information being communicated in primarily traditional ways (lecture and books). Some of these options, mentioned in the previous section, have now tweaked or added to their programs so as to include social media interaction, cohort learning, or dependence upon the arts.

If brains are being rewired, and the way individuals learn is radically changing, then this shift in learning will require significant innovation rather than additions or tweaks to reach and train the next generation of leaders. Where might a better model for how to teach and train be found?

Oddly, the place to learn how to reach, teach, and train Digital Natives is on the Christian global ministry field in the developing places in the world: oral cultures.

“If one is serious about changing the world . . . discard the prevailing view of culture and cultural change and start from scratch.”<sup>104</sup> These words of James Davison Hunter may seem an odd place to start a discussion of something so ancient as oral cultures, yet what can be learned from oral cultures may well be key to impacting our changing world. Learning from oral cultures will take openness to a new way of thinking and being, at least for those who grew up in highly literate cultures. Our brothers and sisters in countries far less (formally) educated may better understand the generation that is rising. They are storytellers, telling their tales in the midst of community. Because of

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<sup>104</sup> James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 27.

that, principles of communication and training gleaned from oral cultures and the orality movement in missions are starting points to train our new storytelling, visually and digitally driven, interactive, social, second orality culture. At the Consultation on Orality in 2012, Dr. Phillip Walker, a professor from the African Theological Seminary said: “African theological education has the potential to break out of the mold of a Western system built upon the faulty foundation of a purely literate style of education, and introduce the world to a model of theological education that has the right blend of literacy and character emphasis and methods.”<sup>105</sup>

### **An Historic Shift in Communication**

Why look to oral culture for how to train Digital Natives? Our current age is seeing a tectonic shift in communication, where both the brain and our culture are being rewired and radically changed by technology. But the current shift due to the digital world is not the first time a change of this magnitude has occurred.

Long ago in history a tectonic shift in communication, and the brain, came about as oral cultures shifted to literate cultures. A study in 2010 compared the functional magnetic resonance of the brains of 63 adults, some of who were literate, and some of who were not. The results showed that the brains of those who were non-literate differed from those who were literate. As an example: “The brains of all literate adults . . . showed enhanced activity in left-temporal areas known to respond to spoken language. The brain of illiterate adults showed enhanced activity in the left occipital-temporal region of the

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<sup>105</sup> Phil Walker, “African Theological Seminary,” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 640.

brain known to respond to faces.”<sup>106</sup> Note that the brains of the non-literate responded more to the visual than the brains of those who are literate.

In addition to this brain difference, oral culture communicates and operates differently from literate culture, but in ways that have similarities with the digital culture of Digital Natives. The focus of this paper now turns to learning about oral culture, comparing it with digital culture.

### **Orality and Walter Ong**

When it comes to the academic study of *orality* and oral cultures, Walter Ong led the way. Ong, a Jesuit priest and scholar who taught at Saint Louis University, is best known for his work in studying cultures where writing has not yet taken hold.<sup>107</sup> His book, *Orality and Literacy*, published in 1982, launched the academic study of orality, creating definitions. One definition: “I style the orality of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, ‘primary orality’.”<sup>108</sup> Although his key works were written in the 1980s, remarkably little has been added to Ong’s work in the academic world when it comes to primary orality. It is because of this, that Ong’s work provides the foundation for this section.

What difference is there in a culture if writing is present or foundational? Much. There are obvious changes: records, books, transference of knowledge in diverse ways.

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<sup>106</sup> Pascale Michelon, Dr., “Literacy Re-wires the Brain,” SharpBrains, December 7, 2010, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://sharpbrains.com/blog/2010/12/03/literacy-re-wires-the-brain>.

<sup>107</sup> Wolfgang Saxon, “Walter J. Ong, 90, Jesuit, Teacher and Scholar of Language,” The New York Times, August 24, 2003, accessed March 3, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/25/us/walter-j-ong-90-jesuit-teacher-and-scholar-of-language.html>.

<sup>108</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 11.

But these are truly only the tip of the iceberg. Ong wrote, in 1982: “Writing . . . was and is the most momentous of all human technological inventions. It is not a mere appendage to speech. Because it moves speech from the oral-aural to a new sensory world, that of vision, it transforms speech and thought as well.”<sup>109</sup> Speech, thought, knowledge, culture, and civilization are transformed by writing (and printing), often in ways that those of us in literate cultures are unaware of.

Ong communicates this humorously by quoting Socrates’ concern about the disaster that writing could bring to society.

Writing, Plato has Socrates say in the *Phaedrus*, is inhuman, pretending to establish outside of the mind what in reality can be only in the mind. It is a thing, and manufactured product . . . Secondly . . . writing destroys memory. . . . Thirdly, a written text is basically unresponsive . . . Fourthly . . . Plato’s Socrates also holds it against writing that the written word cannot defend itself as the natural spoken word can . . .<sup>110</sup>

It is fascinating to note that the hysteria in Socrates over his oral culture shifting to a literate one bears resemblance to those who are deeply concerned about the shift of today from a literate to a digital culture. It is equally fascinating to note that most of Socrates’ concerns are being reversed: the digital universe allows our communication to be collectively creative, rather than a “manufactured product.” Digital culture also is responsive, with comments, and blogs, and viral posts allowing one and all to participate in the conversation. And digital communication, due to interactivity, can “defend itself” in a way that a book on the shelf is incapable of doing. Ong wrote that writing was “the most momentous of all human technological inventions” in 1982. Might he conclude in

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 78.

the age of the internet that the digital revolution is similarly radically impacting the culture?

### Secondary Orality

Ong was a man ahead of his time. He not only defined *primary orality* but he also bridged the gap to our digital world when he created a new category: *secondary orality*.

In 1971 he noted:

Since the advent of electronic devices . . . technological man has entered into a new world of sound . . . Telephones implement personal vocal contact as letters could not, and rapid transportation multiplies person-to-person confrontation . . . Over and beyond the sound of the voice itself, other related sounds, most notably instrumental music, pulse through the air from millions of radio and television(s) . . . to a degree never even remotely approximated in the past. Total immersion in electronic sounds . . . <sup>111</sup>

In 1982, he defined secondary orality as “present day high technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend on their existence and functioning on writing and print.”<sup>112</sup> Insightful visionary observations, considering that Ong was writing before the internet was an integrated part of culture. Since then, others have updated and refined an understanding of secondary orality:

The primary driver of secondary orality is the development of sound recordings, films, telephone, television, radio, video gaming, and the internet. These have all ushered in a renaissance in oral communications and revolutionized how the world thinks, behaves, and defines itself. Transformations in secondary oral culture mirror the trends found in digital communications culture. In its most recent evolution, secondary orality is often experienced as aggregations or mash-ups of textual, visual, semiotic, musical, and oral elements. In addition, the convergence of functions in mobile communications technologies have enabled

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<sup>111</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology; Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), Kindle, Location 4376.

<sup>112</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 11.

users and audiences in the electronic agora to shift from being mere consumers of media to becoming creators, collaborators, customizers, and crowd-sourcers of political, social, intellectual, cultural, and human capital in media spaces.<sup>113</sup>

How does secondary orality differ from primary orality? There are a myriad of ways, but I turn to Ong to illustrate:

[In] a new age of secondary orality . . . electronic devices are not eliminating printed books but are actually producing more of them. Electronically taped interviews produce ‘talked’ books . . . The new medium here reinforces the old, but of course transforms it because it fosters a new, self-consciously informal style, since typographic folk believe the oral exchange should normally be informal . . . This new orality has striking resemblances to the old and its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentrating on the present moment, and even its use of formulas . . . But it is essentially a more deliberate and self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print . . . Like primary orality, secondary orality has generated a strong group sense, for listening to spoken words forms hearers into a group . . . But secondary orality generates a sense for groups immeasurably larger than those of primary oral culture—McLuhan’s “global village”. Moreover, before writing, oral folk were group minded because no feasible alternative had presented itself. In our age of secondary orality, we are group minded self-consciously and programmatically . . . We plan our happenings carefully to be sure that they are thoroughly spontaneous.<sup>114</sup>

Ong’s comments are intriguing when one takes note of how our popular contemporary books—even those written at a desk, not taped as an interview—have taken on a far more conversational (or oral) rather than formal (or literate) tone. In addition, Ong noted how secondary orality (his pre-internet definition of it), like primary orality, generated a communal sense; how much more are Digital Natives, who not only participate through learning, but also participate through social media sharing, commenting, and re-creating through “mash ups,” creating an even greater communal sense in communication.

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<sup>113</sup> Calvin Chong, “Giving Voice to Orality in Theological Education: Responses and Recommendations,” in *Beyond Literate Western Practices: Continuing Conversations in Orality and Theological Education*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2014), Kindle, Location 2746.

<sup>114</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 133-134.

If Socrates and Ong's observations lead the way, and the current digital culture is radically shifting our communication, culture, and thinking, returning us to something closer to oral culture than literate culture, then it is important to observe the differences between oral culture and communication, written and print literate culture and communication, and culture and communication within the new digital landscape.

### **Comparing Oral Culture, Literate Culture and Digital Culture**

Ong, in his writings, outlines characteristics (psychodynamics) of oral culture. There is the presumption that these characteristics are what make oral culture different than literate culture. Each of these psychodynamics are listed below. Assuming that these characteristics set oral culture apart from literate culture, note how often oral culture and digital culture share commonalities. Each psychodynamic is followed by comments comparing and contrasting oral culture characteristics with characteristics of Digital Native culture.

#### **1. Sounded Word as Power and Action**

“Oral peoples commonly . . . consider words to have great power . . . magical potency.”<sup>115</sup> While Digital Natives may not see great “magical potency” in words, they do seem to perceive it in the devices that they use for digital communication. Consider, as an example, the “magical potency” that Apple seems to have, each time a new device (iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch) is announced. Note how Apple blends communication technology with new design, and how this combination creates tremendous hype before any trumpeted announcement from Apple. There is a highly irrational element—

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 31.

”magical,” if you will—that people have when following any highly branded communication technology.

## 2. Mnemonics and Formulas (You Know What You Recall)

How could you ever call back to mind what you had so laboriously worked out? The only answer is: think memorable thoughts . . . You have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence. Your thoughts come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antithesis, in alliteration and assonances, and epithetic and other formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings . . . in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone . . . <sup>116</sup>

While Digital Natives do not need mnemonics for memory (why memorize, when all information is a click away?), they still are drawn to formulaic, memorable, repeatable patterns. Compare a traditional hymn, with many verses, with a song on the radio. Even more than music, consider the advertising world, which has become woven into contemporary culture, and which thrives on memorable images, songs, and slogans. The popularity of a poetry slam would be yet one more example.

## 3. Additive Rather than Subordination

Within literate culture, language is nuanced when additional pieces of information are added to communication. Literate culture may use words such as: and, when, then, thus, and while, giving our written language a sense of outline, with some items of far more importance than others. In oral culture, all new information is additive. How does this additive element of oral culture relate to digital culture? Perhaps the hyperlink is the ultimate additive in the new digital communication, where simply a differently colored set of words signifies “AND.” There is no outline, no ranking, with a hyperlink; it is simply an additive option. Another additive “word” for the Digital Native? The hashtag,

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

named the “UK children’s word of the year” in 2015.<sup>117</sup> Why would this # symbol be christened the “word” of the year? “Children’s dictionary writers at Oxford University Press analyzed 120,421 entries to BBC Radio 2’s annual short story competition. They found that under 13s were using the hashtag symbol in a new way: to add emphasis or to signal a comment in their story-writing. . . (for example) ‘I have the best family, #fantasticfamily’”.<sup>118</sup> In this example, the #fantasticfamily is not nuancing what has already been said with additional information, but punctuating what has already been said, closer to oral culture communication than literate.

#### 4. Aggregative Rather than Analytic

“Oral expression carries . . . epithets . . . formulary baggage . . . clichés.”<sup>119</sup> In addition to the already mentioned advertising world, both film and gaming culture create additional “formulary baggage” and “clichés” which those in related social circles understand. Movie lines, themes, songs, advertising clips, as well as image and story lines of popular games become woven into popular culture. While each tribal group of current culture may not all understand the same clichés, social groups thrive on knowing, using, quoting, and even joking about whatever film, game, or song is common among them. It creates a language for each digital tribe, centered around terms, jokes, and quotes that those in the tribe understand, but those outside may not.

An additional example of the “formulary” used within Digital Native culture would be the internet meme. “Internet memes spread from person to person through

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<sup>117</sup> Vyvyan Evans, “#language: Evolution in the Digital Age,” *The Guardian*, June 26, 2015, accessed November 5, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/media-network/2015/jun/26/hashtag-language-evolution-digital-age>.

<sup>118</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 37.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

imitation, typically by e-mail, social media, and various types of websites. They often take the form of pictures, videos, or other media containing cultural information that, rather than mutating randomly, have been deliberately altered by individuals.”<sup>120</sup>

#### 5. Redundant or Copious

“Redundancy, repetition of the just-said, keeps both speaker and hearer . . . on track.”<sup>121</sup> Again we are reminded of the advertising and music world driving home their messages through repetition. In addition, Facebook “share,” Twitter “retweet,” or any type of communication that goes “viral” (a term that has no specific number attached to it, other than the communication gets shared many times) becomes a redundant form of communication.

#### 6. Conservative or Traditionalist

“Oral societies must invest great energy in saying over and over again what has been learned arduously over the ages . . . Knowledge is hard to come by and precious, and society regards highly those wise old men and women who specialize in conserving it, who know and can tell the stories of the days of old.”<sup>122</sup> This is one characteristic of oral culture which, for the most part, is in sharp contrast to digital culture. As mentioned in the first section, Dr. Jean Twenge discovered that “76% of GenMe said they thought their boss could learn a lot from them, compared to only 50% of boomers—despite boomers’ 30 additional years of work experience.”<sup>123</sup> With the power of technology in

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<sup>120</sup> Kara Rogers, “Meme,” Britannica Academic, accessed November 5, 2017, <http://academic.eb.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/levels/collegiate/article/meme/605592>.

<sup>121</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 39-40.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>123</sup> Twenge, *Generation Me*, 271.

the hands of the young, and the flattening of the world due to technology, Digital Natives often disdain the wisdom of their elders, with one exception: the deep desire on the part of Digital Natives to have a mentor. In a study done for the workforce, LifeCourse Associates<sup>124</sup> determined that Digital Natives want to learn through mentorships, and they desire and expect a work place that is social in nature. While the collective wisdom of elders is often ignored, the wisdom of one person willing to invest personally in the Digital Native is often welcomed.

#### 7. Close to the Human Lifeworld

“Oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human lifeworld, assimilating the alien, objective world to the more immediate, familiar interaction of human beings.”<sup>125</sup> With Digital Natives’ desire for experiential, interactive, hands-on learning, they overlap on yet another characteristic of oral culture. Digital Natives desire and expect “real” learning to have practical application to the “human lifeworld.”

#### 8. Agonistically Toned

“Orality situates knowledge within a context of struggle.”<sup>126</sup> If the popularity (and money making capability) of video games and gaming culture, blockbuster movies, and television drama indicate something about how digital culture views the attainment of knowledge, then struggle is a primary theme. Even the very literate books that Digital Natives read are attune to the theme of struggle. As a sample, the New York Times

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<sup>124</sup> Neil Howe and Reena Nadler, *Why Generations Matter: Ten Findings from LifeCourse Research on the Workforce*, February 28, 2012, accessed December 6, 2016, [www.lifecourse.com](http://www.lifecourse.com).

<sup>125</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 42.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

Young Adult Hardcover Bestsellers list, the week of November 5, 2017, included: one book about a girl seeing a police officer kill her friend, another book about the death of an older sister, a third book (in the popular post-apocalyptic genre) with three sisters fighting to the death for a crown, a fourth book where a detention ends in murder, a fifth that has two warrior princesses fighting to save their world, a sixth where two individuals (one human) fight to save their societies from destruction, and a seventh where the main character fights racial discrimination. This was just within the top ten.<sup>127</sup> Making sense of life (knowledge) is now most often done, not in the church, but through story, in the form of a book, or in front of a screen: computer, television, or movie theater.

#### 9. Empathetic and Participatory Rather than Objectively Distanced

For an oral culture learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the known . . . Writing separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for ‘objectivity’, in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing . . . Under the influence of writing . . . Plato had excluded the poets from his Republic, for studying them was essentially learning to react with “soul,” to feel one self identified with Achilles or Odysseus.<sup>128</sup>

It would seem evident that at the same time culture becomes more digitally driven, it is also losing a sense of objectivity. Viral videos, “alternative truths,” fake news are fueling a time where “truth” has become relative. But relative to what? Relative to those with whom you most closely identify (“communal identification”). As mentioned in section 1, the “poets” of our day, the storytellers, the artists, the actors, the bloggers, the movie-makers, the viral video composers, the musicians, are now the ones with influence.

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<sup>127</sup> “Young Adult Hardcover Books - Best Sellers - November 5, 2017,” The New York Times, November 5, 2017, accessed November 5, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers/2017/11/05/young-adult-hardcover/?action=click&contentCollection=Books&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2Fbooks%2Fbest-sellers%2F&ion=Header&module=ArrowNav&version=Right&pgtype=Reference>.

<sup>128</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 45-46.

They are the ones achieving a “close, empathetic, communal identification” with their fan base, seeming to be known by millions, and having considerable sway on what is listened to and believed as the “truth” of the day.

#### 10. Homeostatic

“Oral societies live very much in a present which keeps itself in equilibrium or homeostasis by sloughing off memories which no longer have present relevance . . . oral traditions reflect a society’s present cultural values rather than idle curiosity about the past.”<sup>129</sup> While digital culture has historical records a click away, there is a sense in which digital culture lives not within any historic framework, or even forecast for the future, but fully in the midst of what is currently trending.

The LifeCourse Associates<sup>130</sup> study mentioned above determined that in the work force Digital Natives want achievable, short-term goals, where the present—rather than the past or even long-term future—is what is important. They want immediate feedback as part of this focus on the now.

#### 11. Situational Rather Than Abstract

“Oral cultures tend to use concepts . . . that are minimally abstract in the sense that they remain close to the living human lifeworld.”<sup>131</sup> This is another place where digital culture can diverge from oral culture. Graphic logos which are fully abstract now carry weight in this visually driven generation. Design trends continue to simplify shape and form, while carrying little meaning other than the meaning repetitively given through

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 46-48.

<sup>130</sup> Howe and Nadler.

<sup>131</sup> Ong, *Orality & Literacy*, 49.

branding. Specific design trends in 2017 include using patterns and geometric shapes<sup>132</sup> and form simplification.<sup>133</sup> When it comes to art, brand, and design, digital culture is truly a new world.

## 12. Oral Memorization

The same formulas and themes recurred, but they were stitched together or “rhapsodized” differently in each rendition even by the same poet, depending on audience reaction, the mood of the poem or the occasion, and other social and psychological factors . . . We know how the bards learned: by listening for months and years to other bards who never sing a narrative the same way twice . . . The crucial words that Christians repeat as Jesus words in fulfilling this directive (that is the words “This is my body . . . This is the cup of my blood. . .”) do not appear in exactly the same way in any two places where they are cited in the New Testament.<sup>134</sup>

While there is very little oral memorization needed or wanted by Digital Natives in a strict sense, the storytellers of today would seem to live out this characteristic of the bards of old. Movies, songs, games of the past are often remade with slight updated changes. Consider Batman: comic books, then a television show decades ago, now movies, being retold again and again. Even storylines or characters that are projected to be “new” feel very familiar with others, particularly within the same genre.

The rising of a new genre—fan fiction—is perhaps the most obvious example of this place where the modern day “bards” (anyone with a computer) can take the work of another “bard” and rewrite it. Doing a quick Google search on “Harry Potter Fan Fiction” will turn up thousands of books written by authors other than J. K. Rowling, who have

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<sup>132</sup> “9 Graphic Design Trends You Need To Be Aware of in 2017,” Web Design Ledger, April 12, 2017, accessed September 12, 2017, <https://webdesignledger.com/9-graphic-design-trends-need-aware-2017/#ffc0690663>.

<sup>133</sup> “9 Hot Logo Trends for 2017,” 99designs Blog, January 30, 2017, accessed September 12, 2017, <https://99designs.com/blog/trends/logo-trends-2017/>.

<sup>134</sup> Ong, *Orality & Literacy*, 57-64.

taken the Harry Potter story and created their own new adventures, and yet are so familiar with the original story, that the new one seems consistent with the old. (As of September 2017, there were over 85,000 Harry Potter based fan fiction novels on the website <https://www.harrypotterfanfiction.com><sup>135</sup>)

As an aside, this quality of retelling a story but using differing words in each telling, has ramifications when it comes to the issue of biblical storytelling. Biblical storytellers debate whether to memorize the Scripture exactly, or to memorize the salient points of any story but have the individual put the story in their own words. The example from the New Testament in the quote above, the same story told in differing words, would seem to indicate a freedom for those who retell stories from the Bible, but don't memorize word-for-word. This freedom would seem to arise from the more oral culture of Jesus.

### 13. Verbomotor lifestyle

“Courses of action and attitudes toward issues depend significantly more on . . . human interaction, and significantly less on . . . input from the ‘objective’ world of things . . . Oral communication unites people in groups. Writing and reading are solitary activities . . .”<sup>136</sup> On this person-interactive verbomotor characteristic of oral culture, it would seem that Digital Natives are simultaneously similar to oral culture and diametrically opposite. How can that be? Digital Natives are focused on their smartphone. They are highly object-attentive in this regard. But the object to which they are attentive is also an object that is not solitary, but communicative, uniting them with

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<sup>135</sup> “Over 80,000 Harry Potter Stories,” Harry Potter Stories, accessed September 12, 2017, <https://www.harrypotterfanfiction.com>.

<sup>136</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 67-69.

others. In a strange twist of modern technology, the word-attentiveness of oral culture has translated to an attentiveness to a technological device, with the end result being the uniting of people into groups. Digital Natives posting Instagram photos of a dinner that they are eating in isolation, in order to connect with their peers, is one such example of the strange relationship that has developed between technology used in isolation to develop community.

When it comes to technologically linked community, however, Digital Natives group around common causes and social media. This communal sense reminds us:

Certain points of resemblance between present-day phenomena related to our orality and primitive phenomena related to orality are startling enough. Sound always tends to socialize. The drive toward group sense and toward participatory activities, toward “happenings,” which mysteriously emerges out of modern electronic technological cultures is strikingly similar to certain drives in preliterate cultures.<sup>137</sup>

#### 14. The Noetic Role of Heroic ‘Heavy’ Figures and of the Bizarre

“Oral memory works effectively with ‘heavy’ characters, persons whose deeds are monumental, memorable and commonly public.”<sup>138</sup> To see the influence of the heavy heroic and bizarre characters in Digital Native culture, one need look no further than the 100 billion dollar gaming industry. *Destiny 2*, named “2017s biggest video game,” bases gameplay on a science fiction tale that includes aliens and humans with special powers (including the players).<sup>139</sup>

#### 15. The Interiority of Sound

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<sup>137</sup> Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology*, 4242, Kindle.

<sup>138</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 69.

<sup>139</sup> Chris Plante, “How *Destiny 2* Became 2017’s Biggest Video Game - and What It Says about the Medium’s Future,” *Vox*, September 28, 2017, accessed September 30, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/9/28/16360680/destiny-2-video-game-blockbuster-story>.

“In a primary oral culture... the phenomenology of sound enters deeply into human beings feel for existence.”<sup>140</sup> In a digital culture, where movies have soundtracks, where popular music plays as we shop, where silence is seen as awkward, even uncomfortable, we have indeed entered an era again where sound has deeply entered the very fabric of our existence.

#### 16. Orality, Community and the Sacral

The spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups . . . Writing and print isolate . . . The Hebrew *dabar*, which means word, means also event and thus refers directly to the spoken word. The spoken word is always an event, a movement in time, completely lacking in the thing-like repose of the written or printed word. In Trinitarian theology, the Second Person of the Godhead is the Word, and the human analogue for the word here is not the human written word, but the human spoken word. God the Father “speaks” to his Son: he does not inscribe him. Jesus, the Word of God, left nothing in writing, though he could read and write (Luke 4:16). “Faith comes through hearing,” we read in the letter to the Romans (10:17). The letter kills, the spirit (breath, which rides the spoken word) gives life (2 Corinthian 3:6).<sup>141</sup>

“The spoken word is always an event,” which the Lord placed as a desire deep within us. Perhaps it is this desire for *dabar* that drives digital culture to events (concerts, pop-up parties, Facebook live, speed dating, and much more), and perhaps it is in this desire for *dabar* that the church has an opportunity to meet a true need, not mimicking the events of the culture, but providing true, sacred community.

Since Ong’s seminal work, others have added to this discussion. Some characteristics that are now included in discussions of orality include:

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<sup>140</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 70-72.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

## 17. The Use of Art

“For oral learners, art-making is not an optional aesthetic experience. Art is functionally necessary.”<sup>142</sup> As noted in number nine above, the artists are today’s influencers. As noted in section one, Digital Natives are innovators and artists. “The keys to the kingdom are changing hands. The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind—creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers . . . artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinker.”<sup>143</sup> Art speaks to a broad cross-section of Digital Native culture in a profound way.

## 18. The Importance of Experience

“Oral learners also learn best when learning is connected to real events, people, and struggles of life.”<sup>144</sup> In many ways, this summarizes many of Ong’s points about oral culture, as well as many of the findings on how Digital Natives learn. One of the things the study by LifeCourse Associates discovered about Millennials is that they want hands-on guidance.<sup>145</sup>

This points a way forward for training Digital Natives.

## 19. Holism

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<sup>142</sup> Samuel E. Chiang, “Prologue,” in *Beyond Literate Western Practices: Continuing Conversations in Orality and Theological Education*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2014), Kindle, Location 329.

<sup>143</sup> Daniel H. Pink, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-brainers Will Rule the Future* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006), Kindle, Location 114.

<sup>144</sup> W. Jay Moon, “Teaching Oral Learners in Institutional Settings,” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 2065.

<sup>145</sup> Howe and Nadler.

“Oral learners prefer to view matters in the totality of their context, including everyone involved (holistically).”<sup>146</sup> This is another summary statement that can be made of both oral learners as well as Digital Natives. In the world of both oral and digital culture, this holistic including of everyone creates a tension with the literate world of propositional truth: when everyone is honored and involved, then blunt truth statements are seen as harsh and unnecessary. This reality leads to the next point:

## 20. Shame Orientation

“Oral persons . . . preferentially shame-oriented . . . have the following basic values: collectivism, indirect communication, event orientation, person orientation, status focus, holistic thinking, and fear of losing face.”<sup>147</sup> While current Digital Native culture may claim to find the act of “shaming” abhorrent, the reality is that shame culture is on the rise for self-described, younger “anglos” in the West. Data from TheCultureTest.com demonstrates that “shame” is on the rise (23.3% of teens identify with shame culture, compared with 16.8% of people in their sixties, with each decade becoming more shame-based), at the same time guilt is on the decline (71.9% of teens compared to 78.3%). While the test is an online self-assessment, the sample size was significant, with at least 500 people answering per birth decade compared.<sup>148</sup>

This new shame culture can be seen when those who express beliefs outside what the normative culture holds, are often seen to be freakish and outcasts. Take, for example,

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<sup>146</sup> W. Jay Moon, “Teaching Oral Learners in Institutional Settings,” Kindle, Location 2074.

<sup>147</sup> Hannes Wiher, “Worldview and Oral Preference Learners and Leaders,” in *Beyond Literate Western Practices: Continuing Conversations in Orality and Theological Education*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2014), Kindle, Location 2188.

<sup>148</sup> “The Rise of Shame in America,” HonorShame, January 24, 2017, accessed September 22, 2017, <http://honorshame.com/rise-shame-america>.

the shaming that is done by the current culture on social media when someone takes an unpopular stand on something such as cruelty to animals. This collective shame orientation leads to a society where the community determines what is acceptable and what is not, rather than a religion, institution, or book defining what is acceptable. This leads Digital Native culture to having few absolutes. Barna researchers found: “Three-quarters of millennials (74%) agree strongly or somewhat with the statement, ‘Whatever is right for your life or works best for you is the only truth you can know,’ compared to only 38 percent of Elders. And millennials (31%) are three times more likely than Elders (10%) . . . to *strongly* agree with the statement.”<sup>149</sup>

While these Barna studies rely upon an individual morality (“only you can know”), because Digital Natives are tribal and social in nature, the reality is that this “only you can know” right and wrong often arises from a collective conscience.

## 21. Storytelling

Perhaps the most obvious, seldom stated characteristic of oral cultures is the importance of narrative storytelling. “Oral leaders . . . have an orature collection of . . . stories.”<sup>150</sup> While the influence and value of storytelling has been described above, there is one more important aspect of storytelling to consider when dealing with Digital Natives: they have grown up telling stories. Whether it is through creating YouTube videos, Instagram posts, selfies, blogs or telling their story in Twitter or on Facebook, Digital Natives are driven by telling their own stories. In a culture where one’s social

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<sup>149</sup> “The End of Absolutes: America’s New Moral Code,” Barna Group, May 25, 2016, accessed September 15, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/the-end-of-absolutes-americas-new-moral-code>.

<sup>150</sup> Samuel E. Chiang, “Prologue,” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 267.

media persona may be more important than one's actual life, there is this connection to oral culture: “. . . in the cultural and artistic context of African orality, literature is nothing when it is not an enactment . . . orality proposes a dynamic conception of literature, one that envisages literature as text in situation.”<sup>151</sup> This “enactment [as a] conception of literature” would seem to align with the modern passion for creating an online story and social identity.

### Story Learning

Oral cultures are storytelling cultures, as is today's digital culture, where the “influencers” are the storytellers. Thom Rainer, in his interview of 1200 millennials discovered this:

What is fascinating are the sources the millennials are not turning to as influencers. Music, internet, and television each outranked religious beliefs, a spouse, and a boss in terms of influence. Music is more influential than religious beliefs by three percentage points. The internet is more influential than a spouse by 30 percentage points. And television is more influential than a boss by 11 percentage points.<sup>152</sup>

What is the power in music, in television, in the internet? All of these mediums are, in today's world, storytellers. Music is interwoven with lyrics, telling a story, giving a perspective, teaching a lesson. None of the musicians on Time's list are focused merely on the musical aspect of their music; lyrics are highly important to their success. Television, whether a sitcom, drama, movie, soap opera, or reality tv, is about telling the story. The broad category of the internet thrives on story (as the statistics on YouTube would attest). Even fashion designers (two of whom made it onto Time's list) are propelled by the story they create on their websites, their ads, the runway.

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<sup>151</sup> Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa & the Black Diaspora* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2001), 36-37.

<sup>152</sup> Rainer, *The Millennials*, Kindle, Location 2889.

Storytelling is both visual and interactive, even when not overtly so. Take musical storytelling as an example. In his 2016 number one hit, Justin Bieber sings “Love Yourself,” and his first verse is: “For all the times that you rain on my parade, and all the clubs you get in using my name, you think you broke my heart, oh girl for goodness sake, you think I’m crying on my own well I ain’t.” His words paint a picture in the imagination: the clubs, the girl, the one singing. In addition, his words invite the listener to participate in a certain way, remembering who, in their past, used them or broke their heart. The story, combined with the music, was powerful enough to propel this song to a top song of the year.<sup>153</sup>

What do the lyrics of a Justin Bieber song have to do with training leaders in the church? If a story about a breakup can have the power to propel a song to the top of the charts, the story of the God of the universe coming on a rescue mission to save us should engage Digital Natives. And it is the Story of the Bible that must be used to not only train a new generation of leaders, but that they must use to reach and train their own generation.

The question might arise: is storytelling enough to hold the attention of this generation? Justin Bieber has a visual—not just musical—brand. Music videos, website, clothing, Instagram account (with over 90 million followers), and enough fan websites to overwhelm, are all included in Bieber’s power. Is listening, by and of itself, enough to engage?

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<sup>153</sup> Hugh McIntyre, “Justin Bieber’s ‘Love Yourself’ Owned Radio In 2016, Ends The Year At No. 1,” *Forbes*, January 6, 2017, accessed November 15, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hughmcintyre/2017/01/06/justin-biebers-love-yourself-owned-radio-in-2016-ends-the-year-at-no-1/#74bfa8455bc6>.

Chris Giliberti, Chief of Staff for Gimlet Media (and a millennial himself), has found that storytelling podcasts (including long ones) have a particular appeal to millennials. Why? He explains “why long-form storytelling is actually the ideal format to reach millennials... 1) It’s an antidote to a 140-character world 2) It’s authentic 3) It earns our trust.”<sup>154</sup>

Clearly, storytelling has power with Digital Natives. Businesses are now learning this. “Storytelling is an organizations greatest secret weapon in its quest to differentiate itself from its competition” advises David All, Founder and CEO of MADE I/O, in an article to businesses looking to connect with millennials.<sup>155</sup> And Creation ADM, a firm that specializes in branding, advises: “Corporate storytelling is the most effective way to engage young customers. Millennials’ identities are social, in constant evolution and open to influence. Brands that tell good authentic stories about themselves will be able to trigger an emotional response and create an involvement that will ultimately drive the people’s choice.”<sup>156</sup>

How can the church use storytelling in a compelling way to develop leaders who have grown up on technology, and whose brains work in new ways?

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<sup>154</sup> Chris Giliberti, “3 Reasons Why Millennials Want Long Form Storytelling Over ‘Snackable’ Content,” *Forbes*, March 8, 2016, accessed July 27, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/under30network/2016/03/08/3-reasons-why-millennials-want-long-form-storytelling-over-snackable-content/#1e94933e380e>.

<sup>155</sup> David All, “Reach Millennials Through Storytelling for Good,” *The Huffington Post*, July 23, 2013, accessed July 25, 2017, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-all/reach-millennials-through\\_b\\_3639040.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-all/reach-millennials-through_b_3639040.html).

<sup>156</sup> “Millennials and Corporate Storytelling. How Authenticity Is Rewarding Brands,” *Creation ADM*, May 5, 2017, accessed July 25, 2017, <https://creationadm.com/advice/millennials-and-corporate-storytelling-how-authenticity-is-rewarding-brands>.

It is time for the church to shift gears from training in a linear, literate-culture method that has served for hundreds of years, and return to the way Jesus taught in his oral culture—with stories. Stories invite people into an interactive learning experience. Listening to a story causes the listener to ponder: Who am I in the story? What would I have done? What do I find shocking in the story and why? How does this story impact or change me? The stories of the Bible can create conversations as well as memorable images, which can impact and teach a generation of Digital Natives.

### **Looking to the Global Ministry Field**

Since there are many commonalities between Digital Natives and oral cultures, particularly when it comes to the impact of storytelling, then the question much be asked: what has been learned about effective training in oral cultures that could help in engaging and training Digital Natives? The best place to look is on the mission field and global ministry field, where in recent years there have been significant successes in connecting with oral cultures through telling the stories of the Bible, teaching others to tell these stories, and creating discussion around these stories. In many ways, it makes great sense that Christians can lead the way in this field, due to the narrative nature of large portions of Scriptures, and to the fact that Jesus was a storyteller.

### **The Growth of the Orality Movement**

“The use of the oral story approach in contemporary mission is nothing more than recovering the original manner in which these narratives were recited to the audience.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Damon So, “How Should a Theological Institution Prepare Students, Leaders Who Will Go Out into the Field to Train Local People (Storytellers) to Tell Bible Stories Effectively?” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 375.

However, it is only recently that oral forms of teaching have gained momentum in missions. “Orality, specifically storying, was introduced to IMB missionaries in West Africa in the early to mid-1990s. It took years . . . before it began to take hold among missionaries.”<sup>158</sup> The reason it took years was because of resistance on the part of missionaries, missions organizations, and educational institutions, not because of effectiveness. There is still significant resistance to orality training when it comes to the establishment. “In a recent 759-page handbook on ‘theological education in world Christianity’ (Werner 2010), with contributing authors from nearly every stream of the Christian family, there is virtually no reference to how the Church should be . . . training in oral settings.”<sup>159</sup> Yet the effectiveness of the method, and a new momentum to the orality movement, is evident.

While various individuals or organizations attempted to better reach and train oral learners throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, the 2004 Lausanne Forum for World Evangelization was a catalyst of momentum for the orality movement. At Lausanne, a working group was formed, and they produced the book *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, published in 2007. In 2005, the Lausanne working group and members of the Oral Bible Network merged to form the International Orality Network (ION). ION

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<sup>158</sup> Jeff Singerman, “Orality Observations among Francophone West African Adults: Storying to Orality,” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 1660.

<sup>159</sup> James R. Krabill, “Important Lessons from Indigenous Movements and Locally-initiated Churches in the Global South,” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 1543.

now seeks to radically influence the use of primary and secondary orality among unreached peoples in rural and urban contexts.<sup>160</sup>

The 2011 Lausanne *Cape Town Commitment* strongly stated the need for Christian organizations to understand oral learners. The Commitment states: “The majority of the world’s population are oral communicators, who cannot or do not learn through literate means, and more than half of them are among the unreached. (The Cape Town Commitment II-D-2)”<sup>161</sup>

Since Cape Town, more meetings and consultations have followed, now drawing in academia, including a gathering at Wheaton College in 2012, and one in Hong Kong in 2013. The Wheaton consultation produced *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*. While still in its early days, the movement has truly begun.

One illustration of why the movement is critical for global ministries is the story of what happened in Orissa (Odisha), India. Orissa was the center of Christian persecution in 2008, when 100 Christians were killed and 6,000 churches burned by radical Hindus.<sup>162</sup> A 2013 video, *Man of Peace: The Storytellers of Odisha*, tells how a shift from ineffective literate strategies to oral approaches in evangelism has now

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<sup>160</sup> “How We Began,” International Orality Network, accessed September 20, 2017, <https://orality.net/about/ion-history/how-we-began>.

<sup>161</sup> Samuel Chiang and William Coppedge, “Orality,” Lausanne Movement, November 17, 2014, accessed September 20, 2017, <https://www.lausanne.org/networks/issues/orality>.

<sup>162</sup> Stoyan Zaimov, “Christian Faith Is Growing 7 Years After Hindu Radicals Killed 100 Believers, Destroyed 6,000 Churches in India,” The Christian Post, September 1, 2015, accessed December 6, 2016, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-faith-strengthening-in-orissa-on-7th-anniversary-of-horrific-violence-where-100-believers-were-massacred-by-hindu-radicals-144228>.

transformed thousands of lives in Orissa.<sup>163</sup> Movement from linear literate preaching to biblical storytelling made a significant and powerful difference in the effectiveness of ministry. Why? Because the stories of the Bible sounded familiar, far less threatening, and less western to those of the Hindu faith. Stories fit and spoke to the culture.

### **Learnings from the Global Ministry Field**

What can be gleaned from those at work in ministry effectively connecting to oral cultures? First, that storytelling is the core of learning. For oral cultures, stories are not something to add on as an illustration of a point. Instead, stories form the foundation, the beginning point, of learning in oral culture. This is radically different than traditional literate learning. “Whereas the West tends to focus on a process of establishing principles, moving to guidelines, observing practices, and collecting stories, the majority of the world reverses the process and moves from stories to practices to guidelines to principles.”<sup>164</sup>

Second, that storytelling, and training storytellers, is effective for not only evangelism, but theological development.

Take the case of 17 North Africans who were taught a sequence of 135 Bible stories. After two years, a seminary professor gave them a six-hour exam. Could they connect the stories with core doctrines, with basic themes of the faith? Indeed, they could. Given a theological theme, they quickly referred to multiple stories. They answered doctrinal questions with illustrations.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *Man of Peace*, Vimeo 61189209, accessed December 4, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/61189209>.

<sup>164</sup> Samuel E. Chiang, “Prologue,” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 233.

<sup>165</sup> Miriam Adeney, “A Response to the Articles in Perspective II,” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 1301.

It would seem that, despite the fact that “something in the history of the Western Church and its theological education/training has produced ministers and pastors who often think and preach propositionally,”<sup>166</sup> other ways to bring deep theological training are possible.

Leadership development has also been demonstrated among oral cultures through using biblical narrative. Bruce Bennett, of Village Church Planting, uses the story of Jesus sending out the 72 to develop leaders and church planters in a highly effective way.<sup>167</sup> A very literal interpretation of Luke 10 means that people are sent out two by two, with no resources, to find someone in a village who will take them in (this person is then defined as the “person of peace”). Once people begin to gather in the home of the “person of peace” and the Lord answers prayers that someone is healed (“heal the sick” – verse 9a), then the church planters know the gospel may be presented (“tell them ‘the Kingdom of God has come near you.’” – verse 9b). Bennett’s organization, Community Church Planting International, planted 40,000 churches around the globe between 2003 and 2014, beginning in Africa, and growing in many cultures that are far more orally based than those in the West.<sup>168</sup> The organization continues to multiply today.

### **Bringing It Together: Orality, Digital Natives, and Telling Stories**

Ponder a church where the experiential is important, where there is a recognition that God can speak in many ways (in addition to the written word), where it is believed

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<sup>166</sup> Damon So, “How Should a Theological Institution Prepare Students / Leaders Who Will Go Out into the Field to Train Local People (Storytellers) to Tell Bible Stories Effectively?” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 498.

<sup>167</sup> Bruce Bennett, *Mobilizing Your Members*, February 24, 2016, Conference Workbook, New Covenant Church, Clio, MI.

<sup>168</sup> “History,” Community Church Planting, accessed September 15, 2017, <https://www.ccp.international/history>.

that faith is meant to be lived out and lived in community, where learning includes give-and-take and all having a voice, and where worship is a multisensory “experience” which includes physically doing something in response to what you learn. This may fit the picture of what one expects to find in a new church filled with the emerging digital generation. In actuality, this is a description that arises out of a church in oral culture that has embraced its orality as a way to teach and train, part of the “powerful pedagogical components in oral contexts that instruct the individual believer and the entire community on a number of important matters.”<sup>169</sup>

While many are sounding an alarmist bell at the significant shift our culture is undergoing, consider again Socrates’s concern regarding the change writing would bring: “Writing . . . is inhuman, pretending to establish outside of the mind what in reality can be only in the mind.”<sup>170</sup> In many ways, Socrates was correct. And yet, for those on this side of the line of literacy, we can see the enormous good that came from writing and print. Could good come as our brains are rewired by technology? Yes. But the church must not get lost during this hinge moment in history. Researcher George Barna understands this: “technology and then mass media have forever changed the ways in which we process information . . . we must develop new forums and formats through which people will experience, understand, and serve God.”<sup>171</sup> Storytelling can lead the way. Marc Prensky tells of trying to get Digital Natives trained in a certain engineering

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<sup>169</sup> James R. Krabill, “Important Lessons from Indigenous Movements and Locally-initiated Churches in the Global South,” in *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts*, eds. Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013), Kindle, Location 1567.

<sup>170</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 78.

<sup>171</sup> George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church: A Blue Print for Survival* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998), 5, 134.

software. It wasn't working until the training was put into a story-format video game. The software became so popular it sold a million copies in several languages.<sup>172</sup>

Leo Widrich, cofounder of Buffer (a social media management program), has the science to back up storytelling:

If we listen to a PowerPoint presentation . . . a certain part in the brain gets activated . . . When we are being told a story, things change dramatically. Not only are the language processing parts in our brain activated, but any other area in our brain that we would use when experiencing the events of the story are too. . . . A story can put your whole brain to work . . . it gets better: When we tell stories to others that have really helped us shape our thinking and way of life, we can have the same effect on them too. The brains of the person telling a story and listening to it can synchronize, says Uri Hasson from Princeton.<sup>173</sup>

N.T. Wright adds theological weight to the discussion: "Stories are . . . particularly good at modify or subverting other stories and their world views."<sup>174</sup>

The connection between oral learners and Digital Natives has not gone unnoticed. The blogosphere, one place where Digital Natives reside, is one location to find the discussion. *The Civic Beat* (an online magazine) published an article written by An Xiao Mina, a blogger who grew up in an oral culture, entitled *Digital Culture is Like Oral Culture Written Down*. She riffs on selfie sticks, cyber-bulling, and emojis, and writes: "many basic critiques of how people live online stem from the assumption that people online ought to follow the norms and conventions of written culture."<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Marc Prensky, *From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom: Hopeful Essays for 21st Century Learning* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012), 5-6.

<sup>173</sup> Leonhard Widrich, "What Storytelling Does to Our Brains," Buffer Social, February 1, 2016, accessed November 15, 2017, <https://blog.bufferapp.com/science-of-storytelling-why-telling-a-story-is-the-most-powerful-way-to-activate-our-brains>.

<sup>174</sup> N. T. Wright, "Stories, Worldview and Knowledge," in *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), 4.

<sup>175</sup> An Xiao Mina, "Digital Culture Is Like Oral Culture Written Down," Medium: The Civic Beat, January 11, 2015, accessed September 20, 2017, <https://medium.com/the-civic-beat/digital-culture-is-like-oral-culture-written-down-df896b287782>.

We are in a moment when the ancient and modern are colliding, when what is learned in a remote tribal village can better help the church in the United States train a new generation of pastors and leaders who have been raised on a diet of technology. It is time to listen carefully to one another for a way forward into the future.

### **Conclusion**

The new emerging generation, the Digital Natives, with brains rewired by technology, are not simply a next generation, but a new culture. In many ways, this culture bears more similarities to oral culture in far-away parts of the world, than it does to our traditional western literate culture.

The global resurgence of orality is upon us. Cyberization and the wide-spread acceptance of habit-forming virtual apps have resulted in patterns of digitized communication similar to verbal forms. Societies across the world are communicating in a style that mimics natural speech patterns.<sup>176</sup>

If the Church is to reach and train a generation of leaders who have more similarities to our brothers and sisters in oral cultures than they do to American baby boomers, it must use appropriate tools and models. And what are those tools and models?

First and foremost is biblical storytelling, with the story being the core of the teaching rather than the illustration. Storytelling is the most effective model of training for this generation of Digital Natives, and must be engaged to raise up a new generation of emerging leaders.

Storytelling mentors must be trained who can who tell and teach the biblical story, and ask questions designed to draw out the important principles of the story.

Visual meaning-rich images connected to the story must also be engaged. In a culture now driven by sight, it is important that the stories told and learned are connected

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<sup>176</sup> Chiang, "Prologue," Kindle, Location 199.

to images that drive home the story and keep reminding the learner of what they are learning through the story.

Beyond the visual, all of the arts must also be incorporated. Music, movies, painting, creativity can all be woven into the story to create a rich learning experience.

Finally, the context for this story learning must be social. Cohorts, either meeting in person or virtually, can grow together in their leadership capabilities, as they learn, discuss, process, and retell the stories of the Bible to one another.

## SECTION 4: TRACK 02 ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

Section 3 presented the rationale for learning from oral culture in order to best train Digital Natives. Biblical storytelling, connected to image, is being powerfully used on the mission field, and can be equally powerful when used with Digital Natives.

Today's average pastor, however, does not have this understanding or training, and needs simple tools that can be used to reach and train emerging generations of leaders.

The artifact I propose is a non-fiction series of small workbooks that can be used in cohorts of emerging leaders. A simple tool that pastors can use to train Digital Natives in community, this workbook will allow Digital Native emerging leaders to learn, tell, and live the stories of the Bible.

The title for this series of booklets is *The Story Leadership Initiative: Mentoring Lessons for Emerging Christian Leaders*.

Each workbook will include an introduction, followed by nine *leadership lesson* chapters, each on a different desired leadership characteristic, and conclude with a wrap-up chapter, reiterating the lessons learned. Each lesson will have one leadership characteristic focus (for example: vision, prayer, bridge-building) while recognizing that non-linear story learning will create discussion and learning beyond the one characteristic.

In each leadership lessons, one Bible story will be the focus, along with a related image. The lessons are completed in cohorts and small mentoring groups, where emerging leaders hear feedback from others on their own character and competencies. Included in each lesson will be questions for contemplating the story and image, plus

instructions for studying, learning, discussing, retelling, and experiencing the story in community.

The leadership model behind the microbooks is Ronald Heifetz's Adaptive Leadership model. The first step of adaptive leadership is to ask: "what is precious versus expendable? Determin[e] what practices are core to the future and what are obstacles to the future."<sup>177</sup> In answer to this question, the lessons look to both the Free Methodist Denomination and the Genesis Conference, as they seek to define the gifts, graces, and skills needed for those seeking ordination. The second step of adaptive leadership is experimentation, testing best practices. Each lesson relies heavily on experimenting, both as the participant tells the story to others, and as they finish the "DO" portion of the lesson. In addition to each lesson depending upon experimentation, the microbooks will be tested, with feedback from participating groups adjusting the workbooks themselves. Finally, adaptive leadership requires that there is both assessment and integration of best practices. Discussion in the group allows people to weigh what worked and what did not, and continuation in the group allows for integration to occur.

While the workbook can be used independently, this is the digital generation, which means that a host of companion material delivered through a website and social networking must be involved and included. Therefore, a connected website, Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter account are a part of the initiative, so as to allow social interactions on a larger scale.

The question may be asked: why create a workbook (a print medium) at all? Why not have all training embedded in digital technology? There are two reasons. The first is

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<sup>177</sup> "Adaptive Leadership," Cambridge Leadership Associates, August 8, 2016, accessed March 3, 2018, <https://cambridge-leadership.com/adaptive-leadership/>.

that most mentors are not Digital Natives. In order to better bridge the gap between literate and digital culture, the workbook element provides familiarity to the literate culture mentors. The second reason is that for the leadership training to truly be transformative, there needs to be some time to disconnect from the digital. In a recent Harvard Business Review article, Deborah Rowland presents the research:

The vast majority of leadership programs are set curricula delivered through classroom-taught, rationally based, individual-focused methods . . . Yet study after study, including my own, tells us the qualities that leaders in today's world need are intuitive, dynamic, collaborative, and grounded in here-and-now emotional intelligence . . . What would work better? . . . Influence participants' "being," not just their "doing." In soon-to-be-published research, Malcolm Higgs, Roger Bellis, and I have found that leaders need to work on the quality of their inner game, or their capacity to tune into and regulate their emotional and mental states, before they can hope to develop their outer game, or what it is they need to actually do. So leadership development must start by working on the inner game . . . In order for leadership development to influence being-level capacities, the learning experience needs to offer stillness and space for intentional, non-obstructed contemplation . . . cultivating the vital skills of purpose, self-awareness, empathy, and acute attentional discipline.<sup>178</sup>

As was discussed in Section 1, Digital Natives are not wired for stillness.

Technology is tremendously distracting. When a training cohort comes together, having a print tool allowing stillness without technology usage, must be an option. To ignore technology completely would be an error (hence the website and social media presence). To require it at every meeting would be an equally deadly error.

In addition, the workbooks are not linear learning experiences; social interaction, ministry experimentation, and the work of the Holy Spirit speaking different words to different participants, all allow for each group to have very different, tailored experiences. The workbook and technology combination encourages customization: there

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<sup>178</sup> Deborah Rowland, "Why Leadership Development Isn't Developing Leaders," Harvard Business Review, April 21, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2016/10/why-leadership-development-isnt-developing-leaders>.

is no required order to the workbooks, lessons provide many alternative discussion questions and exercises, and there are more learning possibilities on the website.

Due to the nature of the artifact, Turabian 8 is not followed in section five or the artifact itself, but rather follows artifact guidelines.

## SECTION 5: TRACK 02 ARTIFACT SPECIFICATIONS

### Non-Fiction Book Proposal Query Letter

Dear (Editor):

“The End of Absolutes: America’s New Moral Code” (Barna, May 2016), “Only 1 in 7 Pastors Under 40” (Christianity Today, January 26, 2017), “The Internet is Rewiring Your Brain” (Huffington Post, October 30, 2013), “59 Percent of Millennials Raised in a Church Have Dropped Out” (Faithit.com, February 9, 2017).

These recent articles, filled with facts and figures, could easily create despair for those desiring to see the church thrive. As pastors retire, churches are sitting empty waiting for new, capable replacements to be found. As a denominational leader overseeing a region of local churches, I understand the angst.

“What are we to do to reach, enfold and train the emerging generation?” is a cry heard in churches across the country. Because this new technologically-driven generation seems so foreign to those that are older, the church struggles for answers, settling for trying new music, or investing heavily in technology.

But what if the best answer for reaching and training this “Digital Native” generation was an ancient one? What if the new generations really weren’t so strange, but in fact looked like generations long past? What if their technologically dependent culture actually bore significant resemblance to the oral cultures of the mission field?

Based upon my doctoral research comparing millennials (and younger groups) with oral cultures around the world, I have created a leadership development initiative, consisting of workbooks, a website, video, Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram accounts, entitled ***The Story Leadership Initiative: Mentoring Lessons for Emerging Christian Leaders***. The introductory microbook explains my research in everyday terms. The remaining microbooks create effective Christian leadership development for our image, story, and media driven emerging leaders. How do these books work? Through using Jesus’ method: Image-driven, biblical storytelling. Each microbook is approximately 4500 words plus images. They can be used as small group curriculum, or in one-on-one mentoring situations. Future series are already under consideration.

I am a published author, a denominational leader, an experienced pastor and leadership developer, and I care deeply for the Church. I want to see a younger generation of leaders rise to take the church into a place of new health and life. It’s this deep desire that has driven this project. I look forward to hearing from you.

With Hope,

Pam Braman

Superintendent, Genesis Conference, Free Methodist Church USA

## Cover Letter

Dear (Editor):

“The End of Absolutes: America’s New Moral Code” (Barna, May 2016), “Only 1 in 7 Pastors Under 40” (Christianity Today, January, 2017), “The Internet is Rewiring Your Brain” (Huffington Post, October, 2013), “59 Percent of Millennials Raised in a Church Have Dropped Out” (Faithit.com, February, 2017).

These recent articles and blogs, filled with statistics, could easily create despair for those desiring to see the church thrive. As a denominational leader overseeing a region of local churches, I understand the angst. As pastors retire, churches are sitting empty waiting for new, capable pastors to be found. As I travel to churches, and speak to leaders around the country, there is a hunger on the part of pastors and denominational leaders for new tools that work in recruiting and developing younger leaders. Even as I have been describing my research, people have asked: “Are you publishing a book? When will it be done?”

Enclosed you will find the first three of a series of leadership development booklets (which connect to a website, a blog, a Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram accounts) created for those generations who have grown up with technology. Entitled ***The Story Leadership Initiative: Mentoring Lessons for Emerging Christian Leaders***, this series begins with an introductory booklet explaining my doctoral research on Digital Natives in everyday terms. The remaining booklets are created as a leadership development tool for image, story, and media driven emerging leaders. They can be used as small group curriculum, or in one-on-one mentoring situations. In addition, I am including samples of the website and social media companion material.

While leadership workbooks abound, none is quite like *The Story Leadership Initiative*. Some – like John Maxwell’s books and workbooks – are not created with the Digital Native in mind. Others – like Tim Elmore’s “Habitudes” series – may be more geared for Digital Natives, but are written for the business market rather than the church. *The Story Leadership Initiative* has a very specific goal: developing leaders in and for the church.

I am a published author (including magazine articles in Light & Life magazine, and a Christmas play published by Lillenas), a highly visible denominational leader, an experienced pastor and leadership developer, and I care deeply for the Church. I want to see a younger generation of leaders rise to take the church into a place of new health and life. It’s this deep desire that has driven this project.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

With Hope,

Pam Braman  
Superintendent, Genesis Conference, Free Methodist Church USA

**Follow-up email**

Dear (Editor):

I am writing to follow up on the book proposal I sent on (date), for ***The Story Leadership Initiative: Mentoring Lessons for Emerging Christian Leaders*** series of workbooks, aimed at Christian leadership development for millennials and younger. At a recent gathering of east coast denominational leaders (overseeing all of our churches on the east coast), I was asked to speak about my research and the workbooks that have been created. I was met with the question: “When will they be published?”

I realize that you have an overflowing desk of wonderful proposals. But I’m writing to check up on one that I believe may have the potential to impact churches for years to come (that proposal would, of course, be mine!).

Is there any word on your publisher’s interest in this work?

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Pam Braman  
Superintendent, Genesis Conference  
Free Methodist Church USA

## Nonfiction Book Proposal Outline

- Title:** *The Story Leadership Initiative:  
Mentoring Lessons for Emerging Christian Leaders*
- Author:** Pamela J. H. Braman  
173 McGinnis Road  
Scottsville, NY 14546  
651-328-4593  
[pambraman@gmail.com](mailto:pambraman@gmail.com)  
<https://pambraman.blogspot.com>  
<http://storyleadership.weebly.com>
- Hook:** The statistics are grim. The Church is losing the next generation. Why? The technology generation, with their rewired brains, learn in vastly different ways than those who have gone before. *The Story Leadership Initiative* speaks to this generation in ways that connect with their new ways of learning, in order to develop a new generation of biblical leaders, with the character and competencies needed to lead now and in the future.
- Overview:** *The Story Leadership Initiative* curriculum is uniquely crafted to address the learning styles of Digital Natives. Drawing from the most recent scholarship in studies of millennials and generation Z, combined with the sociological notion of “secondary orality,” these resources empower churches and denominations to develop the next generation of leaders using a communication style that fits them: image-driven storytelling. Using biblical storytelling, an emerging leader will embark on a journey with mentor or cohort, to learn, tell, and live the stories of the Bible. The end result will be younger leaders with the character, competency, and biblical knowledge needed to guide future generations in a healthy spiritual life.
- Purpose:**
- \*Give an effective tool to the Church for developing emerging leaders
  - \*Develop teachers who know, tell, and live the stories of the Bible
  - \*Create a community of Story Leaders and Story Leader Coaches which grows and multiplies
- Promotion and Marketing:**
- These workbooks may certainly be promoted through the normal marketing channels of online and print Christian magazines. Beyond this, my personal network would be tapped. I meet regularly with the global overseers, bishops, and superintendents in my own Free Methodist denomination. I administer an active online group of over 250 women clergy, plus an additional online group of approximately 200 church leaders. Some of those I regularly connect with in these groups have their

own sites with significant reach (as one example, The Junia Project has over 11,000 followers. I feel confident that I could write a blog post for them). I'm active with the Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy (having served on their planning board), an organization that spans 5 different denominations. In my own Conference, in addition to my oversight role, I speak twice a year to our regional gathering of pastors, (representing approximately 10,000 worshippers on an average Sunday morning). I office in the midst one of our colleges and seminaries (where I have additional speaking opportunities). I'm asked to speak at other gatherings outside my region as well. Because I am the only solo female superintendent in the US church at this time, I'm well recognized, and often utilized to speak. In these places of speaking and influence, buy-in by a select few could create a growing interest and market.

**Competition:** Books addressing millennial leadership or leadership development in the church:

\* *Next Up: 8 Shifts Great Young Leaders Make* by Jonathan Pearson, published by Moody (2014). Pearson addresses millennial leaders with solid material, with much storytelling woven in. He relies upon his audience being traditional readers, self-motivated to read and apply a book on their own.

\* *Developing the Leader within You Workbook* by John Maxwell, published by Thomas Nelson (2001). Maxwell is the boomer's leadership guru. His workbook takes an individual through nine weeks of individual lessons, based upon his book.

\* *The Student Leadership Challenge: Five Practices for Exemplary Leaders* by James Kouzes and Barry Posner, published by Jossey-Bass (2008). With over two million copies sold of the original *The Leadership Challenge* (which has an accompanying workbook), Kouzes and Posner lay out well researched leadership principles, with a specifically younger (albeit secular) audience in mind.

\* *Habitudes* by Dr. Tim Elmore, published by Growing Leaders (2011). Elmore uses images, readings, self-assessments, and reflections to guide young leaders through issues of character. While the material is focused on younger leaders, it is aimed at the business market, not the church. The images and readings are not Bible or Christ centered.

**Uniqueness:** What makes *The Story Leadership Initiative* unique is threefold. First, it comes out of significant doctoral research on how the Digital Native brain is rewired and learns differently. Second, out of this understanding of how Digital Natives learn, a new method of teaching is utilized: biblical storytelling. Finally, the workbooks and companion material assume that the young leader is being trained in community, with a mentor and/or small group (again, adapting to the way Digital Natives best learn).

**Endorsements:** I am confident that the following people would read and endorse the series:

- \*Dr. MaryKate Morse, author of *Making Room for Leadership*, and *A Guidebook to Prayer*.
- \*Dr. Leighton Ford, author of *The Attentive Life*, *Transforming Leadership*, *The Power of Story*, and *Sandy: A Heart for God*.
- \*Dr. R. Anderson Campbell, author of *Praying for Justice* and editor of *The Father Factor*.
- \*Bishop David Roller, Bishop of the Free Methodist Church USA.
- \*Janet Balajthy, former interim Vice President of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, now an InterVarsity Senior Mentor.
- \*Kathy Callahan-Howell, author of *Spiritual Exercises for Couch Potatoes*.
- \*Jill M. Richardson, author of *Don't Forget to Pack the Kids*, *Please Pass the Fish Head*, and *Hobbits, You, and the Spiritual World of Middle Earth*.

**Book Format:** Nine qualities of a leader are highlighted in each workbook. For each of the qualities, there is a Bible story to study and learn, an image to ponder, questions to wrestle with individually, questions for discussion, and exercises to be able to better tell the story to others and invite others into the evaluative process of the leader.

**Chapter Outline:** As an example, the first micro-book (after the introductory one), based on stories from the Old Testament, includes the following chapters (lessons):

- Introduction: A general introduction to how the series works.
- EACH LESSON CHAPTER includes: The passages of the Bible story being learned, questions to ask as the story is learned, an image related to the story to explore, questions related to the image to ponder, preparations questions for the participant as they prepare to tell the story to their cohort as well as to discuss what they are personally learning and applying, instructions on telling it to an individual outside the group, plus follow up instructions to work through with the mentor.
- SURRENDER– The story of God asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is the focus of this lesson. One chapter of the Bible – Genesis 22 – completes the story. Questions include questions about sacrifice and faith. The image included is someone sharpening a knife.
- IDENTITY – The story of Jacob is learned, and the amount of Bible chapters being covered is expanded from lesson one, as this chapter covers Genesis 27-33. Questions beyond Jacob's story include questions about life situations that have defined the individual, as well as places they have sacrificed. The image in this chapter is of wrestlers.
- TRANSFORMATION – The story of Joseph. Genesis 37-47. The focus is the arc of Joseph's life, and the change that is wrought by God. Questions focus on transformation. The image used is that of feet in chains.

- VISION – The story of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, Exodus 2-16. Moses' development and leadership, as well as the leadership of Aaron and Miriam, is what is focused upon in the questions. Personal questions of vision accompany the image of someone standing at the edge of the sea.
- LEADING LEADERS – This lesson zeroes in on one smaller story in the life and leadership of Moses: When Jethro arrives and sees the pace of Moses' life. The image is one of a crowd of lego people, and the image-related questions probe the leaders relationship with and empowering of those around.
- HOLINESS – The story of Joshua and Achan, found in Joshua 2, 6, 7. In addition to questions about the biblical story, questions of personal holiness are explored. The image is a one of an island with danger hidden in the water.
- FAITH FILLED – The story of Deborah, Barak, and Jael, found in Judges 4-5. The image is of a woman warrior.
- HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERMENT – The story of Gideon, with his journey towards trust, is the focus of this lesson from Judges 6-7. Questions regarding getting to a place of dependence on God are the focus on the image, which is a fleece.
- BRIDGE- BUILDING – The story of Ruth. The entire book of Ruth provides the storytelling components for this lesson, with the focus on Ruth's ability to be a cross-cultural bridge-builder. The image is of two adults holding each other's hands.
- Celebrate and Review – Each booklet will have a wrap up chapter for the individual or the group to return to crucial points learned, for both celebration and challenge.
- NOTES – The back portion includes options for pacing of the lessons, a covenant agreement to create and sign with the group, helps on telling good stories, and website links.

#### **Intended Readers:**

- Primary audience: Pastors wishing to train younger leaders.
- Secondary audience: Emerging Christian leaders looking for tools to grow.

**Manuscript:** The first three of the booklets are now complete (14,500 words), with each subsequent booklet estimated at approximately 4,500 words. The series can easily continue to expand, as leadership groups begin to engage.

#### **Author Bio:**

Pamela J. H. Braman currently serves as the Superintendent of the Genesis Conference of the Free Methodist Church USA, overseeing churches in Western New York. She is a candidate for a Doctor of Ministry at Portland Seminary at George Fox University. In the past, Pam has been a pastor in churches mega, mini, and missional, has worked for a leadership development ministry, and has taught at the college and seminary level. She has lived in seven states, thirteen towns, and fifteen homes, but promises she is not on the run from the law. She is a published playwright, a potter, and a garden putterer. She has a passion for the Word of God, the Church, and seeing the next generation of leaders take

their place to move the Kingdom forward. She lives with her husband Marshal (who makes her laugh every day) in Scottsville, NY, and blogs at: [pambraman.blogspot.com](http://pambraman.blogspot.com)

**Publishing Credits:**

*Light & Life Magazine articles:*

*What's a Body to Do?* 2009.

*Would Jesus Use Facebook?* October 2011.

*The Perfect Gift*, a full-length Christmas play, published in *The Christmas Script Book*, compiled by Paul M. Miller, Lillenas Publishing, 1998. (Published under the name "Pam Hiscock")

**Future Projects:** In addition to continuing this *Story Leadership* series:

- *The Hand of the Lord: How God Intentionally Uses Women Leaders, from Genesis to Revelation.* This book will focus on the role of women leaders throughout the Bible.

## SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT

This dissertation journey began with the author planning on addressing leadership development in West Africa, after having been invited to do so by an individual working in Africa. The dissertation shift came in the midst of significant personal change: accepting a new job and moving across country. Immediately following the move, the assumption was that the dissertation would continue as planned. But the west Africans that the author had planned to work with in order to formulate new curriculum were now halfway across the country, and the Africans that were now in the author's circle of influence were far different—central African refugees who spoke little English. Reading about oral culture on the other side of the globe, the relevance of the project to the author's life seemed to be slipping away, until one small phrase lit up the page: secondary orality. It was barely a mention by Walter Ong in his book *Orality and Literacy*, but the words were attention getting.

With telephone, radio, television and various kinds of sound tape, electronic technology has brought us into the age of "secondary orality." This new orality has striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even its use of formulas . . . But it is essentially a more deliberate and self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print, which are essential for the manufacture and operation of the equipment and for its use as well . . . Like primary orality, secondary orality has generated a strong group sense . . .<sup>179</sup>

A few pages in Ong's book shifted the dissertation radically. The possibility that those in this new "secondary orality" – shaped by an interactive internet that Ong could not have imagined when he wrote in 1982 – could actually learn from oral culture, grabbed the imagination of the author.

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<sup>179</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 133-134.

There was an assumption when originally reading those words that the study of secondary orality must be a fully developed academic discipline over 40 years after Ong wrote those words. The first surprise came in finding very little (other than many brief mentions) on the topic in academic or popular literature.

What has developed in the 40 years since Ong wrote, is a better understanding of oral cultures and how to best train them. This was the second surprise to the author: emanating from pioneers on the Christian mission field, and coalescing through efforts by Lausanne and the Billy Graham Center, the strides in reaching and training oral cultures in just the past ten years are enormous. This is cutting edge ministry in Africa and Asia, but other than a few people mentioning the possibility in the missions literature, the ministry world in the United States has yet to understand the gold mine of what is being learned in other parts of the globe. While some in ministry in the United States have grasped the importance of using story with Digital Natives, there has been little attempt to connect that love of story with the idea that Digital Natives are more fully “secondarily oral” than their predecessors.

After the research on orality and oral culture was done, researching Digital Natives became the driver. Combing through studies and articles, many written for the business world and intended to help businesses sell to millennials, resulted in a list of emerging characteristics. Comparing and contrasting them to the characteristics of those in oral cultures came towards the end.

The writing process, however, began with presenting Digital Native learning as “the problem” that needed to be solved. This first section emanated from an academic essay in the last quarter of the coursework portion of the program. From there the author

wrote section 3, the thesis, based upon another academic essay, and then returned to discuss other solutions.

After the first three sections were completed, then sections four through six were worked on concurrently with the artifact. The author thinks visually, and before writing the book proposal, needed to have a sense of what a book might look like. Actually laying out the website helped visualize what role the site would play that would be different than a workbook.

In many ways, the artifact is a living adaptive document, since it is tied in to the web. Additions continue to be made to the website, blogs continue to be written, Facebook posts and tweets continue to go out. Social media shapes this project in a way that fits with this new secondary orality.

It also is a living adaptive document in that the booklet format allows future booklets to continue to take shape, particularly as small groups begin to experiment with the curriculum.

At one point, the author considered having all training web-based. The decision to include a workbook are discussed in section 4.

In conclusion, the author believes that she has merely scratched the surface in understanding our new Digital Native culture in terms of secondary orality, and in terms of knowing how to apply the learnings from the mission field to Digital Natives.

Areas of further exploration include:

- For the academic, further research is warranted on why and how Digital Natives are a secondarily oral culture, how a secondarily oral culture is

defined in terms of an oral culture, and the expansive implications for the future.

- For the practitioner, the possibilities of continuing to learn from the many global agencies making gains in connecting with oral culture are significant.
- Stories beyond the pages of the Bible, but still rich in meaning, must also be explored. The author has focused upon the stories of the Bible, but this does not imply that training Digital Natives with story must end there. In addition, the exploration of not just new stories, but new metaphors, deserves attention. The words of Lakoff and Johnson could lead the way for those who pursue new metaphors:

The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture . . . Metaphors may create reality for us, especially social realities. A metaphor made us be a guide for future action . . . the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies.<sup>180</sup>

- The public nature of our new orality, and how it differs from the public nature of primary orality, is worthy of exploration. Ong wrote: “On television we use public address to reach millions of persons, but to reach each one as though we were having a face to face conversation with him or her. Our public speaking is private speaking now.”<sup>181</sup> This connection

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<sup>180</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 22-23.

<sup>181</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 90.

between oral culture and our new private-public lives would make intriguing study.

- The maturity difference that is required in a primary oral culture versus a secondary oral culture is something to be considered and explored. The impact of that difference is significant:

The old orality was postpubertal . . . The new orality here is . . . closely associated with infantilism and thus no doubt filling a real need, for there are few traces left of puberty rites . . . Indeed, we live in an age not merely of vanished puberty but even of reversed puberty rites . . . Early puberty rites often involved putting off the clothing of childhood and assuming that of an adult. Now, however, the adults are so child-oriented that they are copying their own children.<sup>182</sup>

- Finally, the impact that this new story-telling model of leadership development may have on the mentoring / teaching relationship should be studied: “In the traditional West African model, which is primarily oral, teachers enter into relationships with their students. Often, the students are sent to live with the teachers.”<sup>183</sup> How will this new model both improve and stretch mentoring and teaching relationships in the future?

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<sup>182</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology; Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), Kindle, Location 4446.

<sup>183</sup> Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy, *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts* (Condeo Press, 2013), Kindle, Location 1462.

## APPENDIX

### *The Story Leadership Initiative: Mentoring Lessons for Emerging Christian Leaders.*

#### *Introductory Microbook for mentoring pastors and leaders in the church who are older (and perhaps wiser)*

#### **LET ME INTRODUCE YOU...**

Perhaps you've heard the facts: The generations rising have significantly less interest in the Church, or spiritual matters, than the generations now retiring or dying. Technology is rewiring brains, as well as providing information access to the young in a way that allows them to ignore the wisdom of their elders.

What are we to do? Throw up our hands and give up on future generations, muttering "it's in God's hands"? Or just assume that this generation, like ones before, will sooner or later find their way back to church?

Neither. It's time to take a hard look at these new generations - these "digital natives" - and figure out how they best learn. In many ways it's time to get out that white piece of paper (or better yet, that blank screen) and start from scratch. This is not a generation that will accept warmed up discipleship or leadership-training leftovers. They are expecting a banquet of new food. Let's dig in.

### **Anxious about the next generation?**

Throughout history, elders have been frustrated with the younger generation. My grandparents didn't understand my parents' generation. My parents didn't understand mine. I don't understand my daughter's. Isn't this just the way it has always been, and will always be?

Yes and no. With this new generation, it's not quite the same.

What's different this time?

**We no longer have a simple “generation gap,” we have a “culture gap.”**

Digital natives<sup>i</sup> are not just a group that will become like their parents as time goes on. They are radically different. They are a new culture.

How can that be?

Digital natives are the generations that have grown up (or refused to grow up, depending upon your viewpoint) surrounded by interactive technology. You know those jokes about “if you don't know how to use your phone, ask an eight year old”? Yup. It's them. It's not just that they are smarter when it comes to using your phone... it's that the use of technology has rewired their brains and they actually think differently.

For example, work done at the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior has discovered that digital natives brains are far more engaged when they are on a website than when they are reading a book. (In other words: reading a book = BORING). And the University of Minnesota has discovered that when a digital native is interacting with others, their brain is functioning differently than when a non-digital native is interacting with others.<sup>ii</sup>

To some, this rewiring of the brain may seem deathly frightening, and good cause

to ring the alarm. Perhaps these words reflect what the older generation is feeling when staring into the eyes of the digital generations:

“ . . . for this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners’ souls, because they . . . will not remember themselves . . . they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.”<sup>iii</sup>

Do these words communicate your concern for the next generation? Then you are not alone, for these are the words of Socrates, hundreds of years before Christ. What was the discovery that he spoke of? Writing. His world was in the midst of a shift from an oral culture (one where speaking was the primary or only way to communicate) to a literate one (one where writing and books formed the cultural basis for learning and communication). In fact, we only know the words of Socrates because his next generation student, Plato, wrote them down! 2500 years ago, brains were being rewired by writing and reading. Memory was moving from being in your head to being on the page. Culture was in the midst of a radical shift. The next generation looked nothing like the previous one. Socrates was deeply concerned.

Sound familiar?

Of course from where we sit, we cannot imagine a world without writing and books. Where would history, literature, the arts, the sciences, medicine - and yes, technology – be, if we did not have the ability to write down what we have learned and then pass it along to the next generation? Where would we be personally if we didn’t have the ability to write something down so that we could remember it next week?

For the moment, learning from the ignorance of Socrates, let's say that we are in the midst of as great a cultural shift as the one that comes when a society begins to rely upon the written word. If that is the case, consider the opportunities that are yet unknown in this new digital culture. Consider the danger for the Church if it sits back and ignores these changes. After all, it was the church that not only embraced, but was at the forefront, of the last communications revolution - the printing press.

If the church is to embrace the inevitable - that we are in the midst of a tectonic cultural shift, moving from a literate (writing based) culture to a digital one - how are we to cope?

We start with understanding this new digital culture, and how it differs from the past literate one.

### **Who are the digital natives?**

Millennials, GenY, Gen iY, Gen Z, the Net Gen, are all names for these new generations, all born in or after the early 1980s, around the same time that the internet was born. "Digital natives" is what educator Marc Prensky called them in a 2001 essay, and the term has taken hold. These are the kids (and now adults) who have grown up with a computer in their classroom, a television in their bedroom, and (as they were coming of age, if not before) a phone in their pocket. This is the generation that instinctively knows how technology works, even if they've never seen that phone, that app, that tablet, that software, or that computer before.

"How do they know how to do that?" the older generation asks. With rewired brains they learn differently. Much of what is intuitive to them is foreign to those who are

older. They are speaking their native language. Which means for those who are not digital natives, you have a new language to learn, and some cross cultural skills as well.

In order to better understand this new culture, let me introduce you to a couple of digital natives. Let's call them Matt and Brittany.<sup>iv</sup> Matt and Brittany are both 29. They met in college, dated on and off, lived together for awhile, and just got married this past year. They figure that they will probably have a family "someday" but they are not in any rush. After all, there are lots of things they want to experience before they settle down with kids!

They have a large network of friends, who are very important to them. Some they've known since college. Others they met as friends of friends. Right after college their "tribe" was in the same area, but as time has gone on, their friends have spread out all over the country and the world. This actually causes both Matt and Brittany some anxiety, as they feel like their community isn't as together as it once was. However, they still manage to stay in touch with this extended network. They text, Snapchat, and follow each other's Instagram accounts. They even check in on Facebook once in awhile.

Matt and Brittany themselves are living in a different location than where many of these friendships began. But a job offer in the tech world made them move across country. While their jobs are okay, they don't like how their jobs stress them. They work for companies that have stated corporate values, but they see these values regularly being ignored, and they wonder if they should stick with their values and quit their jobs (their parents do not like this idea). They also think about quitting because too many days they're bored with their work. But they also don't want their jobs to take over their lives like they saw happen in the life of their parents. And while Brittany is working for a tech

firm with a flatline corporate structure, Matt is working for an organization where there is a hierarchy. If Matt has an idea it has to go through his boss, and her boss, and his boss before it gets approved. Matt is incredibly frustrated by this structure, and hates the idea that one of these people could keep his idea from becoming a reality, or even fire him at any time. He doesn't like the idea that someone else has control over his life.

Both of them think they should be paid more than they are, and wonder how long it will take before they get a really hefty raise. After all, they've been there almost a year! They wonder if jumping to another company may make the pay increase faster.

In order to have less of an eco footprint in the world, they are in the midst of building a tiny house. Neither one of them has ever built anything beyond a shop project, but with YouTube videos they are confident that they can build the perfect home. They are sure this project will be fun, and it will allow them to let their creativity flow. They are looking to up-cycle a number of things they've found in the junkyard and incorporate these items into the design of their home.

Their parents think that they are crazy for thinking that they can build a house without the experience, but it hasn't crossed either Matt or Brittany's mind that they can't accomplish this.

In addition, they are excited by the prospect of having a tiny house paid for, and having manageable bills, so that they can both pay off college loans (which are large and cause them anxiety) and have money to travel the world. After all, they reason, life isn't about accumulating possessions, but experiences. And experiences include travel. Between the two of them, they've already been to 11 different countries. Matt spent a year in Cambodia working at an orphanage, but all the rest was adventure travel.

In addition to the ecological and economic advantages of a tiny house, a tiny home allows them to be mobile. If their job stresses them out too much, or they decide they want to try living in another part of the world, then they can take their home with them when they go.

There are many things in the world that clash with both Matt and Brittany's idealism, and this dissonance between the ideal and the real makes them cynical. They know how the world should work in society, corporations, politics, and the church (even though they haven't been to church since they were kids, they are certain they know what's wrong with the church). When things aren't the way they think they should be, it stresses them out and overwhelms them. They feel betrayed by the institutions around them. Whereas their parents or grandparents might have seen the problems in society and decided to change them, Matt and Brittany most often feel overwhelmed. Yes, they may blog or comment on some issue they care about. Their friend Julie has started a non-profit and they admire her. But they are too busy to help her with her cause, and all those student loans don't allow them to financially give the way they'd like to at some point. Once they are paid off, maybe they'll give more. Or travel more. They're not sure.

When asked what they'd like to do with their lives, they still have a sense that they are meant for some grand purpose. It's just that these days they're not sure what that is, and they're not sure who to ask. If a mentor came along who could help, they'd really like that... as long as the mentor wasn't judgmental.

How do Matt and Brittany represent their generation? Here's what studies have discovered are some of the characteristics of digital natives:

\*Digital natives are **social**.

For Matt and Brittany, the world revolves around their friends. In fact, research done by Josh McDowell tells us that nearly half of the younger generation tests as a “high I - Influencer” on the DISC personality assessment. It’s astounding that half of this younger generation is the most social personality type.<sup>v</sup>

How did this happen? Group learning in school. Cohorts. Social networking, where you have the capability of always being connected to others. All of this makes for a very social new culture.

You may at this point be thinking “tell me something I don’t know!”

But stop for a moment. Think about how you are hoping to disciple and train the digital natives in your church or in your denomination.

Do you speak to them from a pulpit on Sunday, and expect them to take notes and go home and apply those notes to their life on their own? Do you send them to go to a conference where there are many people, but no one they know? Do you send them to a college or seminary where they sit in a class, read from a book, and write a paper by themselves, which then gets turned into to a teacher with whom they rarely talk? Do you ask them to jump through ordination hoops without any human being talking to them until the final interview?

Perhaps you are patting yourself on the back right now because in your church you channel people into small groups. But in those small groups, are people learning together, or is the bulk of the learning through reading a book or filling out the pages of a workbook on their own? Isolated learning won’t connect with these social digital natives.

And here’s another twist: “social” will need a new definition, including digital

ways of gathering together with others. For the generations of the past, being social meant being physically in the presence of others. No more: now being social includes connecting with others online, in the comfort of your own home. Even introverts can be very social.

**\*Digital natives are experiential.**

Matt and Brittany have learned that no matter what you'd like to do, you can find how-to instructions online. Want to change your oil? Watch the video. Want to build a tiny house? YouTube. Interested in what is beyond your own sphere? Find out about far away corners of the globe through the magic of the internet, find out how to get there, where to stay, and what to experience when you are there. Can't find the information you are looking for? Ask the question on Trip Advisor or social networking... someone is sure to answer.

Digital natives have gotten used to being able to find experiential instructions online for anything and everything that they want to do (except, perhaps, following Jesus). And they love experiences more than many other things in life. They are pushing back from collecting the material possession of past generations, and looking for a simpler way of being, with their focus being experiences.

They've also grown up with education being entertaining and fun. If their learning isn't a hands-on experience, where they can "do" and not just "think," they're often not interested.

**\*Digital natives are innovators.**

Matt and Brittany are natural innovators. Of course they will look in the junkyard to use items creatively in their tiny house! Digital natives grow up creating social

networking pages, blogs, Instagram and Twitter accounts, memes, and YouTube videos. They have been told they are creative and artistic throughout school. Gone are the days when a creative individual was stopped from getting their “art” into the public by any gatekeeper of society or Hollywood. Now you can record yourself singing (or doing any number of things), go viral, be a star. You can create your own online story or brand (even if it isn’t really who you are). You choose. All of this power in their hands has led to:

\*Digital natives are both **self-confident** and **self-focused**.

Matt and Brittany are certain about what is right and wrong in the world. They are also certain that they should be able to do anything they set their mind to. (When that belief is challenged and they hit a road block they may shrug and blame some outside force, or they may internally crumble because a deeply held belief turned out to not be true). Their story - and their selfies, postings, Snapchat, and Instagram - revolves around them.

The reasons that digital natives are so self-confident are debated. (Were too many awards given? Too much talk of self-esteem? Did easy access to abortion mean that every child was wanted and “special”? Did grandma and grandpa asking them for computer help go their heads?) Whatever the reason, the research is in: digital natives are both self-confident and self-focused. Even as they get older, they are likely to ask: “what’s in it for me?” and to be convinced that they know better than those around them (particularly those who are older).

\*Digital natives are **anxious and depressed**.

While Matt and Brittany are self-confident, they are also highly anxious about the

world, their jobs, their debt and more, just as many of their generation are.

Researcher Dr. Jean Twenge writes: “I gathered data on 40,192 college students and 12,056 children aged 9 to 17 who completed measures of anxiety between the 1950s and the 1990s. I was stunned by the size of the changes. Anxiety increased so much that the average college student in the 1990s was more anxious than 85% of students in the 1950s and 71% of students in the 1970s.”<sup>vi</sup> Anxiety is growing at the same time as depression. “It’s not an exaggeration to describe iGen as being on the brink of the worst mental-health crisis in decades”<sup>vii</sup> she wrote in 2017.

Why the anxiety and depression? Dr. Twenge traces it to the involvement in technology, with a special emphasis upon cell phone usage. While the reasons are debated, consider just these two: while they are social, they are also physically isolated, and they are overwhelmed by information and options.

**\*Digital natives are cynics.**

Matt and Brittany have grown up on the internet. They are naturally wary, believing much of the world is a scam. They are also idealists with high expectations, which are often impossible to meet. They start from a place of cynicism and doubt, lacking trust of all except the tribe of friends that they have built (including online friends and celebrities they trust), or only trusting themselves.

**\*Digital natives learn differently.**

Matt and Brittany’s brains work differently than those older than them, and so they learn differently. Digital natives are far more likely to be what we have traditionally termed “right brained.” They are creative, visual and interactive learners. They are also non-linear, non-heirarchical, choice-focused and freedom seeking in what and how they

learn. If you have only one option, and it doesn't fit with them, they may choose to opt out of your learning experience (and this, of course, includes your Sunday morning church service). They are also greatly influenced by the creative: Music is more influential in their lives than church. The internet is more influential than a spouse. Television is more influential than a boss.<sup>viii</sup> Those who teach and lead this generation about what is "true" are the movie and game makers, the entertainers, the storytellers.

There is one bit of good news that I still need to mention:

**\*Digital natives want a mentor.**

Three out of four would like an older mentor to teach them life and leadership skills.<sup>ix</sup> Just don't try to teach them in a traditional way.

## **HOW THEY LEARN**

If they learn differently, then how are we to teach them?

Oddly enough, the place where we can go to learn how to engage them in learning is in the developing world. Oral cultures (those that rely upon learning passed through telling rather than writing) are eerily similar to digital culture. In what ways?

Look at this list by an expert on oral culture, Walter Ong.<sup>x</sup> Doesn't it look an awful lot like a list of characteristics for digital culture?

Oral cultures:

- think that words have magical powers. (substitute "words" with "the latest technology")

- are drawn to repeatable patterns of words (thank you, advertising slogan, or pop chorus!)

- expect learning to connect to real life and experience

- find knowledge in struggle (have you looked at the top teen lit recently? how about the latest block buster video game?)

- are participatory and empathetic rather than objective (in other words, “objective truth” is less important than relationship. Perplexed about how your church kids can think that a certain behavior is okay? It’s because the relationships around them are more important than “objective truth.”)

- repeat and retell the same stories in different ways (think of all the remakes of movies or fairytales... and do you know about “fan fiction”? People write their own books based on others books. The number of fan fiction books based upon Harry Potter is over 85,000!<sup>xi</sup>)

- rely on storytelling (digital natives tell their own stories on social media, and drink in the stories of their pop-culture literature, music, gaming and more).

Yup. Digital culture is incredibly similar to oral culture. (Walter Ong actually realized this in the 1980s and named a “secondary orality” coming due to the shift from books to radio, the tv, and the computer).

You’re wondering how this helps us engage and train digital natives in the church. Good news: our colleagues on the mission field can show us the way. And how will they lead? Those on the cutting edge of working with oral cultures are learning to use story to teach.

Simply put: Oral cultures learn through storytelling, both hearing the story and learning to tell the story.

I know. You're thinking "but I include lots of stories in my preaching." Not good enough. Those who are not digital natives, use stories to illustrate. Digital natives do the same, because they have learned from those who are older. That's a start. But oral cultures - and digital natives - learn through the story itself, not through it being an illustration.

Let me try and explain it this way. While Matt and Brittany aren't church goers, their non-profit launching friend Julie is. She's expressed an interest in being mentored. You'd like to teach her about evangelism, so you prepare to preach about it on Sunday.

You think you have good points:

- AMEN: start with prayer (from Colossians 4:3)
- ASSIST: meet a need (Jesus feeding the 5000)
- ARTICULATE: know the gospel (1 Peter 3:15 is your reference)
- ASK: ask for a response ("follow me" says Jesus in Matthew 4:19)

You think about Julie being a digital native, and you adjust a bit. For your "amen" point, you'll tell a story about how you have been praying for a friend. When you get to the "assist" point you'll use Julie as an example of what she's doing with her non-profit. For the "articulate" point you'll use something from YouTube. And maybe on the "ask" point, you'll get people practicing, and have everyone turn to the person next to them and say: "what would stop you from accepting Jesus right here and right now?"

You're pretty pleased with how you've adjusted.

But here's the problem. You've probably lost Julie before you finish point one. Her brain has shut down from your linear thinking, and now she's sitting in church, texting with a friend, updating her non-profit website, and making plans for Monday. She

may keep coming to your church if she has important relationships there. But as for learning how to do evangelism effectively from your sermon? Not going to happen.

Instead, what might truly engage Julie in a way that she could become passionate about and skilled at reaching the world for Jesus?

Meet with her and some of her friends. Have two-way conversations. Tell them your story about how you authentically share your faith in a non-cheesy way. And then? Tell them a Bible story.

Tell them the story of Jesus sending out the 72, two by two to villages. As you tell the story, ask questions. Let the story do the preaching. (We do believe there is power in the Word of God, right? And we believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in their lives as well as ours for gaining understanding from the Scriptures, right? Then can't we allow the story and the Spirit to speak to them without us distilling it to four points?)

Stories engage the mind and heart. Stories are not linear. God can use one story to communicate many truths - not just the four alliterated points you came up with.

I know — you went to seminary. Or graduate school. And you spent hours with your commentary. You feel the need to communicate wisdom from the depth of your learning, and let people know how hard you've worked to arrive at this wisdom. Let that need go... because if you hang onto that need to sound smart, you - and the church - will lose out in the end. Go back to the way the greatest theologian of all time - Jesus - taught: in relationship, with stories.

### **THE NUTS AND BOLTS**

My guess is that you might be wondering right now how this could actually work.

So you tell a Bible story... then what? I mean, this is isn't the second grade Sunday School class. How could this be church leadership development? How can you be the mentor that this digital native craves? How can you see true transformative growth in those you mentor?

The Story Leadership Initiative puts the tools in your hands to mentor in an effective and transformative way.

Here are your linear, step-by-step instructions for how to make this work:

**Before the first meeting:**

1. Pray about who you might include in your mentoring group. Don't just assume... take time to hear from the Lord. For the most part, you are looking for people born since the mid 1980s. Make it a group of both women and men, since digital natives expect equality. Look for people already leading in some way, or having leadership potential.
2. Talk to them. Tell them that you are considering starting a mentoring group, mentoring younger Christian leaders. Ask if they would be willing to come to a gathering to hear more. After the first meeting, they can opt in or opt out. (Give them choices!)
3. Set up a time for everyone who is interested to get together. Pick a day or evening that not only works for that one date, but has the potential to work in the future (for example, are Thursday nights generally open for this group?) Yes, it will be difficult to find a

common time. There will be some who say they want to be part of your group, but have no margin in their schedules. Chose those willing to make the time. (One option: If your group decides to meet weekly, some of your meeting times can be virtual - video conferencing - but make sure that you are face to face at least once a month.) Include food.

4. Once you have a date / time, give them the attached tear out information card (and guess what? It's NOT linear, step-by-step instructions). Become familiar with their card, as well as your list.

**At the first meeting:**

5. At the first meeting (over a meal is ideal), ask people to tell their own stories, including their story of faith. Leave plenty of time at this first gathering for everyone to talk. Tell your OWN story (don't take too much of the time, but tell the true, unvarnished story). Take a look at a sample lesson together (although don't take the time to do it all), and what will happen in future gatherings should they choose to sign on (below). Answer any questions they have. Then ask those who may be interested in committing to future gatherings (they may not be ready to commit until this discussion is done) to answer this:

- What do we need to agree on to make this time together work?
- For those who commit, what level of commitment will we expect from one another and hold each other to?

Discuss how often you'll meet, attendance, promptness, having things done ahead of time, smartphone etiquette, which model you'll use (see number 6). Let THEM decide

what the “rules” for the group are. Then ask “what happens when someone doesn’t meet the commitment level the group has agreed to?” If the group doesn’t arrive at any consequences, you may need to speak up and draw your own boundaries (what happens in your mind if the group doesn’t show up one night? Or if one person keeps failing to come?). However... don’t be surprised if their “rules” are more strict than you thought (remember that idealism?). You may actually need to bring grace to bear. (One word to you: the length of time this discussion takes may drive you nuts. It’s okay. Take a deep breath. But also keep the discussion moving if it starts to feel like the group will never make a decision. Take a vote!). At the end of this discussion, ask who is willing to commit. (There’s a chance that someone who has significantly impacted the conversation has no interest. If that’s the case, ask those who have interest if they want to change anything). Some will need to think and pray about it. Allow that – but give them a deadline.

6. There are different models to follow for going through the workbooks, some going faster, some going slower. Discuss with the group which model they would like to follow:

Option 1: *A new story at each meeting.* This requires each participant to:

**Ahead of time:**

1. Read the story.
2. Reflect on the story (answer the questions in the microbook).
3. Learn the story ahead of time, in order to re-tell the story in your group (without notes).

**At the meeting:**

4. Discuss the story and tell it to one another.
5. Discuss ways you could experientially apply what you've learned from the story.
6. Choose one way to personally apply the story to your leadership.

**After the meeting:**

7. Tell the story to someone outside the group (microbook gives details)
8. Do the experiential application you chose in #6.
9. Report back at the following meeting or via some other form of group communication (social networking, email, group text, etc).

(For option 1, the work required by individuals on their own between each meeting includes: #7-9 for the story they already covered in group, and completing #1-3 for the upcoming story. In other words, for option 1 the bulk of the work is done on your own).

Option 2: *Taking two meetings for each story.* This requires:

**Ahead of time:**

1. Read the whole story, including passages before and after.

**At the first week's meeting:**

2. Read the story (or portions of it), together.
3. Reflect on and discuss the story together (questions in microbook).
4. Together, begin to outline and learn the key points of the story.
5. Discuss ways you could experientially apply what you've learned from the story.

6. Choose one way to personally apply the story to your leadership.

**After the first week's meeting:**

7. Learn the story in order to retell it (without notes).

8. Tell the story to someone outside the group (microbook gives details)

9. Do the application chosen in #6.

**At the next meeting:**

10. Report back on #8 & #9.

11. Practice retelling the story.

**After your second meeting:**

12. Continue to ponder and live into this story, journaling on its impact on your leadership. You may also consider continuing the discussion with your Band on some form of social networking, email, or group text.

Option 3: *Taking three meetings for each story.* This requires:

**At the first week's meeting:**

1. Read the story together. If it's very long, ask one person ahead of time to choose key verses to be read, or agree to all read it ahead of time.

2. Reflect on and discuss the story together (questions in microbook).

3. Together, begin to outline and learn the key points of the story.

**After the first week's meeting:**

4. Learn the story in order to retell it without notes.

**At the second meeting:**

5. Tell the story to one another, helping each other to craft the story.

6. Continue to learn and reflect from the story.
7. Discuss ways you could experientially apply what you've learned from the story.
8. Choose one way to personally apply the story to your leadership.

**After the second meeting:**

9. Tell the story to someone outside the group (microbook gives instructions)
10. Do the chosen application from #8.

**At the third meeting:**

11. Report back on #9 & #10.
12. Practice retelling the story.

**After the third meeting:**

13. Continue to ponder and live into this story, journaling on it's impact on your leadership. You may also consider continuing the discussion with your Band on some form of social networking, email, or group text.

I know. YOU are thinking “let’s do #1 and get through the material faster!” But remember... digital natives are experiential. They actually may choose option 3... and it may be the best learning experience for them. Remember, the point is getting this material in the heart and hands, not just in the head. Slow down. Breathe.

7. Either hand out one of the microbooks, OR let the group know about the different microbooks so they can choose one together. (It may be easiest if you choose first, and have it ready. But let them know that they get to choose the next one if you get that far!)

**At each meeting...**

8. Use the microbook: Each microbook contains 9 stories, with each story focusing on a different characteristics, quality, or skill important in Christian leadership. While each lesson focuses on one quality, remember that stories (and the Holy Spirit!) are not linear teachers. The Lord will use these stories in different ways in the lives of individuals in the group. If the story's focus, according to the workbook, is on prayer, but the Lord uses the story to speak to an individual about forgiveness, that's a beautiful thing.

9. Facilitate the group according to the pacing that you've agreed upon (the options are listed in the microbook). Rotate leadership, allowing group members to lead after the first few weeks.

10. Your role as a mentor goes beyond facilitating the group. Make sure you:

- Ask good questions... the kind of questions that come from life experience that the others in the group may not have. Challenge assumptions that aren't healthy or biblical.

- Help each individual put the learnings from the story into an application step that is helpful, practical, achievable yet challenging. Think of your own leadership journey, and what you'd wished you'd learned earlier.

- Don't preach, but do tell your own story (and yes, your story will end up teaching).

- Keep talking about how people in the group have applied what they're learning.

Remember... it's not just about knowing in your head, it's about knowing in your actions.

11. Also...on these assignments? YOU need to do them as well. Learn to tell stories. Find others to tell. See how God works... and see how your own brain is stretched.

### **The last lesson in each microbook:**

Beyond the nine lessons, there is a wrap up chapter. Don't skip this or rush through it. Take time to revisit, review, and celebrate what the Lord has been teaching and how He's been moving over the past weeks. If the group wants to have some ritual or ceremony (such as the one listed in the microbook), you may think it's cheesy... but they may be deeply impacted by it.

### **WHY A BOOK IN PRINT?**

You may be wondering why a workbook for digital natives? Why not just do an app? Didn't I say that books are boring to digital natives? Because...

\*The workbook helps YOU, as a digital immigrant. Just being honest.

\*The workbook allows your group to disconnect from technology for most of the time you are together. Remember that statistic about technology and it's link to anxiety and depression? We're fighting back. Still, the training is visual, non-linear, and storytelling. If you are engaged, they should be as well (after a week or two of feeling awkward telling stories). JUST IN CASE they can't fathom why you are not allowing cell phones in the meeting, here's some back up stats for you. Deborah Rowland in the Harvard Business review writes:

“In soon-to-be-published research, Malcolm Higgs, Roger Bellis, and I have found that leaders need to work on the quality of their inner game, or their capacity to tune into and regulate their emotional and mental states, before they can hope to develop their outer game, or what it is they need to actually do . . . In order for leadership development to influence being-level capacities, the learning experience needs to offer stillness and space for intentional, nonobstructed contemplation . . . cultivating the vital skills of purpose, self-awareness, empathy, and acute attentional discipline.”<sup>xii</sup>

Digital natives are not wired for stillness. Technology is tremendously distracting.

It may be a challenge in the beginning, but it’s worth it in order to develop the “inner game” of these emerging leaders.

\*However! Technology is still involved. There’s a website, a Facebook page, a blog, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Ask your group to connect with you and one another via social networking (whichever variety most of them use) to share their stories of what they are learning (and if you have no idea how to set up any of these groups, ask them. They’ll love to tutor). And let them know . . . the story Bible references, the images that go with the story, as well as extra helps, are online. Just in case they forget their microbook at your house. (They will. But they will always have their phone).

Remember: these workbooks are not meant to be linear learning experiences. Social interaction, ministry experimentation, and the work of the Holy Spirit speaking different words to different participants, all allow for each group to have very different, tailored experiences. The workbook and technology combination also allow for plenty of choices: there is no set order to the workbooks, lessons give many options on discussion questions and exercises, and there are even more learning options on the website.

### **Don’t forget:**

One last piece of instruction: ***Have fun.*** Laugh. Enjoy the journey. Jesus did.

(Come on... the idea of a log in someone's eye? That's funny!)

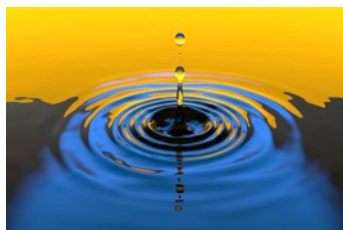
**TEAR OUT SHEET: (Once formatted for print, this will be able to be torn out and folded in half as a card.)**

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**Front:**

*"Jesus told them a story to teach them"*

*Luke 18:1*



*Jesus spent a few years training a group of people who changed the world.*

*How did He train?*

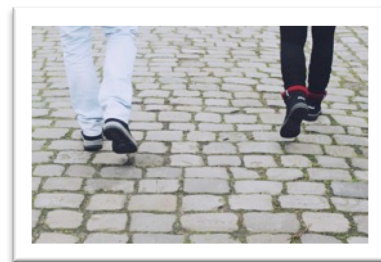
*By walking through life together with them and telling stories.*

*In our digital culture, the time has come again when people can learn by walking through life together, telling and listening to stories.*

*The Story Leadership Initiative is about training in this new and ancient way, through image, story, conversation, and life learning.*

**Inside:**

*Jesus invited people into a journey.  
You, too, are being invited to a journey.  
Come find out more.*



*The Mentor Inviting:*

*Informational Gathering*

*When:*

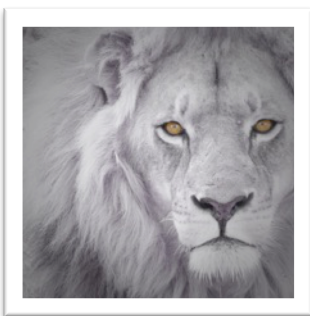
*Where:*

***The Story Leadership Initiative: Mentoring Lessons for Emerging Christian Leaders***

A gathering of growing leaders, with a mentor, to learn in the way Jesus taught ... through listening to, discussing, learning, living and retelling Kingdom stories.

**BACK:**

***Do you love a good story?***



***Want to dive into  
a new & ancient  
way of learning?***

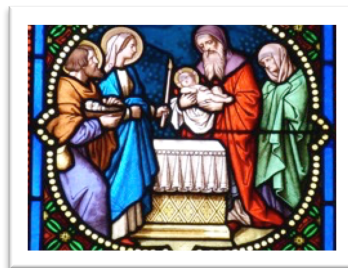
***used by God in new and  
fresh ways?***

***Ready  
to be***

***Christian  
Leadership  
Development  
for a new  
generation.***



***The Story Leadership Initiative will  
take you, with others in community,  
on a journey of knowing, learning,  
living, and retelling the stories of the  
Bible. It will make the Bible come alive  
in a new and experiential way, and will  
give you tools to lead others in the Story.***



***Endnotes for the Story Leadership Initiative Introductory Microbook:***

<sup>i</sup> The term “digital native” was coined by Marc Prensky in an article in 2001. Marc Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (October 2001).

<sup>ii</sup> Carolyn Crist, “On the Mind: What Science Says About Digital Natives,” *Pastemagazine.com*, April 10, 2017, accessed July 25, 2017, <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/04/on-the-mind-what-brain-science-says-about-digital.html>.

<sup>iii</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Public Domain), Kindle, 36.

<sup>iv</sup> Matt & Brittany are a combination of a handful of millennials that I know. The stories are true, but the people are not.

<sup>v</sup> Dr. Tim Elmore, *Gen IY: Secrets to Connecting With Today's Teens & Young Adults in the Digital Age*. (Poet Gardener Publishing, 2015), Kindle, Location 728.

<sup>vi</sup> Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me - Revised and Updates: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (Atria Books, 2006), Kindle, Location 145.

<sup>vii</sup> Jean M. Twenge, "Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?" *The Atlantic*, August 04, 2017, accessed December 01, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>

<sup>viii</sup> Thom S. Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials* (B&H Publishing Group, 2010), Kindle, Location 2889.

<sup>ix</sup> *Ibid*, 648.

<sup>x</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 11.

<sup>xi</sup> As of September 2017, there were over 85,000 Harry Potter based fan fiction novels on the website <https://www.harrypotterfanfiction.com>

<sup>xii</sup> Deborah Rowland, "Why Leadership Development Isn't Developing Leaders," *Harvard Business Review*, April 21, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2016/10/why-leadership-development-isnt-developing-leaders>.

*The Story Leadership Initiative:  
Mentoring Lessons for Emerging Christian Leaders*

**MICROBOOK 1:  
Leadership Stories: the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament)**

*Inside Cover:*

"Jesus told them a story to teach them" - Luke 18:1

Jesus spent a few years training a group of people who changed the world.  
How did He train?

By walking through life together with them and telling stories.

In our digital culture, the time has come again when people learn by  
walking through life together, telling and listening to stories.

*The Story Leadership Initiative* is about training the next generation of leaders in this  
new (and ancient) way, through image, story, conversation, and life learning.

*Introduction:*

Are you a Christian leader under 40 who is craving a mentoring relationship with a more seasoned leader? Or perhaps you'd like to be a better leader, but you're not sure how to develop those skills?

OR... Are you a seasoned Christian leader, wanting to pour into a younger generation, but not sure where to start with this technologically driven generation?

Welcome to *The Story Leadership Initiative*.

This tool is created to be used in mentoring relationships between emerging leaders (who have grown up in a highly technological world) and more seasoned leaders. It uses the process of learning, discussing, retelling, and living out Bible stories to train and mold people in spiritual leadership skills and character.

*The Story Leadership Initiative* was created out of research on digital natives (those born after the early 1980s who have grown up with technology), how brains are rewired by technology, and how that rewiring is resulting in new ways of learning. (For more information on WHY *The Story Leadership Initiative* is choosing to use Bible stories as training tools, read the introductory microbook: *The Story Leadership Initiative: An Introduction for Mentoring Pastors and Leaders*.)

Here's how this tool works:

1. **Meet** in a group (your Band of Allies) with a mentor and other emerging leaders. The best size for a group is 3-5 people plus the mentor.

2. **Covenant** with your Band of Allies on when and how often you'll meet, length of commitment, the pace of the group, and what your commitments will be with one another. Pacing options are listed in the "notes" section in the last pages of this microbook. Ideas for the Band of Allies Covenant (commitments) are listed at the end of this microbook as well as on the website. Please note: as often as possible, *The Story Leadership Initiative* will give you options. Each lesson can stand on its own. The lesson order is not important, but the principles are. Your Band's choices will determine how much you learn on your own and how much you learn in your Band.

3. With your Band of Allies, start in on one of the microbooks. Explore the **online resources**: <https://storyleadership.weebly.com>

4. Whichever pace option you choose, everyone will:

- **Examine the Bible story** enough to retell it to others without notes. Some of the stories are only a few verses. Others are many chapters. Pull out what you see as the key elements of the story when preparing to retell it.
- **Ask questions** related to the story – both questions about the story itself, or questions that prompt you to personally relate to the story. Many of the questions asked don't have "right" or "wrong" answers... they are for reflection and prayer. Allow the Bible and the Lord to speak to you through the questions as well as the stories.
- **Explore the image related to that story.** Pictures speak to us differently

than words. Pray, then ponder the image. How might God speak to you through it? How is the image related to the story? How might the image challenge you?

- **Prepare to tell the story to others.** Plan it then rehearse it. It should be accurate in content and history. Aim for your story to be 3-5 minutes. (There are helps on how to tell a good story listed in the notes at the back, with more information on the website. There are also examples of retelling some of these stories on the website.)
- **Discuss** with your Band of Allies how the story can form your leadership. Don't be afraid to both challenge and encourage one another... both are needed to develop trust within the group and grow personally.
- **Tell the story** to people both inside and outside the group, getting their thoughts and feedback.
- **Experientially apply** that story within your own leadership context.

*Enjoy* the stories and the retelling. Place yourselves in them. (Where would you be?) Stories are meant to be interesting, thought-provoking, and sometimes life-changing. Let these stories change your life, your leadership, and the lives of those around you!

**MICROBOOK 1:**  
**Leadership Stories: the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament)**

Lesson 1: The Story of Abraham, the Lesson of Surrender

Lesson 2: The Story of Jacob, the Lesson of Identity

Lesson 3: The Story of Joseph, the Lesson of Transformation

Lesson 4: The Story of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, the Lesson of Vision

Lesson 5: The Story of Moses, the Lesson of Leading Leaders

Lesson 6: The Story of Joshua & Achan, the Lesson of Holiness

Lesson 7: The Story of Deborah, Barak, and Jael, the Lesson of Faith Filled

Lesson 8: The Story of Gideon, the Lesson of Holy Spirit Empowerment

Lesson 9: The Story of Ruth, the Lesson of Bridge-Building

Lesson 10: Celebrate & Review

NOTES:

- Pacing Options
- Band of Allies Covenant
- Tips for Telling a Good Story

## The Story of ABRAHAM

### Leadership Lesson: FAITH

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Genesis 22
2. ASK these questions as you learn the story:
  - What was Abraham's relationship with God?
  - What was Abraham's response to God?
  - What is Isaac's role?
  - How long did God wait to provide?
  - What was God's response to Abraham's faith? What did He promise?
  - Is there anything difficult God is asking you to do in faith? What is your response?
3. EXPLORE the Image (online and below). *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - What difficult, faith-filled action is God asking you to prepare for now?
  - How are you preparing?
  - How do you feel as you prepare?
  - What is the prayer of your heart in the midst of this?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who might be impacted by the step of faith you considered in #3.
7. INVITE their thoughts on both Abraham and your journey.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



**The Story of JACOB**

## Leadership Lesson: IDENTITY

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Genesis 27-33
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - How does Jacob change throughout the story?
  - How does Jacob's relationship with God and others change throughout the story?
  - Have you ever "wrestled with God"? If so, over what?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - What issues do you currently "wrestle" with?
  - Where does God fit in the picture of this wrestling?
  - How is this wrestling changing you?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who leads you.
7. INVITE their thoughts on their own wrestling journeys.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## The Story of JOSEPH

### Leadership Lesson: TRANSFORMATION

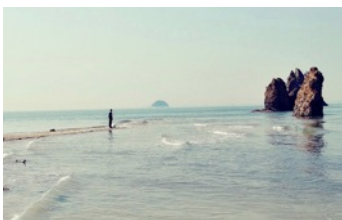
1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Genesis 37, 39-47
2. ASK these questions as you learn the story:
  - What is Joseph's life like at the beginning of the story? What are his dreams? What is his relationship with his family?
  - What do Joseph's brothers do to him? How does this impact him?
  - Outline the times that Joseph's life gets better only to get worse. Where was God in the midst of all this?
  - How does Joseph deal with injustice and hardship?
  - How is Joseph changed? How does his transformation take place?
  - Look back over your life. Where have you seen the hand of God?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - How have you dealt with hardship and injustice? How has and is it changing you?
  - Consider those who have done you harm. How close are you to being able to declare: "You meant it for harm, but God meant it for good"? What keeps you from fully embracing that belief?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who has gone through difficulties.
7. INVITE their thoughts on Joseph's story. Listen to whatever they have to say, negative or positive. Do this without "preaching"... simply tell the story and listen.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## The Story of MOSES, AARON, MIRIAM

### Leadership Lesson: VISION

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Exodus 2-16.
2. ASK these questions as you learn the story:
  - How was Moses special?
  - How did Moses view himself as a young man? How did he lead as a young man?
  - When the Lord appears to Moses, how has he changed? What has changed him?
  - How does Moses interact with God?
  - What are Moses' strengths? Weaknesses?
  - Where does Moses gain his vision for the people of Israel? How does he communicate it? To whom does he communicate it?
  - What does faith look like in Moses' life?
  - What role do Aaron and Miriam play in leadership?
  - How does Moses deal with opposition?
  - When did Moses move too quickly? Too slowly?
  - How did Moses, Aaron, and Miriam lead well? Lead poorly?
  - What can you learn from the leadership of Moses, Aaron, or Miriam?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - What people is God asking you to lead across the sea?
  - What sea do you face in leadership?
  - What can you learn from Moses, Aaron, and Miriam?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone you lead.
7. INVITE their thoughts on how your leadership is like Moses, Aaron or Miriam.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort



## The Story of MOSES & JETHRO

### Leadership Lesson: LEADING LEADERS

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Exodus 8
2. ASK these questions as you learn the story:
  - Observe the state of Moses' life at the beginning of the chapter: both his work and his family.
  - Why is Moses convinced that he is the one people must come to?
  - Outline the advice that Jethro gives to Moses.
  - What are the results of Moses following Jethro's advice?
3. EXPLORE the Image. *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - Who do these figures represent to you?
  - How many people do you lead or oversee? Consider all areas of life.
  - Does the amount of people you interact with overwhelm you or give you life?
  - Do those you interact with feel that they are "known" and cared for by you or by someone else in their life? How do you know?
  - How does your pace of work impact those closest to you?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who is part of your leadership team, or could become part of your leadership team but is not yet.
7. INVITE their thoughts on the story, as well as their view of your current work load as well as their current work load.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## The Story of JOSHUA & ACHAN

### Leadership Lesson: HOLINESS

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Joshua 2, 6 & 7

2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:

- Ponder the faith of Rahab. What role did Rahab play in Israel's victory? What was she promised? Who promised it?
- What were the Lord's instructions for Joshua's troops as they went to Jericho? Who were the instructions given to?
- Where did Joshua succeed as a leader? Where might he have failed as a leader?
- What was Achan's sin? How did it impact his family? His people?
- What sins do leaders "bury" today? How does it impact them? Their family? Their church? The name of Jesus?

3. EXPLORE the Image. *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*

- What do you let people see about you?
- What is "beneath the surface"?
- What is hidden? What is buried?
- Take an inventory: are there any areas of buried sin in your life? What are the danger or consequences?

4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.

5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.

6. TELL the story to someone (perhaps your mentor) to whom you can confess any "buried sin."

7. INVITE their prayers as well as direction on how to see change. Receive the Lord's forgiveness, truth, and freedom. Listen for a Bible verse (truth) to combat any lies you have believed related to your sin or forgiveness.

8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:

- Determine one key personal application from these stories
- Put that learning into action

9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



**The Story of DEBORAH, BARAK, Jael**  
 Leadership Lesson: FAITH FILLED

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Judges 4-5
2. ASK these questions as you learn the story:
  - How did Deborah become a Judge and a Prophet?
  - What challenges did she face in leadership?
  - What role does Barak play in leadership? What role does Jael play?
  - What is Deborah's vision for her people? How does she receive that vision?
  - How is Deborah bold in her leadership?
  - What does faith look like in Deborah's life?
  - What does Deborah include in her praise of the Lord?
  - What is the result of Deborah's leadership?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - What battle are you facing in leadership?
  - What role is God asking you to play?
  - What can you learn from Deborah?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes).  
 Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone you lead. Ask them to learn the key points and re-tell it to someone else. Help them with this process.
7. INVITE their thoughts on how your leadership is like Deborah or Barak or Jael.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort



## The Story of GIDEON

### Leadership Lesson: HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERMENT

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Judges 6-7
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - How does Gideon grow and change throughout the story?
  - How does Gideon's faith transform?
  - When does God clearly give direction to Gideon? When does He seem to leave it up to Gideon?
  - How has your own faith grown in the past few years?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - Have you ever tested God? With what? How?
  - How has God proven Himself to you?
  - What do you do to remember it?
  - Has there ever been a time when God asked you to do something that didn't make sense? If so, did you do what was asked? If you did, what past faithfulness of God did you rely upon as you moved forward?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who you know is a person of faith.
7. INVITE their thoughts on the faith of Gideon.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## The Story of RUTH

### Leadership Lesson: BRIDGE-BUILDING

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Ruth 1-4
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - Outline the times that Ruth makes a change that takes her outside her comfort zone. What are her priorities each time she makes a change?
  - Observe the people that Ruth builds bridges with who are unlike her. How does she do this?
  - Outline how the Lord is with Ruth.
  - What can you learn from Ruth about building bridges with people unlike you?
3. EXPLORE the Image. *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - Who has God put in your life or community who is very different than you? Consider ethnicity, culture, gender, beliefs.
  - What can you learn from Ruth about reaching out to them?
  - Which of these people may be people that the Lord is inviting you to build a bridge to? Pray for God to be with you as you build bridges.
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who is different from you.
7. INVITE their thoughts on Ruth and her story. They may have very different observations from the story. Listen.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## CELEBRATE & REVIEW WEEK(S)

Before meeting with your Band:

**Look back over the last nine stories:**

- The Story of ABRAHAM  
Leadership Lesson: SURRENDER
- The Story of JACOB  
Leadership Lesson: IDENTITY
- The Story of JOSEPH  
Leadership Lesson: TRANSFORMATION
- The Story of MOSES, AARON, MIRIAM  
Leadership Lesson: VISION
- The Story of MOSES & JETHRO  
Leadership Lesson: LEADING LEADERS
- The Story of JOSHUA & ACHAN  
Leadership Lesson: HOLINESS
- The Story of DEBORAH, BARAK, Jael  
Leadership Lesson: FAITH FILLED
- The Story of GIDEON  
Leadership Lesson: HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERED
- The Story of RUTH  
Leadership Lesson: BRIDGE-BUILDING

Which story has most impacted your character or leadership skills? How?

Which story continues to speak to you? How?

Prepare to retell the story that has most impacted you, interweaving it with the story of its impact on you.

**In your group**, take turns telling the Bible story interwoven with the story of how this story has impacted you. *(There's an example on the website under the Band of Allies tab).*

At the end of each story, take a few minutes of silence for one another. During that silence, listen for anything the Lord may bring to mind for the one who has just shared. It may be a Bible verse, an image, or another story. Briefly share that with the one who just told their story. Pray for the person who has just shared their story, including thanking God for how He is working in their life.

Go on to the next person until all have shared.

*Option: After all have shared, ask this question: From what you have learned, what are you leaving behind? (Lies you've believed, behaviors, attitudes). What, with the empowering of God, are you grabbing ahold of? (Truths from the Bible, character, skills, behaviors) Line up. Have each person start at one end of the line and say: "I'm leaving behind"... and then walk to the other end of the line. As they walk, do what seems appropriate to encourage (pray, hands stretched out, high fives...). When they get to the*

*other end of the line, they state: “and I’m grabbing ahold of...” (new behavior, attitude, etc). Use an appropriate Bible verse to get this truth into the soul and seal the new life.*

*For other wrap up exercises and rituals, check the website.*

Finally, do a group evaluation. What’s been working? What hasn’t? If the original commitment was to complete one microbook, discuss whether or not the group wants to continue. If so, plan a time to meet. If needed, put together a new Band of Allies Covenant.

## *NOTES*

### Options for pacing with your Band of Allies:

Option 1: *A new story at each meeting.* This requires each participant to:

**Ahead of time:**

1. Read the story.
2. Reflect on the story (answer the questions in the microbook).
3. Learn the story ahead of time, in order to re-tell the story in your group (without notes).

**At the meeting:**

4. Discuss the story and tell it to one another.
5. Discuss ways you could experientially apply what you've learned from the story.
6. Choose one way to personally apply the story to your leadership.

**After the meeting:**

7. Tell the story to someone outside the group (microbook gives details)
8. Do the experiential application you chose in #6.
9. Report back at the following meeting or via some other form of group communication (social networking, email, group text, etc).

(For option 1, the work required by individuals on their own between each meeting includes: #7-9 for the story they already covered in group, and completing #1-3 for the upcoming story. In other words, for option 1 the bulk of the work is done on your own).

Option 2: *Taking two meetings for each story.* This requires:

**Ahead of time:**

1. Read the whole story, including passages before and after.

**At the first meeting:**

2. Read the story (or portions of it), together.
3. Reflect on and discuss the story together (questions in microbook).
4. Together, begin to outline and learn the key points of the story.
5. Discuss ways you could experientially apply what you've learned from the story.
6. Choose one way to personally apply the story to your leadership.

**After the first meeting:**

7. Learn the story in order to retell it (without notes).
8. Tell the story to someone outside the group (microbook gives details)
9. Do the application chosen in #6.

**At the next meeting:**

10. Report back on #8 & #9.
11. Practice retelling the story.

**After your second meeting:**

12. Continue to ponder and live into this story, journaling on its impact on your leadership. You may also consider continuing the discussion

with your Band on some form of social networking, email, or group text.

Option 3: *Taking three meetings for each story.* This requires:

**At the first meeting:**

1. Read the story together. If it's very long, ask one person ahead of time to choose key verses to be read, or agree to all read it ahead of time.
2. Reflect on and discuss the story together (questions in microbook).
3. Together, begin to outline and learn the key points of the story.

**After the first meeting:**

4. Learn the story in order to retell it without notes.

**At the second meeting:**

5. Tell the story to one another, helping each other to craft the story.
6. Continue to learn and reflect from the story.
7. Discuss ways you could experientially apply what you've learned from the story.
8. Choose one way to personally apply the story to your leadership.

**After the second meeting:**

9. Tell the story to someone outside the group (microbook gives instructions)
10. Do the chosen application from #8.

**At the third meeting:**

11. Report back on #9 & #10.
12. Practice retelling the story.

**After the third meeting:**

13. Continue to ponder and live into this story, journaling on it's impact on your leadership. You may also consider continuing the discussion with your Band on some form of social networking, email, or group text.

## ***A Band of Allies Covenant***

To journey well together, agreements must be made. Here are some things to discuss with your Band of Allies:

1. **We commit to journey together for...** (*length of time. When first making this covenant, start with a shorter period... perhaps the time it will take to go through one microbook. At the end of that period, reconsider the covenant.*)
2. **We commit to praying for one another** (*how often? how much? who prays for who?*)
3. **We commit to be at each meeting, unless...** (*what's an "allowed absence"?*)
4. **We commit to ... prior to each meeting** (*Do you expect everyone to have all of their "homework" done ahead of time? Some?*)
5. **We commit, in our interactions with one another to be...** (*fill in what is important: honest? gracious? prompt? gentle? truthful? merciful? all of them? some of them? You may also want to include HOW you will communicate with one another... will you text? call? email? use a particular form of social networking? In all of this: what will allow all members to know their words and time are valued by the group. During the group, what*

*are your rules on phone usage? Be sure to have some of the group time without cell phones. Stillness is necessary for leadership development.)*

**6. When one of us is not able to keep this commitment...** *(what are the consequences? Are they absolute or do they depend upon the situation? If they depend, who decides?)*

**7. We commit to keep what is said among us in confidence, unless...** *(there may be exceptions to confidentiality, such as when someone is endangering either themselves or someone else).*

*This Covenant may be changed if... (time? circumstances? all agreeing to change something? majority agreeing?)*

*A printable version (which all can sign) is available at <https://storyleadership.weebly.com> under the "Band of Allies" tab.*

### ***NOTES for telling a good story:***

**HOOK:** What's one sentence that will get someone's interest?

**PROBLEM:** What's the problem that needs to be solved?

Spend most of your time telling the twists and turns of the problem(s).

**TIPPING POINT:** What's the height of the problem? The greatest tension? Build your story up to that.

**RESOLUTION:** How is the problem resolved? This gets told near the end of your story.

### **Want more options?**

**Check out the website for help on creating great stories.**

**<https://storyleadership.weebly.com/creating-good-stories.html>**

*The Story Leadership Initiative:  
Mentoring Lessons for Emerging Christian Leaders*

**MICROBOOK 2:  
Leadership Stories: the Life of Jesus**

*Inside Cover:*

"Jesus told them a story to teach them" - Luke 18:1

Jesus spent a few years training a group of people who changed the world.  
How did He train?

By walking through life together with them and telling stories.

In our digital culture, the time has come again when people learn by  
walking through life together, telling and listening to stories.

*The Story Leadership Initiative* is about training the next generation of leaders in this  
new (and ancient) way, through image, story, conversation, and life learning.

*Introduction:*

Are you a Christian leader under 40 who is craving a mentoring relationship with a more seasoned leader? Or perhaps you'd like to be a better leader, but you're not sure how to develop those skills?

OR... Are you a seasoned Christian leader, wanting to pour into a younger generation, but not sure where to start with this technologically driven generation?

Welcome to *The Story Leadership Initiative*.

This tool is created to be used in mentoring relationships between emerging leaders (who have grown up in a highly technological world) and more seasoned leaders. It uses the process of learning, discussing, retelling, and living out Bible stories to train and mold people in spiritual leadership skills and character.

*The Story Leadership Initiative* was created out of research on digital natives (those born after the early 1980s who have grown up with technology), how brains are rewired by technology, and how that rewiring is resulting in new ways of learning. (For more information on WHY *The Story Leadership Initiative* is choosing to use Bible stories as training tools, read the introductory microbook: *The Story Leadership Initiative: An Introduction for Mentoring Pastors and Leaders*.)

Here's how this tool works:

1. **Meet** in a group (your Band of Allies) with a mentor and other emerging leaders. The best size for a group is 3-5 people plus the mentor.

2. **Covenant** with your Band of Allies on when and how often you'll meet, length of commitment, the pace of the group, and what your commitments will be with one another. Pacing options are listed in the "notes" section in the last pages of this microbook. Ideas for the Band of Allies Covenant (commitments) are listed at the end of this microbook as well as on the website. Please note: as often as possible, *The Story Leadership Initiative* will give you options. Each lesson can stand on its own. The lesson order is not important, but the principles are. Your Band's choices will determine how much you learn on your own and how much you learn in your Band.

3. With your Band of Allies, start in on one of the microbooks. Explore the **online resources**: <https://storyleadership.weebly.com>

4. Whichever pace option you choose, everyone will:

- **Study the Bible story** enough to retell it to others without notes. Some of the stories are only a few verses. Others are many chapters. Pull out what you see as the key elements of the story when preparing to retell it.
- **Ask questions** related to the story – both questions about the story itself, or questions that prompt you to personally relate to the story. Many of the questions asked don't have "right" or "wrong" answers... they are for reflection and prayer. Allow the Bible and the Lord to speak to you through the questions as well as the stories.
- **Explore the image related to that story.** Pictures speak to us differently

than words. Pray, then ponder the image. How might God speak to you through it? How is the image related to the story? How might the image challenge you?

- **Prepare to tell the story to others.** Plan it then rehearse it. It should be accurate in content and history. Aim for your story to be 3-5 minutes. (There are helps on how to tell a good story listed in the notes at the back, with more information on the website. There are also examples of retelling some of these stories on the website.)
- **Discuss** with your Band of Allies how the story can form your leadership. Don't be afraid to both challenge and encourage one another... both are needed to develop trust within the group and grow personally.
- **Tell the story** to people both inside and outside the group, getting their thoughts and feedback.
- **Experientially apply** that story within your own leadership context.

*Enjoy* the stories and the retelling. Place yourselves in them. (Where would you be?) Stories are meant to be interesting, thought-provoking, and sometimes life-changing. Let these stories change your life, your leadership, and the lives of those around you!

**MICROBOOK 2:**  
**Leadership Stories: the Life of Jesus**

Lesson 1: The Story of the Boy Jesus, the Lesson: Biblically Formed

Lesson 2: The Story of Invitation, the Lesson: Christ's

Lesson 3: The Story of Praying for Direction, the Lesson: Mission Driven

Lesson 4: The Story of Hunger and Thirst, the Lesson: Evangelist

Lesson 5: The Story of Loaves and Fishes, the Lesson: Prayerfully Faith Filled

Lesson 6: The Story of Healing of the Leper, the Lesson: Healthy and Loving

Lesson 7: The Story of the Sent Ones, the Lesson: Multiplying Discipler

Lesson 8: The Story of Dirty Feet, the Lesson: Self-aware & Surrendered

Lesson 9: The Story of Abandonment, the Lesson: Identity

Lesson 10: Celebrate & Review

NOTES:

- Pacing Options
- Band of Allies Covenant
- Tips for Telling a Good Story

## The Story of the Boy Jesus

### Leadership Lesson: BIBLICALLY FORMED

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Luke 2:41-52
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - How is it that Mary and Joseph didn't know Jesus was missing? What does this tell you about their community / family / network?
  - Consider how a parent might feel after a child being missing in a large city for three days. How does this impact your retelling of the story?
  - How is Jesus' response odd for a twelve year old? How is it typical?
  - What does this story teach us about Jesus?
  - What role has learning played in your life and leadership?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - How deep is your understanding of the Scriptures?
  - How deep is your desire to ask questions of those who know more than you?
  - What would you do in order to have a better understanding of the Scriptures? What might God be inviting you to in this regard?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who knows more than you do.
7. INVITE their thoughts on how to learn more deeply.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## A Story of Invitation

### Leadership Lesson: CHRIST'S

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Matthew 4:18-22, Luke 8:1-3
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - How did Jesus invite people into life with Him? What was His invitation to?
  - How did those in the story demonstrate that they were disciples of Jesus?
  - What is your own story of following Jesus?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - What invitations has Jesus given you in the past? How have you responded?
  - What invitations is Jesus giving to you in this season? How are you responding?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes).  
Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who is a new follower of Jesus.
7. INVITE their thoughts on the actions of those who did follow Jesus. Allow, if appropriate, the conversation to shift into your own story of following Jesus.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## **The Story of Praying for Direction**

Leadership Lesson: MISSION DRIVEN

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Mark 1:21-39
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - Outline Jesus' day. Take note of: the amount of people he is interacting with, and all he accomplishes.
  - How does Jesus' attempt to "get away"? What does it cost him?
  - Jesus' prayed and then knew His purpose and next steps. What kind of prayer might have brought him to that place?
  - How clear a sense of purpose do you have at this time in your life?
3. EXPLORE the Image. *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - What is most on your mind and heart?
  - How much time do you spend praying versus thinking about whatever is on your mind or heart?
  - How often do you get away to pray? What keeps you from it?
  - Do you have a clear sense of God's vision for your life in this season?
  - How can you push more deeply into knowing God's vision for you?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who you are mentoring.
7. INVITE their thoughts on the importance of prayer.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## The Story of Hunger and Thirst

### Leadership Lesson: Authentic EVANGELIST

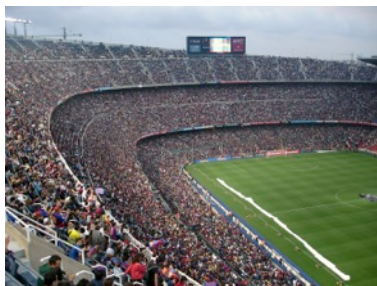
1. EXAMINE THE STORY: John 4:4-42
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - What is unexpected about this conversation?
  - How does Jesus lead the conversation?
  - How does the woman change in the story?
  - Why do the disciples react the way they do?
  - What is the significance of this woman becoming the first missionary / evangelist to the Samaritan people?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - What are you thirsty for? Where are you looking to have that thirst met?
  - What do those in your community thirst for, particularly those who have not yet met Jesus?
  - How might Jesus unexpectedly meet those needs?
  - What thirsty people are waiting for you to have a conversation with them?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who doesn't yet know Jesus.
7. INVITE their thoughts on Jesus' manner and invitation.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## The Story of Loaves & Fishes

### Leadership Lesson: PRAYERFULLY FAITH FILLED

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: John 6: 1-15
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - How does this story differ from Matthew 14, 15, & Mark 6?
  - How Matthew 16:5-12 inform your understanding of this story?
  - What details are included in the story that surprise you? What is left out of the story that you wish had been included?
  - Who in the story had faith? Who doubted? Why?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - Look at the image of a large crowd, and compare it to the crowd in the story above. What impacts you?
  - If Jesus told you to feed them, what would you do? How would you feel?
  - Where are the places you doubt?
  - Why do you think the disciples picked up the leftovers at the end?
  - What crowd are you connected to? How are you being called to “feed” them?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who you can share your own doubt with.
7. INVITE their thoughts on faith.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## **The Story of the Healing of the Leper**

Leadership Lesson: HEALTHY & LOVING

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Mark 1:40-45
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - What was the man's uncertainty?
  - What made Jesus angry?
  - What did Jesus do?
  - Why did Jesus want to keep this a secret?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - How do you respond to touch?
  - What "touches" you (beyond physical touch)?
  - What needs healing in your own life?
  - What needs healing in those around you?
  - What is appropriate touch in our current culture?
  - Who will touch you? Who will you touch? How?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who is outside your normal social or ministry circle.
7. INVITE their thoughts on how Jesus might touch those around them.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## The Story of the Sent Ones

### Leadership Lesson: MULTIPLYING DISCIPLER

#### 1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Luke 10:1-23

#### 2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:

- The passage begins “After this.” Read Luke 9. Why is the link between Luke 9 and 10 important?
- What might have made Jesus appoint the 72 that He did?
- What promises does Jesus make as He sends?
- Outline all of Jesus’ instructions to the 72. How many instructions do you think there are? What surprises you most on the list? Why?
- What were the results of their being sent?
- Who are you in the story?

#### 3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*

- If Jesus was sending you somewhere, where might He send you?
- Who would you want to go with you? Would they go?
- What excites you the most about being sent?
- What scares you?

#### 4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.

#### 5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.

#### 6. TELL the story to someone you lead. Ask them to learn the key points and re-tell it to someone else. Help them with this process.

#### 7. INVITE their thoughts on how your outreach is like the 72.

#### 8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:

- Determine one key personal application from these stories
- Put that learning into action

#### 9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort



## The Story of Dirty Feet

Leadership Lesson: SELF-AWARE & SURRENDERED

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: John 13:1-17
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - “Jesus knew the hour had come.” What might Jesus’ be thinking and feeling at this moment?
  - Jesus knows he will soon die. He takes precious time to wash feet. Why? What was Jesus’ motivation?
  - Why is Peter so upset?
  - How does service play out in the disciples’ lives in the years ahead?
  - Are you more like Peter when he doesn’t want his feet to be washed, or Peter when he wants his whole body to be washed?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - How do you allow Jesus to “wash your feet”?
  - What is the “dirty feet” (the disgusting task) around you?
  - In what ways do you serve others in ways that could be seen as demeaning by others? How do you serve others in this manner of Jesus?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who you will serve during or immediately after the telling of the story.
7. INVITE their thoughts on what it was like to be served.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## The Story of Abandonment

### Leadership Lesson: IDENTITY

1. EXAMINE THE STORY: Luke 22:39- 23:49
2. ASK: these questions as you learn the story:
  - Consider all the friends of Jesus' mentioned in these chapters. How do those closest to Jesus support Him as He goes to the cross?
  - Who opposes Jesus? Why?
  - List out what Jesus must endure physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally in these chapters.
  - Where does Jesus draw comfort during this time?
  - Who are you in this story?
3. EXPLORE the Image: *Sit and prayerfully ponder the image before you answer.*
  - What price are you willing to pay to follow Jesus?
  - How are you developing a deep relationship with the Lord who will walk with you when others cannot?
  - What are you most afraid of on the journey?
  - How will you move past that fear?
4. PREPARE and TELL the story in your own words to your cohort. (2-5 minutes). Compare it to how others in the group tell the same story.
5. DISCUSS with your cohort your learnings from the story.
6. TELL the story to someone who loves you.
7. INVITE their thoughts on any sacrifice you are afraid to make.
8. DO. With the guidance of your mentor and group:
  - Determine one key personal application from these stories
  - Put that learning into action
9. REPORT back to your mentor and cohort.



## CELEBRATE & REVIEW WEEK

Before meeting with your Band:

**Look back over the last nine stories:**

- The Story of the Boy Jesus  
Leadership Lesson: BIBLICALLY FORMED
- The Story of Invitation  
Leadership Lesson: CHRIST'S
- The Story of Praying for Direction  
Leadership Lesson: MISSION DRIVEN
- The Story of Hunger and Thirst  
Leadership Lesson: EVANGELIST
- The Story of Loaves and Fishes  
Leadership Lesson: PRAYERFULLY FAITH FILLED
- The Story of the Healing of the Leper  
Leadership Lesson: HEALTHY & LOVING
- The Story of the Sent Ones  
Leadership Lesson: MULTIPLYING DISCIPLER
- The Story of Dirty Feet  
Leadership Lesson: SELF-AWARE & SURRENDERED
- The Story of Abandonment  
Leadership Lesson: IDENTITY

Which story has most impacted your character or leadership skills? How?  
Which story continues to speak to you? How?

Prepare to retell the story which has most impacted you, interweaving it with the story of its impact on you.

**In your group**, take turns telling the Bible story interwoven with the story of how this story has impacted you.

At the end of each story, take a few minutes of silence for one another. During that silence, listen for anything the Lord may bring to mind for the one who has just shared. It may be a Bible verse, an image, another story. Briefly share that with the one who just told their story. Pray for the person who has just shared their story, including thanking God for how He is working in their life.

Go on to the next person until all have shared.

*Option: After all have shared, ask this question: From what you have learned, what are you leaving behind? (Lies you've believed, behaviors, attitudes). What, with the empowering of God, are you grabbing ahold of? (Truths from the Bible, character, skills, behaviors) Line up. Have each person start at one end of the line and say: "I'm leaving behind"... and then walk to the other end of the line. As they walk, do what seems*

*appropriate to encourage (pray, hands stretched out, high fives...). When they get to the other end of the line, they state: “and I’m grabbing ahold of...” (new behavior, attitude, etc). Use an appropriate Bible verse to get this truth into the soul and seal the new life.*

*For other wrap up exercises and rituals, check the website.*

Finally, do a group evaluation. What’s been working? What hasn’t? If the original commitment was to complete one microbook, discuss whether or not the group wants to continue. If so, plan a time to meet. If needed, put together a new Band of Allies Covenant.

## *NOTES*

### **Options for pacing with your Band of Allies:**

Option 1: *A new story at each meeting.* This requires each participant to:

**Ahead of time:**

1. Read the story.
2. Reflect on the story (answer the questions in the microbook).
3. Learn the story ahead of time, in order to re-tell the story in your group (without notes).

**At the meeting:**

4. Discuss the story and tell it to one another.
5. Discuss ways you could experientially apply what you've learned from the story.
6. Choose one way to personally apply the story to your leadership.

**After the meeting:**

7. Tell the story to someone outside the group (microbook gives details)
8. Do the experiential application you chose in #6.
9. Report back at the following meeting or via some other form of group communication (social networking, email, group text, etc).

(For option 1, the work required by individuals on their own between each meeting includes: #7-9 for the story they already covered in group, and completing #1-3 for the upcoming story. In other words, for option 1 the bulk of the work is done on your own).

Option 2: *Taking two meetings for each story.* This requires:

**Ahead of time:**

1. Read the whole story, including passages before and after.

**At the first week's meeting:**

2. Read the story (or portions of it), together.
3. Reflect on and discuss the story together (questions in microbook).
4. Together, begin to outline and learn the key points of the story.
5. Discuss ways you could experientially apply what you've learned from the story.
6. Choose one way to personally apply the story to your leadership.

**After the first week's meeting:**

7. Learn the story in order to retell it (without notes).
8. Tell the story to someone outside the group (microbook gives details)
9. Do the application chosen in #6.

**At the next meeting:**

10. Report back on #8 & #9.
11. Practice retelling the story.

**After your second meeting:**

12. Continue to ponder and live into this story, journaling on its impact on your leadership. You may also consider continuing the discussion

with your Band on some form of social networking, email, or group text.

Option 3: *Taking three meetings for each story.* This requires:

**At the first week's meeting:**

1. Read the story together. If it's very long, ask one person ahead of time to choose key verses to be read, or agree to all read it ahead of time.
2. Reflect on and discuss the story together (questions in microbook).
3. Together, begin to outline and learn the key points of the story.

**After the first week's meeting:**

4. Learn the story in order to retell it without notes.

**At the second meeting:**

5. Tell the story to one another, helping each other to craft the story.
6. Continue to learn and reflect from the story.
7. Discuss ways you could experientially apply what you've learned from the story.
8. Choose one way to personally apply the story to your leadership.

**After the second meeting:**

9. Tell the story to someone outside the group (microbook gives instructions)
10. Do the chosen application from #8.

**At the third meeting:**

11. Report back on #9 & #10.
12. Practice retelling the story.

**After the third meeting:**

13. Continue to ponder and live into this story, journaling on it's impact on your leadership. You may also consider continuing the discussion with your Band on some form of social networking, email, or group text.

## ***A Band of Allies Covenant***

To journey well together, agreements must be made. Here are some things to discuss with your Band of Allies:

1. **We commit to journey together for...** (*length of time. When first making this covenant, start with a shorter period... perhaps the time it will take to go through one microbook. At the end of that period, reconsider the covenant.*)
2. **We commit to praying for one another** (*how often? how much? who prays for who?*)
3. **We commit to be at each meeting, unless...** (*what's an "allowed absence"?*)
4. **We commit to ... prior to each meeting** (*Do you expect everyone to have all of their "homework" done ahead of time? Some?*)
5. **We commit, in our interactions with one another to be...** (*fill in what is important: honest? gracious? prompt? gentle? truthful? merciful? all of them? some of them? You may also want to include HOW you will communicate with one another... will you text? call? email? use a particular form of social networking? In all of this: what will allow all members to know their words and time are valued by the group*)

**6. When one of us is not able to keep this commitment...** *(what are the consequences? Are they absolute or do they depend upon the situation? If they depend, who decides?)*

**7. We commit to keep what is said among us in confidence, unless...** *(there may be exceptions to confidentiality, such as when someone is endangering either themselves or someone else).*

*This Covenant may be changed if... (time? circumstances? all agreeing to change something? majority agreeing?)*

*A printable version (which all can sign) is available at <https://storyleadership.weebly.com> under the "Band of Allies" tab.*

### ***NOTES for telling a good story:***

***HOOK:*** What's one sentence that will get someone's interest?

***PROBLEM:*** What's the problem that needs to be solved?

Spend most of your time telling the twists and turns of the problem(s).

***TIPPING POINT:*** What's the height of the problem? The greatest tension? Build your story up to that.

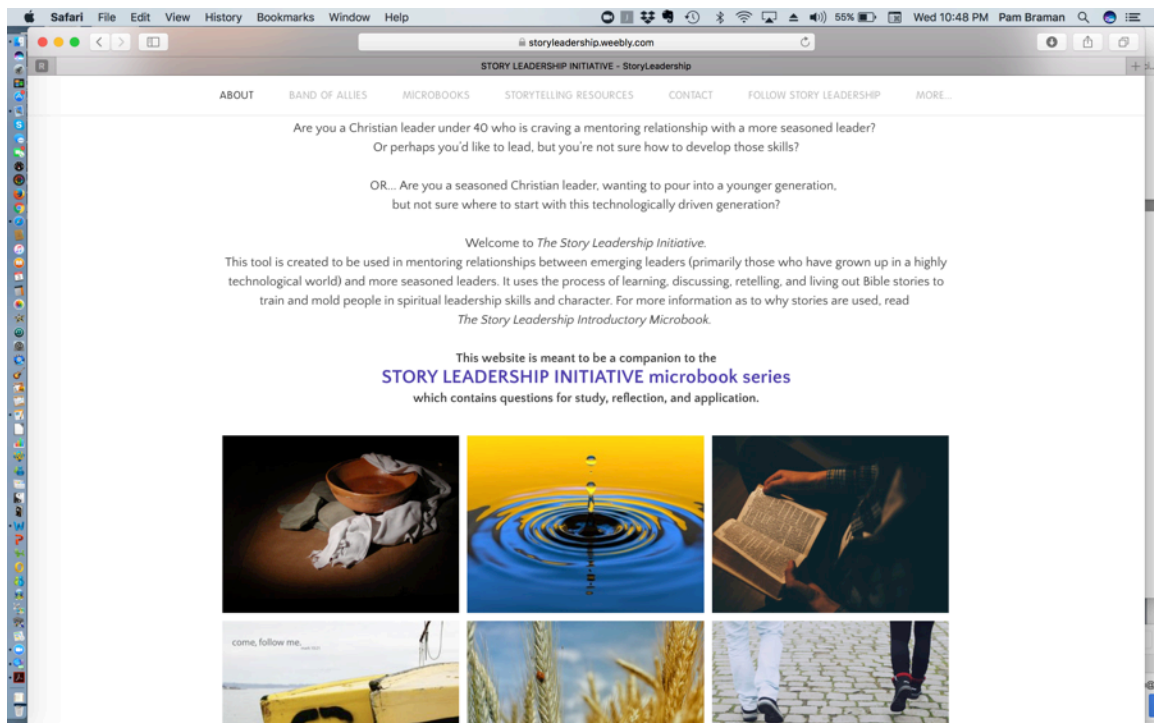
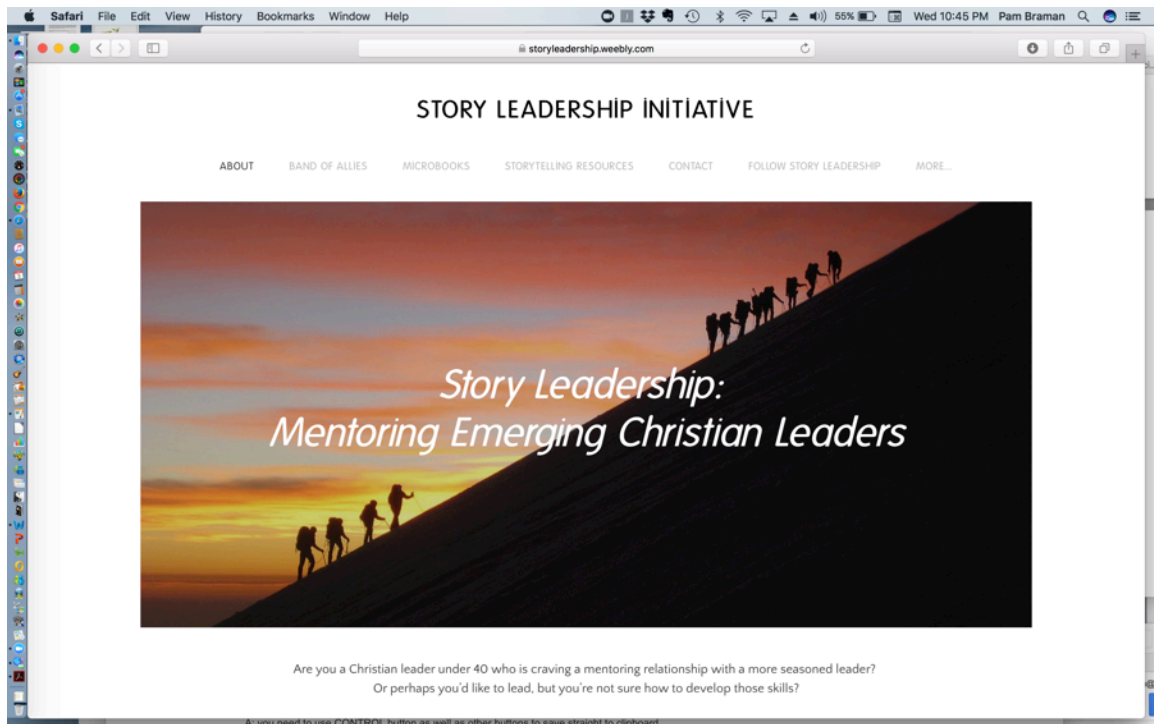
***RESOLUTION:*** How is the problem resolved? This gets told near the end of your story.

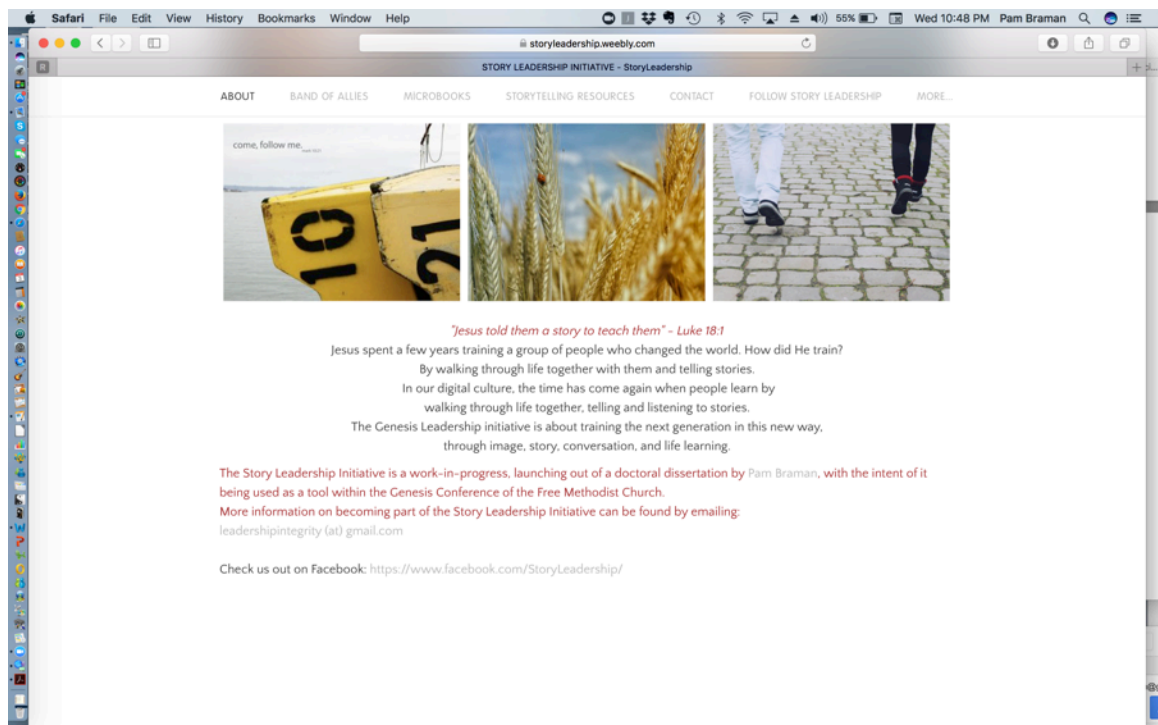
**Want more options?**

**Check out the website for help on creating great stories.**

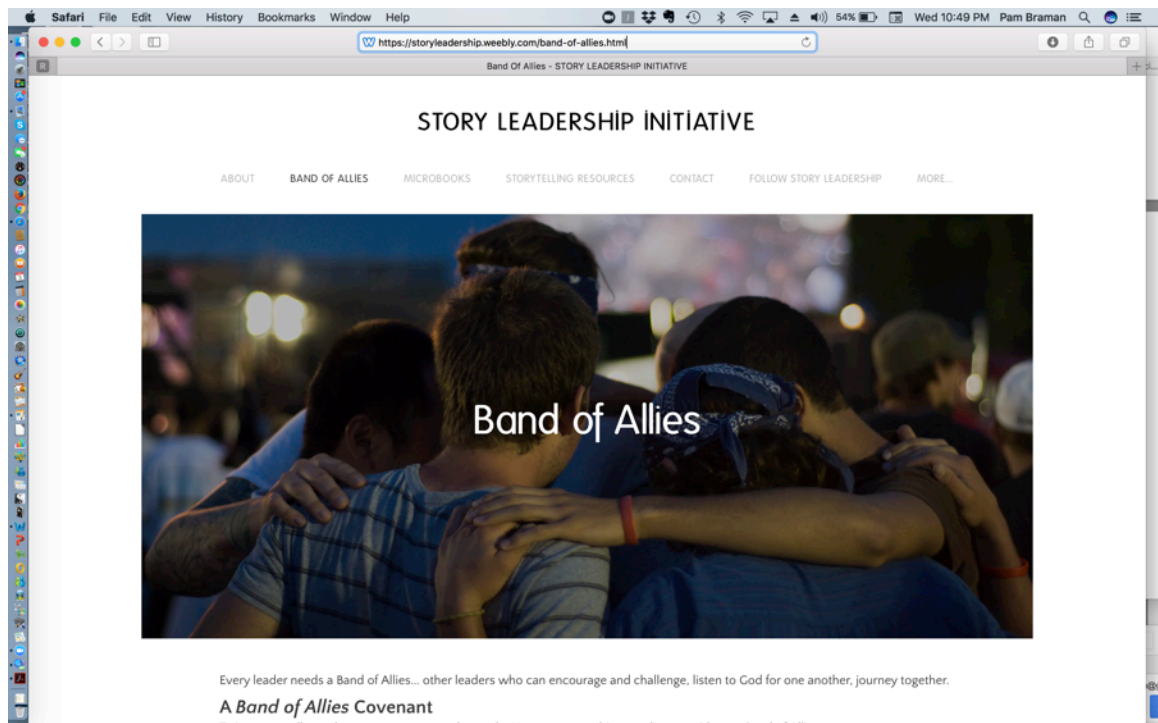
***<https://storyleadership.weebly.com/creating-good-stories.html>***

Screenshots of WEBSITE:  
<https://storyleadership.weebly.com>





<https://storyleadership.weebly.com/band-of-allies.html>

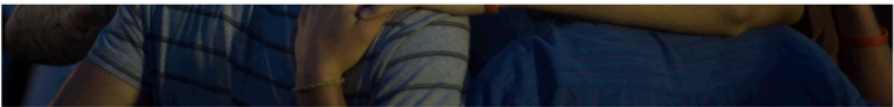


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Band Of Allies - STORY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

ABOUT BAND OF ALLIES MICROBOOKS STORYTELLING RESOURCES CONTACT FOLLOW STORY LEADERSHIP MORE...




Every leader needs a Band of Allies... other leaders who can encourage and challenge, listen to God for one another, journey together.

### A Band of Allies Covenant

To journey well together, agreements must be made. Here are some things to discuss with your Band of Allies:

1. We commit to journey together for... (length of time. When first making this covenant, start with a shorter period... perhaps the time it will take to go through one microbook. At the end of that period, reconsider the covenant).
2. We commit to praying for one another (how often? how much? who prays for who?)
3. We commit to be at each meeting, unless... (what's an "allowed absence"?)
4. We commit to ... prior to each meeting (Do you expect everyone to have all of their "homework" done ahead of time? Some?)
5. We commit, in our interactions with one another to be... (fill in what is important: honest? gracious? prompt? gentle? truthful? merciful? all of them? some of them? You may also want to include HOW you will communicate with one another... will you text? call? email? use a particular form of social networking? In all of this: what will allow all members to know their words and time are valued by the group)
6. When one of us is not able to keep this commitment... (what are the consequences? Are they absolute or do they depend upon the situation? If they depend, who decides?)
7. We commit to keep what is said among us in confidence, unless... (there may be exceptions to confidentiality, such as when someone is endangering either themselves or someone else).

This Covenant may be changed if... (time? circumstances? all agreeing to change something? majority agreeing?)

 a band\_of\_allies covenant.docx  
Download File

CREATE A FREE WEBSITE

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<https://storyleadership.weebly.com/microbooks.html>:


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STORY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE - StoryLeadership

ABOUT BAND OF ALLIES MICROBOOKS STORYTELLING RESOURCES CONTACT FOLLOW STORY LEADERSHIP MORE...

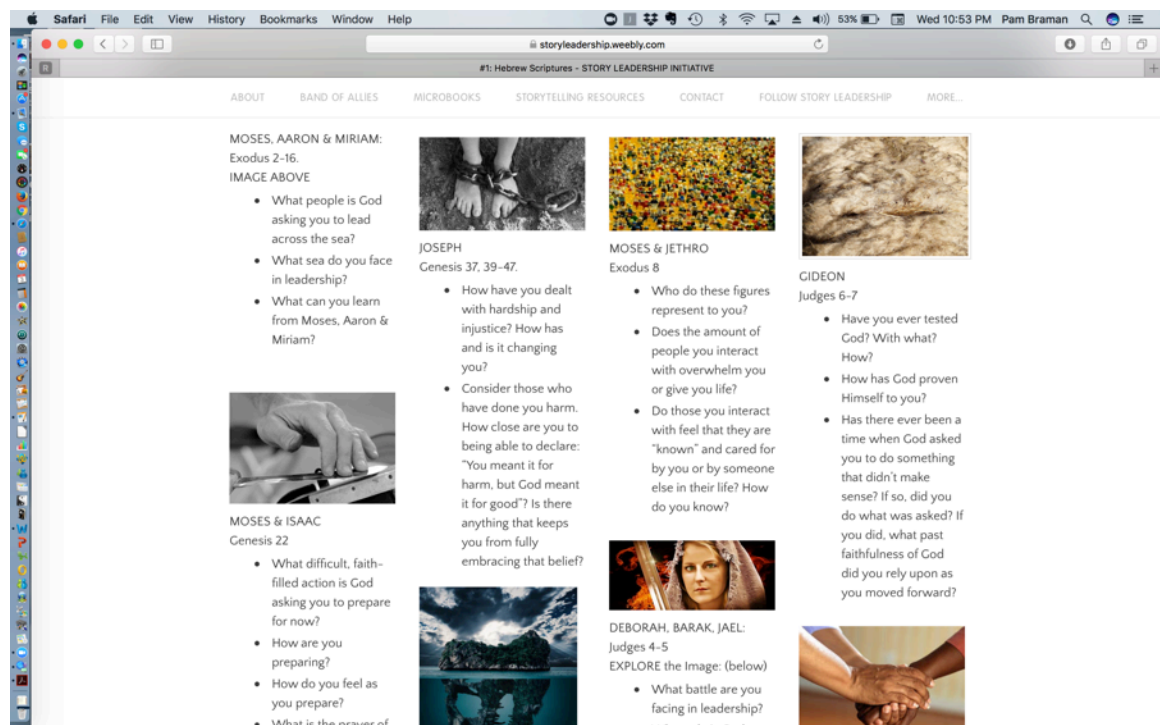
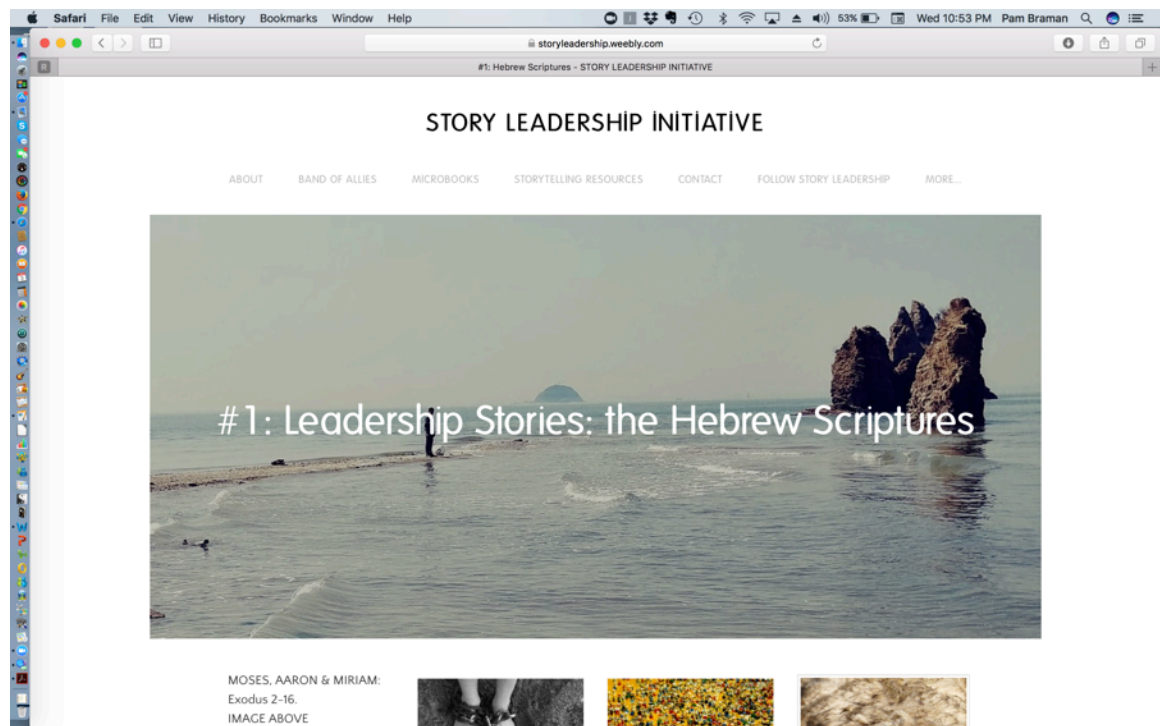
#1: HEBREW SCRIPTURES  
#2: JESUS' LIFE  
#3: JESUS' STORIES



*Story Leadership:  
Mentoring Emerging Christian Leaders*

Are you a Christian leader under 40 who is craving a mentoring relationship with a more seasoned leader?  
Or perhaps you'd like to lead, but you're not sure how to develop those skills?

<https://storyleadership.weebly.com/1-hebrew-scriptures.html>



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#1: Hebrew Scriptures - STORY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

ABOUT BAND OF ALLIES MICROBOOKS STORYTELLING RESOURCES CONTACT FOLLOW STORY LEADERSHIP MORE...

What difficult, faith-filled action is God asking you to prepare for now?

How are you preparing?

How do you feel as you prepare?

What is the prayer of your heart in the midst of this?

JOSHUA & ACHAN:  
Joshua 2, 6-7

- What do you let people see about you?
- What is "beneath the surface"?
- What is hidden? What is buried?
- Take an inventory: are there any areas of buried sin in your life? What are the danger or consequences?

JACOB  
Genesis 27-33

- \*What issues do you currently "wrestle" with?
- \*Where does God fit in the picture of this wrestling?
- \*How is this wrestling changing you?

DEBORAH, BARAK, Jael:  
Judges 4-5

EXPLORE the Image: (below)

- What battle are you facing in leadership?
- What role is God asking you to play?
- What can you learn from Deborah?

did you rely upon as you moved forward?

RUTH:

- Who has God put in your life or community who is very different than you? Consider ethnicity, culture, gender, beliefs.
- What can you learn from Ruth about reaching out to them?
- Which of these people may be people that the Lord is inviting you to build a bridge to? Pray for God to be with you as you build bridges.

<https://storyleadership.weebly.com/-2-jesus-life.html>

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storyleadership.weebly.com

# 2: Jesus' Life - STORY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

STORY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

ABOUT BAND OF ALLIES MICROBOOKS STORYTELLING RESOURCES CONTACT FOLLOW STORY LEADERSHIP MORE...

Leadership Stories: the Life of Jesus

THE STORY OF THE BOY JESUS  
Luke 2:41-52


come, follow me.

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storyleadership.weebly.com

# 2: Jesus' Life - STORY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

ABOUT BAND OF ALLIES MICROBOOKS STORYTELLING RESOURCES CONTACT FOLLOW STORY LEADERSHIP MORE...




**THE STORY OF THE BOY JESUS**  
Luke 2:41-52


How deep is your understanding of the Scriptures?  
How deep is your desire to ask questions of those who know more than you?

- What would you do in order to have a better understanding of the Scriptures? What might God be inviting you to in this regard?

**A STORY OF PRAYING FOR DIRECTION**  
Mark 1:29-39

- What is most on your mind and heart?
- How much time do you spend praying versus thinking about it?
- How often do you get away to pray? What keeps you from it?
- Do you have a clear sense of God's vision for your life in this season?
- How can you push more deeply into knowing God's vision for you?







come, follow me.  
Mark 10:21

**A STORY OF INVITATION**  
Matthew 4:18-22, Luke 8:1-3

- What invitations has Jesus given you in the past? How have you responded?
- What invitations is Jesus giving to you in this season? How are you responding?





**THE STORY OF THE HEALING OF THE LEPER**  
Mark 1:40-45

How do you respond to touch? What "touches" you (beyond physical touch)?

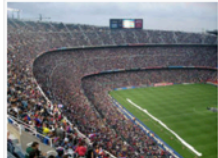
- What needs healing in your own life?
- What needs healing in those around you?
- Who will touch you? Who will you touch?

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# 2: Jesus' Life - STORY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE


ABOUT BAND OF ALLIES MICROBOOKS STORYTELLING RESOURCES CONTACT FOLLOW STORY LEADERSHIP MORE...



**THE STORY OF LOAVES & FISHES**  
John 6:1-15


\*Look at the image of a large crowd, and compare it to the crowd in the story above. What impacts you?

\*If Jesus told you to feed them, what would you do?  
\*Where are the places where you doubt?  
\*Why do you think the disciples picked up the leftovers at the end?  
\*What crowd are you connected to? How are you being called to "feed" them?




**A STORY OF DIRTY FEET**  
John 13:1-17

- How do you allow Jesus to "wash your feet"?



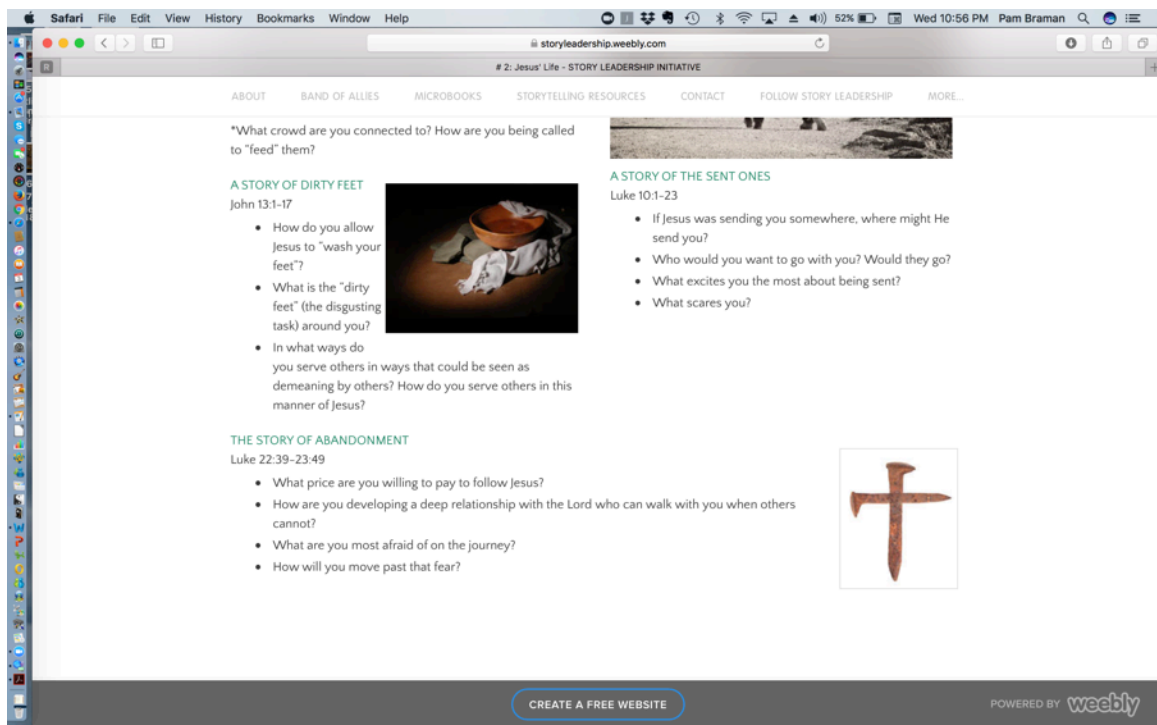
**A STORY OF HUNGER & THIRST**  
John 4:4-42

- What are you thirsty for? Where are you looking to have that thirst met?
- What do those in your community thirst for, particularly those who have not yet met Jesus?
- How might Jesus unexpectedly meet those needs?
- What thirsty people are waiting for you to have a conversation with them?

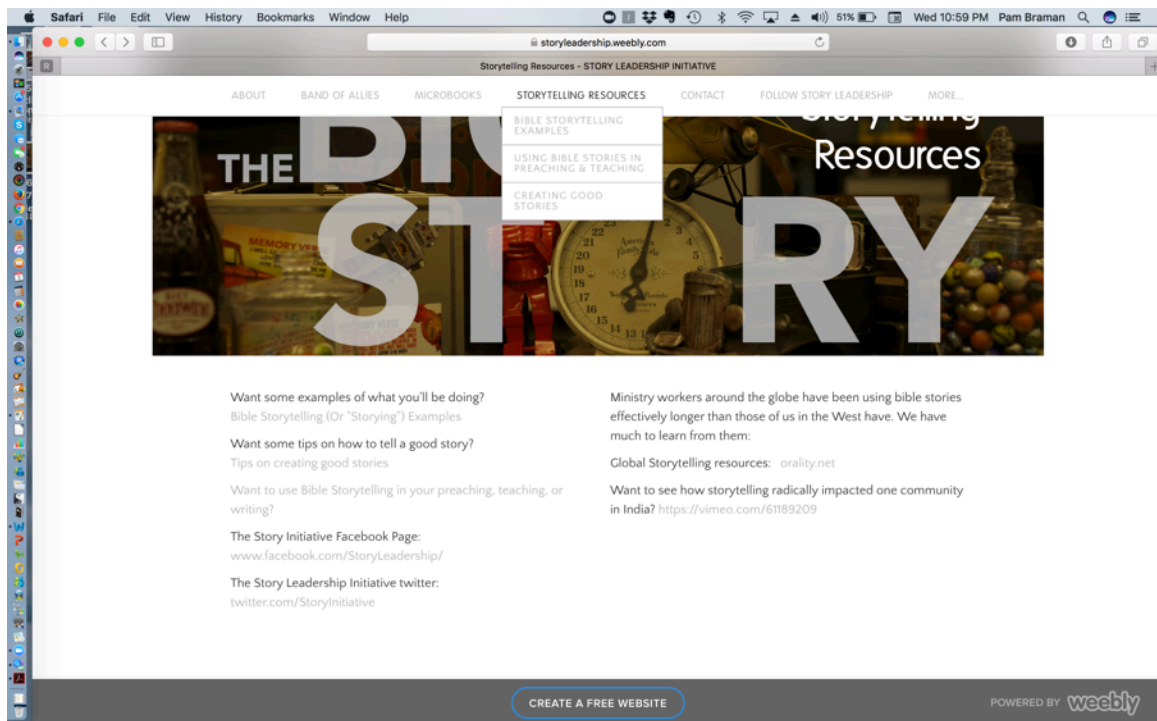


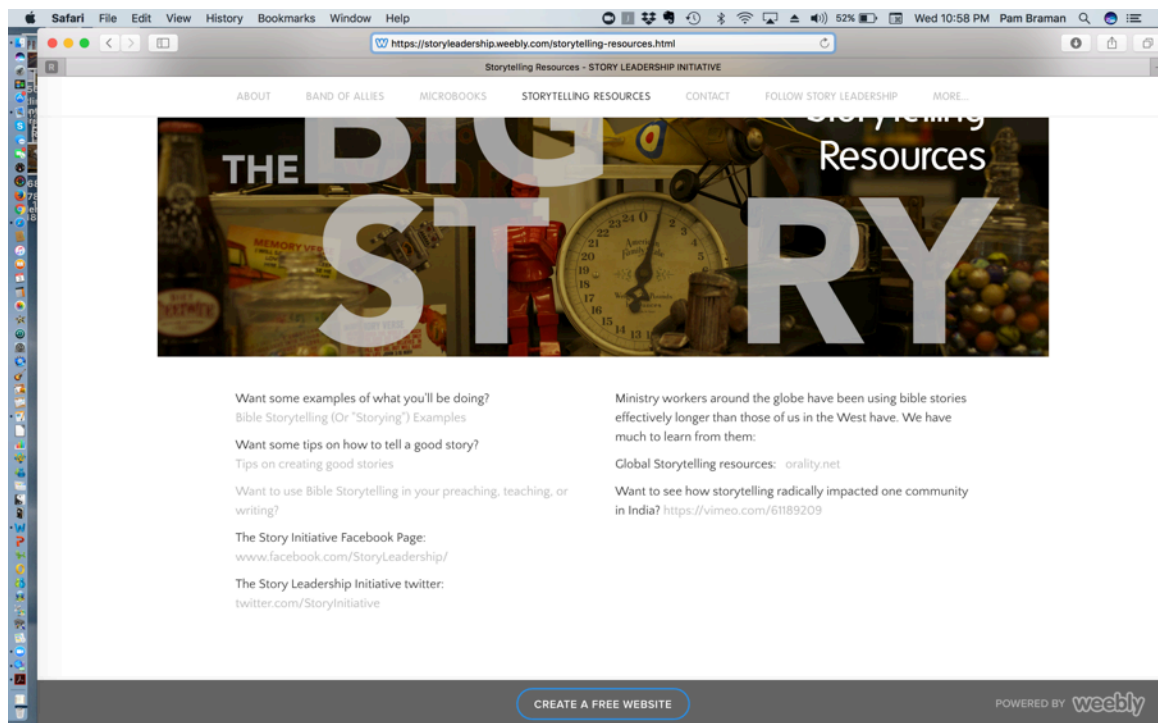
**A STORY OF THE SENT ONES**  
Luke 10:1-23

- If Jesus was sending you somewhere, where might He send you?
- Who would you want to go with you? Would they go?

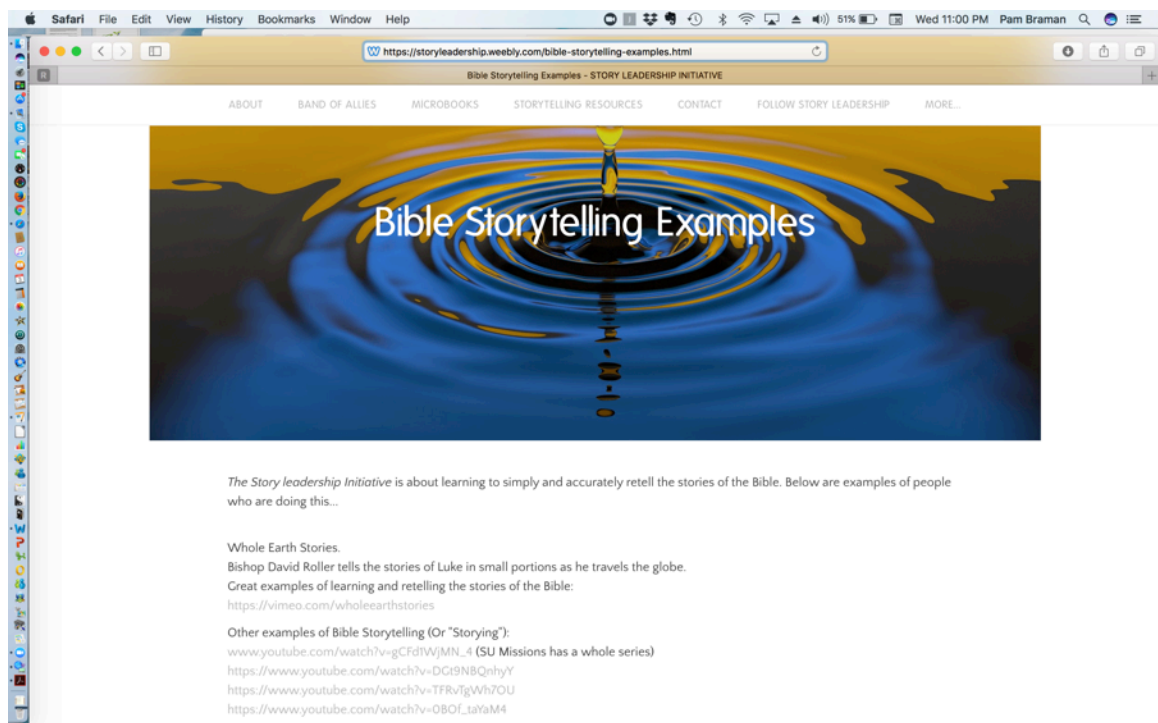


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Using Bible Stories in Preaching & Teaching - STORY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

## STORY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

ABOUT BAND OF ALLIES MICROBOOKS STORYTELLING RESOURCES CONTACT FOLLOW STORY LEADERSHIP MORE...



### Using Bible Stories in Preaching & Teaching




Whether written or spoken, here's some examples of using Bible story in the midst of teaching or preaching, all from author of The Story Leadership Initiative, Pam Braman.

Pam Braman's Blog "Living the Story":  
<https://pambraman.blogspot.com/pambraman.blogspot.com>

Preaching where Bible stories are foundational:  
 The stories of women leaders in the Bible (audio, sound is poor) <https://vimeo.com/246126316>

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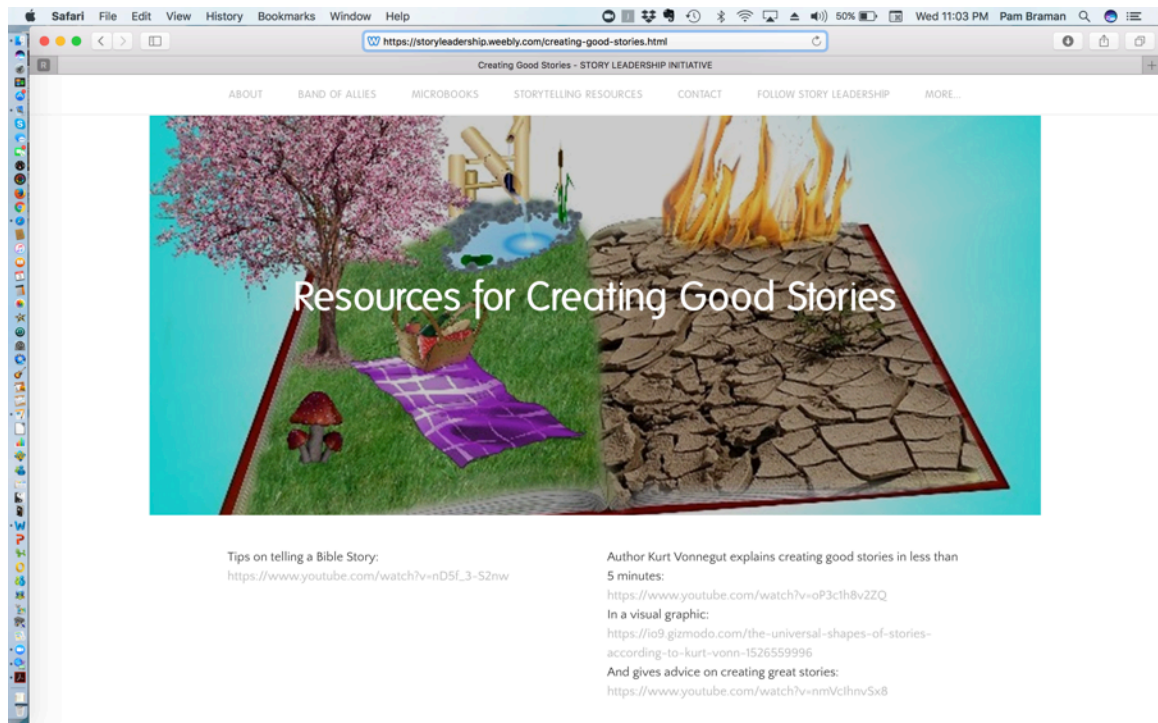
Want to dive more completely into the Bible Story, particularly if you preach or teach? Here's some written examples of messages (sermons) that have been preached, some in the first person (dramatically, as someone IN the Bible story):

 [messyleadershipstories.docx](#) Download File
  [womanissuebloodstory.docx](#) Download File
  [shiprah\\_\\_puah.docx](#) Download File

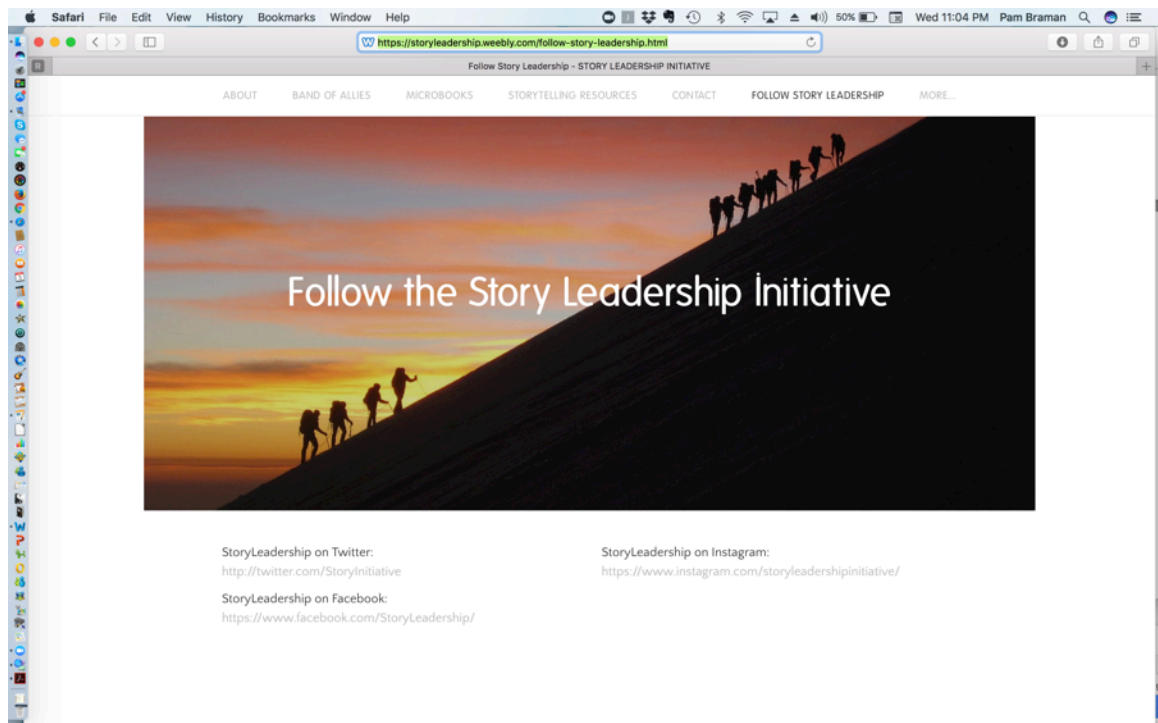
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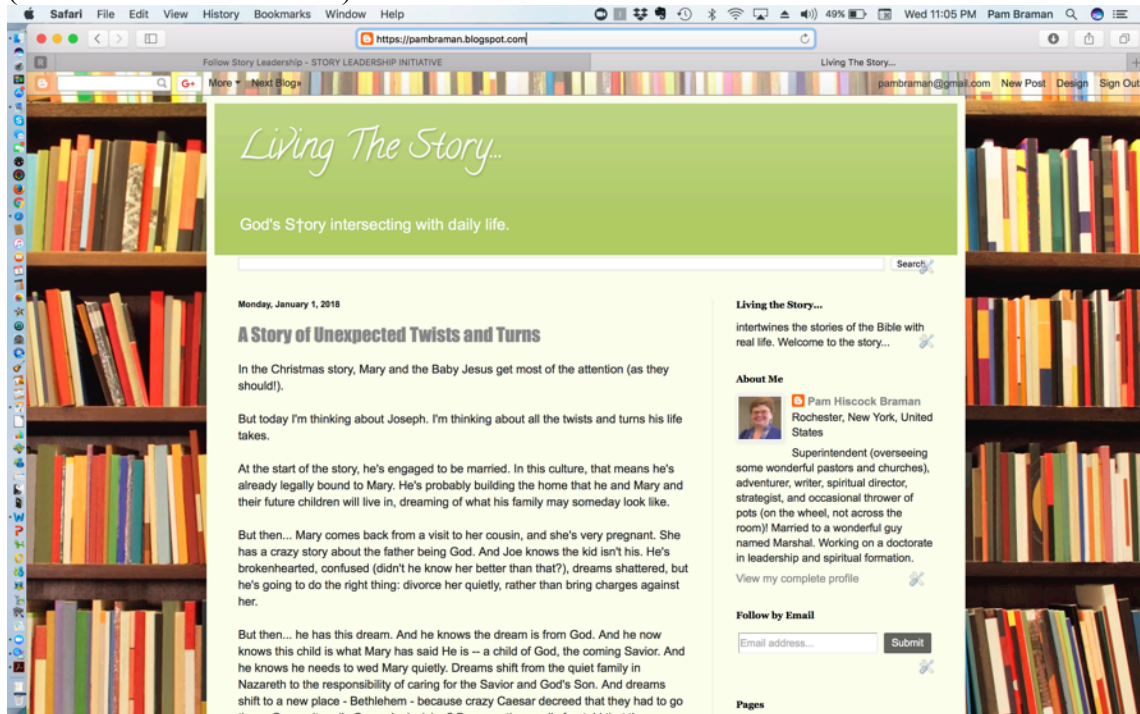
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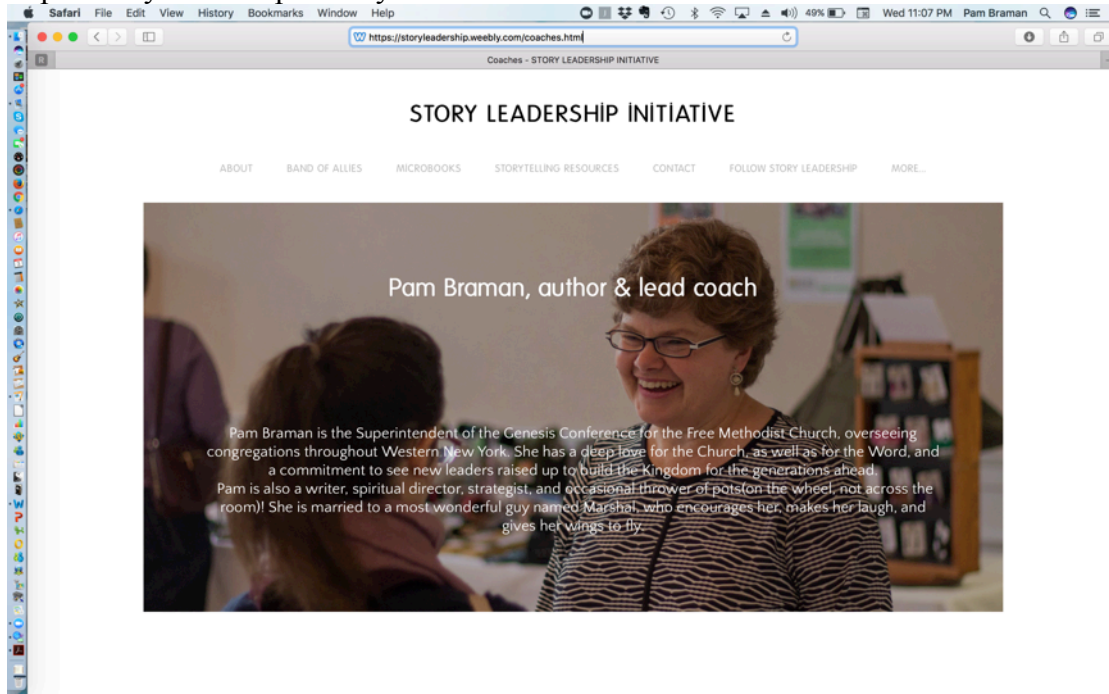
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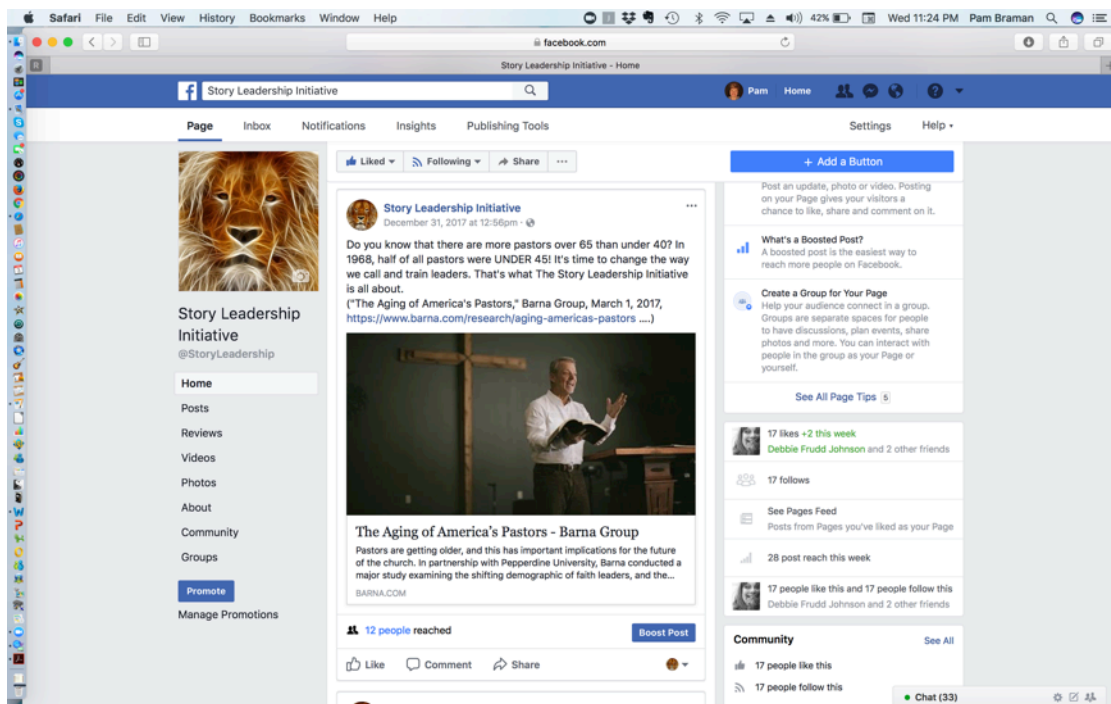
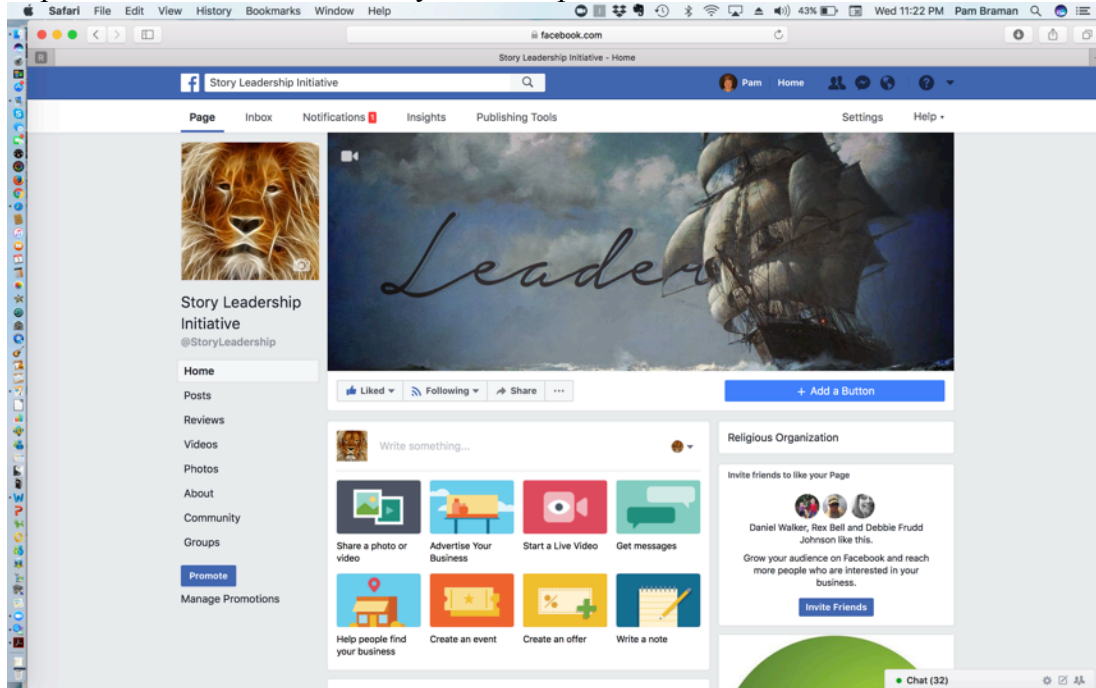


<https://storyleadership.weebly.com/coaches.html>



FACEBOOK:

<https://www.facebook.com/StoryLeadership/>



TWITTER:  
StoryLeadership @StoryInitiative

The screenshot shows a Safari browser window displaying the Twitter profile of StoryLeadership (@StoryInitiative). The browser's address bar shows the URL "Twitter, Inc." and the page title is "StoryLeadership (@StoryInitiative) | Twitter". The Twitter interface includes a navigation bar with "Home", "Moments", "Notifications", and "Messages". The profile header features a banner image with the word "Leadership" in a large, stylized script font, and a circular profile picture of a white lion. Below the header, the profile name "StoryLeadership" and handle "@StoryInitiative" are displayed, along with a bio: "The Story Leadership Initiative is launching to use bible storytelling to train digital native church leaders." and a join date of "Joined October 2017". The statistics show 2 tweets, 8 following, 3 followers, 0 lists, and 0 moments. The "Tweets" tab is selected, showing a tweet from December 31, 2017, about pastors over 65. The tweet includes a video thumbnail of a man speaking. The "Who to follow" section on the right lists three accounts: "One Sultry Day", "Heather Baker Uttley", and "Erick Ewaskowitz".

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Twitter, Inc.

StoryLeadership (@StoryInitiative) | Twitter

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Search Twitter

Leadership

Profile picture: A white lion.

Tweets 2 Following 8 Followers 3 Lists 0 Moments 0

Edit profile

**StoryLeadership**  
@StoryInitiative

The Story Leadership Initiative is launching to use bible storytelling to train digital native church leaders.

Joined October 2017

**Tweets** Tweets & replies

StoryLeadership @StoryInitiative · 31 Dec 2017

Do you know that there are more pastors over 65 than under 40? It's time to change the way we call and train leaders.  
("The Aging of America's Pastors," Barna Group, March 1, 2017, [barna.com/research/aging...](http://barna.com/research/aging...))

Video thumbnail: A man in a white shirt speaking at a podium.

**Who to follow** · Refresh · View all

- One Sultry Day @OneSultryDay · Follow
- Heather Baker Uttley @hbakeruttley · Follow
- Erick Ewaskowitz @erickewaskowitz · Follow

Find people you know  
Import your contacts from Gmail

Connect other address books

## Endnotes from the Introductory Microbook:

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<sup>i</sup> The term “digital native” was coined by Marc Prensky in an article in 2001. Marc Prensky, “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,” *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (October 2001).

<sup>ii</sup> Carolyn Crist, “On the Mind: What Science Says About Digital Natives,” *Pastemagazine.com*, April 10, 2017, accessed July 25, 2017, <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/04/on-the-mind-what-brain-science-says-about-digital.html>.

<sup>iii</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Public Domain), Kindle, 36.

<sup>iv</sup> Matt & Brittany are a combination of a handful of Millennials that I know. The stories are true, but the people are not.

<sup>v</sup> Dr. Tim Elmore, *Gen IY: Secrets to Connecting with Today's Teens & Young Adults in the Digital Age*. (Atlanta, GA: Poet Gardener Publishing, 2015), Location 728.

<sup>vi</sup> Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me - Revised and Updates: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (New York, NY: Atria Books, 2006), Kindle, 145.

<sup>vii</sup> Jean M. Twenge, “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?” *The Atlantic*, August 4, 2017, accessed December 1, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>

<sup>viii</sup> Thom S. Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), Kindle, location 2889.

<sup>ix</sup> Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, location 648.

<sup>x</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 11.

<sup>xi</sup> As of September 2017, there were over 85,000 Harry Potter based fan fiction novels on the website <https://www.harrypotterfanfiction.com>

<sup>xii</sup> Deborah Rowland, “Why Leadership Development Isn't Developing Leaders,” *Harvard Business Review*, October 2016, accessed April 21, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2016/10/why-leadership-development-isnt-developing-leaders>.

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