

Empowering Family Elders to Teach Christian Beliefs to their Families

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Abstract

This article describes my recommendations at the end of a study of how family elders in rural communities in Kalimantan, Indonesia, teach their spiritual beliefs to successive generations. During my study, I discovered that children learn and family elders prefer to teach using six very interrelated and overlapping methods. These six methods were prescribed by Moses in Deuteronomy 6. My recommendations are based on the findings of my study as well as the educational and missiological literature that I reviewed. These recommendations will necessarily involve some kind of quantifiable baseline study, and periodic evaluations. Because content is as important as methods, I also recommend certain content oriented themes.

Introduction

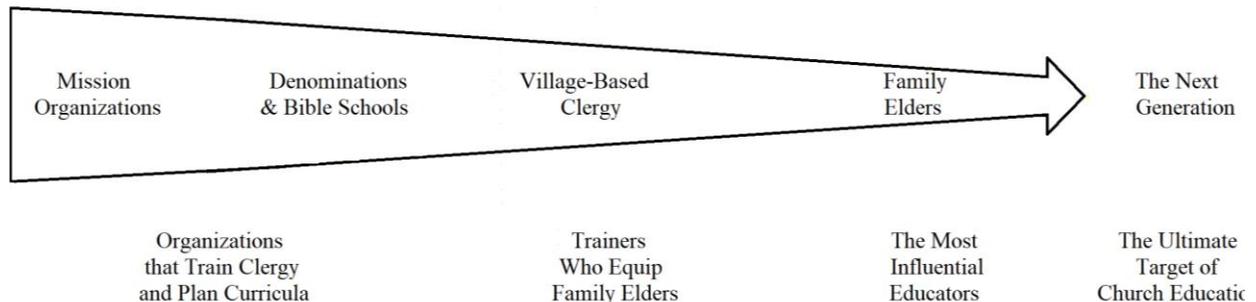
Moses commanded family elders to teach biblical spiritual beliefs through a combination of observation and imitation, asking questions and hearing answers, and oral communication. He also commanded family elders to teach biblical spiritual beliefs through a combination of rituals, rule keeping, and oral storytelling. However, for various historical reasons, most family elders are not trained to use these six methods to teach Christian beliefs. They are unable to use Bible stories to explain the spiritual beliefs that motivate church rituals and therefore, rely on the clergy to do so, while they, themselves, model a very different set of beliefs at home. Very few clergy use Bible stories to explain Christian spiritual beliefs to adults. I use the term clergy very broadly. It refers not only to pastors and priests but also to their spouses and religion teachers. It may even refer to the lay elders who sometimes lead rural congregations.

Only after the methods and content have been used repeatedly, in the same community, for several months or years, will anyone be able to evaluate the effectiveness of any one method to explain Christian spiritual beliefs to families in the rural communities of Kalimantan. In order to implement these recommendations, several individuals and organizations will need to work together. Before missions organizations can be effective, they must understand the needs and constraints of seminaries and denominations. Likewise, before the seminaries can be effective,

they must understand the needs of the clergy, who must also understand the needs of family elders.

Recommendations for the Clergy

My goal is to equip family elders to teach Christian spiritual beliefs to their families. Teaching Christian spiritual beliefs to one's family involves more than just attending and observing an occasional church service, wedding, or funeral. Effective teaching involves explaining the origins and meaning of church rituals and the foundations of Christian moral values, as well as modeling family rituals and moral behavior. The clergy who minister to these families must provide family elders with the tools they need to explain the origins and meaning of church rituals, and the foundations of Christian moral values, as well as to model family rituals and moral behavior.



Therefore, I will begin by describing the needs of family elders. I will then share four recommendations for the clergy. These recommendations are for experiments rather than a wholesale replacement of the way the clergy have been conducting their ministries. Although I will state these recommendations in terms of what the clergy must do, my hope is that seminaries, denominational headquarters, and missions will provide the clergy with the support and training they need in order to carry out these recommendations.

The Needs of Family Elders

The participants in my study explained how they learned their traditional spiritual beliefs first by observing rituals and rules, then by asking questions. In response to their questions, they received short answers in the moment and longer answers in the form of oral folktales. Family elders have difficulty learning (and therefore teaching) Christian beliefs, because these beliefs originate in Bible stories with which the family elders are not familiar. In order to teach Christian beliefs to their families, elders need to know the Bible stories that explain the origin and meaning of church rituals, family rituals, and moral values. They also need to observe their clergy as they model both a godly lifestyle and the telling of Bible stories.

Church rituals. During my study, several family elders described their understanding of church rituals. Their descriptions revealed that family elders do not understand the purpose of church

rituals or how these rituals meet their felt needs for protection and blessing from the spirits. The timing and location of church rituals do not necessarily highlight biblical beliefs about the presence, identity, attributes, and character of God and the spirits. Formal liturgies, prayers, scripture readings, and sermons do not necessarily highlight biblical beliefs about God or His scriptures either. Family elders do not understand the symbolic meanings of baptism, confirmation, communion, marriage, and funeral rituals. Consequently, family elders reinterpret church rituals in terms of the social results rather than the spiritual results that the Bible describes. This leads family elders to focus on the procedures for conducting valid church rituals rather than on the biblical symbolism.

Family rituals. Whereas traditional rituals are performed by family elders as needs arise, many family elders do not know how to lead Christian family rituals, and therefore fall back on more traditional rituals. Christian family rituals include prayers at mealtime, while performing daily chores and livelihood tasks (e.g. farming, laundry, travel, schoolwork, etc.), and at bedtime. Family rituals also include the telling of bedtime stories and personal testimonies. However, family elders are hindered by a limited repertoire of Bible stories, difficulties reading the printed scriptures, and distractions caused by the television. In this respect, family elders in rural Kalimantan are not unlike family elders in North America and around the world.

Moral values. Whereas traditional moral values are transmitted through a combination of folktales and living stories, and are based on either the threat of catastrophe if violated or the promise of blessing if performed well, most family elders are unaware of the biblical blessings and curses that accompany God's moral commandments. They are also unable to connect Bible stories to teenage moral choices. While referring to living stories, family elders' predictions of catastrophe or blessing are based more on economic and educational opportunities than on biblical blessings and curses. Family elders need help recognizing the connection between Bible stories and the practical themes that are taught in those stories, so that they can use Bible stories to interpret their own personal testimonies and living stories.

What family elders need from their clergy. In my study, I described a gap between the expectations of family elders and the intentions of their clergy. Although this gap was partly caused by the original motives that led first-generation Christians to identify themselves as Christians, it was exacerbated by the shortage of clergy prior to 2002, as well as the methods and content of the clergy's teaching. Family elders need their clergy to do several things for them so that they can understand Christian beliefs and transmit truly Christian beliefs to their families.

A student of traditions. Christian family elders need their clergy to study their traditional beliefs and methods for transmitting these beliefs. The clergy do not need to participate in traditional rituals or obey traditional rules. However, as Loewen (1978) recommended, the clergy need to understand the traditional folklore and the beliefs, motifs, and metaphors that are transmitted through that folklore. The family elders in my study do not tell the same folklore that family elders in neighboring communities tell. So even the clergy who originate from other parts of Kalimantan need to understand the traditional folklore told by family elders in the communities where the clergy serve. Before the clergy can accurately criticize local traditions, or provide answers to the questions of family elders, they must ask detailed questions about the meaning of each symbolic or sacred item used during traditional rituals. They must ask questions that go beyond the surface answers about the social function of traditional rituals. I believe that clergy

also need to study the characteristics of the different traditional storytelling genres so that they can imitate the characteristics of these genres that enhance the transmission of Christian beliefs and avoid those characteristics that hinder (or compromise) the transmission of Christian beliefs.

A storyteller. Christian family elders also need for their clergy to introduce new sacred and instructional Bible stories. Some family elders can read these stories in a printed Bible, but most will not. Family elders also need the clergy to point out how these Bible stories apply to the everyday problems faced by Christian families in their community.

Answers for questions. Before Christian family elders can answer the questions posed by their families, they must be able to ask and receive answers from their clergy. Their questions are frequently about the validity and purpose of church rituals, about the application of Bible stories to everyday life, and about relationships with their neighbors.

A role model. Finally, Christian family elders need for their clergy to model appropriate social behavior as well as how to practice family rituals and how to respond to everyday problems. This means that family elders need for their clergy to live among them and to participate in community social life. By participating in traditional livelihood activities, the clergy are able to discuss and model the relevance of Christian beliefs to everyday life. By inviting children to live in the parsonage, the clergy are able to model family rituals, which the children can then model for their elders.

I will now recommend four ways the clergy can use Bible stories to transmit Christian beliefs to family elders so that the family elders can teach these beliefs to their families. These methods involve both cyclically timed and semispontaneous timed activities, because no single activity will meet the needs of every family in the community.

Recommendation #1: Adapt Traditional Storytelling Genres

If Lingenfelter & Lingenfelter (2003) were right, the most effective way for the clergy to transmit Christian spiritual beliefs to their rural congregations is to equip family elders to use the methods they most naturally use in traditional contexts. In this case, one of the methods family elders most naturally use is oral storytelling. However, the clergy must equip family elders to tell Bible stories rather than traditional folktales, to explain the biblical meaning of church rituals, the reasons Christians no longer fear attacks by spirits if they violate traditional rules, and the reasons for Christian moral behavior. In order to equip family elders to tell Bible stories, the clergy will need to model telling Bible stories using various local genres. The goal of equipping family elders involves three objectives:

- 1. Expand the repertoire.** Because the family elders who participated in my study have such a limited repertoire of Bible stories and a limited understanding of the purpose for telling Bible stories, the clergy must introduce new Bible stories and use familiar stories for new purposes. The clergy must also help family elders discover the spiritual beliefs transmitted by these Bible stories, and how these beliefs affect the everyday problems and behavior of adults as well as children. Because Bible stories have some of the

Recommendation #2: Teach a New, Complete Bible Story Each Week

The family elders who participated in my study told how their elders told three sacred stories during each traditional ritual. However, the churches that these elders attend use scripture readings and sermons instead of sacred Bible stories. Catholic church services use three scripture readings while Protestant churches use two scripture readings. I want to suggest two modifications. First, try replacing one or more scripture readings with a complete Bible story from the same Bible passages. By *complete*, I mean that the story begins just before the introduction of a crisis and ends just after that crisis is resolved. This is consistent with Joseph Campbell's (described by Doty, 1986; and Segal, 2004) monomythic cycle and Edward's application of Campbell's theories to the analysis of Bible stories. It is also consistent with the *topajen cycle* on which many sacred folktales are based. It is also consistent with assertions by Slack (1993), Brown (2004), Franklin (2005), and Stahl & Stahl (2013) that Bible stories should be told in ways that resemble the structure and style of traditional stories. However, some Bible stories may need to be simplified in order to fit into the time allowed.

Second and more importantly, help family elders learn to retell one of the Sunday Bible stories during a midweek service the week before that story is told during the Sunday service. Ong (1982) and Terry (2013) claimed that teaching a story to a group improves the chances that the details will be remembered accurately. Helping family elders to learn the story, before the Sunday service, may also improve their attention during the Sunday service; allow family elders to participate in the performance of church rituals; and equip them to retell the story to their families in a greater variety of settings. Some members of the clergy already do something similar with their teenage worship team. Introducing new Bible stories involves four objectives:

1. **Discuss the story with family elders.** A midweek Bible study is the ideal time to teach a Bible story to several adults at the same time. By discussing a Bible story, rather than lecturing about it, the clergy can discover how family elders interpret (or misinterpret) the story, and therefore, what the clergy need to clarify during the Sunday sermon. The clergy can also discover how family elders think the story applies to their everyday problems. However, to do this, the clergy will need to develop discussion questions that enable family elders to discover the main points. Alvarez, Avarientos, and McAlpine (1999) described why it is important that the clergy moderate a discussion without explicitly telling family elders what they must notice in the story. Edwards (2005) recommended discussing a story with a group of laymen in order to discover how they interpret the story before telling the story during a Sunday sermon. Stahl & Stahl (2013) also claim that group discussions can help a group of storytellers to monitor the accuracy of their own retellings. Well led discussions can also help family elders determine the most essential details in the story. During the discussion, two issues need to be addressed:
 - a. **Contrast traditional and Christian beliefs.** The family elders who participated in my study claimed that traditional instructional folktales are usually told to correct behavioral problems, and that the spiritual beliefs that are illustrated in the folktales are left implied rather than explicitly explained. Because traditional family elders often equate the God of the Bible with the spirits that populate traditional folklore, the

clergy must highlight the differences between God's attributes and character and those of the spirits. This is consistent with Arlund's (2013) description of how church planters contrast the hopelessness of traditional beliefs with a new hope provided in the Bible stories.

Because the New Testament authors often used Old Testament stories to teach new New Testament beliefs, the clergy need to help family elders understand how to interpret Old Testament stories in light of New Testament revelations, like salvation by grace through faith alone and the story of redemption, as well as messianic prophecies and their fulfillment. Terry (2002) described how this can be done with *connected stories* or *fast track stories*. Stahl & Stahl (2013) and Slack & Terry (1994) offered other suggestions as well. However, these authors also caution against making the prophecy-fulfillment connections explicit when telling the stories to unbelievers. It is better, they say, to let the hearers discover these fulfillments on their own. I believe that nominal Christian audiences need for these connections to be made more obvious.

- b. *Connect the story to living stories.*** The family elders who participated in my study claimed that they use instructional folktales to correct the moral behavior of children, and living stories to shape the moral behavior of teenagers. Therefore, the clergy must help family elders discover how the Bible story can be used to interpret various teenage and adult experiences. This may involve using case studies that mirror a living story that is currently being discussed in the community. Fritz (1995) made similar suggestions.
- 2. Summarize Bible stories with songs and poetic sayings.** The family elders who participated in my study claimed that they learned the meaning of traditional rituals from short poetic sayings that summarized longer folktales. The poetic sayings explained the purpose of the ritual and the meaning of sacred objects. Therefore, a song or poem about the main point of a Bible story may make the story more memorable. One member of the clergy who participated in my study found that he can use cell phones to record and distribute songs and videos. This is also consistent with comments by Bowman (2009) and Stahl & Stahl (2013) about incorporating the arts into the storytelling process.
- 3. Tell a simplified story to children.** The family elders who participated in my study claimed that they were not able to attend Sunday schools consistently during their own childhoods. Only one family heard their elders tell Bible stories to them. For this reason, the clergy must model how to simplify a Bible story for children. The Sunday service is a good time to do this, using the Bible story that was discussed with the family elders during the previous midweek service. The children can even be invited to participate in a short discussion about how the story applies to their own living stories. The goal is to help family elders overcome their fear of telling a sacred Bible story outside the ritual context or leaving out the powerful words. Telling a simplified story to the children, for the benefit of the adults who are also listening, is an effective, indirect way to correct an adult's misbehavior.

4. **Preach a sermon about the story.** After family elders have already had the opportunity to discuss a Bible story during a midweek service, the clergy can preach their Sunday sermon about an important theological lesson in the story and its relevance to everyday problems. The Sunday sermon may also be the best time to connect an Old Testament prophecy with its New Testament fulfillment.

Although the Sunday sermon may focus on explaining a theological point, a practical application must also be addressed. The family elders who participated in my study claimed that they don't believe that weekly church services benefit them or affect their felt needs for economic survival. Therefore, it is important that the clergy acknowledge the hopes and fears of each family during each weekly service. Although this can be done during the intercessory prayer time of the liturgy, mentioning these needs during the introduction to a story (or sermon) and during the discussion after the story can help family elders realize how the scriptures address their felt needs.

Recommendation #3: Tell Bible Stories during Rituals and Catechism Classes

The family elders who participated in my study told how each traditional ritual involved the telling of three sacred folktales which explain the origin and purpose of the ritual, as well as the meaning of the sacred objects and the procedures for performing the rituals. However, second-generation Christians were unable to explain the biblical meaning of several church rituals. Although they correctly mentioned two stories from the life of Christ that were connected to two of these rituals, they did not know how the stories explain the origin, purpose, symbolism, or procedures for these rituals. They also did not know what spiritual blessings result when the rituals are performed or what curses result when the rituals are neglected.

Telling three Bible stories in rapid succession about the need, origin, symbolism, and procedures for a ritual can help family elders explain these rituals to their families. Terry (2002) called this kind of series *combined stories*. Telling the stories that explain the purpose and meaning of the rituals can also help families understand how the rituals benefit them. For example, to explain various meanings of baptism, stories can be selected from a series that includes the Dedication of Aaron, Namaan, Jesus' Baptism, the Death and Resurrection of Christ, the Day of Pentecost, the Ethiopian Eunuch, Cornelius, and the Philippian Jailer. Similar series can be told to explain communion, marriage, and funeral rituals. Telling and discussing these stories can focus family elders' attention onto the spiritual meaning of the ritual and away from arguments over validity, correct procedures, or the desired social results. Telling Bible stories during church rituals involves four objectives:

1. **Prioritize the spiritual meaning.** The family elders who participated in my study described baptism, confirmation, marriage, and funeral rituals in terms of the desired social results rather than on the rituals' commemoration of the love, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, the clergy must explain how the accomplishments (and promises) of Christ benefit Christian families in their current circumstances. For example, to explain the fate of the deceased's soul and the purpose of a church funeral, thereby comforting grieving families, clergy could select stories from a series which

candidates to recite. Asking candidates to tell and explain the stories will hopefully lessen the likelihood that candidates undergo a ritual only to obtain the certificate.

4. **Replace traditional rituals.** The family elders who participated in my study described how they sponsor traditional rituals to heal the sick, to welcome a new baby, to plant a new field, or to protect bathers at the river. These are times of anxiety when Christian families need reassurance that God, rather than the spirits, sends blessings and protects them from catastrophes. Telling the appropriate Bible stories (and praying together) during these times of anxiety not only comforts Christian families and educates their guests; it can also relieve the temptation to sponsor traditional rituals that communicate with the spirits. This resembles what Tippet (1967) called a *power encounter*, especially when the family elders are able to lead without the clergy. It is also similar to Wilson's (1991) claim that storytelling can be a social event where extended family and neighbors learn from a Christian family's faith.

Recommendation #4: Tell Bible Stories while Visiting Families in Their Homes and Fields

The clergy can clarify Christian spiritual beliefs while visiting individual families in their homes and fields. Visiting also allows the clergy to choose and prepare specific Bible stories that address the specific needs of the family that they are visiting. Terry (2002) called these kinds of stories "point of ministry stories." Visiting also allows family elders to ask specific questions raised by the Bible stories. Colgate (2008) recommended augmenting Bible stories with personal testimonies. The goal of telling Bible stories while visiting individual families has three objectives:

1. **Clarify the conflict.** The family elders who participated in my study used instructional folktales to explain the dangers of violating traditional rules that were once prescribed by the spirits. Therefore, the clergy can use Bible stories to explain the dangers of praying to the spirits and why Christians do not need to fear catastrophes caused by these spirits. In the same way, telling Bible stories while visiting the sick can help families understand the true spiritual causes of catastrophes, and how God uses catastrophes to bless faithful believers. Telling Bible stories can also help Christian families honor their elders without implying that the spirits still have power.
2. **Give biblical counsel while problems are still small.** The clergy who participated in my study complained that they often find out that families in their congregations are being married or divorced in the traditional law courts after the marriage or divorce is already final. These clergy want to learn about and provide biblical counsel before the cases end up in the traditional law courts. Just as family elders use bedtime stories, personal testimonies, and living stories to emphasize the consequences of violating traditional moral values, so the clergy can use Bible stories, personal testimonies, and living stories to describe God's ability to bless and protect people who obey His moral commandments, and the long term consequences of violating Christian moral commandments. When the clergy give biblical counsel, four issues need to be emphasized:

- a. ***Explain the origin and purpose.*** Because traditional sacred folktales describe the behaviors that first prompted the spirits to prescribe the rules, the clergy can also tell the Bible stories that describe the origins and reasons for God’s commandments and the punishments He demands. The clergy must be proactive about pointing out both the blessings and the curses.
 - b. ***Emphasize God’s continuity.*** Because several family elders expressed the belief that traditional rules only apply to descendants of certain ancestors, and only in certain geographic locations, the clergy must tell Bible stories that highlight two things: (a) because the attributes and character of God do not change, neither do His moral commandments; and (b) because God is omnipresent, His commands and His ability to enforce them do not change when His people move from one location to another.
 - c. ***Emphasize God’s power and care.*** Because family elders sometimes doubt that God cares, or will protect them if they violate a traditional rule, the clergy must tell Bible stories that emphasize that God never stops caring for people who serve Him, and that he always has the power to protect them from spirits who would attack them.
 - d. ***Emphasize repentance.*** Because family elders sometime believe that they can prevent the spirits from causing catastrophes by offering food or medicine, the clergy must tell Bible stories that emphasize that all humans need God’s grace and mercy, and that God offers forgiveness and restoration to sinners who genuinely repent. However, it is also important to emphasize that God does not accept the offerings of people who are not truly repentant.
3. **Explain the Holy Spirit’s help.** Because, as children, family elders were often frightened into obedience by the threat of ghosts who would attack them, they need to know that the Holy Spirit is present to give them wisdom and to help them do good things. However, most New Testament passages that describe how the Holy Spirit helps Christians resist temptation are found in the epistles. Therefore, the clergy must tell Old Testament stories that illustrate the Holy Spirit’s work. Telling stories about the Angel of the Lord, the judges, or prophets like Daniel can help, if the clergy can connect the Old Testament stories to the Book of Acts and the epistles.

Recommendations for Seminaries and Denominational Headquarters

In the previous section, I described the needs of family elders in rural Kalimantan, and how their clergy can equip family elders to teach Christian spiritual beliefs to their families. In this section, I will describe the needs of the clergy, and then recommend three ways seminaries, Bible colleges, and denominational headquarters can meet these needs.

The Needs of the Clergy and Church Elders

I have offered the clergy four recommendations to equip family elders to teach Christian beliefs to their families. However, most clergy were not taught how to implement these

recommendations. Most clergy were taught to teach simplified Bible stories to children and to preach topical sermons to adults. Therefore, most clergy will need specialized training and three types of curriculum:

1. **A chronological curriculum for weekly services.** The clergy who wish to experiment with a weekly storytelling Bible study need a list of stories that are arranged chronologically and a study guide that helps the clergy choose the most appropriate themes that best fit the community's apologetic and practical needs at the time.

McIlwain (2005), Slack & Terry (1994), Steffen & Terry (2007), and Terry (2002) all described chronological curricula. They recommend emphasizing certain themes for a beginning (or basic evangelism) track. Then they recommend repeating these same stories plus a few others, highlighting different themes as families grow spiritually. Koehler (2010) described another curriculum that is based on Bible characters and their problems rather than on chronology or theological themes.

However, these curricula are based on an assumption that the clergy can separate the audience into graded groups. In rural Kalimantan, it is not always possible to separate novice or nominal Christians from mature disciples. Therefore, the clergy must choose one or two themes that are most important for their audience at a given time. The clergy will also need to periodically add stories to address an occasional crisis, to answer specific questions, or to challenge specific misunderstandings. During the holiday seasons, the clergy will need to suspend the ordinary chronological curriculum or adapt those stories to explain the meaning of the holiday. Any storytelling curriculum for rural Kalimantan will need to highlight three clusters of themes:

- *The identity, attributes, and character of God* as opposed to the identity, attributes, and character of the sangiang-duato spirits.
- *The plan of redemption*, starting in Genesis and proceeding to Revelation, including the importance of blood sacrifices, faith, repentance, and God's grace.
- *Local issues* like the origin and goal of the spirits, the relationship between the living and the dead, the purpose of rituals, and the purposes of miracles. The godly use of authority may be another important local issue.

The family elders who participated in my study described the meaning of traditional rituals (and sacred folktales) in terms of the desired results. They described church rituals in a similar way. This focus on desired results also has implications for the ways a storytelling curriculum will be used. Koehler (2010) debated whether a curriculum should focus on theological themes or felt needs. I believe that an effective discussion of each story needs to include both theological themes and felt needs. Like Steffen (referred to by Koehler), I worry that the exclusive focus on felt needs will not clarify the essential spiritual beliefs. But like Koehler, I also worry that the exclusive focus on theological themes will lose an audience that assumes that the desired result is all that matters.

2. Collections of Bible Stories for Holidays and Rituals. In the previous section, I recommended that the clergy tell a series of Old Testament and New Testament stories about the prophetic origins of major church holidays. The clergy who do this will need a collection of what Slack & Terry (1994) and Terry (2002) called *combined stories* or *fast track* stories. Such a collection of stories for holidays and rituals should contain stories for the following kinds of events:

- The prophetic origins and outcomes of *church holidays* like Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and Ascension Day.
- The Old Testament origins of the *symbolic objects* that are used during church rituals like baptism, confirmation, and communion.
- Old Testament and New Testament stories that explain God's intent for *church rituals that are not prescribed in the Bible*. Examples of non-biblical church rituals are baby dedications, weddings, and funerals.
- Old Testament and New Testament stories that *redirect the mysticism* of traditional agricultural rituals, birth rituals, and funeral rituals away from the spirits and toward God.
- Old Testament and New Testament stories that *explain God's intent for possible new rituals* for peace making, praying for the sick, welcoming a new baby, and for agricultural events.

3. An Index of Stories for Counseling. In the previous section, I recommended that the clergy tell Bible stories while visiting the home and fields of family elders. During these visits, they may need to tell stories to encourage family members who are suffering from sickness, relational problems, or economic worries, or who are struggling with the temptation to worship the spirits. The clergy who do this will need an index of Bible stories that deal with these topics. I am using the word *index* because each Bible story may be used for a variety of practical applications. An index of Bible stories should contain the following categories:

- Stories that explain *God's involvement* in agriculture, famine, weather, natural resources, and natural disasters.
- Stories that explain *God's standard for human relationships* such as romance, marriage, child care, emotional problems, and conflict resolution.
- Stories that explain the various *causes of misfortune and blessing* (e.g. sickness, accidents, and healing).
- Stories that explain God's desires for *social relationships* (e.g. family economics, the blessings and curses of wealth, how to choose a good leader, the proper use of authority). These stories might also explain God's standards for tithing, business ethics, the treatment of strangers, and unhealthy dependencies.

Obviously, the same stories might appear in a chronological storytelling curriculum, a collection of stories for holidays and rituals, and an index of stories for counseling. However, each of these tools would focus on a different usage.

I believe that the seminary campus is an ideal place to draft, field test, and publish such a curriculum, because the Indonesian government expects seminaries and Bible colleges to both train clergy and to conduct and publish ministry related research, of which curriculum development and testing are parts. Therefore, in #5-7 below, I suggest three modifications to what seminaries and Bible colleges are already doing:

Recommendation #5: Offer Storytelling Courses or Add Storytelling Components to Existing Courses

I suspect that four courses are needed in order to train clergy in how to use Bible stories to teach Christian spiritual beliefs in the communities of rural Kalimantan. Three of these courses are already part of the official curriculum and only need a storytelling component. The other course could be offered as either an alternative chapel or as an elective course.

1. **A Storytelling Bible Study.** In this course, students would learn how to lead a storytelling Bible study. The instructor would model several methods for memorizing stories and leading discussions. Ideally, the course would meet at least once a week as an alternative chapel service so that students can participate for several semesters, and study a different book of the Bible each semester. However, an elective class could work as well.
2. **Storytelling for Counseling Purposes.** In this course, students would learn how to use Bible stories to counsel individuals and families during private conversations in their homes and fields. Class materials could combine Bible stories and case studies. Because pastoral counseling is already a required class, adding a Bible storytelling component would require only minor modifications.
3. **Storytelling and Contextualized Rituals.** In this class, students would learn how to use Bible stories to explain the meaning of church holidays and church rituals, to satisfy the fears that motivate traditional rituals, to incorporate storytelling into existing church rituals, and to design new rituals to replace certain traditional rituals (e.g. a baby dedication ritual to replace the traditional nyorap ritual, or prayers for the fields to replace traditional agricultural rituals). Because contextualization is already a required class, adding a Bible storytelling component would require only minor modifications.
4. **Storytelling and Apologetics.** In this class, students would learn how to use Bible stories to challenge specific non-biblical spiritual beliefs that are common in rural Kalimantan. Students would identify Bible stories that explain essential Christian beliefs and how these beliefs differ from traditional beliefs and the beliefs of other religions. Special attention would be given to Bible stories that illustrate the difference between God and the spirits, the Trinity, and relationships between living human and the dead. Because

both Apologetics and Local Religions are already required classes, adding a Bible storytelling component to either class would require only minor modifications.

Recommendation #6: Hold Periodic Training Workshops

Just as the seminary students need specialized training and a curriculum, existing clergy, religion teachers, and their spouses need the same training and curriculum. I recommend that seminaries provide annual retreats or in-service training workshops for seminary alumni, their spouses, and lay elders. Lee (2005), Bowman (2010), Koehler (2010), and Stahl & Stahl (2013) described similar in-service training for clergy and literacy teachers in the Philippines and India. The seminary could offer modular versions of the same courses offered to seminary students.

Recommendation #7: Test and Publish Storytelling Curriculum

Because seminaries receive accreditation ratings based on their research and scholarly publications, the seminary campus is an ideal place to develop, test, and publish a curriculum for a weekly storytelling Bible study. It is also an ideal place to compile collections of Bible stories for holidays and church rituals, and an index of Bible stories for counseling purposes. The seminary is also an ideal place to involve students and staff in experiments using this curriculum in the surrounding rural villages, and to publish the findings.

Recommendations for Parachurch Organizations

In recent years, several parachurch organizations have been translating relatively small collections of Bible stories into the vernacular language communities in Kalimantan. As Brown (2004), Franklin (2005), Arlund (2013), Smith (2013), and Stahl & Stahl (2013) suggested, translation methods vary widely. The number of stories, and the length of stories, depend on how often and how long the organizations have access to a particular community. These organizations have assumed that family elders will automatically retell the stories they hear, know how to interpret them, and know how to apply them to a variety of everyday problems. However, this study indicates, in #8-9 below, a need for these organizations to expand their ministries in two ways:

Recommendation #8: Larger Collections of Stories and Varied Methods

Christian family elders in rural Kalimantan need a much larger repertoire of Bible stories, and more purposes for which these stories can be told. Family elders need help recognizing the spiritual beliefs illustrated by each story. Earlier I made recommendations for how the clergy can enlarge this repertoire, expand the purposes for which family elders use Bible stories, and ensure that family elders understand the Christian spiritual beliefs illustrated in these stories. I also

made recommendations for how seminaries can train storytelling clergy and publish a master curriculum. However, the seminaries will need help choosing stories, designing curriculum, and envisioning new methods for using Bible stories for all the purposes that I have described above. Once the curriculum has been designed, the seminaries will need help translating it into the languages spoken in the communities of rural Kalimantan.

Recommendation #9: Empower Seminaries to Train Clergy

In addition to facilitating the translation of more Bible stories, I recommend that parachurch organizations assign some of their personnel to assist seminaries in adding a Bible storytelling component to their existing courses and developing a weekly chronological Bible storytelling elective. This will involve training faculty, students, and alumni to design and conduct research experiments related to the curriculum design and the teaching methods I described earlier.

Summary

In this article, I have made nine recommendations for expanding the repertoire and uses of Bible stories for explaining Christian spiritual beliefs in communities in rural Kalimantan. Each recommendation involves ongoing, long term experiments in curriculum design, training storytelling clergy, and the empowering of family elders to both learn and transmit biblical spiritual beliefs to their own families. Transmitting biblical spiritual beliefs involves both methods and content. The methods without the content can lead to false doctrine. Content without methods also leads to misunderstanding basic Christian spiritual beliefs. If implemented, these nine recommendations will hopefully lead to more effective evangelism and discipleship of rural congregations.

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