

# Storying isn't just for those who can't read

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People often ask us what we do. We've learned to be simple in our response, so we most often say, "We tell stories." Then people ask us more questions, and as they do, the conversation almost always turns to illiteracy and the need for ways to reach the illiterate in ways that they can understand and reproduce. It's a good topic, but it totally ignores much of the subject. What about the people who can read, who are highly educated, but still prefer to learn using stories? We live among the IT professionals in our country. Many of the Christians among them have ignored story telling because they just don't see a need for the strategy among "literate" people. Some feel that by simply telling stories, they are downplaying the years, struggles, and resources spent getting a good education. Sometimes I've wondered if they are right. Then, I meet people like "Nadia." Nadia was born a Muslim and works for one of the largest IT companies in the world in a high position. She has a masters degree, has perfect English, and has continually progressed in her career over the years. She is intelligent, and thinks for herself. As a young woman, she defied her culture and married the man she loved, who happened to be a Christian. Over the years she has attended church with him and tried to understand what he believes and why. She sees that in the midst of trials, he has an underlying peace that she just can't grasp. When I invited her to our storying group, she was willing to try anything to understand the Bible more---reading it just didn't make sense to her. As we told the first story about Jesus healing the demon-possessed man and transforming his life, her eyes lit up with understanding. When we asked the questions after the story, she understood immediately what story telling is all about. We asked, "How will you remember this story?" She said, "I'll tell it!" She already had in mind who she needed to tell it to. As weeks passed and she learned more through the chronological stories, she said, "Finally, I am beginning to understand what the Bible is about." She was transferred to the US just as we were finishing the Old Testament stories. The last night she came to our house, she asked us to tell her the rest of the stories that night before she left, because she didn't want to miss out on understanding the Bible. So for the next two hours, she sat enthralled as we told the stories of Jesus, of his death, resurrection, and giving of the Holy Spirit. She'd stop us and ask questions, then listen patiently as we continued the stories. At the end she said, "I've been going to church for years, and no one has ever told me these things. I've learned more in these past few weeks than I have in years of going to church." Many of our Christian brothers and sisters in the IT industry would have said that Nadia needed an apologetics book, a seminar, or a Bible correspondence course. As a humble, genuine seeker, what she really needed was the Bible presented in a clear, simple, way. She needed to know that it wasn't just another program or process (the things she is surrounded with every day), but that it was different; a relational, true story that could transform her life.