

# Welcoming Abundance: Inspiring Engagement and Generosity through Storytelling



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## **A Model: Putting the Story Together**

1. Who is the audience?
  - a. You want to be as specific as possible here
  - b. Are you storytelling within your congregation or organization? Who are the groups or subgroups (e.g. board, team leaders, staff, whole congregation, organizational stakeholders, etc.)?
  - c. Are you storytelling to outsiders who you are hoping to bring in (e.g. potential members, funders, partners, clients, neighbors)?
2. What is the connection?
  - a. Identify the link between the audience and your organization and/or message
  - b. Listeners like to see themselves in relationship to the story's protagonist (can be a person, place, thing, individual, group of individuals)
3. What is the conflict?
  - a. Show the need that your church/organization/donor can change
  - b. Why are you and/or your audience uniquely situated to respond to the challenge in front of you?
4. What is the resolution?
  - a. How was the conflict/problem/need solved? Was it the result of a new program, mission focus, facility re-purpose, community partnership, donation/funding support, a new champion, etc.?
  - b. Be sure to connect the dots for the audience. Be specific and tie the successful resolution of the problem to an identifiable action.
5. What is your Call to Action (CTA)?
  - a. Tell your listeners what to do next: give, pledge, volunteer, pray, advocate, re-tell the story.
  - b. Be explicit about your desired outcome and how the audience can make that happen.

## 7 Tips for Memorable Storytelling

1. **Know your audience.** Your audience will help you set the tone for your storytelling. The same story can be told in different ways for different audiences. Make sure the story and the tone are appropriate for the audience you have.
2. **Use the story to form connections** and bring people into relationship with you/the organization/the ministry/the program.
3. **Get creative with the storyteller(s).** Don't overlook your membership/your clients/your neighbors/children & youth/etc.
4. **Show, don't tell.** Paint a complete picture for your audience; draw listeners in with details focused on an experience and/or feeling(s).
5. **Inspire action.** Be explicit and connect the dots for your listeners; tell your audience exactly what you want them to do after hearing the story.
6. **Tell, re-tell, and tell again.** Just because you are sick of telling a story, doesn't mean that it has sunk into the heart of your audience.
7. **A great story is more than just memorable,** it can become integral to your community's identity.

### **If It's Not a Story, Then What Is It? (reference: *Stories Worth Telling: A Guide to Strategic and Sustainable Nonprofit Storytelling*)**

The Meyer Foundation and Georgetown University conducted a comprehensive research project on storytelling and nonprofit organizations. Their research showed that organizations often identify content for their websites, social media postings, or print materials as stories when, in reality, the content center on event recaps, or programmatic profiles. How much of your websites or printed materials contain stories? The recommendation from their report "Stories Worth Telling," recommends five building blocks of compelling stories that, when experienced comprehensively, can achieve the goal of conveying transformation, authenticity, and human emotions. These building blocks include an effective character, chronicle something that happens, authenticity (or, as stated above, show don't tell), convey emotion, and finally capture the audience's attention.

Take a moment to review your recent printed newsletter or bulletin? Or, peruse your website? How many "stories" are being told to help inform visitors who you are and what your community of faith believe?

### **Resources for Storytelling and Stewardship: Disciples Partners**

National Benevolent Association Social Enterprise Resource Bank:  
[www.nbacares.org/care-resources/social-enterprise](http://www.nbacares.org/care-resources/social-enterprise)

Disciples Church Extension Fund capital fundraising support:  
[www.disciplescef.org/fundraise](http://www.disciplescef.org/fundraise)

Center for Faith and Giving:  
[www.centerforfaithandgiving.org](http://www.centerforfaithandgiving.org)

Christian Church Foundation:  
[www.christianchurchfoundation.org](http://www.christianchurchfoundation.org)

### **Resources for Storytelling and Stewardship: Beyond the Church**

The Storytelling Nonprofit (blog, YouTube videos, email resources):  
[www.thestorytellingnonprofit.com](http://www.thestorytellingnonprofit.com)

Movie Mondays (free weekly fundraising video):  
[www.moviemondays.com](http://www.moviemondays.com)

Nonprofit Marketing Guide (blog, webinars, Pinterest):  
[www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com](http://www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com)

Meyer Foundation, *Stories Worth Telling: A Guide to Strategic and Sustainable Nonprofit Storytelling*. [www.meyerfoundation.org](http://www.meyerfoundation.org)