

Shaped by the Story: Helping Students Encounter God in a New Way

By Michael Novelli Reviewed by Jennie Warkentine

Novelli's 2008 book focuses on a new way to share the story of the Bible—not just Bible stories. Novelli has discovered and developed a method he calls “storying”. Storying is “a unique dialogue-centered approach to teaching the Bible, guided by imaginative listening, creative retellings, and interactive discussions, storying inspires participants to find themselves in God’s Story”. Storying is also a sequential telling of Bible stories followed by a time of review and dialogue.

The book begins with four chapters about Novelli’s own journey and experience with storying, and how it has impacted his own youth group. His narrative is sprinkled with short personal reflections from other youth pastors and lay leaders who reflect positively on experiences with storying. The following seven chapters cover the whys and hows of storying. These chapters begin with statistics on literacy, media and a rationale for the storying method. The next few chapters cover the purpose of storying, desired outcomes of storying, as well as common questions and answers about storying. Novelli goes on to talk about different types of learners (visual, auditory, and physical/kinesthetic) and different types of thinkers (reflective, practical, creative, and conceptual). The last chapters of the book explain how to conduct a storying session: what elements should be present, how it should flow, how to create the proper setting, what questions to ask, as well as ideas for retelling the bible stories.

The storying method is a fresh new idea for how to do youth group. This book is packed full of helpful information and makes a great case for storying. It has many strong real-life examples of how storying has worked. It also includes many very helpful ideas of what to say and how to implement each section of the storying model. There is an extensive appendix section that has a wealth of pointers to prepare for lessons and resources for scripts, books further explaining storying, and sample lessons. The book also contains a DVD with resources to experience storying and to train others/explain storying.