

BIBLE STORYING TO ROMAN CATHOLICS

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WORLDVIEW ISSUES are often complex in that they are a deeply interrelated mixture of culture, religion, personal experience, fear of the unknown, and tradition of the society as handed down by the elders and enforced by peer pressure, religious leaders, and others in authority.

The greatest issues are ignorance of biblical truth, fear of the unknown (spirit world & death), and compliance with tradition (cultural and religious) as it is enforced by the society (criticism, persecution, threats of death).

The Roman Catholic communicant is at once a prisoner of society in that the Church permeates the very fabric of society in the rituals of life as well as the observance of worship and festivals. For most, to be a member of that society is to be Catholic. The Church provides the necessary structure and instruction for all of life's needs, as well as supplying the personnel to minister to these needs whether confessional, liturgical or educational. In short, the communicant is enveloped in a cocoon supplied by the church, which for the most part provides a level of satisfaction, and stability, which makes the Catholic difficult to approach and change their belief.

There are inherent fears that many Catholics harbor because of an unrepressed fear of the spirit world—a basic animism that underlies their religion and is reinforced by common superstitions, which can exist because of common Church teachings and rituals. For some the fear of excommunication (which implies loss of salvation through the Church and eternal damnation) is a powerful deterrent to evangelical conversion.

In ignorance of biblical truth the Catholic lives in a world in which the Church supplies all the needed religious knowledge and grace to cover one's sin and eventually to provide the avenue for salvation through a process of confession, works (attending Mass in which one partakes in the body of Christ and thus receives grace, and providing for certain prayers for the dead), and a final purification for unconfessed sins in purgatory before moving on to the blessed state. The Catholic worships out of duty and out of need to receive grace through the Mass.

The carryover of the old Babylonian Queen of Heaven concept and applied to Mary along with the belief in her immaculate conception (conceived without original sin) and her role as "Mother of God" qualifies her to be the intercessor between the believer and Jesus and God for the Catholic's needs in this life. Prayer then is directed to Mary who is expected to carry it before Jesus and the Father and exert her influence upon them to respond favorably. The story of Mary is a bridge to the Catholic but raises many difficulties when they hear the biblical account and the larger perspective of Christ's birth and Mary's other children, and her doubting of Jesus' sanity when she went to get him along with Jesus' brothers. So that story poses both bridges and barriers but needs to be told as needed to set the truth before RC's. Dealing with the reality of who Mary really was is comparable to dealing with the Sonship of Jesus with Muslims.

Along with adoration of Mary there are certain other saints who are implored for help in times of need. To combat this we cover the prayer teachings of Jesus initially in the evangelism track and more fully when discipling believers from an RC background.

Works are private in the act of saying the rosary or at least fingering the rosary beads, crossing oneself at appropriate times when passing a church or holy place, going to confession, and in acts of penance as payment for one's sin or to cause God to have pity upon the penitent and thus grant soon boon or favor. Works are public in attending Mass and going on pilgrimages, participating in public acts of penance, contributing to and participating in celebrations of Mary and the local patron saints.

Salvation then is not dependent upon one's personal faith in Jesus as Savior, but upon one's faithful standing in the Church. Sins are classified as those leading to death (mortal) and those

leading only to punishment (venial). Sin can be forgiven when confessed to the priest who is the intercessor. The priest may decide appropriate penance for sin.

A general attitude still prevails in many places that only a properly qualified religious instructor may teach or interpret the Bible. Many popularly held Church teachings contradict the Bible and its clear message of salvation through the substitutionary death of Christ once and for all, and the need for faith in that death to provide the only salvation for the sinner.

The Catholic does recognize the Bible as God's Word and as a general rule has some understanding of God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In many societies the Catholic Church has simply imposed its teachings over the existing animistic beliefs of a people and the saints substituted for the benevolent spirits. Because of this it is common to find a deep vein of superstition immediately under a thin veneer of "Christianity." Catholic ritual is a powerful attraction to those coming from an animistic background as it appears to dispense "power" and provides a framework in which one feels secure.

Conformity and compliance is enforced by threat of excommunication from the Church and thereby losing one's avenue of salvation.

The average Roman Catholic has little true knowledge of the doctrine of their religion. They are unsure or lacking of assurance about salvation, and most have a strong sense of devotion to the church and icons and a desire to belong or be included in the family of God.



Where to begin when evangelizing a Roman Catholic? If the Catholic is satisfied with their religion and its structure, then it is difficult to provoke a change unless certain things are considered. These are common areas of need among most Catholics, which can be addressed through a patient presentation of the Bible's message of God's plan of redemption. It is generally unproductive to attempt to argue a Catholic out of their beliefs and into an evangelical position. Even in the presentation of the story of Mary it is best not to debate but simply to present what the Bible says. Assurance of salvation and understanding that salvation comes only from personal faith in Christ and not through one's works are issues needing constant emphasis.

1. Bible Storying among Roman Catholics begins first with overcoming their ignorance of what the Bible teaches—first exposing them to its holistic message through the stories and other scripture references, and then providing opportunity and direction for discovering the real truths leading to salvation and assurance of eternal life in the stories.
2. The Catholic has been taught that only a priest can properly understand the Bible and interpret it for parishioners. So the storying process is an introduction to a new view and understanding of God's Word. This calls for a patient progress through the background foundational Old Testament stories, which point to the story of Jesus.
3. For many Catholics a careful and thorough exploration of God's sovereignty over the Spirit World is essential to begin undermining their animistic beliefs, which they fall back on when their "Christian" faith fails them. The stories of Jesus' victory over the evil spirits in the Gospels stories then can serve to liberate Catholics from their fears of the unseen spirit world. Peer pressure and their culture will attempt to hold them in this belief and practice.
4. Old Testament stories about sin and the sacrifices for sin are generally a bridge to begin dealing with their concept of religion and salvation through the church.
5. Some stories may be needed which deal with the consequences of sin for the individual and his family and descendants, even after there is forgiveness for the act of sin. (Moses' disobedience in striking the rock, the effect of David's sin on his sons and descendants, King Saul's repeated disobedience of God's directives and Law.)
6. While the Gospel stories of Jesus are very attractive to the RC and usually well received by them, it is still best to begin with the foundational Old Testament stories before moving to the stories of Jesus. (There may be some circumstances where either people are open and

ready to profess faith in Jesus or there is need to move them from following the Jesus of delivery or healing to know the Jesus of salvation. Discipling then should include a review of Old Testament stories to teach about sin, judgment, and danger of falling back into sin. These stories give a proper perspective to the stories of Jesus and why he had to die for our sins as a substitute sacrifice.)

7. Jesus' teachings about his being the one to forgive sin, being the source of living water, the bread that satisfies, the one who is more powerful than evil spirits help to put him in a proper perspective as related to Mary. After professing faith in Christ alone as Savior their dependence upon Mary should diminish, though still holding her in deep respect.
8. The Passion story of Jesus is usually very deeply moving for the Catholic, especially the suffering from mocking, rejection and flogging, and crucifixion, less so the resurrection and ascension.
9. For many it has been helpful to go to one or more lessons in Hebrews to cover the role of Jesus as the true high priest, and his death as the sufficient sacrifice never to be repeated.
10. Many Catholics are interested in the life rituals such as circumcision, marriages, and the parables connected with them. These are bridges, especially for the women.
11. To leave the Catholic Church is a leap of faith as the new believer "loses" his belief in Catholic salvation through the Church in exchange for true salvation through a personal faith in Christ. For many this is easier if a group is involved rather than one person being singled out.
12. Other issues can cloud the decision process such as lack of burial places when the only cemetery is associated with the Catholic Church; rejection by families when one becomes an evangelical, difficulty in finding marriage partners for believers.
13. Superstition and amulets may continue to be problems. Expect negative restructuring to occur—reinterpreting biblical truth to support pre-existing beliefs, especially in regard to Mary.
14. Religious festivals and pageants that involve a whole community or country along with the celebration activities (moral and immoral) will continue to be a problem for many. This is usually dealt with best in discipling lessons, which can include a review of Old, Testament festivals.
15. Idolatry is an ever present danger in that it breaks God's Laws against having other gods before him and making of images as it looks to manmade idols instead of the Living God for help. Some of the idol worship stories may be needed—Jeremiah 44.
16. A culturally satisfying worship service as soon as possible is generally needed to provide assurance and structure the RC is accustomed to. Storying sessions with Catholics will likely need to involve some worship at an early time (as many will seek it and expect it—so it is a bridge) which can begin as worship songs and scripture readings or responsive recitations, and even some short written or recited confessional prayers.
17. Provision of a religious authority is needed to fill the role formerly occupied by the parish priest. The storyer will temporarily fill this role in the eyes of the seeker who needs to be pointed to God's Word as the true written authority. Discipleship then must focus on Jesus as the true living "authority" as one learns to obey Jesus in all things with the help of the Holy Spirit.
18. Immediate emphasis for believers upon daily discipleship activities as Bible reading or recalling scripture (for oral communicators) along with meditation and prayer are essential to displace a desire for works and to strengthen the personal relationship with Christ.
19. RC's need to understand that no manner of self-righteous "religiosity" will get them into heaven. They need to understand from the Old Testament that the sacrificial system did not work because it became corrupted and misused, the Law (covenant) system did not work as people flagrantly broke the laws and ignored them, the judge system did not work as the

people would quickly fall back into sin and God's judgment when the judge died, the kingdom did not work as the kings led the people into even greater sin, the prophet system did not work as the prophets were ignored and some prophets were false and caused further sin, the priest system did not work as priests, too, fell into sin and led others into sin (see Malachi 1:6-2:9. In Jesus' day the religious leaders (Sadducees) did not even believe in the resurrection (Matthew 16:6; Acts 23:8, and were jealous Acts 5:17), their office had become a political office. Others who were righteous like the Pharisees counted on their works to gain entrance into the kingdom of God, but their righteousness was filled with self-pride and boasting (Luke 18:9-14), tradition of the elders and condemnation of those who didn't follow the traditions, and a flagrant bending of the intent of the Law to suit their personal greed (Mark 7:8-23).

20. Only a relationship with the Father through Jesus does work. It is the exclusive way to the Father and forgiveness of sin.
21. The RC confession and absolution system has made it easy for the RC to sin and seek easy forgiveness, leaving them free to sin again knowing that it can easily be confessed and forgiven by the system. There may be little sense of moral rectitude and personal responsibility in this system.
22. In some situations one or more persecution stories may be needed to give assurance to the seeker that God does care and can deliver or strengthen the believer when persecuted.

These issues then will help to select needed stories to inform about a better way to salvation and to confront beliefs and practices which hinder real salvation and assurance of eternal life. The basic framework of Core Bible Stories which cover the spiritual truths leading to salvation can be used as a beginning point in planning a storying curriculum. Many of the above issues are also included in these core evangelism stories but will need to be emphasized in the pre-story dialog and post-story dialog as themes. There will be a tension existing in that to fully cover all these issues can lead to an impractically long storying curriculum. If a priority list of issues and truths cannot be adequately worked out in advance, then it will be necessary to provide an overly inclusive list of stories and lessons, teach them and see which are not issues or redundant, or to provide what is deemed to be basic and most practical and then see where there are unanswered questions or difficulty in understanding or reluctance to consider the spiritual truths leading to salvation. Then revise your storying curriculum and move on, making any needed adjustments, deleting stories or adding them in future sessions. There is always the possibility of stopping and going back and inserting new stories when needed, then when understanding is apparent, pick up the story flow again. For strictly oral communicators it is best to keep things in a chronological order and to give attention to linking stories carefully and showing how what happened earlier relates to what happened later in the stories—family generations of descendants, prophecy and fulfillment, promises and answers, etc.



Basic Bible Truths Leading To Salvation

1. God is one God, Sovereign, Creating, Present and Acting in history.
2. God is all-powerful, all knowing, the source of all grace and provision for all a person's needs.
3. God communicates with people by His Word. He is faithful to his Word.
4. God loves all people and wants fellowship with them.
5. God is holy (separate from His creation), righteous in all He says and does, hating sin.
6. God's righteous nature demands that all sin be punished by death that is eternal punishment (separation from God).
7. People are accountable to God for all they say and do, and are held accountable for obeying all that God asks people to do or not do.
8. All people are sinners by inherited nature (birth) and by freewill choice, and are separated from God by their sin.
9. People can do nothing to save themselves from God's judgment and ultimate punishment for their sin.
10. One can approach (have fellowship with) God only through the means God has provided through a perfect (sinless and acceptable) substitute sacrifice (Promised Anointed One who suffered and died in our place).
11. Jesus the Son of God (the Promised Anointed One come from God) is the only perfect sacrifice for sin offered once and for all people for all time.
12. Salvation for all people involves turning (repenting) from one's sin, seeking God's mercy in forgiveness of sin and trusting through faith God's provision for salvation by believing on Jesus as the only Savior from eternal punishment for sin.

PROPOSED INCLUSIVE EVANGELISM STORY LIST FOR ROMAN CATHOLICS

1. *Characteristics of God*—The RC already knows about God but may not have conceptualized or verbalized the characteristics of God. There is obviously not a story where these are listed as such. So we can begin with a compiled narrative, which includes biblical references to the characteristics which are then taught and reinforced in the post-story dialog. The characteristics should be stated simply for memory but later explored in greater detail in following stories, which illustrate them.
2. *Creation of the Spirit World*—The primary focus of this story is the sovereignty of God over the unseen spirit world. The story also can reinforce the righteousness of God who created the spirits like himself, without sin, the grace of God in creation of Lucifer, and the judgment of God in judging the sin of Satan and the disobedient angels and promise of eternal punishment for the angels that sinned.
3. *Creation of man and woman/disobedience of Adam & Eve*—There is less need to focus on the creation story as such except that God created man in his image, gave man a work to do and a command to obey, man disobeyed God who judged the sin, the effect of sin was to bring alienation (separation) from God, suffering and ultimately death.
4. *Cain & Abel*—The intent to worship was good. Though each brother brought different offerings which may have been significant, Cain's disobedience after hearing God's warning and killing his brother brought God's judgment of his sin and alienation, what is in the heart of the worshiper is important—1 John 3:12 & Hebrews 11:4. Note that Eve praised God for giving her a son and later praised God again when God gave her another son (Seth) to replace Abel whom Cain killed.
5. *The Flood*—This story has many themes: God's righteousness was offended by the lives of the people, God saw their sinfulness and judged it. God extended grace to Noah by revealing the judgment that was coming and how to save his family and the animals. Noah was righteous in his day, walking with God, and obeying God's every command. Sin brings judgment and punishment if there is no repentance, obedience brings life when one obeys God's gift of grace. God's promise never to destroy the earth again by water, warning about blood and the value of life.
6. *God's promise to Abraham, God provided the substitute sacrifice*—From an idol-worshiping family (Joshua 24:2) God called Abraham to a land God promised to give him, to make his name great with many descendants, and through Abraham to bless all people. In God's time he gave Abraham and Sarah a son. God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son, his only son. Abraham trusted God to save his son's life; at the sacrifice God provided a substitute ram for the sacrifice. Story=call, promise, announcement by three visitors, birth at promised time, & testing.
7. *Moses—God provided a deliverer*—Begin with God's prophecy to Abraham (Genesis 15:12-16), summary of transition: story began to happen in days of grandson Jacob when Joseph taken to Egypt, Jacob and sons go to live in Egypt, new king and enslavement, God called Moses, revealed his Holy Name, sent to Egypt to deliver the Israelites from slavery.
8. *The Passover and deliverance as promised*—Pharaoh's heart hardened, final judgment with salvation only by the mark of blood, Moses the Savior who obeyed God and delivered the Israelites through the sea to freedom.
9. *God's Holy Law*—Abraham's descendants to be a holy people, a nation of priests (righteous before God and representing God to man), Ten Commandments to define sin.
10. *Golden calf and broken law*—God displeased with idolatry of people, God's judgment and punishment of idolatry.

11. *The blood sacrifice for sin, a priest as intercessor for the sinner*—The sacrifice to be without blemish, its blood to be shed for the sin of the sinner to cover the sin. Leviticus 17:6-9.
 12. *God's grace and judgment*—God provided food & water for the people, when they sinned by grumbling God punished their sin but provided a way to escape if they obeyed—Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 78:17-31.
 13. *Joshua*—warning about turning from God, promise of the people—Joshua 23:1-11, 14-24:1, 14-27.
 14. *Judges*—Judges 2:6-19 failure and judgment/a deliverer provided; Story of Gideon Judges 6-7.
 15. *Failure of the kings: David*—Failure of Saul to fully obey God, David a man after God's own heart, anointing of David—failure of David: sin of covetousness, adultery, and murder—confronting, confession, effect of sin on David's family—2 Samuel 12:18; 13:28-29; 16:21-22; 18^o14-15; 1 Kings 2:23-25.
 16. *Failure of the kings: Solomon*—God greatly blessed Solomon (2 Chronicles 1); God's promise and warning) 2 Chronicles 7:11-22, Solomon failed to fully obey God (see Deu 17:14-20; 1 Kings 11:1-13)
 17. *Failure of the kings: Ahab & Jezebel*— the kingdom divided, golden idols (1 Kings 12:25-33), failure of the kings who led people to sin (1 Kings 16:30-33)/Elijah the prophet to call people back to God (1 Kings 17:1; 18^o15-46).
 18. *Failure of the prophets*—Micaiah & false prophets of Israel (2 Chronicles 18), Jeremiah's warning (Jeremiah 23:9-32; Eze 22:28; Zephaniah 3:4)
 19. *Failure of the priests*—Malachi 2:1-9; Jer 5:31; Eze 22; 26; Hosea 6:9; Micah 3:11
 20. *Failure of the elders*—Jeremiah 22:27; Ezekiel 8:1-18
 21. *Promise of a Savior*—one to suffer for our sins (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:2 & 42:1; 53)
 22. *Birth of Jesus according to prophecy*—Announcement to Mary and Joseph, to the shepherds, visit of Wise Men and their prophetic gifts: gold for a king, incense for a priest, and myrrh for one who was to suffer and die.
 23. *Baptism and testing of Jesus*—Testimony of John, the Holy Spirit, honored by God the Father from heaven, Jesus obeyed God in testing by Satan (Deu 8:3; 6:13; 6:16; Heb 2:14; 4:15-16).
 24. *Jesus and Nicodemus*—You must be born of the Spirit to enter the kingdom of heaven
 25. *Jesus the one to forgive sin*—Paralyzed man & four friends (Mark 2:1-12), or woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50)
 26. *Jesus the bread from heaven*—Feeding multitude, people were like sheep with no shepherd (Mark 6:30-44), Jesus is the bread come down from heaven (John 6:25-51)
 27. *Jesus is Lord of nature*—Calming the storm on the sea (Mark 4:35-41), Jesus asked his disciples who they thought he was—Luke 9:18-26.
 28. *Jesus ruled over evil spirits*—Man in synagogue (Mark 1:21-28), woman afflicted by Satan (Luke 13:10-17), Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20)
- Note:* There is often advantage in using an enriched composite story—that is, one that is a composite of several accounts in which slightly different details are given in each account. If this is confusing to semi literates who are trying to follow in their Bibles, don't do it.
29. *Jesus healed those with faith*—Leper (Mark 2:40-45; Luke 17:11-19), woman with issue of blood (Mark 5:24-34), Bartimaeus (Luke 18:35-43).
 30. *Jesus is Lord of life and death*—Lazarus (John 11:1-53)
 31. *Parable of the Soils*—Rejection and Receptive hearts (Isaiah 53:3; Luke 4:14-30; Mark 4:1-20; John 1:11-12; Matthew 21:33-44.)
 32. *Banquet parable*—The refused invitation (Luke 14:15-24).

33. *What it costs to follow Jesus*—Cost of discipleship (Luke 18:18-30), rich fool (Luke 12:16-21)
34. *Parable of Rich Man and Lazarus*—The warning ignored (Luke 16:19-31, John 5:45-47)
35. *Last Supper*—Going to prepare a place for believers (Luke 22:7-24; John 13:4-14:21)
36. Jesus prayed for God's will to be done—John 17:1-26; Mark 14:32-40 & Betrayal by Judas (Luke 22:1-6; Matthew 26:47-56).
37. *Accusation and condemnation*—I am the Son of God (Matthew 26:57-68), I am a king (John 18:28-19:16)
38. *Crucifixion*— Jesus prays for his accusers, decisions for and against Jesus (Luke 23:32-43).
39. *Resurrection*—Women come to the tomb, disciples on road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), Thomas (John 20:19-29)
40. *Jesus is the true High Priest who shed his own blood*—Hebrews 9-10
41. *Jesus is the shepherd who knows his sheep*—Parable of Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7), Jesus the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-16), Isaiah 40:11.
42. *Repent & return to the Father*—Parable of Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32).
43. *Salvation in no other name*—What must we do to be saved? (Acts 2:14-41)
 - a. *Spiritual receptivity*—Romans 10:9
 - b. *Possible for all*—Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13
 - c. *God's desire*—1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9
 - d. *God's provision*—John 3:16
44. *Jesus is coming again to receive his own and judge sinners*—1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1-8; 22:1-5.

This is a suggested list of stories that more or less covers the Bible truths leading to salvation and also addresses some of the common worldview issues of Catholics. The storyer is not bound to follow this list. There are many possible substitutions of stories and variations to emphasize themes (truths, issues, points) in the stories that are needed by your people. This list may be longer than what you need. For others it may not include enough stories such as those emphasizing faith and God's care in facing persecution.

There is a fine line between attacking a belief and confronting error or ignorance in belief by presenting information related to belief or error. The purpose of the storyer is to present in a culturally compatible and effective manner the stories from God's Word, which can speak to the spiritual, need in the heart of the listener. It is best not to debate in direct apologetics but to help listeners to draw out (discover) the truths for themselves and make the needed judgment of what is the truth. There is need for gentle guiding to do this in the storying session. The pre-story dialog is to sensitize the listeners for the truths in the stories. The post-story dialog is to discover these truths, to help in internalizing them by positioning the listener in the story or relating them to it, and to help listeners "try on" the truths in the stories as they consider how to apply them to their spiritual life.