



Course 3, Session 2 Student Notes: The Power of Story

How Truth Travels Best

Big Idea: A story walks through the gate that a direct pitch hits as a wall. People are moved by stories, not by lists of features.

How to use these notes. These are yours to study on your own, before or after the session. Read each section slowly. Under every principle there is a **Notes** space to write what stands out to you, and a **Reflect** question to answer honestly in writing. Keep your Bible nearby. Take about 30 minutes, and end in prayer. Bring your notes and questions to the group.

Open in Prayer

Before you begin, pray this simple prayer, or your own: "Father, You taught the deepest truths through stories. Teach me to tell honest stories that carry good to the people I serve. Open my eyes to the true stories already around me. Amen."

The Scripture for This Session

Read these slowly, out loud if you can:

- **2 Samuel 12:7**, "And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man." (Read the whole story in 2 Samuel 12:1 to 7, which we study below.)
- **Matthew 13:34**, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them."

Reflect: Think of an ad, a sermon, or a moment that genuinely moved you. Was it a list of facts, or was it a story? Why do you think that is?

The Big Picture

You already know something in your bones that you may never have used on purpose: human beings are wired for story. We forget facts and figures within minutes, but we remember stories for a lifetime. Tell someone

your product has fourteen features and their eyes glaze over. Tell them about a person just like them who was stuck, and then found a way through, and they lean in.

Last session you got clear on the one specific person you serve. Tonight we learn the most effective way to actually reach that person. Marketing done God's way is telling the truth about something good, and the oldest, strongest carrier of truth is a story. Over this session we will look at four truths about story, then watch a prophet named Nathan use a single story to reach a king no argument could touch. Read each one, write your notes, and answer the reflection.

Principle 1: Facts Inform, but Stories Move.

Here is why a story works when a direct pitch fails. A direct claim raises a wall. The moment you say "I am the best, buy from me," the listener's defenses go up and they start arguing in their head. But a story slips past those defenses. When you tell a story, the listener stops defending and starts identifying. They put themselves inside it. They feel the problem and taste the resolution as if it were their own.

That is the difference between informing and moving. Information asks the mind to evaluate. A story invites the whole person to step in and experience. If you want your honest message to land and not just be filed away, wrap it in a story. A story does not push against the wall, it walks right through the gate.

Reflect: Where are you marketing with facts and features when a story would land deeper? What is one true story you could tell instead?

Notes:

Principle 2: Make the Customer the Hero and Yourself the Guide.

Notice who the hero of your story should be. It is not you. The mistake most businesses make is casting themselves as the hero: look how great we are, look at our awards. But the customer does not want to hear about your heroics. They want to see themselves win.

So in your story, the struggling customer is the hero, and your product or service is the guide that helps them get the victory. You are not the star, you are the one who shows up to help the star succeed. Think of every guide in the stories you love. The guide has wisdom and a plan, but the guide never steals the spotlight from the hero. When you take the guide's seat, your customer can finally see themselves at the center of a story that ends well, with you beside them.

Reflect: Who is the hero in the stories you currently tell, you or your customer? What would change if you made the customer the hero?

Notes:

Principle 3: The Simplest Strong Story Is Before and After.

The most useful story in all of honest marketing is the simplest one: before and after. Here is someone like you. Here was their painful before, stuck, frustrated, losing time or money or hope. Here is what changed. And here is their after, the relief, the result, the new reality. That is the whole shape of it.

You are not bragging about yourself. You are showing a transformation the listener wants for themselves, through the eyes of someone they recognize. A clear story has a character who wants something, a problem in the way, and a path to resolution. Give it those three parts and it will carry your message further than any feature list. The listener sees the before, wants the after, and quietly thinks, that could be me.

Reflect: Pick one real customer. What was their painful "before," and what is their "after" now? Write both in a sentence each.

Notes:

Principle 4: Story Is Not Manipulation When the Story Is True.

Now hear the warning that keeps this honest, because we are people of truth. The story must be true. A made up testimonial, an invented transformation, a staged before and after, that is bearing false witness, and we will deal with that head on next session. The power of story is never a license to lie.

The good news is that you do not need to invent anything. If your work genuinely helps people, the true stories are already there. Your job is simply to notice them, collect them, and tell them well. Use real customers, real transformations, real words. Story is the vehicle for truth, never a cover for invention. Jesus, the most truthful teacher who ever lived, taught almost entirely in stories. If the Son of God reached hearts through parables, your honest business can reach people through true stories of the good your work has done.

Reflect: What true stories from your real customers have you been sitting on and never thought to tell?

Notes:

The Story: Nathan and David (2 Samuel 12:1 to 7)

Read the passage. King David has committed terrible sin, and he is the most powerful man in the kingdom, fully defended. A direct accusation would have hit a wall, or worse. So God sends the prophet Nathan, and watch what Nathan does. He does not march in and say “you are a sinner.” He tells a story.

There were two men in one city, Nathan says, one rich and one poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb that he loved like a daughter. When a traveler came, the rich man would not touch his own vast flocks. He seized the poor man’s one beloved lamb and served it for dinner. Now watch David’s heart. He is not on the defensive, because he does not know the story is about him. He is drawn in, he identifies, his sense of justice catches fire. “David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man,” and he declares that the man deserves to die. David has pronounced judgment on himself, with his guard completely down. And then Nathan speaks four words that break the whole thing open: “Thou art the man” (2 Samuel 12:7).

The story walked right through the gate that a direct accusation could never have passed. David identified with it and felt it as his own. It carried real truth, it was not entertainment for its own sake. And the turn landed only because the story had done its work first. Set up a true story, and the point lands on its own.

Reflect: Where have you been hitting your audience with a direct pitch (a wall) instead of a story (a gate)? What would the “gate” version sound like?

Notes:

Put It Into Practice

1. Draft one true before and after story. Pick one real customer (or an honestly labeled composite of real ones). Fill in these lines, using the customer’s own words where you can.

The real customer this story is about:

Their painful “before,” in their words:

The turning point, and their “after” (the real result):

Check: is the customer the hero and am I the guide? If it brags about you, rewrite it to center them.

2. This week's assignment. Ask one satisfied customer to describe, in their own words, where they were before and where they are now. Write it down faithfully and start a simple file of true customer stories. It will feed your marketing for years.

Go Deeper (Optional)

- **Read:** *Building a StoryBrand* by Donald Miller.
 - **Listen:** *Akimbo* by Seth Godin, or a story selling episode of *The Marketing Secrets* podcast by Russell Brunson.
 - **Study:** 2 Samuel 12:1 to 7; Matthew 13:34; Luke 15 (three parables Jesus told to reach hearts).
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Close in Prayer

“Father, thank You that You reach hearts through story, and that You taught the deepest truths in parables. Help me notice and tell the true stories of the good You let me do, always honest, always with the people I serve as the heroes, so that others can be helped and You can be glorified. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

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