

# STORY-BASED TRAUMA HEALING



## Speaking Healing to Heart Wounds

Bible-based Trauma Healing programs from the Trauma Healing Institute at American Bible Society equip local churches to care for people with deep emotional and spiritual injuries caused by war, domestic violence or natural disasters. They combine biblical and mental health resources into an effective intervention that fosters healing and restores relationships with God and others.

The core programs are based on a workbook, *Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help*. It has been used and refined for more than ten years and is available in whole or part in 150 languages. **Story-based Trauma Healing** adapts this proven approach in an oral program for people with high trauma but low literacy—including those who speak minority languages with no written form. It is designed for high flexibility and rapid deployment by church leaders and laypeople.

“Pastor, I hope you keep coming to share stories with us because the story of Kasi has helped my brother and me feel better again.”  
—an orphan in Hombo, DRC, to Moïse Mamlaka

## What does Story-Based Trauma Healing involve?

The materials comprise 13 lessons, six of which are considered essential. Each lesson includes a story from the Bible matched with a composite story of real-life trauma, all with discussion questions. In most of the lessons, participants put Scripture verses to song to help people hide the Word of God in their hearts. Several interactive exercises help participants connect deeply with the materials.

When the program is deployed in a country or region, local facilitators attend three equipping sessions that each last two weeks (the sessions are shorter if translation is not needed). They work in teams to translate stories and Scripture into the target languages and adapt the materials to the needs of their people. They learn to tell stories in an engaging manner and to lead discussions about the stories to help their listeners discover truths that will help them heal from their trauma. They put Bible verses to music in the local style.

Between sessions, facilitators go to their communities and tell these stories, singly or in groups, to hurting people. Feedback from such encounters is used to polish their translations and improve their presentation and facilitation skills.

## What is covered?

- ❑ If God loves us, why do we suffer?
- ❑ How can we heal the wounds of our hearts?
- ❑ What happens when someone is grieving?
- ❑ Getting our pain out through laments
- ❑ How can we listen well to others?
- ❑ How can we help traumatized children?
- ❑ How can we help people with HIV or AIDS?
- ❑ How can we help victims of rape?
- ❑ Care for the caregiver
- ❑ Taking our pain to the cross
- ❑ Forgiving others
- ❑ How can we live as Christians in the midst of conflict?
- ❑ Preparing for the future



## What are the effects?

The first pilot program for story-based trauma healing was held in 2011–12 in partnership with The Seed Company. It trained twenty facilitators in four language groups in Goma, a refugee-filled city in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In a period of six months, they had gone out into dangerous territory and told stories to more than 22,000 people; several of them are now also certified to train others. After the training, they report better emotional and physical health and a closer relationship to God despite ongoing traumas in their own communities.

This is a testimony from Jimmy Ndeshibire Bwenge (*pictured with his certificate, bottom right*), from the Tembo language team in the Goma pilot program:

“Soon after our last seminar on trauma healing, I was given the opportunity to tell a story during the evening service in my church. I told the story of Pastor Yuh, who was orphaned at an early age, mistreated by his uncle and then traumatized by war. As I told the story, a woman named Naomi began to cry. After the service, I asked her what was happening in her life. She said that Pastor Yuh’s story was her story. She was orphaned at an early age and brought up by a cruel uncle. She asked herself, ‘Why did God kill my parents? He must be a bad God.’ As she talked she cried for a long time. Finally, she asked forgiveness for thinking God was bad. She also forgave her uncle. We prayed together and believed in the love and power of God.”

## Roles and responsibilities

The **national Bible Society** or other hosting group provides leadership and program oversight. They convene church and ministry leaders, help select candidates to equip, coordinate equipping and other support sessions, and gather and report impact data.

The **Trauma Healing Institute** provides content and a fully supported and sustainable program model. Its global experts come on site to train facilitators in trauma healing and facilitation skills and the program model. It also arranges for translation consultants, helps with contextualizing materials, and helps identify funding sources.

More details on the program model and overall Scripture-based trauma healing approach are available on request.

## How can we get started?

Write to us at [traumahealing@americanbible.org](mailto:traumahealing@americanbible.org) or contact your local Bible Society.



## Core Bible Stories

- ❑ The creation of the world and the beginning of suffering
- ❑ Two grieving disciples (Emmaus Road)
- ❑ Jesus grieves the loss of his friend, Lazarus
- ❑ God’s people lament
- ❑ Job suffers
- ❑ Jesus listens to the children
- ❑ Zaccheus
- ❑ Amnon and Tamar
- ❑ Moses accepts advice
- ❑ Jesus came to deliver us from sin and suffering
- ❑ The servant in prison
- ❑ Conflict in the early church
- ❑ Nehemiah prepares for the future

