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Kathleen Otchy

Season 4, Ep. 5: Ethical Storytelling (2021)
www.chogglobal.org/S4E5 (35 min)

Key Takeaway

People are never props for a message. Effective Christian storytelling seeks to honor the dignity, humanity, and ongoing journey of the people involved.

SUMMARY

In this episode, Andrew Gale interviews Kathleen Otchy about the power and responsibility of storytelling in ministry. Drawing from her twenty years of pastoral care experience, Kathleen explores how stories help people connect, learn, and empathize while also highlighting the ethical challenges that arise when sharing personal experiences. The conversation focuses on consent, dignity, context, trauma, technology, and the importance of ensuring that stories humanize rather than exploit the people they represent.

Scripture passage: James 3:5-10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Listen: 5:02-6:56.* How has a story changed your perspective or motivated you to care about an issue, person, or community you had not previously understood?
2. *Listen: 7:06-8:55.* What makes storytelling ethical? Where do you think the line exists between telling an impactful story and exploiting the people involved in that story? What indicators help you recognize when that line has been crossed?
3. *Listen: 25:05-30:28.* What practical guidelines should churches, mission teams, or ministry leaders follow before sharing someone's image, testimony, or personal story? Why is ethical storytelling especially important in the context of missions and cross-cultural ministry?
4. How can mission trip participants share meaningful experiences without unintentionally reinforcing stereotypes or creating unhealthy narratives?

REFLECTION QUESTION

Think about a story, testimony, social media post, or ministry update you have recently shared or plan to share. If the people featured were sitting beside you, would they feel honored, accurately represented, and respected by the way you told it?