

## STORYTELLING and ILLUSTRATIONS

Somehow, we forget that the Bible is essentially a book of God-inspired stories! That's how God has chosen to communicate his Word to human beings.

There are many benefits to using stories to communicate spiritual truth:

1. **Stories hold our attention.** The reason television became so popular is because it's essentially a story-telling device, whether you're watching comedy, drama, the news, or a talk show. Even the commercials are stories.
2. **Stories stir our emotions.** They impact us in ways that precepts and propositions never do. If you want to change lives, you must craft the message for impact, not for information.
3. **Stories help us remember.** Long after the outline is forgotten, people will remember the stories of the sermon.

It's fascinating to watch how quickly a crowd tunes in whenever a speaker begins telling a story and how quickly that attention vanishes as soon as the story is finished!

We need to remember that Jesus did not use the classical Greek language of the scholar. He spoke in Aramaic. He told stories using the street language of that day and talked of birds, flowers, lost coins, and other everyday objects that anyone could relate to.

-Rick Warren

### **Five Reasons Story Telling is the Easiest and Most Effective Form of Public Speaking**

1. **You're already good at it.** About 65% of our daily conversation is made up of personal stories.
2. **It will stop you from Rambling.** Stories have built-in structure that make a point.
3. **Stories are easy to remember.** Telling a story, especially a personal one, doesn't take a lot of memorization or practice; you already know it and you may have already told it dozens of times.
4. **Starting with a story will relax you.** The very start of your talk is the time when you're most likely to be nervous or stressed, but it's also when you need to hook your audience. When we tell stories, we're conversational: We smile, use good body language, make eye contact—everything that builds trust with listeners. If you start your presentation like that, you preempt any chance of anxiety or presentation jitters to get the better of you.
5. **You have plenty to choose from.** We all carry around a lifetime's worth of stories—both personal and professional—probably more than you're even aware of, and you can draw on just about all of them.

-Darren Menabney

The truthful, inside story of almost any man's life -if told modestly and without offending egotism- is most entertaining. It is almost sure-fire speech material.

-Dale Carnegie

## **Reasons for Using Illustrations**

- Audiences today are not wired for lectures.
- Some people need pictures to learn.
- Illustrations infuse emotional charge into the sermon.
- Illustrations help clarify difficult concepts

Preaching God's Word -Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duval, J. Daniel Hays

"The longer I study Jesus' method of communicating, the more convinced I am that His genius rested in His ability to simplify and clarify issues others had complicated. He used words anyone could understand, not just the initiated. He said just enough to inspire and motivate people to think on their own, to be inquisitive, to search further. And He punctuated His teaching with familiar, earthy, even humorous illustrations that riveted mental handles to abstract truth."

- Chuck Swindoll

## **10 Tips for Effective Sermon Illustrations**

1. Use Illustrations for the right reason. Sermon illustrations are tools to shed light on the exposition [of the text], not a substitute for the exposition.
2. Keep in mind that more is not better.
3. Make sure the illustration fits the point you're making. If you have to explain an illustration to make it apply, you've stretched the point.
4. Get the facts straight. Adept handling of facts instills listener confidence. Careless errors kill it.
5. Be honest. Don't embellish the story for effect.
6. Cite your sources.
7. Do not carelessly expose, disclose, or embarrass.
8. Share the spotlight. Be careful about how often you're the hero in your illustrations. People may admire your strengths, but they resonate with your weaknesses.
9. Demonstrate good taste and respect sensibilities. Be sensitive to your audience. An illustration that might work well on a Men's Retreat could be out of place in the pulpit.
10. Make sure they are transferable. Impressing everyone with the prayer life of E.M. Bounds or the faith of George Mueller may make for good drama, but they often promote a spirituality that is out of reach for the average person.

-Dave DeSelm

### **Further Reading:**

- Storytelling in Preaching, Bruce Salmon
- The Power of Story, Rob Harley
- The Art of Storytelling, John Welsh