



John Goetsch | Wednesday, June 15, 2016

**Title:** Illustrating the Sermon

**Introduction:** \_\_\_\_\_

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Proper illustrations are a \_\_\_\_\_ today in the arena of preaching. We are an entertainment age with a very \_\_\_\_\_ attention span. What people need is the truth of God's Word, but they must be \_\_\_\_\_ to that truth. The illustration helps to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the listener's attention.

The preacher must beware, however, that the illustration does not \_\_\_\_\_ the message so that the truth or application of truth is not remembered. We must not reduce ourselves to mere \_\_\_\_\_. An illustration properly used will cause the listener to remember the application of it to the truth of God's Word. An illustration must always be in \_\_\_\_\_ with the text and not told simply because it is a great story.

The Lord Jesus Christ used many \_\_\_\_\_ everyday life experiences to communicate truth. They captivated His audience because the people could relate to them.

## 1. The Nature of an Illustration

A. Illustrations are \_\_\_\_\_ to the audience.

- 1 THEY MAKE LISTENING ENJOYABLE.
- 2 THEY \_\_\_\_\_ THE LISTENER INTO THE MESSAGE.

B. Illustrations help to \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1 LEARNING IS ACCOMPLISHED BY GOING FROM THE \_\_\_\_\_ TO THE \_\_\_\_\_.

- 2 BY LIKENING SOMETHING THAT IS UNKNOWN (SPIRITUAL APPLICATION) TO SOMETHING THAT IS ALREADY KNOWN (AN EXPERIENCE OF LIFE), LEARNING IS ACCOMPLISHED.
- 3 THIS ALLOWS THE OBSCURE TO BECOME \_\_\_\_\_ BY THE USE OF WORD PICTURES. (A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS—THAT INCLUDES A WORD PICTURE.)
- 4 IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE AUDIENCE KNOWS SOMETHING OF THE SUBJECT MATTER ON WHICH THE SUBJECT MATTER STANDS. SOMETIMES SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION NEEDS TO BE GIVEN SO THAT THE APPLICATION CAN BE MADE.

## 2. The Reason for Illustrations

A. To help people \_\_\_\_\_ or aid in \_\_\_\_\_

1. IN BUILDING A SERMON, IT IS NOT YOUR TASK TO MAKE THE SERMON EASY TO \_\_\_\_\_. IT IS YOUR TASK TO MAKE THE SERMON EASY TO \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 THE AUDIENCE SHOULD NOT HAVE TO \_\_\_\_\_ AT GETTING SOMETHING OUT OF THE MESSAGE. IT IS THE PREACHER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP THEM EASILY SEE THE TRUTH.

**ILLUSTRATION:** (This is an illustration of an illustration) An illustration is like an ornament on a Christmas tree. It is not there to take up space or look pretty in itself. The ornament is there to draw the onlooker to the tree. Too many ornaments will hide the beauty of the tree thus making it unappreciated, while not enough ornaments exposes too many bare spots leaving the onlooker with the idea that “it needs something.”

B. To assist in \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 VERY FEW PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO FOLLOW YOUR TRAIN OF THOUGHT THROUGH A MESSAGE WITHOUT THE HELP OF AN ILLUSTRATION.

- 2 AN ILLUSTRATION IS A \_\_\_\_\_ IN AN ARGUMENT AND LETS IN \_\_\_\_\_ SO THAT THE POINT CAN BE SEEN.
- 3 SOMETIMES YOUR AUDIENCE WILL BE LISTENING DOUBTFULLY, LABORIOUSLY, OR SUSPICIOUSLY, AND WONDER WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT. WHEN YOU SAY, "IT'S LIKE . . ." THE AUDIENCE SEES \_\_\_\_\_ IT IS LIKE. WHEN A PROPER ILLUSTRATION IS USED, THERE IS A SENSE OF RELIEF AS THEY SEE THE POINT.
- 4 THE ILLUSTRATION MUST ALWAYS BE \_\_\_\_\_ TO WHAT YOU ARE PREACHING. IF IT IS NOT, YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME AND MERELY ENTERTAINING.
- 5 THE ILLUSTRATION SHOULD ALWAYS BE \_\_\_\_\_. IT SHOULD BE AS TRUE AS THE TRUTH YOU ARE PREACHING.

C. They can be a \_\_\_\_\_ in some difficult situations.

- 1 SOMETIMES THE ILLUSTRATION IS AN \_\_\_\_\_ TACTIC.
- 2 THERE MAY BE SOMETHING YOU NEED TO PREACH ON AND YET NOT WANT TO HIT SPECIFICALLY BECAUSE SOME IN THE AUDIENCE MAY THINK YOU ARE JUST PREACHING TO THEM. THUS, YOU COULD USE AN ILLUSTRATION ABOUT "SMOKING" IN A SERMON ON \_\_\_\_\_ TO HELP THE PERSON WHO SMOKES TO SEE AN IMPORTANT TRUTH WITHOUT MAKING HIM FEEL LIKE YOU ARE JUST PREACHING TO HIM.

D. Illustrations help people \_\_\_\_\_ truth.

- 1 REMEMBER, A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS.
- 2 IF AN ILLUSTRATION IS TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE, THE AUDIENCE WILL GO AWAY \_\_\_\_\_ THE ILLUSTRATION. AND IF THEY WERE ASKED

WHAT THE \_\_\_\_\_ WAS TO THAT ILLUSTRATION – THEY WILL USUALLY REMEMBER THAT AS WELL.

- 3 IF THEY CAN REMEMBER THE \_\_\_\_\_, THEY WILL REMEMBER THE \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 YOU CAN SERVE \_\_\_\_\_, BUT IT TASTES BETTER \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 ILLUSTRATIONS, LIKE SALT, WILL NOT ONLY MAKE THE SERMON \_\_\_\_\_ BETTER, BUT WILL ALSO HELP TO \_\_\_\_\_ THEM LONGER.

E. Illustrations stimulate \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1 THEY HELP THE AUDIENCE IMAGINE \_\_\_\_\_ THE TRUTH THEY ARE HEARING ABOUT.
- 2 IF THE ILLUSTRATION IS NEGATIVE, IT HELPS THEM IMAGINE WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE IF THEY DISOBEY AND CHOOSE NOT TO LIVE THAT TRUTH.

F. Illustrations help the audience to \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1 THERE IS AN ART TO BEING ABLE TO PREACH AS \_\_\_\_\_ AS YOU NEED WITHOUT THE AUDIENCE BECOMING TIRED OF LISTENING.
- 2 NO ONE, NO MATTER HOW SKILLED, CAN HOLD AN AUDIENCE SPELLBOUND BY USING A MONOTONE IN EITHER \_\_\_\_\_ OR \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 IN PREACHING, YOUR PRINCIPLES AND POINTS WILL APPEAL TO THE \_\_\_\_\_ WHILE YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS WILL APPEAL TO THE \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 THE MORE \_\_\_\_\_ YOU CAN PREACH TO—HUMOR, SADNESS, ANGER, BURDEN, ETC., THE LONGER YOU CAN PREACH. WHILE YOU ARE ADDRESSING ONE EMOTION, THE OTHERS ARE RESTING. AS A RESULT, THE AUDIENCE WILL LISTEN TO A LONG SERMON AND THINK IT WAS \_\_\_\_\_.

G. Illustrations allow you to reach \_\_\_\_\_ people in the audience.

- 1 YOUR MESSAGE SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE \_\_\_\_\_ FOR \_\_\_\_\_ IN THE AUDIENCE.
- 2 REMEMBER, THE AUDIENCE DOES NOT ALWAYS \_\_\_\_\_ TO HEAR WHAT YOU ARE PREACHING—SO \_\_\_\_\_ THEM TO THE MESSAGE WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

### **3. Variety in Illustrations**

Illustrations can come from a variety of \_\_\_\_\_.

The Bible  
Personal experience  
Personal observation  
Children  
Literature  
History  
Hymns  
Novels  
Art  
Media  
Comparative religions  
Nature  
Sports  
Military  
Science  
Travel  
Hobbies  
Object lessons  
Poems  
Quotations

## 4. The Delivery of Illustrations

A. They must be \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1 ALWAYS GIVE THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF THE STORY AS ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE. (PEOPLE CAN CHECK YOUR ACCURACY ON THE INTERNET.)
- 2 NEVER GIVE THE AUDIENCE THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU ARE \_\_\_\_\_ ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE SPEAKING OF.

B. They should be \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1 KNOW THE CROWD YOU ARE PREACHING TO AND REACH THEM ON THEIR LEVEL.
- 2 REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT TRYING TO HELP \_\_\_\_\_, YOU ARE TRYING TO HELP \_\_\_\_\_.

C. They must be \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1 DON'T BE AFRAID TO ILLUSTRATE TRUTHS IN AN \_\_\_\_\_ MANNER.
- 2 DON'T WAIT FOR THE AUDIENCE TO COME TO YOU - \_\_\_\_\_ TO THEM.
- 3 GET DOWN ON THEIR \_\_\_\_\_.

D. They must be \_\_\_\_\_ hitting?'

- 1 THERE IS NOTHING MORE FRUSTRATING TODAY TO PEOPLE THAN THE WASTING OF THEIR \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 THE AUDIENCE SHOULD NOT BE THINKING \_\_\_\_\_ THAN THE PREACHER.
- 3 THE AUDIENCE SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT THE \_\_\_\_\_ BEFORE YOU GET THERE.
- 4 THE ILLUSTRATION IS THE QUICK BLOW OF THE HAMMER THAT DRIVES THE POINT OF THE MESSAGE HOME. STRIKE CLEANLY AND QUICKLY. DON'T OVER-DRIVE IT OR YOU WILL \_\_\_\_\_ THE WOOD.

E. They must always be \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1 WHILE PREACHING ON GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE, ONE PREACHER SAID, "GOD IS EVERYWHERE, EVEN IN THE TRASH CAN." THOUGH WHAT HE SAID IS ACCURATE, IT IS NOT \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 APPROPRIATENESS MAY \_\_\_\_\_ WITH THE AUDIENCE AND THE SETTING.
- 3 BE AWARE OF AND AVOID ANYTHING THAT IS OFF-COLOR, CRUDE, ETHNICALLY OR GENDER INSENSITIVE.

F. Illustrations should be told \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1 THE AUDIENCE SHOULD FEEL LIKE THEY ARE \_\_\_\_\_ IN THE STORY.
- 2 DON'T JUST RE-TELL THE STORY:  
\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ IT.
- 3 CUT AWAY ANYTHING THAT IS SURPLUS IN THE STORY THAT DOES NOT AID IN SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE TRUTH YOU ARE PREACHING.

## 5. The Best Illustrations

A. The best illustrations are always \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1 THEY ARE \_\_\_\_\_ TO TELL PROPERLY BECAUSE YOU WERE THERE.
- 2 YOU ARE AWARE OF ALL THE PERTINENT \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 THEY ARE \_\_\_\_\_ BECAUSE OF THE INFORMATION YOU ARE SHARING THAT NO ONE ELSE WOULD BE AWARE OF.
- 4 THEY \_\_\_\_\_ YOU TO THE AUDIENCE.

B. Three rules with regard to personal illustrations:

- 1 THEY MUST ALWAYS BE \_\_\_\_\_.

If the audience perceives that you lie or embellish truth, they will assume that you do the same in other areas.

2 THEY SHOULD BE \_\_\_\_\_.

The audience will resent personal stories where you are always the hero. In conversation, we do not like to listen to people who brag about how clever, humorous, or spiritual they are. Nothing changes that reaction when the boasting is done from the pulpit. Most experiences make us either victims or villains and can be used with modesty and benefit.

3 THEY MUST NEVER VIOLATE A \_\_\_\_\_.

People will not share their concerns with you if they feel they might be part of your next sermon. Don't hesitate to ask people if you might have permission to use an illustration that involves them.

**Conclusion:** \_\_\_\_\_

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The following is taken from Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones' book, *Preaching and Preachers*, and serves well as a conclusion to these notes on the subject:

*"Stories and illustrations are only meant to illustrate truth, not to call attention to themselves. This whole business of illustrations and storytelling has been a particular curse during the past 100 years. I believe it is one of the factors that accounts for the decline in preaching because it helped to give the impression that preaching was an art, an end in itself. There have undoubtedly been many who really prepared a sermon simply in order to be able to use a great illustration that had occurred to them or which they had read somewhere. The illustration had become the first thing; they then find a text which is likely to cover this. In other words, the heart of the matter had become the illustration. But that is the wrong order. The illustration is meant to illustrate truth, not to show itself, not call attention to itself; it is a means of leading and helping people to see the truth that you are proclaiming more clearly. The rule therefore should always be that the truth must be pre-eminent and have great prominence, and illustrations must be used carefully to that end alone. Our business is not to entertain people. People like stories; they like illustrations."*

A preacher should go into a pulpit to enunciate and proclaim the Truth itself. This is what should be prominent, and everything else is but to minister to this end. Illustrations are just servants.

