

Storytelling that leaves an impression:

1. The sharer's motive, intention, and heart for the precious ones to whom he is sharing is primary. We treasure the Lord; we treasure them, we serve the Lord; we serve them. The Lord is our love, our life, our light, our way; we want them to see, to lay hold of, to desire, to treasure what is the greatest treasure.

2. The young people can quickly, accurately, and critically sense whether they are treasured, whether you are there for them, or not. If we are motivated with an intention to impart something so important, but do not first have and reflect a heart for them full of love, compassion, tenderness, humility, gentleness, and reality, they will close off. The first impression is so key. This really tests and measures the sharing one to the uttermost.

3. The stories from the Bible and from our experience flow out of this great love for them that the Lord has for them through us-- the authenticity, genuineness, sincerity, purposefulness-- is the wellspring from which flows the Word, the burden, the truth, the insight, the principle, the experience, and the application. We have fallen in love, and are in love with the Lord. That love, that life is infectious. They want what they sense must be the most important and satisfying relationship in the universe-- their dear Lord, who is courting them as their Bridegroom.

4. One time I was touched to talk about a little lamb as a vivid picture of our Lamb-- so small, so tender, so innocent, so pure. Hold it in your arms. It looks at you so tenderly. It bleats so sweetly, vulnerable, precious. You can feel its heart beating. You feel its warmth. Such a One is our Lord. This is who He is, and who was, and who offered Himself up for us. This tender, guileless, pure, precious One-- His side was cut-- that innocent, meek One, His belly, His side was pierced, for you, for me! What can we say or do? Just receive Him, appreciate Him, love Him, adore Him! The little Lamb who died for you! Who died for your best friend at school... So this is not really a story in this case, but it brings His redemption, His humanity, His blood, His motive to an altogether intimate and personal level. It is an example about how the sharer's love for the Lord and for them is communicated in a very personal, intimate, yet very safe way-- likely to not be misunderstood.

5. When the young people can see our humanness, that we are not "giants," or intimidating, or unapproachable, or Pharisaic, but just like them, simply older, but who have made decisions in our life at their age or so, decisions that are our personal "treasures," that set our course and shaped our destiny, we would like to share with them. These "treasures" have made our life full of meaning and purpose, full of help in the present, and hope for the future. We want them so much to see the Lord, the Bible, the church life, and also all the cheating counterfeits, the stratagems, of God's enemy, in this light.

6. Then the storytelling is vibrant, is relevant, is important for them to listen, to learn about, to receive, embrace, and follow. The Samaritan woman shows the Lord's heart, and her heart-- both so thirsty, so seeking, so driven, then so satisfied. The paralytic is seen so poignantly as never able to reach the stirring waters first, of religion's utter indifference, of Christ's complete relevance and solution, and of the profound result, and that this is about you and me! You, varsity quarterback,

AP student, yearbook editor, timid sister, shy brother, are paralyzed! I, creative writer, grant recipient at an Ivy League school, stuck, miserable, desperately seeking, in such piercing, desperate, inner need. Would you cry out? Would you take this chance? Would you be changed? The story comes out of the burden, out of the connection they have with you, and hopefully through you, the Lord, and His purpose.

7. They remember how they felt, about the transaction they had, about the experience of the Lord's preciousness touching them personally, in complete relevance, tailored somehow by His benevolence to their need. They may remember the seemingly trivial anecdotes, but it is the Christ they somehow touched through God's utter mercy to the speaker and to them! I would talk about the nine Chihuahua dogs my wife and I have had. How they would serve as our "organic security system" when a stranger was in our yard at night. How or why I referenced these little dogs escapes me now, but they never forgot. Why would they not forget? Because somehow, some way, the eye salve was being applied to their eyes, of the preciousness of their Savior, of their Lord, of their Life, and of His relevance to them in the moment, and for their whole life.

8. Perhaps most important is the prayer over a period of time before the event. Prayers upon prayers. Laying the tracks. Preparing our hearts, and their hearts. The Lord loves to answer our prayers about them being gained to be part of His loving bride, and to gaining gem through this time as a factor governing them for the rest of their lives.

9. The use of visual illustrations and props is very helpful. Brother Gary Evans, a sixth grade teacher by profession, uses props extremely effectively. A timely picture is indeed worth a thousand words. A great example I remember is utilizing a ball-bundle of cotton and blue dye to illustrate mingling-- the gradual saturation of God's life into our soul. At first, there is no visible evidence whatsoever that the dripping blue dye is having any effect whatsoever. Time passes. The dripping continues. Then the faint sign of blue appears in a spot, then the blue dye spreads, and the color intensifies drop by drop. By the end, the once white cotton ball has been thoroughly saturated by the blue dye. It is still cotton, but it is now blended, mingled, with blue dye. It's nature and expression is not just of the human, but now the divine life, nature, and expression. There are quite a few others that at a tremendous help of making a spiritual truth and experience come to life and relevance through illustration. The memory is "indelible."

By Bill Bean