

Embracing the Vision of Camp Hill Doug Hamilton



Part 3) Changing the Method, NEVER the Message.

- Jesus preached a consistent gospel message while working His earthly ministry (Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 11:5; Luke 9:6, 20:1).
- He said the gospel must be preached to all nations (Mark 13:10, 16:15).
- Jesus was preordained to preach the gospel (Luke 4:18).
- The gospel was the same message preached by the apostles (Acts 14:7, 15, 21, 15:7, 16:10, 20:24).
- They were eager to preach it (Romans 1:15) and were not ashamed of it in any way (Romans 1:16).

Our gospel message today is the same message as it was two thousand years ago. What is that core message? It is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

When preaching sharing the gospel with our fellow man we must always be willing to change the method, but never the message. The method can vary greatly, but the message must be consistent. Using Jesus as our example, we can quite clearly see this principle being carried out. I would like to use four methods which Jesus commonly practiced in communicating His gospel message. He changed methods without changing His message.

A. Jesus used a story-based method.

It was predicted in Psalm 78:2 that Jesus would teach in parables. *"I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old..."* According to Harpers Bible Dictionary, a parable is *very short story with a double meaning*. Jesus was the Master of this technique and used them effectively to connect the people to the gospel. A good example of this would be from Matthew 13.

- He told the parable of the sower of the seed to communicate that everyone who is preached the gospel will not respond positively (Matthew 13:10-23).
- He told the parable of tares among the wheat to explain the attempts of the devil to choke off the message of the gospel in the hearts of people (Matthew 13:24-30).
- He told the parable of the mustard seed to communicate faith in the gospel (Matthew 13:31-32).
- He told the parable of leaven to explain the need to grow faith in the gospel (Matthew 13:33-35).
- He told the parable of the hidden treasure to illuminate the seriousness of sacrifice (Matthew 13:44).

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- He told the parable of the costly pearl to communicate the same (Matthew 13:45-46).
- He told the parable of the dragnet to clarify the judgment on those who receive not the gospel message (Matthew 13:47-52).

In all these cases Jesus used stories to communicate the gospel message. He did so because stories are an effective method to communicate a message. The message was the same and the method was delivered in parable-form. Stories have a way of connecting the message to the heart of the recipient.

Take for example: If we were presenting the gospel to another person and trying to communicate the deceitfulness of sin, we might use this verse. Hebrews 3:13, *But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* There is a deceitfulness of sin which the Christian should be leery of. Before we know, a person can be way off in their perception. Perhaps a story might communicate it better.

A woman walking down a residential street, noticing a little old man rocking in a chair on his porch. She called out to him as she passed. "Hello there! I couldn't help but notice how happy you look. What's your secret for a long happy life?" "I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day," he replied. "I also drink a case of whiskey a week, eat nothing but fast food, and never exercise." "Wow!" The woman was amazed. "How old are you?" she asked. "Twenty-six," he replied.

Jesus was the Master of communicating in such a way. He changed the method, but never the message.

B. Jesus used surroundings-based method.

- When He was by the Sea of Galilee, He used the language of a fisherman.
 - Matthew 4:19-20, And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.
- When He was in the agricultural regions, He used the language of a farmer.
 - Luke 9:62, But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
 - Luke 10:2, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."
- When He was in the city limits, He used the language of the Temple.
 - Matthew 21:13, "*And He said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER'; but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN."*
- When He was at the treasury, He used the language of money.
 - Luke 21:3-4 And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; ⁴ for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

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In any location that we find ourselves is the potential to better communicate the message of the gospel. If we are in a hospital, then communicate the gospel message of Jesus that He is the Great Physician. If we are in a prison, communicate the gospel message of Jesus that we shall be free indeed. If we are at a courthouse, then communicate the gospel message that Jesus is our advocate or lawyer, pleading our case before God. The method changes with the environment, but that sweet message of the gospel must never change.

C. Jesus used Repetition-based method.

There is a saying in teaching, “Tell them once, tell them again and tell them again.” It is communicating the fact that repetition is an effective method to communicate a message. Jesus was also a Master of this method of teaching.

- He told the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son in Luke 15 to inform us about how much God appreciates the recovery of lost souls.
- He repeatedly used the symbol of Him being a Shepherd of the sheep to symbolize His love for the church in John 10:1-30.
- He pearl-stranded a list of blessings to describe the attitude of a Christian in Matthew 5:1-12.
- He gave a list of eight woes to describe His lamenting over the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 23:13-36.
- He used the witness of John, the witness of the works, the witness of God, the witness of the scriptures to articulate His Messiahship in John 5:33-47.

Jesus knows mankind better than anyone. He knows that without having repetition that we are likely to not get it. This was one of His methods to communicate the message of His love. We can also do the same, or should I say that we already do.

Jesus Loves Me

Yes Jesus loves me for the Bible tells me so
Jesus loves me this I know
For the Bible tells me so
Little ones to him belong
They are weak but he is strong

Chorus

Yes Jesus loves me
Oh, yes Jesus loves me
Yes Jesus loves me for the Bible tells me so

D. Jesus used prop-based method.

Jesus used many physical props to communicate His message. This is because physical examples are a really great way to permanently affix a message in the hearts and minds of people.

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- He used a meal of bread and fish to communicate that He is the Bread of Life in John 6.
- He used water at a well to communicate that His message is the Living Water in John 4:7-30.
- He used a child in His arms to communicate innocence for which His people must have in their relationship with God in Matthew 18:3.
- He used a man healed from blindness to communicate that He was the light of the world in John 9:1-12.
- He used the disciples dirty feet to communicate the message that we are to have a submissive love for one another in John 13:1-20.
- He used a withered fig tree to communicate the withered, fruitless lives of Jerusalem in Matthew 22:18-22.
- He used a coin with Caesar's image to communicate the need to make money less important in our lives in Matthew 22:19.
- He used the bread and cup of the Passover to communicate His broken body and shed blood of the covenant in Matthew 26:26-29.

In these and many other examples, Jesus changed the method, but His message remained the same. Every single object or person we come into contact with in this life can become a prop for the furtherance of the gospel.

Close with the story of Visiting Preacher Prop