



THE COMPASS

A TOOL FOR DISCIPLERS

Gospel Illustrations

Conversation On the Journey

“Story is the language of the human heart.” So says John Eldridge. Stories are also darn good for making the Gospel clear. When we share the Gospel on campus, we make ample use of stories and illustrations. I’m sure you do, too.

In fact, if you followed me around Penn State for a month you would hear a select handful of stories used over and over in a variety of ways. I basically have a file in my head of mini-speeches that I pull out as the situation calls for them. If some punk tries to tell me he doesn’t believe that anything is morally wrong, I like to talk about extinguishing cigarettes on the eyes of infants. That generally wins assent as a pure evil. Then, it’s on to talk about the love of Jesus.

When I go out, I am “armed” because I have memorized a bunch of simple illustrations that help me explain substitutionary atonement, the deity of Christ, our need for a Savior, or the reality of evil.

A number of such stories are available at centerfieldproductions.com. Print them out and give them a read. I expect that you will have heard some of them in one form or another. There may also be others that you heard as a student, or find consistently helpful, that we didn’t think to include here. If that’s the case, I’d be grateful if you’d take a minute to email us at centerfield@uscm.org with the basic outline. We may include your story or illustration on a future release of The Compass.

In the meantime, here’s what I recommend about teaching the ones we have included: There are at least two key skills you can impart to your disciple. First, they need to know the stories. It would be great if they could memorize them and be able to rattle them off in any situation. I like to teach my men that they need to “own” the Gospel. That is, I want them to have illustrations and a simple outline memorized (The Four Laws comes to mind) at such a level, that if they were on fire, they’d still be able to explain it.

This may not work as well with women, but I like to ask my guys to recite the alphabet. Once they begin, I start to hit them. And I keep on hitting them. Remarkably, they are able to continue on with their ABC’s despite my violent distraction. The reason is that the alphabet is so ingrained in their heads that it requires no thought whatsoever to say it. They own the alphabet. (Aren’t they smart?)

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This Week’s Excursion

This lesson will prepare you to help your disciple learn a number of illustrations that they can use when sharing the Gospel in a variety of settings.

Gospel Illustrations

That's where I want them to be with the Gospel. If they really own it, then they can spend all their conversational energy thinking about how to relate it to the person they are speaking with. If in the back of their mind they are thinking, "Uh, law two: Man is, uh. No, crud. Wait a second. Um. Shoot. Is this the part with the bridge?", they obviously won't have a whole lot of opportunity to think about how to connect the Gospel to the specific individual they are sharing with. Drill them. Help them memorize, and understand, the Gospel and these illustrations.

The second skill they need to learn is how to bring up a story. This is more art than science, and is best learned by watching you. You will serve them best if they can see you share your faith lots and lots. When someone asks a really good question, and they see you respond with a great explanation or illustration, they will figure out how to do the same. But they need to see you sharing your faith. So take them out. Follow up contacts. Do "Quest" surveys with random people. Model evangelism for them.

The simplest thing to do is to offer a story as an answer to a question. If someone asks me what makes me think Jesus is God, I would explain C.S. Lewis's trilemma (Lord, Liar, Lunatic).

Joe Lost Guy: You said a minute ago that you think Jesus is God. I don't mean to offend you, but I think that's really naïve. I agree He was a good teacher, but to say He's God is a stretch.

Brilliant Missionary Evangelist: I agree with you. It is ridiculous. But I think it's true, nonetheless. Let me tell you why. Jesus said a number of things that clearly show He was claiming to be God. Now, that doesn't mean He was God, but it does limit our options of what He is.

JLG: What do you mean?

BME: Well, think about it. When we evaluate any statement ever made, there are only two possibilities. Either that statement is true or false. So, when Jesus claimed to be God. . .

Or, in the conversation you can suggest a question. A series of questions that reveal a person's ignorance can create a teachable moment:

Righteous Staff Woman: Do you know why Jesus died?

Susie the Wicked: Well, I guess it was to show that He loved us.

RSW: Yeah, I think He does love us, and wanted us to know it, but if you think about it, that's kind of a weird way to show it.

STW: What do you mean?

RSW: Well, if you wanted to show your boyfriend how much you loved him, and you said to him, 'I love you. And I want you to know how much I love you.' Then you pulled out a gun, put it in your mouth and pulled the trigger, what would he be thinking then?

Next Steps

Go through the illustrations available at centerfiledproductions.com (or sift through the ones in your head), and choose one to teach this week, along with the concept of having a file of mini-speeches ready to go. It would probably be overwhelming to teach a half a dozen illustrations in a week, so try spreading them out. Just make sure you are looking for real life opportunities to use them in conversations as well. After you have modeled them, look for other chances for your disciple to share them with others.

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Gospel Illustrations

This is hard to teach, but pretty easy to pick up by observation. If it's hard for you to do it, get your discipler to take you out, and show you how they do it.

Side Trails

You'll find a number of illustrations in the Additional Resources section of Communicate Your Faith. All are in a pdf format. Some also have audio recordings saved as mp3s.

Available at centerfieldproductions.com

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