**Humour & Storytelling**

# Humour

## Why is Humour so Important?

(Adapted from Ken Davis, *Secrets to Dynamic Communication*, 117-22)

### Humour softens the heart (it builds rapport with the audience—it breaks down barriers between speaker and listener)

### Humour benefits the mind and body

### Humour let’s the audience talk back—a laugh, nod, or chuckle transforms a benchwarmer into a participant

### Humour provides instant feedback—let’s you know if you’re communicating

### Humour gets the listener’s attention

### Humour entertains listeners to keep their interest

### Humour typically catches people by surprise

### Nearly everyone enjoys humour—it is truly universal

### Someone defined humour as “‘a gentle way to acknowledge human frailty.’ Put another way, humour is a way of saying, ‘I’m not okay and you’re not okay, but that’s okay, he loves us anyway!’” (Davis, 117).

## How to Be Funny

### Start with low-risk humour.

#### High-risk humour can embarrass you if it is not considered funny.

##### Comedy (obvious joke) demands an audience response.

##### Ridiculous exaggeration is very visual and less cerebral.

#### Low-risk humour is better for beginners and comes in two types:

##### Some jokes are so good that they never fail.

##### Other true stories or illustrations come from simple truth—even if the audience doesn’t laugh, the truth still remains.

### Work on facial expressions and body language.

### Work on eye contact—make sure you’re looking at the people!

### Be yourself—if it feels like you are overdoing it, tone it down.

### Never wait for laughter—if it doesn’t come, just continue on.

### Types of humour to avoid include those that make others look bad: other ethnic groups, politicians and other persons of authority (e.g., pastors).

### If you know a church that does not appreciate humour, tone down your presentation in content and especially facial expressions and body language.

### If you are unsure if a certain story or joke would be appropriate, check it out with a leader in the group. Sometimes I email my opening joke to the board chairman or pastor if I suspect it might have offensive elements.

### Watch others succeed or fail at humour—ask why it worked or didn’t work.

### Practice your stories with your spouse, friends, and others who will listen. Have them watch for timing, order, details in the story, facial expression, voice inflection, and body movement.

## Sources for Good Humour

### Hodgin, Michael. *1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

### James, G. D. *Tales Worth Telling.* Dr. G. D. James Multimedia, P.O. Box 122 Epping, N.S.W. 2121 Australia. Funny stories in an Asian context.

# Storytelling

## How to Tell Stories

### Follow the guidelines for humour above (cf. advantages to stories on p. 107).

### Follow the guidelines on page 112.

### Never give the conclusion to the story up front.

#### If you use a story to illustrate, don’t state the point deductively.

#### Rather, place the point in brackets in your outline, meaning that you won’t be saying the content of the bracketed area at that time. Instead, say this after the illustration (e.g., p. 86).

## Sources for Good Storytelling

### Barrett, Ethel. *Storytelling—It’s Easy!* Los Angeles: Cowman Pub., Inc., 1960. Here’s a genuinely funny woman’s practical advice.

### Grant, Reg and Reed,John. *Telling Stories to Touch the Heart: How to Use Stories to Communicate God’s Truth.* Wheaton: Victor, 1990. Some of their helpful ideas are summarized on pages 7-8, 113-14 of the Homiletics I notes.