

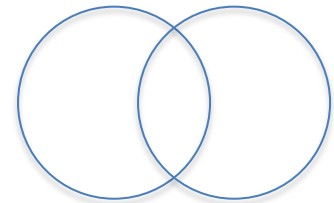
Planning for Oral Clarity (Step 6b) Illustrations

I. The Importance of Good Illustrations

Why it is important to illustrate the text well in preaching? (Robinson, 149-50)

- Illustrations explain, validate, or apply ideas by relating them to tangible experiences.
- Illustrations render a truth believable
- Illustrations aid memory
- Illustrations stir emotion
- Illustrations create need
- Illustrations hold attention
- Illustrations establish rapport with the audience (entertaining is good!)

Preacher's World Listener's World



II. How to Give Good Illustrations

- Draw illustrations from the *listener's* world—not yours!
- Get your sermon outline done early enough in the week to give time to find good and fitting illustrations (Mawhinney, 38, 40, 252-53).
- Vary the type of sermon illustration used. Variety is key!

Hardly ever used

- Humor
- Nursery rhyme
- Bible story
- Visualization (use of objects)
- Emotional story
- Personal story (which is true, modest, and does not violate a confidence)

Sometimes used

- Historical incident
- Definition
- Quotation
- Hymn
- Newspaper story

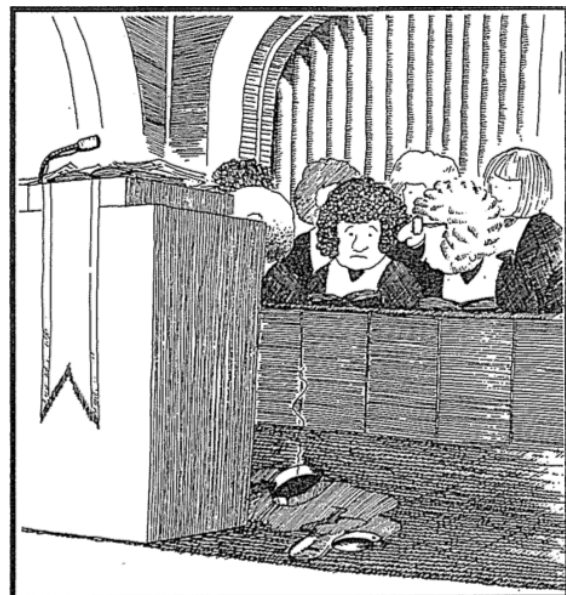
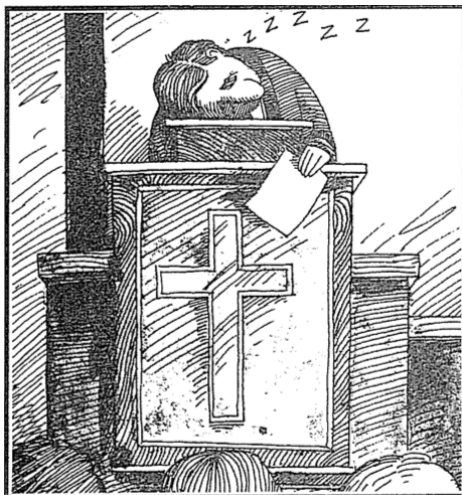
Often used

- Statistic
- Scientific data
- Poem
- Overused story
- Anecdote

Try to emphasize this first column and you'll be a hero to your listeners as very few Chinese preachers share illustrations in these areas!

(For a good example of variety, see Duane Litfin's sermon in Haddon Robinson's book, *Biblical Sermons*, 89-103, 107. He illustrates from Greek classics, pop music, science, poetry, hot air balloons, and his own experiences—all in one message!)

- Don't tell stories—relive them! Be dramatic!
- Illustrate for every 3 minutes of preaching (p. 51 has 18 ILLs in 15 minutes!)



"The pastor certainly put everything he had into that sermon!"

F. Avoid these dangers when illustrating your points

(from *100-Fold*, the EDAA [English Department Alumni Association]-SBC News, February 1992)

The pastor of stern countenance began his sermon by saying solemnly, "I am not here to entertain you with a lot of interesting stories; I am here to preach the Word of God." He proved to be prophetic. He was neither entertaining nor interesting. As a matter of fact, he was quite dull.

In vilifying the use of stories and illustrations in preaching, he was unwittingly criticizing a style (what we call parables) used most frequently by a well known preacher of the first century. He told stories about families, farmers and financiers. Some of them are quite humorous while others are rather sad.

From that Galilean preacher, we learn that using illustrations from the pulpit is an art to be learned. The most effective preachers are those who can communicate truth with a well-chosen illustration.

However, there needs to be a word of caution - nothing suffers from more abuse than the pulpit story. Certain kinds of stories should be avoided like a hymn with eight verses to the eight stanzas (take this with a pinch of salt).

The embellished story. Here the speaker wastes precious minutes giving a lot of irrelevant details and never seem to get to the point. And if he does, it is lost in the mass of unrelated details. He is usually one who complains about not enough time to preach.

The superfluous story. This usually occurs when the preacher has just heard a really good story and can't wait to spring it on his congregation. So somewhere during the message, he makes a herculean effort to apply it, saying, "that reminds me of a story".

The egocentric story. Here the preacher sees himself as a spiritual superstar. His illustrations are usually first-person accounts about his many spiritual triumphs. Like Perry Mason, he never loses. It is not wrong to use first-person incidents as illustrations. They can be quite helpful but the speaker must resist the temptation to become the hero every time.

The specious story. There is nothing wrong with fictitious stories - so long as they are not presented as actual experiences. Nothing will destroy the confidence in a minister as quickly as hearing fiction presented as fact.

The manipulative story. This is where the speaker manipulates the emotions of the audience to obtain certain results. Sometimes referred to as "tear jerkers", the tales can be used for such diverse purposes as obtaining decisions for Christ or raising funds. A moving story is not always an indication of the moving of the Spirit.

Here is a suggested checklist for the pulpit story-teller:

1. Is the story relevant to the point?
2. Does the story contain unnecessary details?
3. Will the story contribute to the overall quality and clarity of the message?
4. What is the motive in telling the story?

We need to think twice before saying, "that reminds me of a story."

adapted from article by LeRoy Patterson Stuart

II. How to Catalog Illustrations

A. *Find your illustrations.* Beg, borrow, or steal illustrations wherever you can—from...

1. *Sermons you hear* (in church, chapel, on tape, etc.): Never be caught without your mobile phone to write down what you hear as soon as you hear it.
2. *Things you read*
 - a. Newspaper articles and comics—especially on the morning you preach!
 - b. Christian Books—especially by Charles R. Swindoll (read *Living on the Ragged Edge*, *For Those Who Hurt*, *Improving Your Serve*, *Strengthening Your Grip*, *Dropping Your Guard*, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*)
 - c. Secular Books—see Tan Huay Peng, *Fun With Characters: The Straits Times Collection*. 3 vols. Singapore: Federal Publications, 1982.
 - d. Magazines—especially *Reader's Digest*, *Insight*, and *U.S. News and World Report*
 - e. Devotional guides—especially *Our Daily Bread*
 - f. Written sermons—especially Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Sermons*
3. *Your own personal experiences in life (but be transparent)*
4. *Other people's life experiences or quotes (good for clarity and authority)*
5. *Your imagination (make up a scenario or conversation as if the listener is in it)*

6. *Websites of Illustration Collections*

- IllustrationExchange.com allows weekly subscriptions of one free illustration per week
- PreachingToday.com
- SermonCentral.com might be the best one with the most illustrations
- SermonIdeas.com
- MoreIllustrations.com

7. *Films and Television—including advertisements (printed ones too)—hundreds of clips are available at wingclips.com*8. *Other preachers (exchange your best ones with one another)*

- B. *Categorize your illustrations* by pasting them into a separate Word file for each illustration where the file name has the TITLE in CAPS and the subtitle in small letters. For practice, give each of these four illustrations a TITLE and subtitle:

● **Karl Marx—A Role Model?**

Two of his daughters and a son-in-law committed suicide. Three of his children died of malnutrition. Marx felt no obligation to earn a living, but instead lived by begging from Engels. He fathered an illegitimate child by his maidservant. He drank heavily. He was a paid informer of the Austrian police, spying on revolutionaries.

Though Marx and his wife were poor, he kept investing in the stock market where he constantly lost. His wife left him twice, but returned. He didn't attend her funeral. His correspondence with Engels was full of obscenities. His favorite daughter, Eleanor, with her father's approval, married Edward Epling, a man who advocated blasphemy and worshipped Satan.

Daughter Eleanor committed suicide. Karl Marx died in despair.

● **Rape Acceptable?**

Nearly one-quarter of the boys and one-sixth of the girls responding to a survey on rape say it was acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex with him if he has spent money on her.

The survey was taken by 1,700 sixth-to-ninth graders who attended the Rhode Island Rape Crisis Center's Assault Awareness Program at schools across the state.

Among the findings:

- *65% of the boys and 47% of the girls in seventh through ninth grades said it is acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex if they have been dating more than six months.
- *87% of the boys and 79% of the girls said rape is OK if a man and woman are married.

● **How We Learn**

- 1% through Taste
- 1-1/2% through Touch
- 3-1/2% through Smell
- 11% through Hearing
- 83% through SIGHT

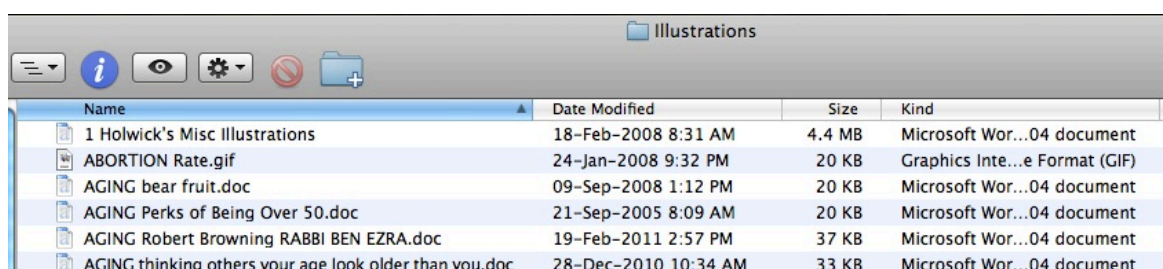
This shows the importance of audio-visual materials in teaching.

● **What Do Americans Believe?**

The Roper's USA Reports recently made an opinion survey. The result:

- *74% of Americans believe there is a heaven and hell.
- *50% believe in ESP
- *41% believe there is human life elsewhere in the Universe.
- *25% are sure that we have been visited by aliens from outer space via UFOs.
- *15% believe in reincarnation.

- C. *File these illustrations* in a folder on your computer. If your titles and subtitles make sense, then this will be valuable in the future when looking for illustrations.



Name	Date Modified	Size	Kind
1 Holwick's Misc Illustrations	18-Feb-2008 8:31 AM	4.4 MB	Microsoft Wor...04 document
ABORTION Rate.gif	24-Jan-2008 9:32 PM	20 KB	Graphics Inte...e Format (GIF)
AGING bear fruit.doc	09-Sep-2008 1:12 PM	20 KB	Microsoft Wor...04 document
AGING Perks of Being Over 50.doc	21-Sep-2005 8:09 AM	20 KB	Microsoft Wor...04 document
AGING Robert Browning RABBI BEN EZRA.doc	19-Feb-2011 2:57 PM	37 KB	Microsoft Wor...04 document
AGING thinking others your age look older than you.doc	28-Dec-2010 10:34 AM	33 KB	Microsoft Wor...04 document