

Life Notes *Sharing Your Faith with Pastor Justin*

9. Relevant and Helpful Illustrations

Sometimes a good story really helps to get the point across. When sharing our faith, especially to someone who has not grown up in church or has never read the Bible, it is a good idea to help them grasp biblical concepts by using stories or illustrations. Jesus did this all throughout his earthly ministry and it enabled people to see an awesome and powerful God as their friend whom they could accept and understand.

Let's look at three illustrations today that can be used alongside the Five-Second Gospel we learned last week.

1. The Spiritual Equation

The first one, The Spiritual Equation, flows directly out of the words of John 1:12. It's especially helpful for religious people who think that merely agreeing with the right facts makes them a Christian. John 1:12 says:

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, He gave the right to become the children of God."

This verse contains three operative verbs: *believe*, *receive* and *become*. Put into a spiritual equation it would look like this:

Believe + Receive = Become

Believe: It is important to believe the right things. The Bible presents certain truths that we need to understand and agree with.

These are: there is a God who loves us: we've sinned against him and deserve his punishment; he sent his son Jesus to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to rise from the dead to give us new life.

Receive: It's not just enough to believe these things. The Bible says that "*even the demons believe and tremble*" (James 2:19). Simply agreeing that Jesus died for your sins would be like someone sitting in jail believing that a friend had paid his fine to set him free, but then just staying there anyway. Instead he must act on what he knows by getting up and walking out of the jail cell as a free person! Similarly, we need to act on what we believe and receive the forgiveness and life that Jesus offers.

Become: When we sincerely believe in and receive Jesus' forgiveness and leadership, the Bible is clear that at the moment we are forgiven of all our sins and we become his adopted son or daughter. From there we have the adventure of following and serving Him.

*Adapted from How to Give Away Your Faith by Paul Little, second edition copyright 1988 by Marie Little

2. The Judge

A young woman was arrested for breaking the law. She knew she'd been caught red-handed and couldn't deny her guilt, and later stood in front of a judge's bench and admitted what she had done. The man wearing the robe was a kind man, but he was also a just judge, and knew he couldn't let her off the hook. She had broken the law. So he gave her the penalty prescribed by the law, which meant the girl was required to pay a steep fine – one that she couldn't afford – or else end up in jail.

But then the man did an amazing thing. He stood up, took off his judge's robe, walked around the front of the bench where the girl was standing, pulled out his wallet, and lovingly looked in her eyes as he handed her the money she needed to pay the entire fine.

Why did he do this? Because the woman was his own daughter! Being a good judge, he had to honor the law and impose the penalty. But being a loving father, he was willing to come to her side and pay the price on her behalf.

But now the girl had a choice to make. Would she let go of her pride, and humbly reach out to receive her father's generous offer? Or would she insist on trying to prove she didn't need help from him or anyone else, and end up going to jail?

This story illustrates the situation between God and us. God is a holy and just judge who said, "You've broken my laws and sinned against me, and the penalty is death." But he is also like a loving father, who said, "I love you and will come down and pay the penalty myself," and then he took off his heavenly robe, came to earth in the person of Christ, and paid for our sins by dying on the cross.

Now we too, have a choice to make: to humbly receive his payment, forgiveness, and leadership – or to reject his sacrifice and spend the rest of our lives, and eternities trying to pay a debt we can never fully pay.

*Adapted from *More than a Carpenter*, by Josh McDowell
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3. Do vs. Done

This final illustration, Do vs. Done, is helpful for people who think they need to do good works to try to earn their way into God's forgiveness and favor:

A lot of people don't realize there is a big difference between religion and Christianity – it is in how they are spelled!

Religion is spelled "D-O."

It consists of trying to do enough good things to earn our way back to God. The problem is we never know when we have done enough. More than that, the Bible makes it clear that we never can do enough.

Christianity, on the other hand, is spelled "D-O-N-E."

That's because Jesus has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. He lived the perfect life that we could never live. Then He died on the cross to pay for all of the sins we could never pay for, and he rose from the dead to offer us new life. But it is not enough to just know this. We have to receive Him and what he has done for us. We do that by asking Him for His forgiveness and leadership in our lives.

Does this make sense to you? Have you ever received what Jesus has done for you?