

MONDAY MANNA

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TO HAVE AN IMPACT, TELL YOUR STORY

By Rick Boxx

While attending a national conference some years ago, I enjoyed listening to a variety of excellent keynote speakers. Some of them, however, seemed particularly memorable. I wondered what had made them stand out in my mind. I knew it was not just their levels of expertise. Then I realised the business owners who shared their personal stories were the ones that had impressed me the most.

These were not professional speakers, but rather, entrepreneurs who are making a difference. Some are having an impact on the world through their products or services; others are changing their communities and the world through their generosity. Their information was excellent, but their stories – accounts on what is happening through their enterprises – were what touched the hearts of people in the audience.

As I scanned the meeting room, it occurred to me that many of the leaders in attendance were becoming highly motivated through the stories they heard. I suspected that the following year, there would likely be a fresh crop of stories to be told, including some from those who were being inspired.

Why are stories so effective? One reason is that they provide a picture, what you might call a “verbal image,” of the principles and practices we are trying to convey. It is one thing to have strong enthusiasm for a product, service or even ideas. But it is better to show – through the power of stories – why they are important. Stories create images in our minds, giving flesh and bones to otherwise intangible concepts.

This story-telling strategy is hardly new. Even the Bible, written thousands of years ago, uses stories extensively to communicate its timeless truths. In fact, one passage says, *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story”* (Psalm 107:1-2).

When Jesus Christ was conducting His earthly ministry, He recognised the impact of stories. Why do you think that of all His teachings included in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, what many of us remember most are His stories, which He also called parables? For instance, even in today’s increasingly secularized world, we often hear references to “the good Samaritan,” recounted in the 10th chapter of Luke.

The biblical account is about a Jewish man beaten up along a highway by robbers and left to die. Two religious leaders saw him, but rather than stopping to assist, they moved to the other side of the road and passed him by. It was a Samaritan, a race of people hated by Jews, who stopped to help, not only binding the injured man’s wounds but also paying for a place where he could rest and recuperate.

To this day, we often hear news reports about some “good Samaritan” who selflessly – maybe even sacrificially – stops to provide aid for someone in desperate need. Jesus used this story to illustrate what He called the two greatest commandments, *“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,’ and ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’”* (Luke 10:27).

At the end of the story, Jesus asked, *“Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”* (Luke 10:36). He presented many other memorable parables, but we can see the enduring power of stories from this single example. What can we learn from this? It is simple: If you desire to inspire others to even greater heights, share your story.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

Can you relate to this idea of communicating important concepts and ideas through the power of stories? What is an example of someone telling a story that remained with you long after he or she had stopped speaking?

Who is the best storyteller that you know? How effective are you at telling stories to convey your thoughts? What are some of the challenges to being or becoming an effective storyteller?

Often the best stories are not ones we repeat that we have heard told by others, but ones we can draw from our own lives and experiences. Why do you think this is the case?

What are some ways you could hone your skills in the use of stories, especially when you are trying to persuade people to consider something that is very important to you that you believe would also be of great value for them?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Matthew 7:24-27

Luke 4:1-13, 5:17-26, 8:1-15

John 20:10-18