

ROLE PLAY & CASE STUDIES

BRINGING THE LESSON NEXT DOOR

1. Strengths

Stronger than a parable because these are stories about real people whom we may not know, but who face real situations where Scripture needs to be applied.

These may be reports from surveys of the-man-on-the-street who responds to questions about the Bible.

The situations we'll discuss may come from TV news, reports in a magazine, observations from the internet, or neighbors from the past. They are as vivid as our relatives, workplace friends, school chums, or the kid down the street.

They could even be Bible characters in disguise or unidentified members from other churches. The reality factor brings the situation into vivid perspective.

Humor is usually appreciated because the obvious "error" is greatly overstated.

2. Weaknesses

It may sound like gossip.

Be sure your purpose is reconciliation, not condemnation.

Many people have been offended by a pastor's generic stories because they were convinced the sermon was directed straight at them and they accused the pastor of violating some personal confidence.

3. Tips

If you're dealing with an actual in-church situation, don't give too much information about a negative issue the way I did. Somebody figured it out and went to one of my friends [a college student] and told him what I had said while he was absent from class. He was hurt but kind. He came to me and rebuked me, but kindly encouraged me to be more careful in the future. PTL for his kindness to me.

4. Examples

The case study may take the form of, "What Bible verse could we use here?"

Play "What's his problem?" or "How can we possibly reach this dude?"
or "What Bible story do you think brought this person to faith in Christ?"

Perhaps you want to guess what kind of home life this neighbor had: ethnic, social, educational, religious, or bad experience with believers.

This may be an exercise in problem solving.

Teachers have used this method in-class by having a member of the class role play an unsaved neighbor who is resistant to the Gospel. The rest of the class asks 20 questions of this "person" to find out where he is stuck on spiritual matters, and the class member answers which his friend would probably give.

A ministry group leader is having difficulty with staff unity. She knows she should talk to them but she is afraid if she does, some of her staff will quit.

You are the Sunday School superintendent. You have veteran and rookie teachers. Some of them never involve their students in learning but lecture the entire period. In your monthly staff meetings you address this. What are you going to say in your opening paragraph?

What's wrong with this picture? Give details, possible classroom snags, actual fatal mistakes, or probable fallout and worst case scenarios.

How can we encourage an over zealous new believer without quenching his desire to affect others?

Would you, like Nathan, risk a friendship by telling your friend, David, a parable like "the little ewe lamb" or hold your tongue and allow a relationship to go south by saying nothing?

5. Example #1

Role play

Debbie [pastor's wife, age 24] Pat [SS supt, age 40]

The pastor's wife, a little perturbed, finds reason to mention to the Junior Church leader that a few of the children have been slipping out of the children's service and have been making a nuisance around the sanctuary peeking in the windows, throwing rocks on the roof, and making strange noises.

The Junior Church leader thinks that these are not church kids but neighborhood boys who had visited only once several months ago and were so disruptive they were asked to leave. While defending the 2 boys and 1 girl from class, he speaks quite rudely to the pastor's wife.

Time 1 to 3 minutes

Example #2 A bad testimony

The teacher asked 2 class members to play the role of unbelievers.

Another was asked to quote John 3.16 to them, but six others Christians will be loudly spouting off about a number of Christian issues: tobacco, alcohol, abortion, dancing, drugs, the political right, etc. Demonstrate Christian "Noise." Your actions speak so loudly that I can't hear what you're saying.

Example # 3 David & Bathsheba

What question could the teacher ask to start the discussion?
 for class of junior high kids?
 for 3rd grade children's class?
 for 30-something class