

Series: Real.Loud

Session Title: Demonstration

Date and Time: _____

Number of Students: _____

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Charades scenarios according to the Lead In as you prepare it
- ☐ Prizes
- ☐ Scrap paper
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Double-sided copies of A15-16

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will...

- Confront the difficulty of non-verbal communication.
- Practice non-verbal communication.
- Identify eight meaningful gospel themes.
- Identify non-verbal ways of demonstrating those gospel themes.

Pastoral Objectives:

Lead In:

It would be appropriate to do an extended lead in for this session as it is the first in a new series and is highly strategic. Consider running an extended version of Charades, but don't just trot out a generic brand of the game; use the concept intentionally. For example, you might make a giant sign board proclaiming "Communication Competition" and divide the group into two teams. Create a 'drama troupe' that will do all the skits and tell the groups that they will be competing to determine who the best listeners and interpreters of dramatic interpretations are.

Assign a leader to manage the drama troupe out in another room. Have a number of rounds with escalating prize values for the correct guesses. The one thing all assignments or sketches should have in common is this: *they must not use words; non-verbal communication only!* Drama sketch assignments could involve variations such as:

1. Troupe must act out a story from the Bible. Suggestions: David and Goliath, Noah and the Ark, Jesus and Peter walk on water, Ananias and Sapphira, Jonah and the whale, etc. Do this version in rapid fire format. As groups roar out the correct answer assign points.
2. For the second round enforce some new rules. For the second round teams can only guess once; no shouting out random answers. The group must appoint a leader, view the whole drama and consult before offering one final answer. Point values should be much higher. Dramatic suggestions would include: inform the groups that the drama team will be doing a skit that highlights one of the fruits of the spirit. They must guess which one. Or tell the groups that the drama team will be doing a skit to demonstrate the wisdom of one of the Ten Commandments. They must decide which one.

This whole exercise could take twenty minutes. Have fun with it.

Consider transitioning into the tasks by saying something like this:

Communicating without words is hard work which is why we do so much of our intentional communicating through verbal means. But have you ever heard the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words?" Sometimes non-verbal communication actually says more than we could ever get out in words.

The Bible says that one of the primary means we are to use to communicate the gospel is demonstration, or non-verbal imaging. Remember Jesus said, "Let your light so shine that others will see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) Peter said something similar when he advised us to "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (1 Peter 2:12, TNIV)

As Christians we tend to fall back on words whenever we want to communicate the gospel message. We have so much to say. But the Bible calls on us to focus hard on demonstration for at least two reasons:

1. *We need to earn the right to be heard. (Our actions, if harmonious with our future words will prove our integrity. Most Christians claim to have integrity but have done nothing to prove it.)*
2. *Actions truly speak louder and more effectively than words.*

Have you ever heard eight-year-old children speaking about their fathers? Ask an eight-year-old that you know well what their father does for a living. You'll be surprised by the answers you receive. Ask them about his character, what he's like and how he behaves. Ask them how tall he is and what he eats for breakfast. You may end the conversation rolling on the ground in

laughter or trying hard not to giggle through your nose. Kids have a very imprecise understanding of their fathers. It's not that kids are stupid or unable to communicate; it's that kids live in a very different world than their fathers and so are really just grasping at the unknown from a very limited perspective. We need to understand that when we tell people about God we are limited in the same way. Our words come from the place of our experience and our knowledge base, which is, we must admit, pretty limited. That's where the power of actions and images comes in. When we act out something we know to be true of our Father in heaven (forgiveness, empowerment, love, etc.) we allow the image to speak a thousand words that might never come to us. It allows the Holy Spirit to interpret the art for the individual; that's where the real power is!

Tonight we are going to practise our painting skills. We are going to work hard to identify some important gospel themes and we are going to try to think of ways to act them out artfully for our friends. Don't think too much right now about how you will interpret those images for your friends – artists don't always make the best gallery guides – just think about representing themes through action and movement. Let's split up now into groups of no less than five and no more than ten. Then wait silently for me to give you instructions. Go!

Part One:

Hand out copies of page A15-16 to every student. The hand out gives instructions for the students to follow. Give the students ten minutes to complete the first task and then break for feedback. For feedback, you could have the first group come up to the board (easel paper or a blank overhead work too) and write up their eight themes and verses. Have the next group look at these and then add any they had differently as well as the verses they used to support these. Continue this for every group until you have a complete list of everybody's themes and verses. Monitor their answers for appropriateness (for example, are they really themes and do the verses actually support them?) and ask the other students to do the same

Part Two:

After the feedback, tell the students that they are about to begin Part Two. Part Two consists of generating the actions, images, lifestyles, movements that demonstrate the theme. Do an example such as this together.

Suppose you chose the theme, "God loves the lowly." Good. This is a major gospel theme. God is not looking for powerful, confident, self-assured people because those people are not looking for God. Part of the mystery of the gospel is that God is building a kingdom and a family out of the weak, the low, and the rejected. Wow! That's a cool theme.

Ask the students to suggest a concrete image or action that demonstrated this theme. Let them answer. The kind of answer that you are looking for is something like this:

You might image or communicate the love of God for the lowly by developing a ministry in your church to single moms. They are ‘the low’ (the average income of single moms is significantly lower than that of two parent families) and ‘the vulnerable’ (they are alone and without backup) in our society. What if one Saturday a month your church hosted a service event whereby single moms could come to the church, drop their kids off at free day-care, leave their cars in the lot for the men (or mechanically minded ladies) to change the oil and do basic maintenance while the church van drives them to the mall for a morning away or to just run errands? Do you think that would be appreciated by these women? You bet! Does that action reflect and speak of God’s love for unusual and unlikely people? You bet!

Once you think the students understand how to make the connection between theme and demonstration, release them to follow the instructions of the second side of the handout.

After the students have completed Part Two of the handout, surprise them with a fun feedback task. Tell the students that they have two minutes to quickly plan out a charade for each one of their scenarios. Then have the groups take turns demonstrating their scenarios while the other teams guess. For example, the group that did God’s love for the lowly demonstrated in a Saturday service for single moms could silently act out such a service and the other teams would have to figure out as closely as possible what the ministry is.

Conclusion:

Consider wrapping up the evening by saying something like this:

Art and image are great ways of sharing the gospel! When we reduce the gospel to the words we know we limit the message! There is a place for words and we will speak about that next week but we must recapture the use of action, image, and movement. All of this together is demonstration and it must gain a larger role in our gospel strategy. These actions and images will prove our integrity (if they are real and reflect our words) and will earn us the right to speak when the time for words arrives. They will also leave lots of room for the Holy Spirit to work and to use the images and examples we provide as a medium for him to share God’s love. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words; start speaking with your mouth shut!