



TRAINING SESSION

# Illustrating Your Bible Teaching



## 1. Introduction: Why Does This Matter?

### OPENING DISCUSSION

Think of a time when someone explained something to you in a way that really ‘clicked.’ What made it memorable?

Can you recall a sermon, Sunday school lesson, or youth talk that stuck with you? What helped you remember it?

## 2. What Is Illustration?

The word *illustrate* comes from the Latin **lux**, meaning “light”—to illustrate is to **shed light** on something so that it can be seen clearly.

### QUOTE TO REFLECT ON

“The illustration is never to be regarded as an end in itself; it shines for the sake of something beyond.” – C.R. Brown

### 3. Is Using Illustrations Biblical?

Jesus, the perfect teacher, used illustrations constantly—**parables, word pictures, metaphors, and comparisons**—to communicate deep truths in ways his listeners could grasp, remember, and apply.

### 4. Why Use Illustrations?

#### THEY MAKE TRUTH UNDERSTANDABLE

Abstract concepts such as **grace, faith, or sovereignty** become clear through familiar images.

#### THEY CAPTURE ATTENTION

A well-chosen story grabs attention and holds focus.

#### THEY MAKE TRUTH RELEVANT

Application matters—illustrations help listeners see why God's truth affects them personally.

#### THEY HELP TRUTH STICK

Memorable images help truth remain in our hearts.

## 5. Types of Illustrations and How to Use Them

### 5.1 STORY-BASED ILLUSTRATIONS

- Jesus' parables are the best examples.
- **Example:** The Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:25–37*) vividly illustrates God's command to love our neighbour.
- **How to use it:** Find real-life stories that help young people understand the biblical truth you are trying to explain.

### 5.2 ANALOGIES AND COMPARISONS

- Similes and metaphors make abstract truths concrete.
- **Examples:**
  - Simile: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed" (*Matthew 13:31*).
  - Metaphor: "I am the vine; you are the branches" (*John 15:5*).
- **How to use it:** Think of something common in your audience's life that parallels biblical truth.

### 5.3 EVERYDAY OBJECTS AND NATURE

- Jesus pointed to **birds, seeds, water, and light** to teach about God.
- **Example:** A caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly illustrates new life in Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:17*).
- **How to use it:** Use physical objects during teaching.

### 5.4 WORD PICTURES AND DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

- Good descriptions paint a picture in the mind.
- **Example:** Jesus calls believers "the salt of the earth" (*Matthew 5:13*), evoking images of preserving and flavouring.
- **How to use it:** Use vivid descriptions to bring Scripture to life.

### 5.5 PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

- Paul often used his own life as an example (*Philippians 3:4–14*).
- **How to use it:** Be humble—tell stories that point to **God's work**, not your own greatness.

## 6. Where to Find Good Illustrations

A well-chosen illustration is drawn from **everyday experiences** that children and young people can easily relate to.

### Sources include:

- Nature, school life, friendships, family, sports, technology
- The Bible itself—full of rich imagery
- Children’s literature, history, objects like a seed, mirror, or torch

### Tips for sourcing and using illustrations:

- Vary your sources to avoid predictability and include all children.
- Use real, up-to-date illustrations rather than only historical ones.
- Prefer true stories from real life, the church family, or known sources.
- Avoid making up stories just to make a point.
- Observe life intentionally—keep a notebook or digital list of strong illustrations.

## 7. Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

- **Illustration Overshadowing the Text** – A great story is useless if people remember the story but not the Scripture it illustrates.
- **Forgetting Context** – Illustrations should fit both the passage and the listener’s world.
- **Being the Hero** – Avoid placing yourself at the centre. Illustrations should point to Christ.
- **Overcomplicating It** – Keep it **short and clear**—an illustration should illuminate, not dominate.

### FINAL REFLECTION

What is one takeaway you will apply in your teaching?

What is one area where you’d like to grow in using illustrations?