

Di121 Effective Communication

Lesson Di121-17 Method: Using Visual Aids

Jesus was the greatest Teacher in history. Therefore we must study his many approaches to teach people. One thing Jesus did to communicate truth was to use a common, ordinary object to illustrate a lesson. Then when someone who had heard the story saw that object again, they were reminded of the spiritual truth again. These ordinary objects—like a sheep, a mustard seed, or a sparrow—can all be called “visual aids.” In modern times you can use pictures of these things if they are not near you. In this story Jesus used a coin to reinforce the truth that God, our Creator, has a claim on us. We should give ourselves to him.

This event probably took place on the Tuesday before Jesus was crucified on Friday. Keeping a close watch on Jesus, the Pharisees and the Herodians sent spies, who pretended to be sincere followers. The Jewish leaders feared to take action against Jesus themselves. The Herodians supported Roman rule, but the Pharisees opposed it. Both groups hoped to catch Jesus in something he said. So the spies questioned Christ: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right. You do not show partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” They really intended to hand him over to the Roman officials to be executed for treason if he said “No.” If he said “yes,” the Pharisees would denounce him to the Jews as disloyal to his nation.

The subject of taxes was very important to the Jews of that day. The governor represented the power and authority of Rome. Those who collected taxes for these invaders were viewed as the worst of traitors to God and country. The spies hoped to trap Jesus in his words, because his wonderful deeds could not be denied. They gave Jesus a question and two possible answers. They thought he would trap himself, whichever answer he chose. He would reveal his loyalty either to Israel or Rome. They were wrong, however. Jesus chose not to answer their question. Instead he used a visual aid to teach an important truth.

He saw through their pretense and said to them, “Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

This tax question was hotly debated by the Jews. Their leaders often taught that Jews should not pay taxes levied by Rome. The Roman denarius was worth a day’s wages. The coin represented Caesar’s authority and his power over the people. On one side was the emperor’s likeness; on other Caesar claimed that his father Augustus was divine. Paying the tax meant surrendering to that power and honoring him as a god.

Jesus chose to ask his own question, spoiling their trap. His question about whose picture was on the coin was simple but very profound. If Caesar wanted back what had his picture on it, than give it to him. But more importantly, give back to God what belongs to him. What is that, you may ask? He wants people to serve and be loyal to him, because everyone has been created in God’s image (Gen 1:27).

He said to them, “Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Luke 20:20-26).

In contrasting Caesar and God, Jesus also protested against the false and idolatrous claims made on the coins. Jesus did not teach us to withhold taxes from rulers. Rather he taught that we all have a greater loyalty to God. How did Jesus get this message across to his opponents and disciples? He did it by showing an everyday object, a coin, and giving it new meaning. He intended that his hearers would remember the illustration every time they handled such a coin. The Holy Spirit often speaks, reminding us of what we have seen and heard.

They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. Astonished by his answer, they became silent. The spies and their leaders were silenced by the words of Jesus. So they left him and went away. Very likely the people again rejoiced that he had left their wicked leaders speechless. He did it by asking a simple question about an ordinary object and giving it a new meaning in the process.

This story is **important** because it demonstrates how Jesus responded to those who opposed him and his message by using a simple everyday object.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Jesus used visual aids to effectively communicate. In this story he effectively taught God’s claim on our lives and his desire for our commitment to him.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What was the response of Jesus when his opponents tried to trap him about paying taxes to Caesar? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “Jesus asked them to show him the coin used to pay the tax,” you are correct.
2. What communication method did Jesus use after he was given a Roman coin? [Pause]
 - A. If you said that Jesus used the coin as a visual aid to illustrate a spiritual truth, you are right.
3. What was the response of the people after Jesus instructed them about what to give to God and what to give to Caesar? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered that the people were astonished by his answer, and they became silent, you have answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to memorize the story and tell it to someone who has not heard it before. Then ask them these questions, “What are some other biblical truths that Jesus taught using visual aids? What are some objects in your surroundings that could be used to teach a spiritual lesson?” Discuss your answers together.