

Where to Find Good Anecdotes and Illustrations

Great material to illustrate truth is all over. Here are a few places to find it:

1. ***Mine Your Memory!*** Dig down deep for those story gems. If you think about it, there are probably stories you tell at parties or when talking with friends that always bring a laugh, or drive home a particular point. Such a story may also be used to illustrate an important truth. It might be an experience from your childhood, or a family tale about your great Aunt Gertrude. How about your own testimony of coming to faith in Christ? Do you remember your first car? Your first job? Your first kiss? Any one of these memories could have the making of a great anecdote.
2. ***Ask Your Mama!*** Or ask your spouse, your brother, your best friend. One of them might know the story about Aunt Gertrude. You can even get stories by interviewing strangers; everybody's got an Aunt Gertrude. And if you use the anecdote in your book or article, be sure to give credit to the storyteller: "My neighbor, Charlie Smith, loves to tell the tale of how his Aunt Gertrude once foiled a bank robbery . . ." Your source will be tickled pink to be named in your writing. And speaking of being tickled . . .
3. ***Start a Tickler File!*** When you run across a good story in your reading, whether in a book, a magazine, a newsletter, a blog, an ezine, or in the news, put it in a hard copy or electronic file; Give the story a title and a brief description of what it might illustrate, along with details of where you heard it. Cut and paste the text from the web; photocopy the pages from the newsletter; or if need be, just make note of where the text can be located. Be sure you have enough information to provide a credit line.
4. ***Do Some Research!*** Check out stories from history; read biographies of interesting characters; investigate urban legends; uncover scientific oddities. You may find that some well-known stories and things you always thought were facts are really fiction. But you may find that the real story is more interesting than the fable.
5. ***Go to the Movies!*** Or TV, or the theatre, or a classic novel. A well-known, or not-so-well-known, scene from a fictional piece can illuminate a point beautifully As long as the point of the anecdote can be clearly understood without a long, drawn-out explanation of the plot.
6. ***Be Metaphoric!*** You can often find an illustration of a truth in the simplest of everyday events, just Jesus did in His parables about a man sowing seed or the birds of the air. But avoid those metaphors that are overused, such as "the key that unlocks every door," or comparing faith in God to sitting in a chair.