STORYRUNNERS®
A Cru Ministry

HOW TO BE A GOOD STORYTELLER

How you say what you say has the power to change how your story is perceived. It also has the power to change whether or not your story is received.

1. Know your story

- Internalize, don't memorize. Make it personal, tell it using words you naturally use so it sounds like you.
- Practice, practice, practice!

2. Make eye contact with your listeners.

- Look people in the eye. A moment of eye contact can cause a listener to think, "I feel as if this person is talking to me personally."
- If telling the story to a group, make eye contact with a variety of people throughout the room, so that everyone feels included.
- Use your eyes to draw attention to scenes/objects in your story or to demonstrate dialogue to bring the story to life for your listeners.

3. Gestures and Body Language

- Use gestures to illustrate action and descriptive elements in your story.
- Look for ways to incorporate the four types of gestures:

    1. **Emotive**-gestures used to emphasize emotion in the story.

    2. **Emphatic**-gestures to draw attention to and reinforce a strong point. They tend to indicate strong feelings and conviction. *(example: a fist slammed down when expressing anger, etc.)*

3. **Descriptive**-gestures that demonstrate shape, size, height, location of something in a story.

4. **Prompting**-gestures that invite a response from others. (*example: clapping to prompt others to clap*)

- Be intentional with your gestures and plan ahead for how you will use them in your story.
- Use your hands, shoulders and body as much as you can, to show shapes of objects, scenery, actions and feelings. Use mime and gesture to "paint the story," like a picture.
- Make gestures bigger than you think they should be.
- Make sure your gestures are appropriate to the size of your audience and appropriate to the size of what you're demonstrating.

4. Facial expressions

- Your face is the most effective gesture you have. It's usually the first thing people notice. We use our facial expressions to communicate the emotion and mood of a story.
- Let the audience see your face. Don't hide behind dark glasses, unless it's part of your story, of course.
- Be emotionally consistent and make sure your facial expressions actually reflect the emotion you want to convey in your story.
- Use a mirror to practice.

5. Voice- the soundtrack of your story.

- Speak with clarity and confidence.
- Enunciate clearly and project your voice towards the listeners. Use a microphone if one is offered to you for larger groups.
- Speak slowly enough so that the story is easily absorbed by the listeners but not so slowly that the listeners' attention wanders.
- Use your tone of voice to communicate the meaning behind your words (for example, the sincerity of saying "I'm sorry;" or Jesus's feelings toward the woman he calls "Daughter").
- Use volume to reinforce the meaning and the emotional consistency of your message.

- Use pitch to convey the meaning, emotion and the structure of your speech (going up in pitch at the end of a sentence when asking a question). As a rule, higher pitch communicates excitement, surprise, or curiosity and lower pitch communicates authority, seriousness, and anger.
- Emphasize certain words in a phrase to reinforce and clarify its meaning. (for example, "Only ***I*** have the authority to forgive sins.")
- Tell your story with intentional pauses where appropriate. This helps the listeners process the story and also keeps them interested. This can also draw attention to important parts of the story.
- Role play dialogue with character voices. Let the audience know who is speaking simply by using different voices for different characters.
- Use other sounds. For example, weather sounds, like wind or rain; action sounds, like explosions or rustling; animal sounds, like a snake's hiss; emotional sounds, like sighs, sobs, yawns. Where appropriate, you can involve the listeners by asking them to help you by making the sounds themselves.

6. Believe in the power of stories

- Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools we have to connect with and capture the imagination of an audience.
- People are more likely to remember a spiritual principle or truth when it's told in the context of a story.
- As you make the story your own and tell it well, it will empower the story to persuade people of its truth.