



Creative Communication - The Essential Guide to Captivating an Audience

Kidzmatter 2026 Breakout Notes - James Hamilton

Introduction

Every kid in your ministry is being shaped by stories, be it on their screens, in their games, in their imaginations. So if we want to shape their hearts for Jesus, we have to strive to become the most captivating storytellers and communicators in their world. Today, we're going to unlock the secrets behind Jesus' own teaching methods and the science of how young minds engage, remember, and are moved, so you can walk out of this room ready to turn every Bible story into an unforgettable experience for the kids you lead.

"Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." Matthew 13:34

Jesus the Greatest Communicator. Why did Jesus use parables?

- **To make the message accessible:**

Jesus used parables to translate abstract truths into familiar, everyday experiences. This made his teachings relatable and easier for the common people to understand.

- **To engage imagination and emotion:**

Stories have a unique power to engage the heart and imagination, making the message more impactful and memorable than abstract facts.

- **To reveal the kingdom of God:**

Parables presented a glimpse into the nature and character of God's kingdom, showing how it would look like in the world.

- **To teach and test:**

While parables revealed truths to those who were open to receiving them, they also served as a test of hearts, revealing who was receptive and who was not.

If we want to communicate effectively to children, we need to follow Jesus' example and become great storytellers.

TELLING STORIES TO KIDS

James told the story of Peter Walking on Water – Matthew 14:22-33

What can we learn from this storytelling experience?

- **Learning styles** – What do the audience See, Hear, Do?
- **Hook** – How did I draw the listener in?
- **Memorable Moment** – What will be the first thing they recall?
- **Comedy** – Kids love nothing more than other people's misfortune
- **Repetition** – Keeping the engagement and pace

- **Ingredients** – This story included music, movement, props, artwork, and technology to enhance the experience.
- **Optimal Teaching Moment** – Where in the story is the most powerful moment to share the message?
- **Energy** - A Place of PLAY, PASSION, PACE, POWER

THE STORY ARC - Every good story has a 4 Part Story ARC

What was the story ARC for Peter Walking on Water?

“When you tell a story, you have to take the listener somewhere. You can’t keep driving around the block”

Alistair Bane

- **Setting** - Let the listener know who you are and where you are so they can join you.
- **Conflict** – What is the problem that needs to be solved. Where is the tension?
- **Resolution** – How is the problem overcome?

“Every good story hinges on a decision”

This is the ‘main event’ of your story. This is why we are all on the edge of our seats. The story turns the final corner.

- **Ending** – What is different as a result of the events in the story?

Something is achieved. Somehow the ‘you’ at the end of the story is different from the beginning.

What’s happening to the brain in story? – What takes place neurologically during effective storytelling?

When a storyteller weaves content into narrative form, they tap into powerful cognitive and emotional mechanisms:

1. Enhancing Memory

By engaging both memory and cognition, storytelling gives the listener something to remember, reconsider, and reconnect with long after the story is shared.

According to *Headstream* 79% of consumers prefer to read stories about brands than facts

Stories are 22 times more memorable than facts

2. Engagement and Motivation

Allow the listener to not just hear your story but experience it.

You want the audience to think *“What happens next?”*, not *“Why am I hearing this? What has this got to do with anything?”*

A well told story hooks you in and motivates you to pay attention. The *“Silent Hum of Listening”*.

“Great stories don’t just summarize the event; they zoom into the moment” – Philipp Humm

Example - (Daniel was feeling nervous / Daniel was rapidly tapping his heel to the floor)

3. Empathy and Understanding

“Stories are the original virtual reality – no goggles necessary”

Stories naturally incite perspective. It allows the listener to step into other's shoes and see the world through different eyes.

A study led by neuroscientist Uri Hasson found that when a person is listening and comprehending a story, their brain activity begins to couple, or align, with the brain of the teller

SPEAKER-LISTENER NEURAL COUPLING – The teller and listener Sync up at OXYTOCIN (Social Bonding Hormone) is released.

In my story – our brains were scientifically connecting. I hopefully built empathy which, in turn, created community. We had a shared experience.

4. Emotion and Action

"If you don't feel it, the audience won't feel it" – Jenifer Hixon

Listening to a story without emotion (and energy!) is like having an instruction manual read to you.

Never tell an audience how they should feel. Tell them how you (or the main character) felt. Sometimes the story itself is enough to inspire change without you having to spell it out.

Conclusion

Jesus didn't just tell stories, He was the story, and He's invited every one of us into it as storytellers for the next generation. The brain science, the story arc, the hooks and the humor are all just tools; the real work happens when you're willing to step out of the boat and risk telling the story with everything you've got. Kids may not remember your bullet points, but they will remember how your story made them feel, and that feeling can shape a lifetime of faith. So be creative in how you communicate to kids and see what happens when a lean in to hear what comes next.

Thanks for attending the session! Visit www.thrivingkidmin.com for more information about ThrivingKidMin and how I can support you in in your church, ministry, or organization.

****See *Teacher Guidelines* document below for an example of what is expected of the storytellers and teachers at Bayside Kids.**



Teacher & Storyteller Guidelines

Bayside Kids Ministry Elementary Teaching

Thank you for allowing God to use you to teach Bayside Kids the truths of His Word and joy and hope of being a follower of Jesus. We highly value creativity in helping kids grow in their faith and their understanding of who God is.

The following 10 guidelines are designed to help you in your preparation and delivery of your lesson and give Bayside Kids a memorable and impactful experience. These are our non-negotiables; the standards every teacher and storyteller commits to each time they step into our ministry setting. They exist to protect two things: the clarity of God's Word and the experience of every child in the room.

1. Pray and Be Fully Prepared

What it looks like: Teachers have prayed over their lesson and the kids they'll teach and have rehearsed the material well enough to teach it without leaning too heavily on a script.

Why it matters: Preparation is stewardship. God has given you this opportunity to open up His Word to children. We believe this should be treated with the utmost commitment. Prayer reminds us that this work is spiritual, not just programmatic: we're planting seeds, but God is the one who makes them grow.

2. Use Visuals — Props, Slides, and Object Lessons

What it looks like: Every lesson includes at least one tangible visual element. Use physical props, slides, or a hands-on object lesson tied to the *Big Idea* to help capture the kid's attention.

Why it matters: Elementary-age kids are concrete, sensory learners. Abstract truths ("God is faithful") land and stick when a child can see, touch, or watch something illustrate it. Visuals also level the playing field for different learning styles and hold attention in a way that talking alone can't. Ask; "*What will the kids see, hear, and do throughout my presentation?*"

3. Use Audience Participation

What it looks like: Kids aren't just listeners, they respond, move, answer, act out, or interact at multiple points during the story or lesson.

Why it matters: Participation turns a story kids hear into an experience kids live. It keeps energy and focus, gives quieter kids a way in, and helps truth move from head-knowledge to something felt and remembered.

4. Be Creative

What it looks like: Teachers bring their own voice, humor, personality, experiences and imagination to how they deliver the material, not just reading a script. We want you to own your lesson, using the gifts God has given you.

Why it matters: Kids can tell the difference between someone who's "getting through it" and someone who's genuinely engaged with the story. Creativity communicates that this material is worth their attention. It keeps the Gospel from ever feeling stale or routine, even on the 100th telling.

5. Always Include the Weekly Big Idea and Bible Story

What it looks like: Every single week, regardless of activities or games built around it, the Big Idea is clearly stated, and the Bible story is told in full.

Why it matters: Games and activities are the container, the Big Idea and Bible story are the content. Without them clearly present every week, kids may have fun but walk away without the truth we actually want them to carry home.

6. Provide at Least 4 Small Group Discussion Questions

What it looks like: Each week, teachers prepare a minimum of four questions designed to help small group leaders talk through the Big Idea and story with their kids.

Why it matters: The large-group teaching moment plants the seed; small group discussion is where it gets watered. Good questions help kids process, ask their own questions, and personalize truth in a way a one-way presentation can't do on its own.

7. Arrive at Least 15 Minutes Before Service Time

What it looks like: Teachers are on-site, set up, and ready (not arriving) at least 15 minutes before the service start time.

Why it matters: Kids and volunteers need a calm, ready room, not a scramble. Early arrival protects the team around you (greeters, small group leaders, tech volunteers) from last-minute chaos and sets a tone of order and readiness before a single child walks in.

8. Submit Slides by the Thursday Before Your Teaching Day

What it looks like: Any slides needed for your lesson are turned in no later than the Thursday prior.

Why it matters: This gives the production/tech team time to review, load, and test everything avoiding Sunday-morning technical scrambles that disrupt the flow of the service and pull focus from the message.

9. Have Fun

What it looks like: Church doesn't have to be too serious! When children come to church, we want them to have fun

Why it matters: Kids associate church with whatever they feel while they're there, and joy is part of the message, not a distraction from it. A room full of laughter tells a child that faith is good news, not a chore to sit through. Fun also builds the kind of trust and warmth that makes kids *want* to come back.

10. Be Ready Improve (to evaluate and take feedback)

What it looks like: Teachers welcome feedback from leaders and peers after a lesson, reflect honestly on what worked and what didn't, and are willing to adjust their approach based on that input without getting defensive.

Why it matters: No one delivers a perfect lesson every week, but the kids in our ministry deserve our best, not just our comfort zone. A teachable spirit keeps us growing instead of coasting on habit, and it models something powerful for our volunteers and kids alike: that humility and growth are part of following Jesus, not signs of failure.