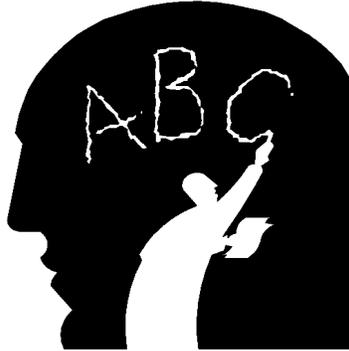


The Master Trainer by Dave Arch



2000 years later . . .
millions still meet weekly to discuss Jesus' content!
Here are 17 of his presentational secrets!

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"And hearing this they marveled. . . "

-Jesus' Enemies (Matthew 22:22)

"The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching for He was teaching them as one having authority. . . "

-The Public (Matthew 7:28,29)

"And the disciples were amazed at His words."

-Jesus' Friends (Mark 10:24)

INTRODUCTION

Whether in a public seminar, a confrontation with his enemies or a private conversation with His closest friends, Jesus' teaching consistently produced the powerful emotion of amazement!

Today, whether his teaching is discussed in North America, Asia or Africa, the reaction of amazement persists.

In spite of this fact, I have never seen any seminar evaluation form with a space for evaluating the participants' amazement.

Yet after concluding this study, I believe Jesus' skill in evoking the emotion of amazement is one ingredient that gave his training the power necessary to carry its message for 2000 years. Talk about training transfer!

In the following sections, you'll discover 17 of his training secrets to use in raising the level of amazement in your own training sessions.

However, it's necessary to begin by stating the obvious. If you glance back to the account of the public's reaction as referenced at the beginning of this introduction, you're sure to make a startling discovery.

Much of the amazement produced by Jesus' training came because he taught with authority. He knew both his material and his audience equally well. Consequently, he taught with amazement-producing confidence.

Only by combining a mastery of our own content with an equally complete understanding of our participants will we ever have the confidence necessary to apply the following presentational techniques. These techniques are not for the faint hearted.

**"But many who are first will be last; and
the last first." - Jesus (Mark 10:31)**

AMBIGUITY

No one could ever accuse Jesus of "over teaching." More often than not even his closest friends went away from his teaching sessions still discussing unanswered questions (Matthew 15:15).

His use of parables were often presented without public explanation (Matthew 20:1-16).

One can only imagine the crowds walking home -- scratching their heads while discussing with each other exactly what Jesus meant by something he said.

What did he mean when he said "Many are called, but few are chosen?"

(Matthew 22:14) or "But many who are first will be last; and the last, first?" (Mark 10:31)

Even today theologians disagree about what he did mean, but those ambiguous statements keep us discussing.

Jesus knew how much the human mind hated ambiguity and incompleteness while loving clarity and completeness. He knew how we automatically work to bring resolution and closure to anything incomplete.

As an example, take a moment to hum a favorite tune. However, stop two measures short of the end. You'll feel an internal compulsion to finish the song. If you finally do finish the tune, you'll be able to leave it and move on to something else.

Jesus never wanted us to move on! He wanted us to continue discussing his teachings.

Test the power of ambiguity yourself the next time you train. Teach through your outline. However, without saying anything to the class, just skip a major heading on your handout. Someone in the class will surely bring the apparent oversight to your attention -- oftentimes pursuing the subject until completeness is restored. That's the power of ambiguity!

Other suggestions for using this principle to your advantage include:

- *Generating an ambiguous content phrase for your handout -- never explaining its meaning to the group.
- *Using a handout with blank spaces that the participants must complete as you progress.
- *Stopping short of bringing summary or closure to every discussion. Stop with questions unanswered so that the participant's discussion and involvement with the topic might continue.

(See also Questions and Metaphors)

"While I am in the world, I am the Light of the World."

-Jesus (John 9:5)

METAPHORS

One of the greatest examples of ambiguity was Jesus' own use of metaphors. This technique has the

potential for enhancing every trainer's impact.

Jesus called himself "the Bread of Life" (John 6:35), "the True Vine" (John 15:1), and "the Light of the World" (John 9:5). He called his followers "the salt of the earth"

(Matthew 5:13).

Furthermore, he seldom explained what he meant. However, his use of an unexplained metaphor created tension in a listener's mind. Jesus knew that the participant would then seek to resolve that tension by exploring the implications of the metaphor. Within that exploration, the participant would mine out for himself significant content truths.

The next time you prepare to teach, try and generate some metaphors (or similes) in your content area.

Here are some examples:

"How is good customer service like eating an orange?"

"How is maintaining quality like running a race?"

"How is cost control like inflating a balloon?"

Phrasing the metaphors as a discussion question is often a good way to begin. You will be amazed at the answers generated by your participants. Hopefully, you'll soon discover that using a metaphor is worth the extra preparation!

(see also Ambiguity and Questions)

"Do you not yet understand?"

-Jesus (Matthew 8:21)

QUESTIONS

Jesus masterfully generated involvement with questions. In the eighth chapter of the book of Mark, He uses eight different types of questions with each type serving a different function.

Answering Questions (Mark 8:5)

Rather than merely answering a question (and thereby halting the question's content involvement), Jesus would often answer a participant's question with a question of his own.

In the eighth chapter of Mark, when his followers asked Jesus how he planned to feed a crowd of 4000 people, he didn't answer. Instead, he asked them about how much bread they had. That question kept his followers involved. He refused to cultivate a group of mere "question askers." He insisted on being more than a "question answerer."

We need this discipline as trainers. Learning to ask an involving question as simple as "What do the rest of you think?" as opposed to answering every question requires confidence. In time, we need to develop the confidence to NOT answer every question -- robbing the questioner of the satisfaction found only in personal discovery! (see also Involvement)

Gathering Data (Mark 8:5,19,20,21)

Jesus will eventually ask some very personal question in this chapter. However, he always begins with and intersperses throughout the dialogue questions of a non-personal (more factual) nature. "How many loaves do you have?" involved his followers on a non-threatening level. Using these types of questions helps maintain group involvement while gently moving the group towards the more personal applicational questions. Participant questions such as "How many years have been involved in your current job?" is one type of factual question not requiring much personal revelation while still giving the trainer needed insights.

Making Statements (Mark 8:12)

Usually rhetorical in nature, Jesus skillfully made statements disguised as questions in order to give emphasis to a point in a powerful but non-combative manner. "Why does this generation seek for a sign?" communicates much better than "You stubborn group of unbelieving people!"

Such diplomacy remains a beneficial teaching skill! (see also Pacing)

Communicating Passion (Mark 8:17,18)

When the statement-making question discussed above is linked together with others of like kind, the rhetorical series transports tremendous passion. In Mark 8:17 and 18, he asks his followers:

". . . Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread?

Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears do you not hear?"

Jesus joins questions together without giving pause for an answer. His listeners are rendered thoughtfully speechless.

This particular technique can be used effectively in discussion groups by carefully crafting a series of questions so that they start in different places but lead the discussions to the same conclusions -- reinforcing a piece of content in a powerful manner. (see also Lecture)

Communicating Correction (Mark 8:21)

Sometimes when correction needs to be made, phrasing it as a question will allow another individual to make the necessary changes without defensiveness or a loss of face. Instead of saying "You are so stupid. You never understand anything?," Jesus asked "Do you not yet understand?" This question most assuredly made the point while maintaining the involvement of His participants. (see also Correction)

Seeking Feedback (Mark 8:21)

After seeking to heal a man of blindness, Jesus asks "Do you see anything?" What a graphic picture of the trainer's role! "Are you understanding what we're studying?" needs to be a question asked in a dozen different forms throughout any teaching process. Oftentimes, it can be included as an innocent discussion question that has been carefully crafted to show the trainer the current level of group comprehension. (see also Pacing).

Encouraging Personal Application (Mark 8:27-29)

Towards the conclusion of the eighth chapter of Mark, Jesus utilizes two increasingly personal questions -- gently leading his followers into the arena of content application.

However, he also wisely begins with the more general of the two questions -- "Who do people say that I am?" (Mark 8:27)

After listening to their discussion surrounding that question, he then asks "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29)

Although this conclusion was clearly Jesus' intent right from the start, he had slowly led his followers to this final more personal question.

The next time you seek to move your training group to application try starting discussion with "What are some ways that WE could _____?" before transitioning to "What are some ways that YOU could _____?"

You'll feel the difference!

Soul Searching (Mark 8:36,37)

"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36,37)

This type of question reaches to the heart of an issue and really has no comfortable reply.

Oftentimes, having such a question in print on your handout will give it maximum impact without even mentioning it during the teaching. One example of such a question might be:

"How long can any business hope to survive without satisfied customers?"

Learning to use all eight types of these questions will enable the skillful trainer to provide variety while retaining focus. (see also Variety)

(see also Ambiguity and Metaphors)

". . . and I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it." (Mark 9:18)

"And Jesus said to him (Peter), 'Truly I say to you this very night. . . you will three times deny me.'" (Mark 14:30)

INVOLVEMENT

What we see in the accounts above take us beyond the involving nature of mere discussion questions. Jesus was a firm advocate of on-the-job training.

He began selecting his disciples in the third chapter of the book of Mark and already began sending them out only three chapters later. He couldn't possibly have taught them everything they'd need to know!

At the time of this writing, I have four adolescents. I have noticed that around the age of thirteen enthusiasm for trying life is high but knowledge is low.

As I allow them to experience some of life, they begin to realize that they still must learn.

On-the-job-training literally makes room for more knowledge without squelching enthusiasm.

Needless to say, this does require a trainer comfortable with student failures -- recognizing failure as an indispensable component in the internalization of knowledge.

In fact, if you look aback again at the second account at the beginning of this section, you'll hear Jesus telling Peter rather matter-of-factly that Peter would fail three times that very night. Jesus, The Master Trainer, knew that there was no other way.

(see also Questions, Spontaneity, Variety)

"I feel compassion for the multitude because they have been with me now three days. . . " (Mark 8:2)

LECTURE

Now that's some seminar! Jesus had a three day seminar with a registration of four thousand people!

It's now obvious from what we've already examined that Jesus did not lecture for three days. In fact in examining his training, one is impressed by the absence of lengthy lectures.

Today any good conference has both keynote presentations and workshops. Keynotes set the emotional tone for a conference -- motivating the delegates for further involvement. Workshops give opportunity for the participants to have hands-on involvement with the content. Pity the workshop participants when confusion prevails and they realize that their workshop leader doesn't know the difference between a three hour workshop and a three hour keynote!

It appears as though Jesus reserved lecture for those times in which He desired to communicate his passion along with some content.

The leader's ability to communicate passion is an indispensable part of the training experience! Passion infuses content with urgency and importance!

Jesus' most comprehensively recorded lecture is oftentimes referred to as "The Sermon On the Mount" from the book of Matthew chapters five, six, and seven.

If we take a moment to look at those chapters, we will discover how Jesus structured this extraordinary keynote address.

General To Specific

Like a great Broadway play's orchestral overture -- growing in its intensity and building anticipation for the play; Jesus' introduction to this important address serves the same purpose:

"Blessed are the poor . . .

Blessed are those who mourn. . .

Blessed are those who hunger. . .

Blessed are the merciful. . .

Blessed are the pure in heart . . .

Blessed are the peacemakers. . .

Blessed are those who have been persecuted . . .

Blessed are you . . . "

If you listen carefully, you can still hear his voice as he begins with this captivating series of pronouncements. Its parallel construction gives it a musical quality while its movement from the general to the specific (third person to second person) builds its intensity through focus!

We have already seen how this transitioning from the third person person ("What do most people do in this situation?") to second person ("What do you do in this situation?") works well in preparing discussion questions. Now we see application of this technique to the lecture!

New Information Linked To Known Information

A good keynote will always introduce new information and/or fresh perspective on old information. However, the best keynotes will always help the participants relate the new information to something they already know. This requires an equally thorough understanding of both the audience and the content.

Throughout the fifth chapter of Mark, Jesus links new knowledge to present knowledge in a series of parallel statements each beginning with the phrase "You have heard. . ." and transitioning by means of the phrase ". . . but I say to you. . ." (Mark 5:21,22; 27,28; 31,32; 33,34; 38,39; 43,44)

He begins by reminding them of something they already knew and then adding to that knowledge his new insights. This "new" concept in learning has only recently (late 1980's) been rediscovered by L.S. Vygotsky with his learning theory of informational "scaffolding."

Word Pictures

"And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you;

for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, then for your whole body to be thrown in hell. And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off,

and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish,

than for your whole body to go into hell." (Mark 5:29,30)

Jesus painted mind pictures to help his listeners literally "see" what he was saying. He knew that the human mind thinks in pictures. When I say the word "father," you don't picture the word "father." Instead you visualize your own father or someone else's father. It's the way we think.

When you take time to analyze the word pictures just presented, three common characteristics soon become obvious:

There is ACTION -- something is happening!

There is EMOTION -- something emotional is happening!

There is IDENTIFICATION -- His listeners could easily identify with the action happening to them!

Using these three criteria strengthens any word picture!

Practical Content

Although Jesus did not always confine himself to addressing felt needs (sometimes we need information we don't even know we need), He did always speak to practical issues.

In fact his training on worry and stress (Matthew 6:25-34) contains many of the principles espoused by those who conduct stress management seminars today!

Focused

As trainers, it's a constant challenge to eliminate all extraneous content in order to maximize the strength of a keynote presentation. Any extraneous material only dilutes the ultimate impact. Powerful keynotes are without exception intent on a single purpose with all content unified around that purpose.

A Call To Action

Finally, Jesus concluded His lecture with a passionate "call to action."

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine, and
and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his
house upon the rock. And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst
against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it
had been founded upon the rock.

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act
upon the, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon
the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst
against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall." (Matthew 7:24-27)

There were specific behavioral changes he wanted his listeners to make and he didn't leave those changes to their imaginations! In a lecture format, we mustn't either!

(see also Print, Spontaneity, Questions, Compassion)

"And seeing the multitudes, he felt compassion for the, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36)

"And when he came out, he saw a great multitude, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick." (Matthew 14:14)

"And Jesus summoned to himself his disciples, and said, 'I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.'" (Matthew 15:32)

COMPASSION

The word literally means "to feel with."

Although Jesus might not have been hungry, he could feel with the crowd when it became hungry. Although Jesus did not need to be healed, he could feel with those who did. Although Jesus wasn't discouraged, he could feel with the crowd when it became discouraged.

Great teachers are as tuned to the feelings of the group as they are to their own. This compassion might express itself in simply adjusting the temperature in a room, slowing the pacing of a presentation or even taking an early break!

An effective trainer cares!

(see also Personal)

"And Jesus said, 'Who is the one who touched me?' And while they were all denying it, Peter said, 'Master the multitudes are crowding and pressing upon You.

But Jesus said, "Someone did touch me. . . ." (Luke 8:45,46)

PERSONAL

Lest we be tempted from the last section to believe that Jesus only had compassion for crowds, the writer Mark records an incident in which a woman in a crowd happens to touch Jesus' clothes, and He stops to ask "Who touched Me?" The disciples were amazed (there's that word again) that in the midst of a crowd Jesus could ask such a question. However, Jesus sensed an individual's need.

We all know trainers who are good in front of a group but tend to fall apart one-on-one. It really hinders their effectiveness.

Some practical suggestions for cultivating this quality might include:

- *Have preparations done thirty minutes before the actual class start so that you can spend time getting to know class members individually;
- *Be available at breaks and lunches for individual interaction; and
- *Be willing to remain after class for any individual questions.

(see also Compassion)

"And they began bringing children to him, so that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them 'Permit the children to come to me; do no hinder them; for the kingdom of

God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.'" (Mark 10:13-15)

SPONTANEITY

When an unexpected interruption breaks into a training session, you are guaranteed to have everyone's attention!

When we're in a class, we love this type of spontaneity. It gives us a chance to see how the teacher is going to react. We literally get to know the teacher better.

Maybe that explains why 85% of Jesus' training appears to be spontaneous in nature -- outside the oftentimes sterile nature of a structured teaching situation.

Although you may not be good at thinking on your feet, you can capitalize on this technique of spontaneity by planning spontaneously appearing in incident throughout a session.

Possibly it will be a "sudden" thought that motivates the trainer to try an apparently spontaneous (albeit planned) activity. It might be an object suddenly "found" on the floor that the trainer can use to help visualize an emphasis. It can even be an unexpected insight produced by a participant that the trainer allows to evolve into a beneficial discussion.

Learning not to be afraid of the unplanned or unexpected does take some training maturity. However, it is in those spontaneous moments where we find the most fertile ground for planing our content seeds.

(see also Lecture, Variety, Miracles)

"Then he poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. . . For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." (John 13:5,15)

MODELING

Trainers quickly learn that there is no substitute for demonstration of content application. Before Jesus asked his followers to wash each other's feet, he washed their feet. His willingness to do what he asked others to do empowered his training.

What would have happened if Jesus' lifestyle had not been congruent with his teachings?

I'm convinced that if such had been the case, all of his carefully selected words and all of the presentational techniques studied so far in this book could not have kept his message from falling silent generations ago.

That's the power of modeling!

(see also Miracles)

"And it came about that while he was praying in a certain place, after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray. . .'" (Luke 11:1)

PACING

The above account graphically demonstrates how the role of modeling interacts with the indispensable ingredient of pacing.

If anyone had the potential of overwhelming his listeners with content, it was Jesus. Instead he would often quietly model until his followers asked for information or explanation.

Any parent quickly discovers the need for pacing the raising of children. When the three year old child asks "Where did I come from?," the wise parent doesn't reach for the biology textbook with all of its diagrams. Instead, they simply clarify the child's question -- realizing that more information will be required later.

The trainer too paces content in much the same manner -- organizing material from basic to advanced with hands-on experiences interspersed throughout. (see Involvement)

Bob Pike, a well-respected trainer of trainers, has suggested these content divisions:

***Need To Know** -- this content is indispensable.

***Nice To Know** -- this content sharpens the skills but can be treated as optional.

***Where To Go** -- these resources help the motivated learner achieve even a higher level of competency.

You might try using these division to pace your own content.

Your participants will thank you!

(see also Questions, Lecture, Involvement)

**"And immediately the girl got up and began to walk. . .
And immediately they were completely astounded." (Mark 5:42)**

MIRACLES

You may not be able to make blind people see, disable people walk or the dead come back to life. But I have yet to meet anyone who couldn't produce the reaction of astonishment from a group of people.

Each of us must search for our own uniquenesses -- the very qualities we have come to take for granted. Those personal uniquenesses possess the power to render our training memorable through the astonishment of our participants.

Possibly it might be our knowledge on a given subject, our life experiences, a handicap we've overcome or a talent we've developed. If you look (sometimes with the help of others), you will find that you too have within you a one-of-a-kind tool for creating the powerful emotion of astonishment in the minds of your trainees. Learning to use that tool in your training really makes a difference!

(see also Modeling)

"And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they received their sight and followed him." (Matthew 20:34)

"And taking the blind man by the hand, he brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes, and laying his hands upon him, he asked him, 'Do you see anything?' And he looked up and said, 'I see men. . . "
(Mark 10:52)

"He answered, 'The man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam, and wash'; so I went away and washed and received my sight.'" (John 9:11)

VARIETY

As we read the accounts above, we soon realize that although Jesus healed all four people from blindness, he used a different method on each one.

What a graphic portrayal of the trainer in the training room. The most effective trainers can teach the same content with a diversity of methods -- helping each person in the class to "see" clearly the subject matter at hand.

A few participants will need only spoken words; some will require printed materials; others will need hands-on experience or a visualization through a chart, diagram or object lesson.

However, nothing will kill a participant's enthusiasm for good content quicker than a lack of variety in its presentation.

(see also Miracles)

"But when they persisted in asking him, he straightened up, and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'" (John 8:7)

ACCEPTANCE

Jesus always met people where they were. . . but never left them there.

In the above scenario, an angry crowd had bought Jesus a woman caught in the act of making love to someone other than her husband. "Shouldn't she be killed by stoning?" the crowd wanted to know. You can read Jesus' reply for yourself.

As trainers we must understand our participants' current knowledge level in the area under study. We then must accept each one of them individually (at the skill level where we find them) before we'll ever be able to successfully impact them with our training. If they sense a lack of acceptance from us, they will only back up from our presentation.

We must move acceptingly towards them. They cannot be expected to come to us.

(see also Compassion, Standards, Correction)

"And he summoned the multitude with his disciples and said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it.'" (Mark 8:34,35)

STANDARDS

In spite of his acceptance, Jesus never served his content too low. Rather his standards were extremely high. He talked openly and unashamedly of commitment, sacrifice, and quality. He gave his followers a challenge -- something to reach for.

In order to bring the best out of those we train, we as trainers must get comfortable with such talk. Whether we're training how to do math, clean a hotel room, or program a computer, an appropriate insistence on excellence brings out the best in us all.

(see also Acceptance and Correction)

"But turning around and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's.'" (Mark 8:33)

CORRECTION

If we are to insist on standards in our trainings, then we must have the courage to identify the sub-standard.

Whether that sub-standard is classroom deportment, an unsatisfactory performance or an incorrect answer, we can't just always "let it go." If you've read this far, you know that Jesus never advocated perfectionism (see Involvement). Jesus never advocated ridicule or personal attacks (see Acceptance).

However, just as he did with Peter in the incident cited above, Jesus not only knew when to correct and how to correct, but he also had the courage to correct.

For the sake of our participants, we need a dose of that same courage.

(see also Acceptance, Standards)

"This is the disciple who hears witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true." (John 21:24)

"These things have I written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." (I John 5:13)

PRINT

The time limitations of the training session as well as the absorbing capabilities of our minds require that trainers use print in handouts, summaries, books, and articles.

All of the training ingredients we have examined to this point would have been insufficient to carry Jesus' content into the twenty-first century.

Without the transportation power of print, the message would have been silenced, inaccurately reported, or both. Instead we are able to hold in our hands and learn from both the content as well as the presentational techniques of Jesus Master Trainer.

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books which were written." (John 21:25)

ACTION IDEAS

Take a moment to retrieve from your memory those ideas that impressed you most from this series of articles -- jotting them on a piece of paper. That very action could make this section the most valuable of the series.

Although I believe that the ideas in these articles will never change you. . . I do believe that the thoughts you have about these ideas just might!

I hope you enjoyed it!

Dave Arch

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