

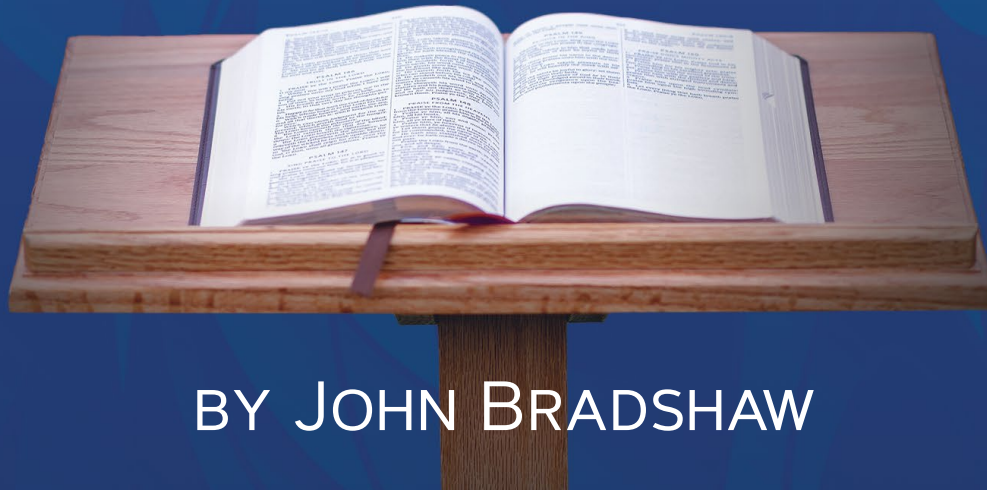
VOLUME 1

104

Useful Sermon Illustrations

FROM

 IT IS WRITTEN®



BY JOHN BRADSHAW

104 Useful Sermon Illustrations from It Is Written, by John Bradshaw

Graphic design by Michael Prewitt.

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN 978-1-63569-216-7

Introduction

Sermon illustrations—or the lack thereof—can make or break a sermon. While preaching is most certainly the ministry of God’s Word, effective sermon illustrations fix important points in the mind of the hearer. Jesus frequently illustrated His messages. Two thousand years later we call to mind stories of a shepherd who lost a sheep, a son who wandered far from home, and young women who discovered they were without sufficient oil for their lamps—stories that call to mind the powerful lessons in Christ’s teaching. I pray you will find these illustrations helpful, and that they will help you recognize potential sermon illustrations as they come to your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Bradshaw', with a stylized, looped flourish extending to the right.

John Bradshaw
President of It Is Written

P.S. I'd love your help as I compile volume two of *104 Useful Sermon Illustrations*. If you have sermon illustrations you would like to share that you feel would be a blessing to others, please submit them to me at itiswritten.com/preach.

Sermon Illustrations

1. Presumption; Faith

That had to hurt. An Ethiopian athlete running in a meet in Lausanne, Switzerland, sprinted to the finish of the men's 5,000 meter race, 20 meters or more in front of the second-place runner, and crossed the line in celebration. Except that the race wasn't over. There was still 400 meters left to run, and our friend—who won an Olympic bronze medal in 2016—ended up finishing ... tenth. He thought the race was done, but didn't realize there was still a lap to go. We see a spiritual lesson there. Jesus said in Matthew 24:13, "He [or she] that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." You don't want to coast to the finish. Christianity is about staying connected to Jesus. Take hold of Jesus and let Him guide you all the way to the finish line.

Associated verse: Matthew 24:13

2. Forgiveness

A man in New Zealand backed out of his driveway when a cat came out of nowhere. He ran over the cat, and the cat died. But what made it even worse is that the cat was owned by the prime minister of New Zealand, who lived nearby. The man's two children wrote a condolence card in which they asked the prime minister not to send their father to prison. When he bumped into her in person, he apologized, but she apologized for the inconvenience, and it was one of those, "I'm so sorry," "No, I'm so sorry," moments. One could easily have held a grudge. But forgiveness is always better. God forgives. We want to remember that. Remember to forgive others.

Associated verse: Psalm 86:5

3. Words; Conversion

It pays to speak clearly. A woman called a cake shop, wanting a cake decorated for her daughter's birthday. The cake came back decorated with a large marijuana leaf and other drug symbols. They called the shop asking what happened to the cake they asked for, the cake based on *Moana*, a movie. They said "Moana," but the bakery heard ... marijuana. The family thought it was all quite funny and the birthday girl still enjoyed the cake, but it pays to be careful how you sound. How do *you* sound? Do you ever catch yourself *not* sounding like a Christian? Saying things you regret?

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We speak a lot of words, and too often words we wish we hadn't said. But God can change your heart, and when He does He'll change your words, too.

Associated verse: Psalm 141:3

4. Small Things; God's Care

As the family drove along the busy freeway, the four-year-old sitting in the back seat threw her favorite stuffed animal out the window of the car. And no replacement dolphin would possibly do for this child, who simply could not be consoled. So Mother called the police, who staged a rescue operation and retrieved the toy dolphin from the side of the busy freeway. A little girl was happy—and her parents were very relieved. A stuffed toy—a small thing. Aren't you glad small things matter to God? They do when they matter to you. You can give all your worries and cares to God, knowing He really does care.

Associated verse: 1 Peter 5:7

5. Honesty; Integrity

A few years ago in Syracuse, New York, an armored truck that evidently wasn't properly shut dropped more than \$300,000 onto city streets. The two men who first came across the bags started to gather the money up so it could be returned to its rightful owners. When word got out about what had happened, a crowd—later described as “mostly helpful”—began to gather. But there were some who didn't want to hand the money back! One of the honest men said, “If I wasn't so big I might not have been able to convince them to do the right thing.” The prospect of free money can change a person's behavior. It seems people have a buying price. You know that the people who gathered weren't all evil people, but they were people who had a buying price. When confronted with the opportunity to gain, their scruples went out the window. Honesty is still the best policy. Integrity is still the right path. You'll never be worse off when you choose to do the right thing.

Associated verse: Proverbs 13:11

6. Trials; God's Care

A dad was taking items out of a box and piling them one by one in his young son's arms. A passerby asked the little boy if it was too much for him. The boy smiled and said, “No, it isn't too much. My Daddy knows how much I can carry.” It's true. God won't allow more to come to you than you can bear. If you're dealing with grief, or loss, or illness, or pain, or something that seems very heavy today, remember this verse. Your Father knows how much you can carry—and He'll give you His strength to do so.

Associated verse: 1 Corinthians 10:13



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