

Big Words – Little Understanding

At my annual physical I sit in the chair and listen to the doctor go over the essentials of good health. He shares with me the results of my blood test. He asks me questions about my personal habits to determine specific areas of risk. Then, he hands me appropriate medical literature to give me information about my risk factors. Those pamphlets contain lots of scientific terms, some of which are in Latin. Any scientific term is “Greek to me.” Thankfully, the doctor explains the meaning of those big words. If he didn't, I would leave his office confused and without a plan to improve my health.



I was a trumpet player in the college pep band for home and some away basketball and football games. Being the late 60's, much of our pep band music featured brass oriented songs from Herb Albert and the Tijuana Brass. I wasn't that good of a musician so when we came to big trumpet runs or extremely high notes, my horn went silent. The difficult music intimidated me, so I froze and let others play the most challenging parts.

The faith world is full of words we don't use in our everyday language. We hear them every Sunday morning but if asked to give a definition of these words, we might struggle to fully explain them. We pretend we understand the meaning but really need the pastor to provide an explanation in plain English. Thankfully, sermons help us to understand their meaning and application to our life. *Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me (Psalm 66:16).*

The unique lingo of the church can confuse people outside the faith. “Churchspeak” phrases may make us sound authoritative, but they mean nothing to the unchurched. If our mission in life is to encourage people to come to faith, we need to speak a language they can understand. We want people to feel they belong at church. Find simple ways to explain God's love for them, or people will think it is only for those who “get it.”

My weekly devotionals are an attempt to help all people see God's hand in daily life. My devotionals start with familiar storylines that everyone can identify with. Just like an effective doctor explains the medical terms in everyday language my stories are designed to do the same. Then, I go several additional steps. Once people understand the moral of the story I show that God has the answer to the issue at hand. In my opinion, morals are a secular way to explain God's Word. I turn the secular lesson into a faith lesson, based on the teachings of Jesus. To do that, I quote one or more easy to understand scripture verses. I don't want to talk over people's heads or make their eyes glaze over with a deep theological presentation. God's message is simple, if presented in an understandable way. Before closing with a prayer I ask a question to help people internalize the story for them personally. Just like Jesus' parables, while the story setting appears to be about other people, the conclusion is that story is actually about the people hearing it. So are mine.

God wants you to share your faith with others. As you do, remember to present it in a language and style others can understand. Our goal should be to bring people to Christ, not to scare them off. Your warm presentation can be a testimony of how God has changed your life. If you are successful in connecting with people, you can help change their life as well.

Scripture: *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ (Romans 10:17).*

Question: What approach do you use when sharing your faith with people who do not yet believe? How can you improve your ability to help people understand how God's Word applies to their life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father. We thank you for helping to shape our life. We pray that we will have the opportunity to share our faith effectively with others. Amen.