

Just as there are one-liners in movies that are mentally sticky, so there are incidents in our lives that remain vivid. Such a moment occurred in west-central Argentina in the late 90s. My Spanish was not perfect, but acceptable to the point I operated fine. But on this occasion the right-hand man of a friend of mine used a word with which I was not familiar. My response was, “No entiendo”, or “I don’t understand”, to which he said the same thing, but noticeably louder. Again I replied, “No entiendo.” This time he shouted the same thing. Finally he was screaming. My friend finally interrupted and told Beto if I did not understand in a small voice, I wouldn’t understand screaming.

The point made here seems simple, but is actually profound when probed a little closer. As we are discovering, the Jr. High and a little older generation have their own language in texting. The art form has evolved to the point where single letters stand for entire words, depending on the context. To us septuagenarians it is as hieroglyphics without a Rosetta Stone. Nonetheless, these younger ones do fine. (as an aside, one wonders what will happen in 10-20 years when they are in power...)

Another notch ‘upward’ is also hosted by the Internet in Facebook, Twitter, blogs and other variations of cyber-talk. For the mother, housewife and assorted women with limited spatial connections, these work fine and are generally positive. The forms provide a mode for keeping current with ones you love, etc.

Then there is the ubiquitous E-mail which in large measure has provided a substitute for letters, telecons and the like. (I will omit the oft-offensive “forwarding.”) High-tech management is using E-mail internally within the company to cover their tracks (and rear ends) in the daily routine of business transactions and protocol. Often this reaches absurd and counter-productive levels, to the detriment of the company at large. Additionally, the common Joe uses e-mail for a host of minor things.

Next comes the written word in Thank You notes, papers like this, fiction, science, etc. This form takes time and effort, especially published matters. Another notch up would be the legal-medical-academic-high tech printed matter in quadruplicate.

All of the above is more or less accessible to most of us, leaving television and other high-frequency modes for another discussion.

My weekly routine takes me to a nursing home where there are some who are really hurting, some with no knowledge of the Most High at all. One such of the latter (we will call him Henry), brought home the meditation about all the above modes of communication, or the lack thereof. You see, Henry cannot read very well, both from the age of his eyes as well as lack of education. So what good does it do for me to give him a New Testament, much less overwhelm him with quotes of Scripture? –or give him one of my erudite papers that is so much blather to him?

Henry caught me up short as they say. For some time I had been bothered by various literary efforts that saturated the writing with quote after quote of Scripture. As an example, I tried to read a book on the relationship of human diseases to violations of Scripture. Obfuscated within the 300-400 pages of this style was truth indeed. However, my mind was unable to separate the Scriptural bold type in every fourth line from the normal type where he was trying to convey his findings. In Internet vernacular, he was 'shouting' one moment (bold type) and 'speaking quietly' (common type) the next! Put another way, he was mad one moment, peaceable the next. I finally gave up; my mind got tired of the volume shift. It was like a yo-yo on steroids.

Not to throw stones, at one time I had been 'guilty' of the same techniques. In fact, Henry brought home to me not a low degree of troubling to my soul. This troubling has been going on now for some weeks now, often to the point of despair. But I was reminded of a passage where it says in Isaiah, "Read this; "I cannot read," says the man. I was also reminded of a time when teaching some ex-convicts there was a man who through no fault of his own, knew nothing about nothing. All he knew was he was tired of getting a night-stick up 'side his head.

Where do I start with Henry? Where do I start with the ex-con?

How does one understand what is written when they are unable to read?

How does one warn someone who does not realize any danger? –or even think he needs warning?

How does one provoke mental activity to one who does not think?

How does one converse in a language the other does not speak?

How does one teach another who was never taught to learn?

How does one teach fatherly, masculine principles to a male with an effeminate mind?

How do you show the ditches in a man's life when he has no eyes?

How do you speak to a man who has no ears?

How can I hear the Spirit when noise fills the room?

How do my ears work when my brain is focused on the activities around me?

How do I communicate sentences containing more than three words to a person bound by texting?

How do I educate a person who does not want to listen? – or unable to listen?

"I cannot read..."

So no wonder the stares, anger, resentment, accusations, disdain, contempt, hatred, and murderous reactions!! No wonder the flared nostrils!!

In any case, the few who are equipped to hear are dwindling; in order to communicate some change needs to be made. -but what? -how?

Signs? Pictures? Tone of voice? Personal speech? Signs and wonders? (lots of luck).

As reluctant as I am to say it, experience and knowledge of the Word tells me there are times where one mode works and another does not. Ecclesiastes seems to capture this thought where it is said there is a time for everything.

I am also reluctant to say what worked yesterday does not work today; in fact, modes of yesteryear, even yesterday, are counterproductive. Although often true, the works of the past generation are as so much blather today, as are their modes of expression. Small wonder the film “Jesus” is so effective worldwide. It is a film, with pictures.

If you will remember, the people of Israel who were in slavery for 390 years or so weren't real educated. I doubt if any could read, nor were really adept at all when it came to understanding spiritual principles. So what did God do? –He performed signs and wonders so they could receive His communication by sight. It was only later did He issue forth the written Law to a younger generation. The same principle was true when Jesus came. The people were under Roman rule and domination, lacking sorely in education (save the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees.) He too at first did signs and wonders; later He taught simple concepts, very simple concepts portrayed as parables, in everyday speech.

There was a time in this country when preaching was the mode, performed by the few with ‘learning’, to a people with little or no ‘learning’. The effectiveness of that too, has passed with time. The ones to whom it, or anything else, is relevant, are those who were reared with it. To the majority it is anachronistic, a dinosaur.

The O.T. stories back this principle, in particular the ones where the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are active. Alas, the times when their signs and wonders were active and relevant were difficult indeed. Can anyone say chaos? –anarchy? –blood?

Said another way, I believe we are in a time when the judgments of God are upon us to the extent the ears are becoming few and far between. As it is written, in such times He takes away the Sage, the learned man, social graces, as well as elevated thought. These are just facts in the midst of His judgments. So I do not think it is a matter of changing your writing style or format; it is a matter of *anything* working. The paradigm shifts of types of speaking are becoming little more than the sharing of emotions, avoidance of responsibility, shifting the blame and basic grunts. The mind is rapidly disappearing.

“I cannot read.”

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