

# Bible Alive

## Appreciating the Relevance of Scripture

*by James Riley Estep, Jr.*

Many people today do not see the Bible as relevant. Christians disagree. We affirm the continuing relevancy of the Bible for at least two reasons. First, Scripture is authored ultimately by the eternal God. While the Bible was indeed penned by men, they were not the ultimate authors (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). Second, the Bible addresses unchanging human needs and nature. Regardless of advances in science, we still struggle to meet basic needs, to overcome evil, to find redemption, etc. A stroll through the book of Ecclesiastes demonstrates such struggles are not new.

However, most people who ignore the Bible do not do so because of some profound philosophical or historical argument against it. Rather, they don't listen to it because it simply *seems* irrelevant given the way that it is taught. Have we taken a Word that is described as "quick, and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12) and treated it as if we were dissecting a frog in science class? The Bible is not outdated, but our teaching methods may be! Let's examine three ways to make the Bible come alive in our teaching: illustrate, participate, and express.

### Illustrate

When you are teaching, make sure to use *illustrations*, both verbal and visual, to demonstrate the reality of Scripture and its relevance for today. People love stories today. The experts at communicating with the young adult generation are fond of saying "The story is the message." While some think that overstates the case, stories that illustrate the message are always helpful.

Visually, you can show pictures or even videos of the geography of the Holy Land. You can use GoogleEarth for this if your classroom has Internet access. Other pictures are useful as well. If you use PowerPoint (or some other presentation software) be sure to include pictures to illustrate your slides. Sometimes a picture by itself on the slide, combined with what you say in class,

makes the best illustration for your message. Words on the slide may actually compete with your message, sometimes spoiling the timing of your delivery.

## Participate

Having your students participate in the biblical narrative means helping them engage in the activity of that narrative. For example, you can have your learners try making bricks both with and without straw if the lesson is on Exodus 5:6-18 (brick recipes are on the Internet). This will add a tactile element to the narrative, helping your learners sense the text in a way beyond hearing.

“Acting it out” thus requires the learners to place themselves into the narrative. Beyond merely asking, “How would you have felt if you were they?” acting-it-out asks learners to wrestle with choices in a hands-on way. Notice the difference: you’re not asking them just to think *about* the biblical text, but to place themselves *inside* it. This helps the learner realize that Bible characters were real people facing real-life situations. There are limits, of course. For example, having your learners make their bricks out in the hot sun is not recommended!

## Express

Finally, your learners can encounter the living Word as you help them express it through their lives. For example, you can ask the learner to personalize a psalm, describing their family in light of a passage on community. You also could hold a “mock” elders’ meeting in which participants grapple with how to ensure that a widow in the church has her daily needs met (use fictitious names) in line with 1 Timothy 5.

## It’s Relevant!

Will your learners experience the Word of God merely as an academic discussion, to be left behind as they get back to “real life”? Or will they experience the Word as “alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12)? *Illustrate, participate, express!*