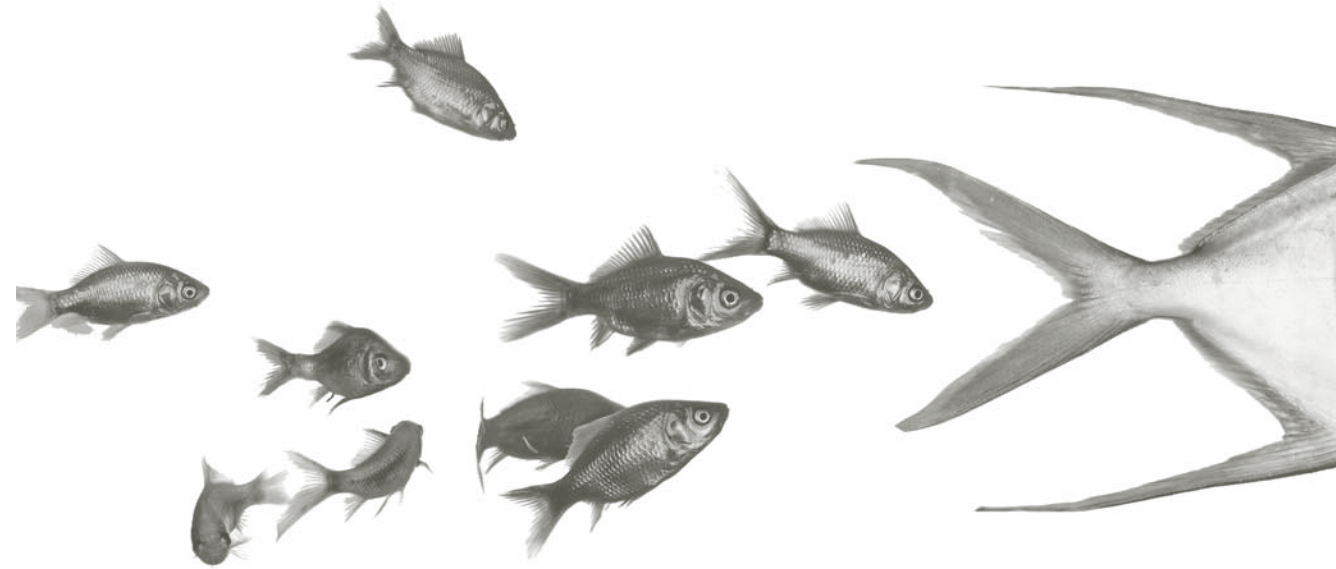


reframe the situation

WEEK THREE



THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF INFLUENCE we're covering this week are among my favorites because they're so subtle. They can influence people without them knowing that they're being influenced.

I don't mean that in a subversive, manipulative way. What we're learning this week is essentially "invisible influence." *Storytelling*, *contrast*, and *metaphor* are indirect pathways to persuasion, and in many situations, that's exactly what's required.

Jesus modeled each one of these approaches for us. Jesus was a master storyteller, using parables—stories that entertained while they educated. Jesus creatively used the approaches of "contrast" and "metaphor" to help people see old things in new ways. By changing their frame of reference, Jesus changed people's thinking and behavior, not with a formal argument or direct evidence and not with openly telling them to change, but with subtle, ingenious word choices.

We don't need to be geniuses to follow Jesus' example. Every one of us already use these techniques. We simply need to understand these principles, fine-tune our skills with them, and be more intentional in planning to use them. These are some of the most powerful concepts we'll cover in this study, so continue to look for their applications to your most pressing influence challenges.

small group meeting 3

WITHOUT VIDEO

1. PRAY

Opening prayer

2. DISCUSS (45 minutes)

Leader facilitates discussion based on the questions from the Week 2

Principle 4: Connect Through Similarity

Where have you seen this principle in operation?

Discuss the following questions: What do we have in common that could be a starting point for relationship and discussion? Or should I instead work through others who are more similar to this person?

Skill building: How can you make “connecting through similarity” more of a habit? Try to identify at least three practical steps you can take

Principle 5: Serve Their Needs

Where have you seen this principle in operation?

Discuss the following question: What does this person value that I could give to him or her?

Skill building: It’s easy to use this principle inappropriately—that is, to serve people for the sole purpose of getting something in return. How can you avoid that problem and use this principle with the right motivations?

Principle 6: Ask for Their Opinion

Where have you seen this principle in operation?

Discuss the following question: Have I asked for this person’s solutions and ideas, and have I genuinely listened to him?

Skill building: If you don’t use this principle as often as you should, why is that? Is it because you were unaware of it, or is it perhaps because it can be difficult to really listen to the other side and take seriously their ideas? What character qualities might you need to improve to make “asking their opinion” more of a habit?

3. PREVIEW (5 minutes)

Leader encourages participants to do the Week 4 at-home studies with the discussion questions to be covered in Meeting 5.

4. PRAY

WITH VIDEO

1. PRAY

2. DISCUSS (30-45 minutes)

Leader facilitates discussion based on the questions from the Week 2 (Follow the discussion plan found on page 70-71)

3. VIDEO (15 minutes)

Leader shows videos for Principles 7, 8, and 9

- **Principle 7:** Tell a story
- **Principle 8:** Construct a contrast
- **Principle 9:** Find a metaphor

4. PREVIEW

Leader encourages participants to do the Week 3 at-home studies with the discussion questions to be covered in Meeting 4.

5. PRAY

tell a story

Since we're covering the principle of storytelling today, what better way to start than with a story? This is a true one.

My son Michael is half Irish and half Italian. Pity the poor boy; his hard-wiring has yielded many, many wonderful attributes, but also a temper that epitomizes the stereotypes of those two fabulous cultures. Like his father, he's had to learn a thing or two about releasing anger in an appropriate manner. I've done everything I can think of to help him in this regard, including trying to model the appropriate behaviors (Principle 2), educating myself about kids' emotions (Principle 3), relationship building through similar interests (Principle 4), seeking his solutions (Principle 6), showing him relevant passages in books such as Proverbs and James (Principle 10), and administering a plethora of time-outs and other consequences (Principle 14). That's just a sampling, by the way. I've tried a few other things as well. And to be honest, each of these methods has produced some positive results. But not one of them ever had the effect of

reading him a story from Bill Bennett's *A Children's Book of Virtues*.

In that book is a story about Genghis Khan, a Mongolian warlord from the 13th century who was known for, among other things, his blistering temper. The story, in a nutshell, tells of Khan hunting with his pet hawk, a trusted friend who helped him find game to shoot. Khan was alone in the woods and very thirsty, but he had no water with him, so when he came across some water dripping slowly from a rock ledge, he was elated. Khan took a cup and over the course of a couple minutes, filled it drop by drop. But just as he tried to drink the water, his pet hawk swooped down and knocked the cup from his hand, spilling the water on the ground. This was strange and unprecedented behavior for the hawk.

Kahn was enraged and returned his cup to the ledge, waiting a couple of more minutes for it to refill. Again, just as he was about to drink it, the hawk knocked the drink from his hand. Kahn screamed at the hawk, warning him that if he did it again, he'd be dead. And sure enough, minutes later, when

the hawk again prevented Kahn from taking a drink, Kahn struck down the bird with his sword.

By now, the water had stopped dripping, so an infuriated Kahn had to scale the rock ledge to find where the water had come from. When he reached the top he found a lake—with an enormous (think “sea monster”), poisonous snake laying dead in it. The snake's body blocked the path of the water that had been dripping down the rock ledge, and immediately, Kahn realized that the water he intended to drink was venomous. His pet hawk, having seen the snake from above, had saved his life, but Kahn's uncontrolled anger caused him to repay the heroic bird with death.

My son, an animal lover, sat in stunned horror, transfixed by the picture of this poor, dying bird at the feet of a sword-wielding soldier. Tears filled Michael's eyes (an unusual event). He couldn't sleep for hours that night. The story triggered a flood of

emotions—and, I think, a flood of revelation—that no punishment, no Bible verse, no parental relationship ever had. Through the story and the picture, he *felt* for the first time the destructive power of improperly releasing anger, and it had a profound effect on him for a long time.

That's not to say that he (or his dad) no longer struggles with the issue. It is to say, though, that the emotional appeal of a story, coupled with the graphic picture of the consequences of unmanaged anger, affected him more than any other influence method.

THE INFLUENCE METHOD MOST LIKELY TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

Aside from prayer, storytelling, especially when it tugs at the emotions of another person, is the influence principle that is most likely to get your audience to actually do something—to actually change their behavior. I recognize that's an audacious statement, considering the enormous power of

Aside from prayer, storytelling, especially when it **tugs at the emotions** of another person, is the influence principle that is most likely to get your audience to actually *do* something.

the other principles we're discussing in this study. But it seems a little less audacious when we consider that storytelling was Jesus' primary means of teaching and influencing others.

Jesus was a master storyteller, regaling people throughout the countryside with parable after parable—stories that entertained while they educated. Before those in the crowd knew it, they were face-to-face with a life-changing truth, and they retained that truth because it was easy to remember the story from which it came.

When we think of Jesus' teachings, we think of stories, don't we? Parables. Lessons taught through familiar experiences, at least familiar to the original hearers—farming, weddings, employment, borrowing and lending, tending sheep. It was really just an extension

tradition orally and anecdotally. In doing so, it influenced the next generation to embrace longstanding values.

Jesus used stories for far more than this, though. Rather than just perpetuating values of old, He introduced through parables an entirely different way of relating to God and neighbor. To teach that God's forgiveness is always available, no matter what we've done, he told the prodigal son story. To teach that it's never too late to be saved, He told the workers in the vineyard story. To teach us how to pray and how not to pray, He told the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee. To teach that we are to love and serve all people, regardless of who they are or how busy we are, He told the good Samaritan story.

In this way, He influenced thousands of His contemporaries and

they were simply memorable tales. A major reason is that Jesus' stories, like all of the most influential stories throughout history, *touched people's emotions*. They had "pathos," to borrow Aristotle's term for the influence principle—the power to evoke feelings and arouse emotions.

Consider for a moment the parable of the good Samaritan. Nice story about a couple of big-wigs whose heads were too big for their wigs, right? And about a little guy who did a big thing, right? Wrong. If we hear the story through the ears of the original Jewish audience, it's not nearly that tepid. It's a completely scandalous story. Because the protagonist is a Samaritan—essentially an impure, half-Jew—few stories could be more offensive. In fact, according to renowned seminary professors Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, if Jesus told the parable today, it would sound something like this:

A family of disheveled, unkempt individuals was stranded by the side of the road on a Sunday morning. They were in obvious distress. The mother was sitting on a tattered suitcase, hair uncombed, clothes in disarray, with a glazed look to her eyes, holding a smelly, poorly clad, crying baby. The father was unshaved, dressed in coveralls, the look of despair as he tried to corral

two other youngsters. Beside them was a run-down old car that had obviously just given up the ghost.

Down the road came a car driven by the local bishop; he was on his way to church. And though the father of the family waved frantically, the bishop could not hold up his parishioners, so he acted as if he didn't see them.

Soon came another car, and again the father waved furiously. But the car was driven by the president of the local Kiwanis Club, and he was late for a statewide meeting of Kiwanis presidents in a nearby city. He too acted as if he did not see them, and kept his eyes straight on the road ahead of him.

The next car that came by was driven by an outspoken local atheist, who had never been to church in his life. When he saw the family's distress, he took them into his own car. After inquiring as to their need, he took them to a local motel where he paid for a week's lodging while the father found work. He also paid for the father to rent a car so that he could look for work and gave the mother cash for food and new clothes.⁵

Get the point? Framed in these contemporary terms, the story is not only memorable, it's provocative in the

Jesus introduced through parable **an entirely different way of relating** to God and neighbor.

of what we now call the "oral tradition." With the scarcity of both writing implements and literacy, every ancient culture passed along its wisdom and

billions since then to see differently. How does this work? It's not just that Jesus' stories offered clever analogies to everyday experiences or that

same way that it provoked the first-century Jewish audience. Indeed, it's offensive, but its offensiveness finally gets us to think. In fact, I'd bet if this contemporary version of the parable were told this coming Sunday at churches across America, two things would happen: (1) Some people would not return to their churches the follow-

ing Sunday and (2) those who did return would be thinking differently about themselves and others. I suspect they'd be very open to hearing more about this "new" teaching (in fact, many would be demanding it!), and our pastors would have a unique opportunity to preach a life-changing message to their most attentive audience ever. Pastors would be in a remarkable and rare position to have significant influence over normally complacent congregants.

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That's the power of a great story. It provokes as it proffers. It prods as it progresses. It shakes people from their comfort zones and gets them asking

questions they've never considered asking. Have you heard stories like that? Or told them? You probably have on occasion, so you know what I'm talking about.

But now, are you willing to try to use this approach more often? It's surely worth the effort. As we said

above, of all the principles covered in this study, other than prayer, storytelling may be the one most likely to stimulate change. Since people are so prone to *really* listening when we're telling a story, storytelling influences in the most non-threatening and disarming of ways: before we know it, we're face-to-face with an uncomfortable truth—one that will shadow us even when we try to run from it!

Make a habit of telling more stories in your efforts to persuade. Invest the time to identify stories that could be wake-up calls for those you're trying to influence. And invest the time to become a better story-

teller by developing a delivery that's both enjoyable and enlightening. It's a technique that works in nurseries and nursing homes alike...and everywhere in between. So, like Jesus, if you want to master the art of persuasion, master the art of storytelling.

MASTERING THE ART OF STORYTELLING

We can look to many other places in Scripture where a story led to influence and change. To cite just a couple, think about how Nathan, through a story, influenced King David to see the egregiousness of his sin (2 Sam. 12). Think of how Paul evangelized the Gentile world through telling and retelling the story of his Damascus road experience (Acts 22:6-21; 26:12-18). Overall, think of how God chose to reveal, through stories in the Bible, who He is and how He desires for us to live.

Pretty compelling evidence that we should perfect our storytelling, don't you think? To improve the skills you already have, consider these practical tips:

Selecting a Story and Preparing to Tell It

- Finding an appropriate story is sometimes the hardest part. It helps to identify a situation in the past that's analogous to what you want to teach. In other

words, identify a story where the change you'd like to see has already happened somewhere. Learn as much as you can about that situation and then tell that story. The more analogous the story to your current situation, the more believable your point will be and the more likely the story will be influential.

- It's usually best for a story to have only one protagonist rather than a lot of them. Listeners can connect well with a single character, empathize with him or her or it, and thereby learn the lesson of the story better.
- Practice telling the story. Then, if you really want this to be effective, practice it some more. That might sound weird, especially if you tell a lot of stories. But truly great storytelling doesn't just happen, not even for professionals. As with any performance, excellence requires that you rehearse before going "on stage" with your story.

Telling the Story

- As you're telling the story, relive it as well as you can. If you imagine yourself in the setting you're describing, you'll be more comfortable telling the story,

A great story shakes people from their comfort zones and gets them asking questions they've never considered asking.

you'll include richer detail, and you'll tell it in a way that draws others into that setting with you. By contrast, when we tell a story by mentally remembering how we've told it before and then try to repeat that earlier performance, our story usually falls flat.

- Perform the story. Tell it with emotion. Tell it with enthusiasm and animation, using hand gestures and other nonverbal cues. Use inflection in your voice rather than a monotone delivery, and vary your pace of delivery, slowing down in the most important parts. If you can mentally "relive" the story as you're telling it, as noted above, these things will happen more naturally.
- Enjoy telling the story. Have fun with it. Don't worry about what anyone thinks of you.
- Avoid offering unnecessary details or tangents in the story. Practice helps you to identify these.
- Tell the story often. The best influencers tell good stories over and over again, even to people who have heard them before (such as their employees or their kids). Why? Because people forget the lessons. A year after telling my son the Genghis Khan story,

for example, he had remembered it differently—Khan was out hunting with his pet dog (not his hawk), they caught a snake, and everyone lived happily ever after. Ouch. Because I neglected to retell the story enough times, the anger management lesson was completely lost.

- Remember that storytelling is contagious. When people hear stories, they often want to continue the conversation by telling their own similar stories. This helps immensely in an influence situation. If the person you're trying to persuade connects enough with your story to tell you one with a similar lesson, then stop talking and listen attentively. People are convinced best when they convince themselves.

Some Other Tips

- Self-deprecating stories—stories about how you personally failed at something—tend to keep people's attention and they lend credibility to what you're saying.
- For any situation you encounter often (introducing yourself, telling someone about God, training a new employee, etc.), have a stock story or two that you've polished and perfected. Few

people can tell inspiring, motivating, or life-changing stories in an impromptu, off-the-cuff manner.

- There's not one right way to do this...or even two or three. Find a storytelling style with which you're comfortable and stick with that. If something in

the above list doesn't work for you, ignore it and do something else. What's important is that your storytelling style is entirely yours and that you're comfortable delivering in story form the messages that God wants you to deliver.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

The “tell a story” principle says that stories persuade because they captivate, inspire, and stay with us. Where have you seen this principle in operation?

Think about the greatest influence challenge or challenges in your life and then respond to the following question on your Influence Planning worksheet:

What stories can I tell that will get my point across in a memorable and emotional way?

Skill building: Review the list of practices for “Mastering the Art of Storytelling.” Identify those where you are strongest and those where you need to improve. You may also find it helpful to photocopy the list and post it someplace you’ll see it regularly. If you keep those ideas in front of you, you’re more likely to use them.

INFLUENCE PLANNING WORKSHEET 7

Influence Principle 7

TELL A STORY

Stories persuade because they captivate, inspire, and stay with us.

THE GOAL

To influence _____

to _____

A QUESTION TO ASK MYSELF

What stories can I tell that will get my point across in a memorable and emotional way?

WHAT I COULD DO

construct a contrast

Picture this: A fanatical and militant group of men are determined to stone a woman to death, publicly and brutally. They chase her through the streets as she screams for her life. Onlookers do nothing, except for the few who eagerly join the swarm of sadists.

Finally, with her bloody bare feet unable to take another step, the woman stumbles and falls, mere yards from where you sit. The executioners surround her, hurling insults before they hurl their rocks. “You’re an adulteress!” they shriek. “A dirty whore! The law of Moses demands that you be killed!”

Oddly enough, before they carry out their sentence, the leader of the lynch mob turns to you for your advice. Well, sort of. Actually, he’s not real interested in your advice; he’s just hoping that you’ll say something that contravenes their tradition, so they can put you on death row too.

“This woman’s been caught in the act of adultery,” he explains to you, “and under our law she’s to be stoned to death. What do you say?”

Well, what do you say? A dozen angry men with their finger on the

trigger and their leader asks for your opinion, only so he can reject it. Meanwhile, the accused lies weeping at your feet. If ever there were a time to have influence skills, this would be it.

Now take this one step further: Imagine that you’re such an effective influencer that merely one sentence out of your mouth saves the woman’s life, disperses the crowd, and sends you safely on your way. How valuable would it be to have that sort of ability? How much good could you do with talent like that? How much could that gift, in the right hands (or mouth, for that matter), advance the kingdom of God?

It may be the most stunning example of influence in the entire Bible. I’m sure you remember this true story, don’t you? You remember that moment of truth when Jesus was asked “What should we do?” And you probably remember the single line of truth that Jesus spoke as He sat in the sand beneath them—a line that caused them to drop their weapons: “The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7).

When you understand why Jesus’ one line was so influential, you’ll have at your disposal one of the **most potent of persuasion** practices: contrast.

The would-be assassins looked down at him in disbelief. Then, reluctantly, they complied: “When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only He was left, with the woman” (John 8:9).

Like I said, it’s arguably the most profound and dramatic example of influence in all of Scripture. Do you understand, though, *why* Jesus’ one line was so influential? Once you do, you’ll have at your disposal one of the most potent of persuasion practices: contrast.

THE POWER OF CONTRAST

The contrast principle is easy to understand, and it’s also one of the easiest influence principles to use. In a sentence, it’s this: *The difference between things greatly influences our perceptions and decisions.* That is, how we feel about a situation, an idea, a person, or a product depends on our benchmark, our reference point—the thing to which we’re comparing it.

I recognize that may seem a little abstract, so let me give you a few everyday examples. When we look at the price tags on clothing or other goods, it says something like: “Their price: \$50. Our price: \$39.99.” Contrasted against a reference point of \$50, \$39.99 may seem like a good deal to us.

When you walk into a furniture store, you’ll encounter the more expensive items first and then the less expensive items farther back in the store. Why? Contrast. After seeing a \$2,500 living room set, \$999 doesn’t seem so bad. Had the store arranged its products from low price to high price, the contrast principle would reduce rather than enhance sales.

Another example: When buying a diamond, you’ll rarely see one on a white background. On what does every diamond sit in almost every jewelry store? A black background, right? The visual contrast makes it look far more dazzling.

This is not just a principle for salespeople, though. We see the contrast

principle in operation, sadly, through the growing problem of Internet pornography. Against the backdrop of younger, thinner, less-inhibited women, a guy's view of his wife changes—guaranteed. *She just doesn't measure up*, he thinks. *Not even close. She's not nearly as attractive or exciting as so many other women out there in the world. I really got ripped off.* He might as well feed poison to the marriage. The cyber-contrast has the same toxic effect.

I had a professor in seminary who used this approach often when lecturing. For many controversial topics he'd describe in nonpejorative, value-neutral terms, the far right and far left positions. Then he'd come to *his* position on the issue, a position that almost always sat comfortably between the two extremes. It was a compelling rhetorical approach. Contrasted against the extremes, his more moderate perspective seemed reasonable—and thereby persuasive.

The difference between things greatly influences our perceptions and decisions.

However, the principle can work just as powerfully to strengthen our relationships. When we almost lose someone we care about—or even if we genuinely think about that possibility—we get a chilling glimpse of what life would be like without that person. How much *worse* things could be becomes our new reference point, eclipsing the old reference point of how much *better* things could be. As a result, appreciation floods the relationship and it may be a long time before we again take this person for granted.

Contrast can change more than relationships too: it can change minds.

JESUS' USE OF CONTRAST

On that foundation, let's come back full circle to the men preparing to exact vigilante justice on the woman at Jesus' feet. His one sentence cleared the crowd, without threat, without bribe, without emotion. Jesus influenced them simply through contrast, nothing more. One moment they were comparing her behavior to the law of Moses; the next moment, they were comparing her behavior to their own. Jesus changed their frame of reference, and in doing so, He changed how they saw the situation.

Jesus used this same approach in other influence situations as well. Do you recall the story of the paralytic brought before Jesus and the scribes in Matthew 9? Jesus looked at the man with love and compassion, and then, to the utter horror of the nearby scribes, said to him: "Have courage, son, your sins are forgiven" (9:2).

Look at what happened next, keeping in mind the contrast principle:

"At this, some of the scribes said among themselves, 'He's blaspheming!' But perceiving their thoughts, Jesus said, 'Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts? For which is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—then He told the paralytic, 'Get up, pick up your stretcher, and go home.' And he got up and went home. When the crowds saw this, they were

awestruck and gave glory to God who had given such authority to men" (Matt. 9:3-7).

Notice a few things here. Jesus wanted to influence their understanding of His ministry ("so you may know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins"). He pursued this influence through contrast: If He could do something greater, such as heal a paralyzed man, He could do something lesser, such as forgive the man's sins. And, at least for "the crowds," it worked.

With a different crowd, a crowd on the Mount, Jesus again used contrast. To influence them—and us—not to worry about so many things, He taught:

"This is why I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the sky: they don't sow or reap or

Jesus changed their **frame of reference** and in doing so, He changed how they saw the situation.

gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow: they don't labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these! If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't He do much more for you" (Matt. 6:25-30).

See the contrast principle at work in His words? Take a second to take a quiz: Do you see the contrast principle in His words or in this passage?

It's in two places here, right? First, if God feeds the birds, how much more will He feed you? And second, if God clothes the flowers and fields, how much more will He clothe you? Just like He did with the vigilantes and with the scribes, Jesus reframed the anxiety of those on the mountainside in a new context—a context that has the potential to forever change the way they think.

PAUL'S USE OF CONTRAST

Speaking of thought-changing, life-improving contrasts, let's not leave this topic without at least of brief look at how Paul used this influence principle.

Romans 8:18 is a life verse for many and for good reason. If we'd just align our thinking with this single verse, everything—*everything*—would be better in our lives. That probably sounds like an oversell to you (something that I really dislike, by the way, especially when listening to someone's exegesis), but I don't think it is in this instance. Consider the verse:

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us."

By now you'll no doubt recognize the inherent, influential contrast in the verse. The first part of the verse is set against the second part; that is, the temporal sufferings we experience are set against an eternal life in paradise.

That matters a whole lot to the original audience, a group of severely persecuted Roman Christians. Paul didn't tell this group to combat persecution or to run from it. He taught them to think about it differently, to

Paul taught us to **think about persecution differently**, to keep it in proper perspective, and to contrast it with an infinite inheritance of joy.

keep it in proper perspective, and to contrast it with an infinite inheritance of joy.

Think of the remarkably practical applications of this teaching. If a friend is struggling with the ordinary stuff of daily life—for instance a misbehaving toddler, an awful commute, an impossible co-worker, a relentless schedule—some humble Romans 8:18 counsel might encourage your friend to take a longer view of things, to see the present day in eternal context, to set her burdens against the bigger picture of how blessed she really is. "That's annoying, for sure," you might say, "but maybe you can try to see it as little stuff compared to what really matters. Sure it's important to deal with it, and I'll help you think through that, but try to keep it in proper perspective. We're blessed so abundantly."

This is the contrast principle at its best. But one word of advice: Before you try to encourage a friend with it,

let God use it in you first. Keep regular reminders in front of you that will contrast the day's burdens against God's past, current, and future blessings. Maintain this frame of mind to reap more gratitude and joy, fewer conflicts, the surprising ability to forgive, and the peace that's been so elusive in your life. And if that weren't enough, in doing so you'll also lay the foundation to influence your friend more authentically, *out of personal experience with this God-given approach*.

Remember, this contrast principle is not some mind-trick. It's nothing less than a biblically based pathway to a better life—and to influencing others to walk this pathway with you and with Paul and with Jesus.

Perhaps your friend will think that's some pretty good company!

5. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd edition, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1993), 147.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

The “construct a contrast” principle says that the difference between things greatly influences our perceptions and decisions. Where have you seen this principle in operation?

Think about the greatest influence challenge or challenges in your life and then respond to the following questions on your Influence Planning worksheet:

Is there something to which this option compares favorably?

Can I show how much worse things could be?

Skill building: This principle is easy to use, but often forgotten. List at least *three practical things* you can do to help you remember to use the contrast principle to influence people.

INFLUENCE PLANNING WORKSHEET 8

Influence Principle 8

CONSTRUCT A CONTRAST

The difference between things greatly influences our perceptions and decisions.

THE GOAL

To influence _____

to _____

QUESTIONS TO ASK MYSELF

Is there something to which this option compares favorably?

Can I show how much worse things could be?

WHAT I COULD DO

find a metaphor

*I'm at a crossroads.
My car is a lemon.
She's sharp as a tack.*

Twenty three hundred years ago, Aristotle, who's considered the father of persuasion theory, wrote in his book, *Poetics*: "The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor." Similarly, in *Rhetoric*, he taught that "from metaphor we can best get hold of something fresh."

*Kids really blossom at that school.
He's an old flame.
I've got too much on my plate
right now.*

The ancient philosopher defined "metaphor," quite aptly, as "the act of giving a thing a name that belongs to something else." As such, a metaphor can help us to see things in a new way, perhaps in a way we hadn't seen it before. That's why it's such a powerful influencer: Clever and timely use of metaphors can fundamentally alter the way people think about something.

*Business is war.
My home is a zoo.
I'm drowning in work.
You're the light of my life.
The tyrants of political correctness
on campus.*

Each one of these sentences or phrases paints a picture. Some of the pictures may even be vivid and memorable enough to reorient our perspective. Take the "business is war" metaphor, for example. It's a reasonably common way of thinking and talking about the business world, but it also turns out to be a *dangerously* common way. There's actually some solid research that shows that businesspeople who think in these "war" terms are more likely to do unethical things, such as steal from a competitor, than are those who operate under a different metaphor, such as "business is a race."

That's a profound finding. It seems that we could improve business ethics without ever spending a dime. Just change the metaphor by which people operate.

But well beyond that business context, the same kind of reorientation can apply to just about every other area of our life. If, say, a man thinks of himself not as a "father" (which may be fraught with all sorts of baggage from his own upbringing) but primarily as a "teacher," his level of patience and his disposition toward his kids may change instantly. Why not give it a try tonight, guys? And if a Christian employee thinks of his job not as "work" but as his "ministry," how he uses his time and how hard he works will likely change for the better. Similarly, if he thinks of himself not as an "employee" but as an "ambassador for God," his workplace attitude and character might change as well.

context, opening the door to lasting change. But don't take my word for it—or Aristotle's, for that matter. Take your cue from someone even smarter than Aristotle.

JESUS' METAPHORS

Think about the various metaphors Jesus used and how colorful and even provocative they are. See if you can recall some of them. There's a bunch.

Here's the first one that often rolls off of people's lips when I ask this question: Jesus called the religious leaders of the day "whitewashed tombs" (Matt. 27:23). Remember that? What a scandalous thing to say! And what tremendous potential it had to adjust the way people thought about their leadership. These aren't authori-

A well-chosen metaphor can, in a covert and nonthreatening way, completely reorient a person's perspective.

The point is this: Our frame of reference matters. As we saw in the previous study, a person's context often determines how he or she behaves. A well-chosen metaphor can, in a covert and nonthreatening way, shift that

tative sages to be followed and revered. They're *whitewashed tombs*—sparkling clean and perfect on the outside, dead and rotting on the inside. Could anyone hearing these words ever look at a Pharisee the same way again? More

likely, people would forever associate the leaders' pristine robes with superficiality, veneer, and hypocrisy. All that from two words!

That's what a wise metaphor does: It can change the way we see something, no matter how many times we've seen it or thought about it before.

Maybe that's why Jesus gives us so many metaphors about Himself, to give us a fresh perspective on how to experience God. Jesus called Himself the "Good Shepherd"—a kind guide. He's "the Gate" and "the Door"—something through which we need to go. He's "the Bread of life"—something one would take in for nourishment. He's "the Vine"—something to which we "branches" must remain connected. He's "the Way, the Truth, and the Life"—a person we need to follow if we want our lives sustained.

Each of these metaphors shapes our perception of Jesus in a way that straightforward assertions simply cannot. The same with Jesus' metaphors for some of the central issues of His ministry: "faith" and "the kingdom of God." Regarding faith, Jesus taught that all we need is a little to do a lot—the faith of a mustard seed, the smallest seed that grows into the biggest tree. And regarding the kingdom of God, He communicated its value by likening it to finding "a treasure in a field" or finding "a pearl of great price." Any more questions about its value?

PAUL'S METAPHORS

Paul piggybacked on this approach. Among his most cited behavior-changing metaphors is the race image of the Christian life. Remember that? To exhort the Corinthians to make their faith life a continuing priority, he connected it metaphorically to something commonplace in Greek culture: "Do you not know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win" (1 Cor. 9:24). He returned to the image elsewhere in his writings, including in his swan song to Timothy: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

Does this kind of metaphor matter? You bet! If we think of our faith journey as a race, we're more likely to keep pressing forward instead of snoozing for a season.

Paul used metaphor to keep us in right relation with one another as well. Think about his "body" metaphor in his first letter to the Corinthians. To this people rife with arrogance and pride—individuals prone to thinking themselves better than those around them—Paul offered an essential and timeless corrective, based on a common context that everyone has. He reminded them that though the body is made up of many parts, it's still one body, with parts arranged and connected just the way God designed them to be:

Paul didn't say to the Corinthians: "Shut up about how great you are!" He used the **softer, subtler approach** of metaphor—an important tactic with prideful people.

"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' nor again the head to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, all the more, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are necessary" (1 Cor. 12:21-22).

Notice that he didn't just come out and say, "Shut up about how great you are!" He took a softer, subtler approach—an important tactic with prideful people—that leverages the power of metaphor to change the way they think about one another.

If you're a regular reader of the New Testament, you can probably think of other Pauline masterpieces. When cautioning the Corinthians not to tolerate sin in their congregation, he wrote: "Don't you know that a little yeast permeates the whole batch of dough?" (1 Cor. 5:6). When encouraging the Ephesians to take a stand against Satan's schemes, he told them to "put on the full armor of God," including things like the "belt of truth," the "shield of faith," the "helmet of salvation," and the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:11-17). These are not

attempts at poetry; they're attempts to change behavior through the creative use of metaphor. And two millennia later, they're still doing just that.

MAKE THE EFFORT TO FIND A METAPHOR

Someone once said "Metaphors shows us that the world is full of cousins." Come to think of it, that's sort of a metaphor about metaphors! Anyway, the point of today's study is that we should look for those cousins, these connections between things that can make the difference between influencing somebody or not, between a change in their behavior or more of the same, between getting them on God's agenda or remaining on their own.

Is it worth the mental effort to find a metaphor? Jesus thought so. Paul thought so. James used metaphors (e.g., the tongue is a rudder, Jas. 3:4-5), as did Solomon (e.g., guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life, Prov. 4:23), and John (e.g., God is love, 1 John 4:8). So shouldn't we use metaphors, too?

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

The “find a metaphor” principle says that metaphor—showing that one thing resembles another thing—can cause people to see and think in new ways. Where have you seen this principle in operation?

Think about the greatest influence challenge or challenges in your life and then respond to the following question on your Influence Planning worksheet:

Is there a metaphor I can use that will encourage this person to see the situation differently?

Skill building: Finding an influential metaphor comes naturally for some people, but can be a lot of work for others. If you don’t usually use metaphors to persuade people, what could you do to change that in the future? Be as specific as you can.

INFLUENCE PLANNING WORKSHEET 9

Influence Principle 9

FIND A METAPHOR

*Metaphor—showing that one thing resembles another thing—
can cause people to see and think in new ways.*

THE GOAL

To influence _____

to _____

A QUESTION TO ASK MYSELF

Is there a metaphor I can use that will encourage this person to see the situation differently?

WHAT I COULD DO