Keep it Simple: Stick Figures

There is something unassuming about a simple stick figure. It is not a great work of art. It does not have moving parts nor is it usually animated.

Yet, at a camp last week some student teachers used stick figures to illustrate a Bible story for kids. The kids were enthralled.

Why was that?

Kids are constantly stimulated by all sorts of colourful graphics on T.V., laptops and tablets. What was it that they found so interesting about these simple figures?

Personally, I think that the unassuming imperfection of a simple stick figure relays a certain genuineness that children can't help but recognise. By keeping the visual aid simple the teachers communicated the following to the children:

1. I drew this for you.
2. I don't mind if you see me trying and making mistakes. I'm willing to share the "real me" with you.
3. This story is more important than my inadequacies so I want to share this with you.
4. God uses me (and you) for good when we put our pride to the side.

Here's an encouragement for today. Strive to give your best effort when you teach children but remember God can use even our most humble gifts to advance His kingdom.

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Supplies Used in this Story-telling Method:

- A Bible and chosen Bible story
  In the example above the story that was used was that of
  Paul and Barnabas in Lystra (Acts 13 and 14)
- Paper (in this case it was a poster board)
- Markers or a pen

Instructions:

1. Read over the event in the Bible and outline the story. In the example above the outline was:
   1. Paul heals the lame man in Lystra
   2. The people of Lystra begin to worship Paul and Barnabas like they were gods
   3. Paul tells them that only God should be worshipped. He is the giver of all gifts. He made everything around them. But the people would not stop worshipping them.
   4. Some angry men from another town came and started saying bad things about Paul and Barnabas. They made the crowd very angry.
   5.

      The crowd became so angry that they threw stones at Paul until he fell down and they said he was dead.
   6. After the crowd left Paul got up. He and Barnabas left Lystra and continued on to other cities to teach about Jesus.
2. Divide the paper into sections.
3. Draw the scenes of the story on each of the sections.
4. Before class begins cover each of the scenes with paper.
5. Remove the papers one at a time as you tell the story to the children. (By waiting to reveal pictures one at a time you will help the children maintain a sense of anticipation.)

Adaptations:

- Draw the pictures as you tell the story. This will require planning ahead and a little practice.
- Ask another person to draw as you tell the story. Teenagers or adults could be the guest artist in your class.
- Older children can read the story from the Bible together with you and outline it. They could then plan out the scenes and draw them themselves.
- Instead of a number of scenes choose one scene and draw it together as a group.

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- Use other mediums besides paper and markers:
  - Paints or chalk pastels
  - Sidewalk chalk on the sidewalk, footpath or concrete
  - Sharpie pens or any number of purchased products made to write temporarily on glass. The teacher or children can write on a window pane. (You will want to test this first to make sure it cleans up well with window cleaner).
  - (for outside) Use a stick and draw in the sand.

Extra Help for Drawing Stick Figures:

Here are a few helpful instructional videos I have found online.

- Drawing basic faces and emotions
  Video (almost 6 minutes) at https://youtu.be/BFoIRV1Eo84
- Adding dynamic actions to stick figures.
  Video (4 1/2 minutes) at https://youtu.be/DkM6FgbQIGs

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