

Introduction

Bruce Barton is known as one of advertising's most gifted writers. His copy is still studied today for its lessons. In fact, two of his ads stand as the best 50 ads ever written in the early 20th Century.

He was one of the founders of the legendary BBDO. But for all his accomplishments, Barton pointed to a greater Master as having created the greatest advertisement of all time.

The year was 1925 when Barton penned one of the most controversial books of his day, "The man nobody knows." It was an unorthodox look at the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the lessons on business that His life contained. Both conservatives and liberals alike decried the book and the controversy drove its sales to 400,000 copies.

But in one of the chapters titled "His Advertisements" Barton dissected the persuasion and communication strategies nestled inside the parables of Jesus – the very messages that had allowed this small village carpenter to influence civilizations and history for the last 20 centuries.

This chapter is fascinating since it is one of the few analyses of the Parables of Jesus, not from a theological perspective, but from the perspective of a seasoned ad-man.

Inside this chapter you'll discover...

- What the first sentence of every ad should contain

- The 2 universal ingredients that rivet the interest of your prospects

- What great ads DON'T contain
- How to infuse your advertisement with sincerity
- The common mistake that even experienced ad writers make.
- 3 of the greatest pieces of writing in history
- Every sentence you write should contain this powerful element
- Lessons from "advertisements" that have lasted for twenty centuries and are still among the most potent influencers in the world.
- How to pack a persuasive wallop in a small space
- 4 critical lessons from the greatest advertisement of all time.

Since it was published in 1925, the book is now in the public domain. I love Barton's ads and his unique perspective on the parables, so; I've had this chapter abridged for your convenience.

Enjoy.

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P.S. Barton spends a good half of this chapter demonstrating the "news value" that Jesus worked into his daily life. In fact, you may feel like skipping ahead after a while. Why all the time on "news?" If you study Barton's ads, they were loaded with "news value." Simply put, "news value" was important to Barton's success.

Secondly, in the parables he emphasizes sincerity. Again, if you study his ads, he was a master of sincerity.

His Advertisements

I propose in this chapter to speak of the advertisements of Jesus which have survived for twenty centuries are still the most potent influence in the world.

Create News!

Let us begin by asking why he was successful in mastering public attention and why in contrast, his churches are less so? The answer is twofold. In the first place **he recognized the basic principle that all good advertising is news**. He was never trite or commonplace; he had no routine. If there had been newspapers in those days, no city editor could have said, "No need to visit him to-day; he will be doing just what he did last Sunday." Reporters would have followed him every single hour, for it was impossible to predict what he would say or do; every action and word were news.

Take one single day as an example. The four gospel narratives are not chronological. They are personal records written after his death, not diaries in which entries were made every night. Thus we cannot say of most of the incidents: "This happened on such and such a day." The four stories repeat and conflict and overlap. In one place, however—the ninth chapter of Matthew—we have a detailed account of a single day's work. One of the events was the calling of Matthew himself to discipleship; hence we have every reason to suppose that the writer's memory of this particular day must have been more than usually reliable. Let us look at the twenty-four hours' schedule; see how it bristles with front-page news.

The activity begins at sunrise. Jesus was an early riser; he knew that the simplest way to live more than an average life is to add an hour to the fresh end of the day. At sunrise, therefore, we discover a little boat pushing out from the shore of the lake. It makes its steady way across and deposits Jesus and his disciples in Capernaum, his favorite city. He proceeds at once to the house of a friend, but not without being discovered. The report spreads instantly that he is in town, and before he can finish breakfast a crowd has collected outside the gate—a poor palsied chap among them.

The day's work is at hand.

Having slept soundly in the open air he meets the call with quiet nerves. The smile that carried confidence into even the most hopeless heart spreads over his features; he stoops down toward the sufferer.

"Be of good cheer, my son, " he cries, "your sins are all forgiven."

Sins forgiven! Indeed! The respectable members of the audience draw back with sharp disapproval. "What a blasphemous phrase," they exclaim. "Who authorized him to exercise the functions of God? What right has he to decided whose sins shall be forgiven?"

Jesus sensed rather than heard their protest. He never courted controversy but he never dodged it; and much of his fame arose out of the reports of his verbal victories. Men have been elected to office—even such high office as the Presidency—by being so good-natured that they never made an enemy. But the leaders who are remembered are those who had plenty of critics and dealt with them vigorously.

"What's the objection?" he exclaimed, turning on the dissenters. "Why do you stand there and criticize? Is it easier to say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' or to say, 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk?'" The results are the same." Bending over the sick man again he said; "Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house."

The man stirred and was amazed to find that his muscles responded. Slowly, doubtfully he struggled to his feet, and with one great shout of happiness started off, surrounded by his jubilant friends. The critics had received their answer, but they refused to give up. For an hour or more they persisted in angry argument, until the meeting ended in a tumult.

Can you imagine the next day's issue of the Capernaum News, if the had been on?

PALSIED MAN HEALED

JESUS OF NAZARETH CLAIMS RIGHT TO
FORGIVE SINS

PROMINENT SCRIBES OBJECT
"BLASPHEMOUS, " SAYS LEADING CITIZEN,
"BUT ANYWAY I CAN WALK," HEALD MAN
RETORTS.

Front-page story number one and the day is still young.

One of those who had been attracted by the excitement was a tax collector named Matthew. Being a man of business he cold not stay through the argument, but slipped away early and was hard at work when Jesus passed by a few minutes before noon.

"Matthew, I want you," said Jesus.

That was all. No argument; no offer of inducements' no promise of rewards. Merely "I want you;" and the prosperous tax collector closed his office, made a feast for the brilliant young teacher and forthwith announced himself a disciple.

PROMINENT TAX COLLECTOR JOINS
NAZARETH FORCES
MATTHEW ABANDONS BUSINESS TO PROMOTE
NEW CULT

GIVES LARGE LUNCHEON

Front-page story number two.

The luncheon itself furnished the third sensation. It was not at all the kind of affair which a religious teacher would be expected to approve. Decidedly it was a good-natured and noisy.

No theological test was applied in limiting the invitation. No one

stood at the entrance to demand: "What is your belief regarding the birth of Jesus?" or, "Have you or have you not been baptized?" The doors were flung wide, and, along with the disciples and the respectable folks, a swarm of publicans and sinners trooped in.

"Outrageous," grumbled the worth folk. "Surely if this teacher had any moral standards he never would eat with such rabble."

They were shocked, but he was not. That he had condemned himself according to their formula worried him not a whit. His liking for folks overran all social boundaries; he just could not seem to remember that some people are nice people, proper people, and some are not.

"Come, come," he exclaimed to the Pharisees, "won't you ever get over nagging at me because I eat with these outsiders? Who needs the doctor most—they that are well or they that are sick?"

"And here's another thing to think about," he added. "You lay so much stress of forms and creeds and occasions—do you suppose God cares about all that? What do you think he meant when he said; 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice?' Take that home and puzzle over it."

DEFENDS PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

JESUS OF NAZARETH WELCOMES THEM AT LUNCH

REBUKES PROMINENT PHARISEES

"CREEDS UNIMPORTANT," HE SAYS. "GOD WANTS
MERCY NOT SACRIFICES."

A fourth big story. You may be sure it was carried into hundreds of homes during the next few weeks, and formed the basis for many a long evening's discussion.

As the meal drew to its close there came a dramatic interruption—a ruler of the city made his way slowly to the head of the table and stood silent, bowed by the terrible weight of his grief. That morning he had sat at his daughter's beside, clasping her frail white hand in his, watching the flutter of the pulse, trying by the force of his longing to hold that little life back from the precipice. And at last the

doctors had told him that it was useless any more to hope. So he had come, this ruler, to the strange young man whose deeds of healing were the sensation of the day.

Was it too late? The ruler had thought so when he entered the door; but as he stood in that splendid presence a new thrilling conviction gripped him:

"Master, my daughter is even now dead," he exclaimed, "but come and lay your hand on her and she will live."

Jesus rose from his seat, drawn by that splendid outburst of faith and without hesitation or question he started for the door. All his life he seemed to feel that there was no limit at all to what he could do, if only those who beseeched him believed enough. Grasping the ruler's arm he led the way up the street, his disciples and the motley crowd hurrying along behind.

They had several blocks to travel, and before their journey was completed another interruption occurred.

A woman who had been sick for twelve years edged through the crowd, eluded the sharp eyes of the disciples and touched the hem of his garment. "For she said within herself, if I may but touch his garment, I shall be healed." ... What an idea.... What a personality his must have been to provoke such ideas...."My daughter is dead, but lay your hands on her and she will live."... "I've been sick for twelve years; the doctors can do nothing, but if I only touch his coat I'll be all right."... How can the artists possibly have imagined that a sad-faced weakling could ever inspire such amazing ideas as these!

The woman won her victory. By that touch, by his smile, by the few words he spoke, her faith rose triumphant over disease. She "was made whole from that hour."

Again he moved forward, the crowd pressing hard. The ruler's residence was now in plain sight. The paid mourners, hired by the hour, were busy about the doorway; they increased their activities as their employer came in sight—hideous wails and the dull sounding of cymbals—a horrible pretense of grief. Quickening his stride Jesus was in the midst of them.

"Give place," he cried with a commanding gesture. "The maid is

not dead but sleepeth."

They laughed him to scorn. Brushing them aside he strode into the house and took the little girl by the hand. The crowd looked on dumfounded, for at the magic of his touch she opened her eyes, and sat up.

Front-page stories five and six. A woman sick twelve years, and healed! A child whom the doctors had abandoned for dead, sits up and smiles! No wonder a thousand tongues were busy that night advertising his name and work. "The fame thereof went abroad into all that land," says the narrative. Nothing could keep it from going abroad.

It was irresistible news!

Works, Not Words

He was advertised by his service, not by his sermons; this is the second noteworthy fact. Nowhere in the Gospels do you find it announced that:

Jesus of Nazareth Will Denounce
The scribes and Pharisees in the
Central Synagogue
Tonight at Eight O'clock
Special Music

His preaching was almost incidental. On only one occasion did he deliver a long discourse, and that was probably interrupted often by questions and debates. He did not come to establish a theology but to lead a life.

He healed a lame man, gave sight to a blind man, fed the hungry, cheered the poor; and by these works he was advertised much more than by his words.

Tell a Story!

A very successful publisher has a rule that no photograph shall ever be printed in his newspapers unless it contains human beings.

You and I are interested most of all in ourselves. Next to that we are interested in other people. What do they look like? How old are they? What have they done and said? With unerring instinct Jesus recognized and used this trait in human nature. One of the most revealing of all versus to those who would understand the secret of his power is this: "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parables spake he not unto them." A parable is a story. He told them stories, stories about people, and let the stories carry his message. He might have adopted very different methods—many teachers and would-be leaders do. He might have dealt in generalities, saying;

"When you are going about your business, be as kind as you can. Be thoughtful of other travelers on the highways of life. Take time to look for those who have fared less fortunately; lend them a helping hand whenever you can."

I say he might have uttered such generalities. But if he had, do you suppose that they would ever have been remembered? Would the disciples have recorded them? Would our age ever have heard his name? He was far wiser in the laws and habits of the human mind. Instead of the commonplace phrases written above, he painted this striking picture:

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves."

There's your illustration and your headline! If you had lived near Jerusalem or Jericho; if you often had occasion to use that very road, wouldn't you want to know what happened to that unfortunate traveler?

"They stripped off his raiment," the parable continues, "and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead." Pretty soon a priest came by and seeing the victim said to himself; "That's a shameful thing, the police ought to do something about these outrages." but he crossed over carefully and passed by on the other side. A certain respectable Levite also appeared "His own fault," he sniffed, "ought to be more careful." And he too passed by. Then a third traveler drew near, and stopped—and the whole world knows what happened... Generalities would have been soon forgotten. But the story that has its roots in every-day human experience and need, lives and will live forever. It condenses the philosophy of Christianity in to a

half dozen unforgettable paragraphs. **The parable of the Good Samaritan is the greatest advertisement of all time.**

Take any one of the parables, no matter which– you will find that it exemplifies all the principles on which advertising text books are written. Always a picture in the very first sentence: crisp, graphic language and a message so clear that even the dullest cannot escape it.

Ten Virgins Went Fourth to Meet
A Bridegroom

A striking picture and a striking headline. The story which follows has not a single wasted word:

Five of the Virgins were wise, and five were foolish.

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

Then all those Virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said unto the wise, "Give us of your oil for our lamps have gone out."

But the wise answered, saying, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came. And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.

Afterward came also the other Virgins, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to me."

But he answered and said, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not..."

Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Illustrate that with a drawing by a distinguished artist; set it up according to the best modern typography; bury it in a magazine with a hundred other pages—will it not stand out? Will it not grip the attention of even the most casual, and make itself read?

Here is another one:

What Happened to The One Lost Sheep?

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulder rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance...."

If you given the task of advertising to the world that God cares enormously for one human life—no matter how wayward and wrong the life may be—how could you phrase a message more memorable than that? Yet how simple; how sincere; how splendidly crisp and direct.

Benjamin Franklin in his autobiography—that first great American "success story"—tells the process through which he went in acquiring an effective style. He would read a passage from some great master of English, then lay the book aside and attempt to reproduce the thought in his own words. Comparing his version with the original, he discovered wherein he had obscured the thought, or wasted words, or failed in driving straight to the point. Every advertising man ought to

study the parables of Jesus in the same fashion, schooling himself in their language and learning these four big elements of their power.

The Four Elements of Power in the Parables

Principle One: Condensed.

1. First of all they are marvelously condensed, as all good advertising must be. Charles A. Dana, once issued an assignment to a new reporter on the New York Sun, directing him to confine his article to a column. The report protested that the story was too big to be compressed into so small a space.

"Get a copy of the Bible and read the front chapter of Genesis," said Dana. "You'll be surprised to find that the whole story of the creation of the world can be told in 600 words."

It is an axiom in many magazine offices that the introduction to almost any article can be cut by the editor without sacrificing anything of real value. **Even experienced writers almost invariably write something before they begin to say something.** Advertising writers are compelled to greater condensation, but they too are guilty of much waste in words. How often you must read and read before you discover just what is that the advertiser wants you to do. Jesus had not introductions. A single sentence grips your attention; three or four more tell the story. One or two more and the application is driven home. When he wanted a new disciple he said simply "Follow me." When he sought to explain the deepest philosophic mystery—the personality and character of God—he said, "A king made a banquet and invited many guests. God is that king and you are the guests; the Kingdom of Heaven is happiness—a banquet to be enjoyed."

Two men spoke on the battle-ground of Gettysburg sixty years ago. The first delivered an oration of more than two hours in length; not one person in ten who reads this page can even recall his name; certainly not one in a hundred can quote a single sentence from that "masterly effort." The second speaker uttered two hundred and fifty words and those words, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, are part of the mental endowment of almost every American.

Many noble prayers have been sent up to the Throne of Grace—long impressive utterances. The prayer which Jesus taught his disciples consist of sixty-eight words, and can be written on the back of a post-

card. Many poems and essays have been penned by writers who hoped that they were making a permanent place for themselves in literature; but the greatest poem ever written consist of one hundred and eighty-eight words. It is the Twenty-Third Psalm.

Jesus hated prosy dullness. He praised the Centurion who was anxious not to waste his time; the only prayer which he publicly commended was uttered by a poor publican who merely cried out, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." A seven word prayer, Jesus called it a good one. A sixty-eight word prayer, he said, contained all that men need to say or God to hear. What would be his verdict on most of our prayers and our speeches and our advertisements?

Principle Two: Simple Language

2. His language was marvelously simple—a second great essential. There is hardly a sentence in his teaching which a child cannot understand. His illustrations were all drawn from the commonest experiences of life; "a sower went fourth to so"; "a certain man had two sons": "a man build his house on the sands"; "the Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed."

The absence of adjectives is striking.

Henry Ward Beecher said once that "to a large extent adjectives are like leaves on a switch; they may make it look pretty, as a branch, but the prevent it striking tinglingly when you use it."

Jesus used few qualifying words and no long ones. We referred a minute ago to those three literary masterpieces, The Lord's Prayer, The Twenty Third Psalm, The Gettysburg Address. Recall their phraseology:

Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want

Four score and seven years ago

Not a single three-syllable word; hardly any two-syllable words, All the greatest things in human life are one-syllable things—love, joy, hope, home, child, wife, trust, faith, God—and **the great advertisements generally speaking, are those in which the most small words are found.**

Principle Three: Sincerity

3. Sincerity glistened like sunshine through every sentence he uttered; sincerity is the third essential. Many wealthy men have purchased newspapers with the idea of advancing their personal fortunes, or bringing about some political action in which they have a private interest. Such newspapers almost invariably fail. No matter how much money is spent on them, no matter how zealously the secret of their ownership is guarded, the readers are conscious that something is wrong. They feel that the voice of the editor is not his own. The public has a sixth sense for detecting insincerity; they know instinctively when words ring true.

It was the way Jesus looked at men, and the life he led among them that gave his words transforming power. **What he was and what he said were one and the same thing.** Nobody could stand at his side for even a minute without being persuaded that here was a man who loved people and considered even the humblest of them worthy of the best he had to give. **There is now superstition more deadening to a writer than the idea that he can "write down" to his readers.** No man was ever big enough to build an enduring success on the basis of insincerity; but many comparatively small men, like Peter the Hermit or Bill Sunday, fired with conviction, have been able to create and sustain a very considerable influence.

Jesus was notably tolerant of almost all kinds of sinners. He liked the companionship of the rough and ready folk who were entirely outside the churches; he was tender toward unfortunate women; he had a special fondness for James and John whose ungovernable tempers had given them the title of "Sons of Thunder"; he forgave the weakness of Peter who denied him; and was not resentful at the unbelief of his near relatives and his native town. But for one sin he had no mercy. He denounced the insincerity of the Pharisees in phrases which sting like the lash of a whip. They thought they had a first mortgage on the Kingdom of Heaven, and he told them scornfully that only those who become like little children have any chance of

entering in.

Little children know no pretense. They are startlingly frank. They look at the world through clear eyes and say only what they think. No writer, no orator, no salesman, exercises any large dominion in the world unless he can humble himself and partake of their nature.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal," wrote Saint Paul.

Much brass has been sounded and many cymbals tinkled in the name of advertising; but **the advertisements which persuade people to act are written by men who have an abiding respect for the intelligence of their readers, and a deep sincerity regarding the merits of the goods they have to sell.**

Principle Four: Repetition

4. Finally he knew the necessity for repetition and practiced it.

It has been said that, "reputation is repetition." No important truth can be impressed upon the minds of any large number of people by being said only once. The thoughts which Jesus had to give the world were revolutionary, but they were few in number. "God is your Father," he said, "caring more for the welfare of everyone of you than any human father can possibly care for his children. His Kingdom is happiness! His rule is love." This is what he had to teach, but he knew the necessity of driving it home from every possible angle. So in one of his stories God is the shepherd searching the wilds for one wandering sheep; in another, the Father welcoming home a prodigal boy; in another a King who forgives his debtors large amounts and expects them to be forgiving in turn—many stories, many advertisements, but the same big Idea.

Because the advertisements were unforgettable, the Idea lived, and is today the one most powerful influences on human action and thought. To be sure the work of the advertisements is far from complete. The Idea that God is the Father of all men—not merely of a specially selected few—has still to penetrate some creeds, and to establish its dominance in society.

However, the Great Advertisements continue to make progress.

Monarchs are succeeded by democracies, building their governments on the firm foundation that men are free and equally entitled to a chance at the good things of life. The privileged protest and the agitator denounces, but unmistakably the world is becoming every day a fairer, juster and happier living place for the great majority of its inhabitants.

And whoever feels and impulse to make his own live count in this grand process of human betterment, can have no surer guide for his activities than the advertisements of Jesus. Let him learn their lesson, that if you would teach people you must first capture their interest with news; that your service rather than your sermons must be your claim upon their attention; that you must be simple, and brief, and above all sincere—the unmistakable voice of true regard and affection.

"Ye, " said he, "are my friends."