

# Show and Tell?

When I was young, I had a feeling that people seemed to favour extroverts, seeing them as people having more positive vibes. There were times when I felt that those who acted and spoke louder were favoured. As I grew older, I noticed that in different societies, silence carries different meanings. For Japanese people, silence is an essential form of non-verbal communication – it is a sign of respect and personal distance. For Westerners, silence means something is wrong.



As time passes, I begin to realise that being quiet can be a choice. I can choose to be more outspoken in specific scenarios or more withdrawn in others. I have noticed that being quiet allows me to listen and reflect more. I admit it is certainly hard to be quiet in this distracting media driven era with all the social media notifications, Netflix binging, constantly being surrounded by others and overloading our calendars with events. Finding a quiet moment to spend time with God, penning down my thoughts, writing for The Vine is not easy and it takes a conscious effort for me to put things aside, clear my mind and focus. I know some of us are deathly afraid of silence; but think about it, what do you associate silence with? Is silence really the absence of noise? Not really. Sometimes, God looms large and speaks in this silence. In one of these moments of silence, a question grew in my mind and could not be shaken off. The question is this: Can I **show** others about God instead of *telling* them about Him?

When unbelievers or even believers are repulsed by us, we cannot chalk it up to the secular world hardening their hearts. Sometimes Christians shoot ourselves in the foot by appearing judgmental (I wrote about [this](#) before - the presence of judgment almost always guarantees an absence of love), indifferent, hypocritical (my walk doesn't always match my talk) or even being pushy.

## Judgement

If you have been following news from Hong Kong, you would be familiar with the name Joshua Wong. For the uninitiated, he is an activist who is internationally known for his prominent role during the 2014 Umbrella Movement, a political movement that emerged during the Hong Kong democracy protests of 2014. In August, he was sentenced to six months in prison for his involvement in leading the demonstrations.

While most news focused on Joshua Wong, one article stood out to me. It was an interview of his father, a devout Christian, who shared his heartbreak and pride of watching his child come of age as one of the leaders of a protest movement for free elections and also, the pressures he faced from fellow believers. One of the things his father said was that the worst kind of attention he received came from fellow believers or friends, who would, out of nowhere, offer to pray for his son to 'repent of his sin'.

We must understand that unbelievers do not understand our faith and what they do not understand can lead to annoyance if we keep shoving it into their faces. Now, it does seem to be quite a dilemma - always talk about faith and we are turning the relationship into a project. Never talk about it and we miss the most important thing in life.

I know it feels like having hands tied behind our backs if we cannot talk about God when He has such a positive influence on us. How do one go about convincing people about God's love if we cannot talk about Him? Don't be mistaken. I am not saying that we should deliberately omit God's name out of every conversation we have. I am saying that **empty words and long praises without the conviction of the Holy Spirit do not get people closer to God**. Words spoken without the prompting of the Holy Spirit, without wisdom, are simply white noise filling in the silence.

## Influence vs Example

Let us consider how we ‘hear’ God. He allows His message to come through the Bible, sermons, miracles or sometimes we can ‘hear’ Him speaking in a still, small voice, in sighs and prompts instead of Him shouting in our ears trying to convince us of something. We should be guided by the Holy Spirit for the right timing to share our faith. Telling people about our faith is just one way. Showing them through example may be a form that is more easily understood by non-believers and even our fellow brothers and sisters. Sometimes, what the world can see in us is more important than what we can teach them.

When the crowds came to Jesus for food and healing, He did not say, “I’ll pray for you,” and then walk away. No, He acted. He fed them. He healed them ([Matthew 14:13-21](#)). He touched the man with leprosy ([Matthew 8](#)). He stood toe to toe with demons to save a life ([Matthew 8:28-34](#)). He defended the sinful woman from the Pharisees ([Luke 7:36-50](#)). Jesus certainly got His hands and feet dirty. His sharing of moments, meals and life with people would scandalise the religious leaders in His day.

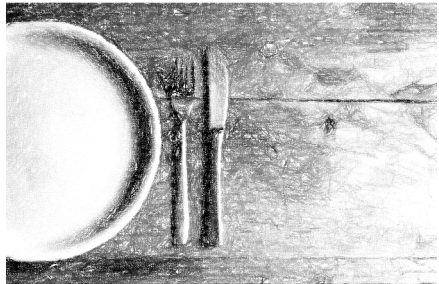
Maybe we do share friendship with people who are far from God and we desperately want them to know our God. In our zeal, we should also take care to remember that people are not projects; people are people. People can smell it a mile away if we see them as a project, not a person.

Let’s take a look at the Bible again. Extraordinary acts of healing could have easily made Jesus a household name but Jesus told the people not to tell anyone about Him. In fact, when the crowd grew too big, He withdrew at times into the mountains. He never sought to rally people to divisive politi-

cal causes. He retreated to pray and to wait for the right time, God's appointed time, to move. In no way was His actions unintentional.

Jesus did not need to rely on a PR team or any marketing tools to influence the world. Maybe our problem isn't the fact that we are unable to influence others but more of us going about it the wrong way.

So...back to the question that started this article... can I **show** others about God instead of *telling* them about Him? I believe I can but it will only work if I walk close to Him. There is always going to be a challenge in developing ways to honour God while living and loving with those who think differently. I know, at times I cut corners. It is always easier 'feeling' the presence of God on a Sunday than doing the hard work of being in the presence of God every day. However, it is only in the presence of God that I am fed. Otherwise, I can be at His table but be surprisingly starving.



Already, He has shown me ways...opportunities to show and share about my faith. As I move along in life, I pray that whatever I do, in word or deed, they may glorify God.

*Alicia Wong*