

if we are given, instead of a ready-made conclusion, the material from which to draw one of our own—it then seems a natural part of ourselves, holds our interest and influences action.

The Bible is full of illustrations of the power of indirect suggestion. Sir Joshua Fitch has given an admirable description of how Nathan used this method to teach David the greatest lesson of his life:

“When Nathan was commissioned to reprove David, you know that if he had gone at once, and taxed him with the offence, and said, ‘You have committed a great sin, and I have come to rebuke you,’ David would probably have been prepared with some answer. That was a form of accusation which he very likely anticipated, and we do not doubt he had so armed himself with pleas of self-justification, and so skillfully ‘managed’ his conscience, that the charge would scarcely have impressed him at all. But instead of this, the prophet began to tell him a narrative: ‘There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor.’ He went on further, as you know, detailing the various incidents of his story, until ‘David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man,’ and he exclaimed, ‘As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die.’ Not till the solemn words, ‘Thou art the man!’ had been uttered in his hearing, did the conviction come thoroughly home to his heart that he was really guilty. Now, why was it that Nathan’s method was so effective? *Because David had listened with interest to the story without supposing that it concerned him. His judgment was clear and unbiased, and he came to the right conclusion before he perceived that the conclusion applied to himself.* How much deeper and more permanent was the impression thus made than if the prophet had confined himself to a plain literal examination of the right and wrong of David’s own case. And we may