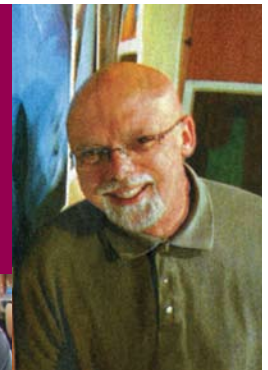


VISUAL PARABLES

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Bert VanderMark
Extensive teaching experience as a former art faculty member at Washington University, Webster University, and Missouri State University, for 14 years.

Following the teaching methods of Jesus is not just a passion for Bert VanderMark, it is his calling. VanderMark, an artist and member of First Baptist Church of Villa Ridge, is the founder of Visual Parables, a pastoral outreach ministry, which provides art classes for all people to focus on God's Word. "Jesus sat at a well and taught about Living Water," VanderMark said. "He served Bread and Wine for us to remember His sacrifice. His teaching was always tied to the visual." VanderMark is well prepared for his ministry. He was born in The Netherlands and he holds both a bachelor and Master's of Fine Arts from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, The Hague in The Netherlands. In addition, he has a M.F.A. in Graphic Design from the Washington State University. He taught as a full-time professor at both Washington and Webster Universities in St. Louis. VanderMark's art business, Studio Montage, works with national publishers of educational materials to enhance the visual appeal. "Five years ago," VanderMark said, "the Holy Spirit wanted me to emphasize the Truth in art. I was doing the church thing when I was pushed into Bible study and mission trips." It was a trip to the Czech Republic where he used his art to work with young people and to teach the Bible that he understood the call. "There is a visual warfare going on today with

teens," VanderMark said. "The preoccupation with visual is pursuing our youth. They are not reading, they turn on the TV, watch a movie or turn to Facebook. I've watched teens and they download images and instead of talking, they show the pictures on their cameras. We need to teach youth to be more visually and spiritually discerning."

"images can be used for testimony, witnessing, discerning and teaching."

One of the groups participating in Visual Parables is Mercy Ministries, an international residential program that exists to transform the lives of young women between the ages of 13-28 who face life-controlling issues such as eating disorders, self-harm, drug and alcohol additions, physical and sexual abuse, depression and unplanned pregnancy. The ministry uses biblically based counseling and teaching. VanderMark teaches the Bible for an hour in his classes and then encourages his students to paint or draw in response to the Word. "It is art with a purpose," he said. "These non-artists are encouraged and it is a process of worship for them. The art helps them clarify God's Truth." After the art session, the students have a

testimony time. VanderMark reports that many use their artwork to teach God's Word in their testimony. "The graphic experience helps them understand the truth of His kingdom," he said. "Most have never connected with the Bible, they interpret life by what they have seen in their families and this is such an eye-opening event that it satisfies their search for Truth." Kayla S, one of the art participants, said, "It really clicked for me when he said that God is the One...no more searching is needed I know I can't do this on my own. Only by God's grace and His help can He heal me." Christina C had a similar testimony, "I can glorify God through my art and writings. My prayer is that God would reproduce himself in me every day. It's okay to experience hurt; God is in control and will never leave me." VanderMark sees his art as a tool to serve God. "The power of images," he said, "can be used for testimony, witnessing, discerning and worship." VanderMark is scheduled to present a workshop, "How Seeing Helps Believing," at the upcoming Conference for the International Orality Network founded by Avery Willis.

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