

OLD SCHOOL,

by James Rock

Late night television has changed. You can look at it as Jimmy Fallon and James Corden vs. Jay Leno and David Letterman.

Jay and Dave are old school late night TV—or does Johnny Carson own that title? Either way, the previous wave of hosts reveled in a sarcastic point of view. Especially Dave—he made fun of his guests, his audience and himself. His was comedy based on pointing fingers and laughing. It was smug, tight to the chest, awkward, yet too easily funny.

Jimmy and James also have their sarcastic moments—or at least I think they do. I haven't watched a whole episode of the *The Tonight Show* in years. That doesn't mean I haven't seen them though. In today's world, there is no need to stay up late. You can always watch memes online. Everything James and Jimmy do is designed to go viral. ►



NEW SCHOOL



WHAT LATE NIGHT TV
TEACHES US ABOUT
BETTER MINISTRY



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But it's more than that. They do an amazing job at making their guests look good. Watch James sing with Adele or Stevie Wonder in a "Carpool Karaoke" segment. James and his guests sing while driving around town. It's fun to watch because he is so truly happy singing beside these stars; at times they stop and just watch him sing their songs! His exuberance, his amazement at just being in the car with them is contagious.

Or watch Jimmy play with his guests; his smile is overwhelming. He plays far more than he interviews. Using lip sync, games, impressions, dance and competitions—sound familiar, my fellow camp leaders?—he works side by side with his guests to take down the walls through unmitigated enthusiasm. He's a kid inside an adult body, so happy to be there playing games that he can barely stand it. The end result is one amazing four-minute viral video of happiness after another.

Jimmy and James make their guests look good. They help them relax. They help them be naturally funny. They help them be themselves. You and I know there must be hours of setup and production, yet from the viewers' perspective, it all feels real, honest and so very joyful.

Dave Letterman made fun of his guests, usually without them realizing it. He battled wits. He broke them down, throwing verbal darts that made his audience laugh and him look good. Jay put cameras on the street to find the dumbest people he could find and made them famous for looking stupid.

At camp, we need to be more like Jimmy and James. Our onstage program teams need to be extraordinarily enthusiastic and happy for our campers. We need to play! We need to flood them with praise and forget the sarcasm.

We need to set the stage for our campers and guests to be themselves.

This is especially true as we look at the generations we are reaching. Jimmy and James reflect the millennial mindset, and that's a big reason why they resonate so well. Their younger viewers—and our young campers and even staff—share the mindset of supportive fun. They long for enthusiasm and inclusion. Say what you will about whether kids are over-praised or entitled—regardless, we have a ministry opportunity and responsibility to build them up with an exciting sense of support, encouragement, joy and love, all rooted in Christ's unconditional example. Sarcastic old school must get out of the way of the new enthusiasm.

Then we need to take those moments online and let them go viral. Another key to Jimmy's and James' success is their willingness to break out of the box, to use new media and to speak the communication language of their audience. Digital is the native tongue of our campers and seasonal staff. Unless we learn to speak it well, especially through video, we run the risk of speaking into an echoing void. And we minimize our opportunities for greater and wider life-change.

Remember the Old School

We must go new school, but does that make old school bad?

As I was writing this article, I passed through a season of stressful days of meetings filled with summer plans: new schedules, Bible teaching concepts, the search for staff and volunteers, worry about camper numbers, worry about interns and their millennialnesses, worry about our post-Christian world and how it will effect camp's bottom line this summer and next summer.

Then I remembered something

I haven't thought about in years. It was January 1989. I was the maintenance intern at Bair Lake Bible Camp, and I lived in an old, donated mobile home. My girlfriend (now wife) had just visited, and I was sitting on the stairs outside the trailer looking down at her fresh bootprints in the snow. Everywhere I looked, there was this funny little heel imprint in the shape of a diamond.

I remember staring at those boot prints and singing, "I Love You, Lord" under my breath. I stopped to look at her prints again the next morning as I left to clean a bunch of toilets. I think they lasted about a week. I was 19 years old, in love with a girl, working my dream job, singing to my God. I was happy—maybe the happiest I have ever been. I could feel God beside me. That's my old school.

I was the first intern BLBC ever had. There were no intern meetings, no trips to Israel and no whiteboards full of plans. God simply changed me through a ministry of cleaning toilets, through the love of a girl and through the whisper of His song on my lips.

I miss my old school. I miss the smell and feel of a real, paper-and-ink Bible opened in my hands. I miss four guitarists in chapel and not one of them plugged into an amp. I miss sitting on some broken-down trailer steps for an hour, staring at footprints in the snow. There were no smartphones, no Wi-Fi, no binge-watching TV or Facebook envy. There were far fewer distractions.

We can learn much about using new-school techniques to better interact with campers and market our camps. We must change and find modern tech-

niques and tools to meet our campers where they are. But we must remember our old school. We must remember when all of this was new and distractions did not remove God's song from our lips. We must remember when and how Jesus changed our lives in the first place.

Not everything old is bad, and not everything new is good—or vice versa. We must use methods both old and new and remember that we are here to help change hearts. Anything else we do can go out of style. ●



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EXTRA INFO

NEW MINDSETS AND OLD FOUNDATIONS

It takes the best of both eras to minister most effectively. Try these tips.

Old Classics

Teach the gospel.
Use the living Word of God.
Sing praises.
Flee sin.
Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.
Keep it short.
Pursue a pure heart.
Turn off or limit distractions.
Seek Him.
Read.
Learn.
It's never too late to grow.

New Enthusiasm

Smile until it hurts.
Be enthusiastic.
Focus on them, not you.
Make the camper look good.
Have fun for fun's sake.
Keep it short.
Prepare, prepare, prepare.
Focus on the positive.
Share it with everyone.

—James Rock

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