

Basics on Sermon Design and Delivery

Introduction:

- A. There is a lot in this lesson, and I don't expect you to remember it all.
 - 1. For this reason, I'm going to give you the full-length outline.
 - 2. You can "round can" it or keep it for future reference.
 - 3. You may not agree with some of what I have to say.
 - a. That is okay.
 - b. People have their opinions on Sermon Design and Delivery.
- B. I intend to present some things for your consideration that are generally accepted by respected professors and orators.

One day while in a preacher training school, seeking to get **accredited** and **ordained**, a man met a woman and they fell in love.

He asked her to marry him. But she said, "**No way, no how. Never will I marry a preacher.**"

25 years pass, and the man meets the woman at a revival where he was speaking. They recognized each other and began talking. Surprisingly, neither of them had married over the last 25 years.

He said to her, "**Why don't we get married?**" She said, "**I will marry you.**"

Though surprised, he asked her, "**What changed your mind? When I asked you before, you said you would never ever, no way no how, marry a preacher.**"

To which she replied, "**I listened to you stand up there and talk for the last 45 minutes. You had not talked 5 minutes before I concluded that YOU ARE NOT A PREACHER.**"

- C. In the very beginning I want to say this:
1. The **first thing to do before** you begin your effort to select a topic and prepare a sermon is **pray**.
 2. Then pray **during** the **preparation** and before the delivery.
 3. You can know it will help because Israel always won their battles **when God was with them**, helping them in various ways.
- D. To be an effective preacher – **one that preaches the gospel** and sets a good example of an evangelist, one must first be a faithful and dedicated Christian.
1. This means you have been *buried with Christ in baptism* and have *risen to walk in the new life*.
 2. **The preacher's life** must be filled with love and desire to be fruitful in the service of the Lord.
- E. **Preachers go into the ministry for various reasons:**
1. Some think it is an **easy** way to **make a living**.
 2. Others like to have **control** over people.
 3. Some just like to talk.
 4. The best reason I can think of for wanting to be a preacher is because I want to tell others about the **peace, joy, and hope** that can only be had in Christ, and not just **TELL them** but **earnestly endeavor** to persuade them to follow the only life (the Christian life) that promises eternity in a better place.

Body

I. **To preach the gospel you must be able to speak, and it will be very helpful if you learn to write.**

- A. So, it would be advisable to:
1. Endeavor to do well in your **English** courses,
 2. take a **writing** course,
 3. a **public speaking** course,
 4. maybe also take a course in **debate**.

5. It would also be helpful to take a course (or at least read a book) on the art of **persuasion**.
- B. The more of the things listed above that you **utilize**, the **better equipped** you will be to preach the gospel.

II. What is Preaching?

- A. *“To proclaim or publish tidings; specifically, to proclaim the gospel; to discourse publicly on a religious subject, or from a text of Scripture; to deliver a sermon. [1913 Webster]”*
- B. “Sermons are not feats of oratorical prowess whereby a preacher seeks to be admired and complimented.
1. Rather, they are public proclamations of God’s Word designed to influence the mind and moral behavior of a group of people.
 2. The discourses should **inform** the ignorant, **denounce** the moral compromiser, **expose** false doctrine, **inspire** the faithful, **challenge** the indifferent, **encourage** the despondent and **reveal** God’s plan of salvation for the human family.
 3. Therefore, sermons are designed to **accuse**, to **inform**, to **stir**, to **convince** to **persuade**, to **reassure** and to **present saving truth.”**
(Sermon Design and Delivery by Thomas Holland)
THIS IS PREACHING!

- F. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

2 Tim 2:1 *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of*

season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

So, preachers must be **strong** in **grace** and **faith**. Their duty is to preach the word when it is *convenient* and when it is not; to **reprove**, **rebuke** and **exhort**; to be **watchful**, *enduring afflictions* and to do the **work of an evangelist**.

2 Tim. 1:13 *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*

Thus, the preacher must not deviate from the sound words we learn from inspired teachings.

Titus 2:7 *In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. 9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; 10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the*

glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. 15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”

I want to draw attention to the fact that Paul instructed Timothy to show a *pattern of good works in uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity*; and he listed other important things and commanded: *“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority.”*

- G. Most sermons a preacher preaches has something in it that **someone needs** to be persuaded to not only believe but to act upon.
1. Since it is **evidence** that changes people’s mind, it is the preacher’s job to present the *evidence* (to support his speech) in such a way that it is understandable and believable. (Like a lawyer who seeks to persuade a judge or a jury.)
 2. This requires a lot of research and much thought as to how to go about **developing** and **presenting** the lesson.
 3. It is called **“public speaking”** defined as; *“Formal face-to-face talking by a single person to a group of listeners.”*

III. If you want to be a public speaker there are things that you need to know or learn:

A. Sermons Must be Prepared.

1. “The apostles were not faced with the problem of method or content for sermon delivery.
 - a. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles’ preaching.”

b. The scriptures tell us they spoke “**as the Spirit gave them utterance**” (Acts 2:5).

(Thomas Holland)

1) We might say it was **Inspired** Impromptu.

2) Some preachers contend that they do a better job when they preach ***impromptu sermons, i.e., just get up and speak whatever comes to mind.***

3) However, it is easy for a preacher to confuse a ready flow of words with an actual message that is edifying.

2. Preachers today must do **research, study, and meditate on their message** (what to say and how best to say it) and **plan** the delivery.

a. Brother **Holland**...suggested that as a rule one should spend **ONE hour** in preparation for every MINUTE he intends to speak.

b. Arthur Allen, in his book, “**The art of Preaching**” said, “*To go into the pulpit without having the sermon thoroughly prepared is to insult the congregation and to dishonor the master.*”

Elsewhere he added:

c. “*For a man to preach about the cross when he has made **no sacrifice in preparing the message** is not merely **ironical**; it is nothing less than **tragic**.*”

B. Just What is it that We Are to Preach?

1. It is the word of God that is to be preached because the Bible is the standard of authority in **doctrine and morality**.

2. Gospel preachers must **tell the truth**.

3. We tell words that can save.

- a. Peter reiterated what others had said, that he would “...Tell thee **words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved**” (Acts 11:14).
- b. The **word of God** is what Christians **expect** to **hear** from a preacher.
 - 1) Nothing kills the audience’s interest in hearing a preacher **quicker** than for the preacher to **emphasize** his favorite themes repeatedly, while **neglecting lessons** on important subjects that the congregation needs to hear.
 - 2) The preacher must determine the most **pressing need** of a congregation and preach to that need.

C. Understand the Expectations and Learn the Details

1. Gather all the information regarding location, technical setup, and time you’ll be speaking and the duration (how long).
2. If you fail to understand what you are expected to do and say and do not have the details, common nervousness can turn to real **fear** and then **panic**, resulting in **failure**.
3. But being prepared in every way can help you to be **confident** in what you want to say and do.

D. Know Your Audience

1. **It’s as** important to understand your audience as it is to understand the subject that you’ll be discussing in front of them.
2. Make sure you understand their level of knowledge.
 - a. If you are speaking to **3rd** graders, your lesson will not be as deep as it might be if speaking to adults.

- b. If you are speaking to a group that is mostly **elderly** and who are members of the church, you will want to choose a topic that is more suitable to **their** interests, rather than a sermon designed to teach the *first principles* to a group that has yet to become a Christian. (I once did sermon at rest home called, “**Give me this mountain**” which was said by an old prophet.)
- c. If the audience is composed of people who do not believe in **God** or the **Bible**, then a lesson designed to help with that would be in order.

E. Plan and Structure Your Talk

1. Write down things like the topic, general purpose, specific purpose, central idea, and main points.
2. Say things that will capture the audience’s attention in the first 30 seconds.
 - a. Maybe tell a **joke** that is related to the **topic**, and which **makes a point**.
 - b. Maybe tell them what you are going to say.
3. Choose your words carefully.
 - a. It is okay to write things down, especially your main points.
 - b. Have an **introduction**, **body**, **conclusion** and if applicable, an **invitation**.
 - c. **Stay with** the topic.
 - 1) If you go **all over the place**, you will have **failed** to structure your talk, and your audience will remember very little.
 - 2) The one thing they will certainly remember is that you **did not** present a lesson that was **edifying**, and some will conclude that you wasted **your** time and **their** time.
 - 3) The importance of staying with the topic **cannot be overemphasized**.

- 4) If you get invited to speak at a church, and your sermon or class is not **structured**, you likely will not get invited back.
- 5) Realize you are present to **help them**; not talk about **yourself** or your **family**, or **politics** or **food**, or the things you own and enjoy.
- 6) When you are up to speak for the first time at a location **let someone else introduce you**.
 - i. If there is something everyone needs to know about you tell it to the one that will introduce you.
 - ii. Remember, it is **not about you**, it is about your **audience** and presenting to them what they need to hear – not just what you like to talk about.

F. Watch for Feedback and Adapt to It.

1. Look at the faces of your audience as you speak.
 - a. If you see confusion, you might say “**some of you looked confused so I’m going to back up and say this in a different way.**”
 - b. *Feedback* can help you adjust the message to where it is one that “**gets across**” rather than it going “**over their head.**”
2. Don’t let **distractions** interrupt your talk, if possible.
 - a. If you are speaking and someone comes in late, **they are not the focus** of attention – **you are**, so ignore them.
 - b. If a **baby cries**, let someone else deal with it.
 - c. Continue your talk without doing anything but maybe raising your voice a bit, if needed, so you can be heard over the distraction.
3. **Feedback** can come during or AFTER the delivery in the form of **criticism**.

- a. *“Criticism is the act of giving your opinion or judgment about the good or bad qualities of something or someone...”*
- b. Someone might say, **“I have a few criticisms to make about your talk”** and proceed to point things out that, if **heard** and **heeded**, will help the speaker to improve.
- c. A preacher seeking to learn might ask someone with knowledge of speaking, **“If you have any helpful criticism, I’d be glad to hear it.”**
- d. A speaker must learn **not to overreact to criticism** nor question the critic’s motives, and he should certainly not use the pulpit to **malign** and **discredit** the critic as just being mean or unkind.

G. Let Your Personality Come Through.

1. Be yourself.
2. You will establish better credibility if your personality shines through, and your audience will trust what you have to say if they can see you as a real person.
 - a. Smiles are good.
 - b. **Show your passion** for what you have to say, but the pulpit is not **theater** where you get to **practice drama**.
 - c. Gestures are good but should come naturally.

H. Use Humor to get attention at the Beginning.

1. A preacher is not a comedian -- that is **not his job**.
 - a. He should understand that he is **not an entertainer**.
 - b. He is present to present a message from

the Word of God that is carefully selected, and which will benefit the audience more than any other talk he can come up with.

2. A short joke at the beginning **that relates to the lesson** may help to **awaken** the interest of the audience in the subject to be discussed and to **orient** the audience relative to the discussion.

a. There is the story of a preacher who, when preaching on GIVING, announced to the congregation:

"I have good news and bad news. The good news is we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."

b. A preacher was completing a sermon on temperance and with great expression he said,

"If I had all the beer in the world, I'd take it and throw it into the river."

With even greater emphasis, he said, **"And if I had all the wine in the world, I'd take it and throw it into the river."**

And then, finally, he said, **"And if I had all the whiskey in the world, I'd take it and throw it into the river."**

After he sat down, the song leader then stood very cautiously and announced with a pleasant smile, **"For our closing song, let us sing Hymn #365: 'Shall We Gather At the River.'"**

I. Don't Read Unless You Have to, like when you are reading a quote. **Work from an Outline.**

1. Reading, especially **poor reading**, will quickly result in a loss of audience attention.
2. A **brief outline** can get your lesson structured and your lesson on task.
 - a. Once you become **familiar with the material**, you should be able to glance at your outline or notes and not appear to be reading it.
 - b. This will require much practice or rehearsal.

J. Use Audiovisual Aids Wisely.

1. Too many aids can break the direct connection to the audience, so use them sparingly.
2. They should **enhance** or **clarify** your content and help capture and maintain your audience's attention, and **help** with **remembering**.
3. Don't try to get too much on a **slide** or **page**.
4. Assure that the letters are **big enough** for everyone to see.

K. When you speak make sure that everyone can hear.

1. If there is a microphone, **use it** -- it is there for a reason, and try to stay the right distance from it.
 - a. There may be people in the audience that will **not hear a word you say** if you don't speak up into the mic.
 - b. You may need to **ask** if everyone can **hear** and if some cannot then adjust your volume (maybe the mic) until they can.
 - c. If the microphone is needed, you will lose your audience (some of them, at least) if you **walk away from the thing** that was providing sufficient volume for everyone be able to hear.
2. Also, make sure that everyone can **understand**.

- a. In some cases, preachers must work with an interpreter.
- b. In some churches there are **deaf people**, and an intermediary interpreter is used.

L. Speak clearly and crisply, not too fast, or too slow.

1. Tommy Lee Jones (actor) comes to mind as being a good example of how to **speak clearly, succinctly, and with authority**. (In the movie Emperor, he played Gen Douglas MacArthur) See trailer below:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?&q=Tommy+Lee+Jones+trailer&view=detail&mid=1C0710B44C6ACAFB3E581C0710B44C6ACAFB3E58&FORM=VDRVRV&ajaxhist=0>

- a. If he were a preacher, could you not just hear him say, “**Ladies and gentlemen, I’m here, as requested, to present some facts about Jesus Christ. You can reject them but there will be consequences.**”
 - b. Compare with how it **should not** be uttered....
Speak softly, slow and with monotone.
2. There are times when you need to **slow down** and let **what you say sink in**.
 - a. Maybe even pause. (pause)
 - b. And there are times when you will need to **repeat** something to assure that the audience gets it. (repeat)
 3. “Consider your **voice** because it can reveal abounding vitality, or it can disclose **laziness** or **indifference**.”

M. Practice but Don’t Expect Your Presentation to be Perfect.

1. Nobody expects you to be perfect in your delivery.
2. However, putting in the required time to prepare will help you deliver a **better** or more **effective** talk.

- a. The more days you have for preparation, and the sooner you get a big start, the better.
- b. I like to have at least 80% of a talk done several days in advance and have several MORNINGS to **go over it and polish it**, since this is the time when most people's brain works best.

N. Practice The 3 P's of Public Speaking

1. There are few people in this world who enjoy public speaking.
 - a. People who love to help others and who have the **ability** and the **will** to communicate a beneficial message enjoy it.
 - b. But it can be **terrifying** if you are not prepared and you are speaking to a room full of people who are getting nothing from your words and who begin **fidgiting, reading the songbook**, or using their **phone**.
 - c. But public speaking can be **fun** if you follow 3 simple rules: **Preparation, Practice & Performance**.
2. Speech preparation may seem overwhelming at first but once you get into the groove it will not be so difficult.
 - a. Preparations start with **picking your topic**.
 - 1) Pick one that you know something about and for which you have **passion**.
 - 2) You want to make sure your talk is on something that is interesting and that will keep your audience engaged while also giving them the information they can use after they leave the room.
 - 3) Once you've picked out your topic then your **research begins**.
 - 4) The lesson might be one of the following forms:

Expository; 2) textual format, 3) Topical format; 4) Narrative format.

Each of these are explained at a great website on preacher training:

<https://www.churchofchristpreachertrainingprogram.net/>

- b. Your research is where you'll get all the facts, which you can **share with your audience**.
 - 1) Arrange the facts so your audience will **understand** and **be persuaded** to believe what you are endeavoring to get across.
 - 2) After you've done enough research and organized your points, it will be important for you to **practice** what you're going to say.
 - i. Practice it several times and then out loud in front of someone who will give feedback on things like **pace, volume, tone & language etc.**
 - ii. This will help you get ready for the presentation.
 - iii. Make sure that when the big day comes around that you're prepared and ready to give a talk that will be **edifying**, and **convincing**, which will likely result in it being **appreciated**.
 - 3. You should not be **afraid** of public speaking because it can certainly be learned with the right amount of **preparation, practice & performance!**

O. A preacher needs to know How to Close the Sermon (the Conclusion):

- 1. Consider the **purpose** of the sermon.
 - a. **If** it is to **instruct**, the conclusion will probably be a summary of the material presented – maybe just a **reiteration** of the main points.
 - b. **If** it is intended to **convince**, to **inspire**, or to **persuade** the function of the conclusion would

be to **make clear** what was said and to impress the audience and inspire them to action.

2. Do not dwell at length on **emotional appeals**.
 - a. For sure, once you start your appeal to obey the gospel, **don't digress** by talking about something trivial, or even anything other than what will **help to motivate** the *pricked in heart* to action.
 - b. And certainly, don't end by **apologizing** for going overtime, or for the raspy voice etc. due to whatever.

IV. Conclusion:

A. **Powerful preachers aren't born, they are made.**

1. Effective sermons don't just happen, they are the product of thorough preparation.
2. With ample preparation, **fear** and **dread** will change to looking forward to the time when you can impart God's truth to the audience.

B. **I want to emphasize how important it is to be diligent in sermon preparation.**

1. If you are speaking to an audience of **100** people and you **waste one hour** of YOUR time by not being prepared with something that truly benefits the listeners, you will have wasted **6060** minutes of valuable time.
 - a. That is **101 hours**.
 - b. In addition, a **quality message** can lead people to Christ; whereas a **poor sermon** has the **potential** to turn people away if it is not the truth, not adequately presented, or not spoken in love.
 - c. Thus, the importance of being right (preaching the truth) and of presenting a message, with love, that is edifying could hardly be overemphasized.

2. There will be failures, but **brethren are understanding** and **patient** when the preacher is studious and shows a genuine interest in learning and in **improving** in **sermon preparation and delivery**
3. **Passion** is something that I've emphasized, but not enough.
 - a. **Passion is contagious.**
 - b. It is the opposite of *lukewarm*, which **disgusts** our Lord.
 - 1) He had rather we be COLD than *lukewarm*.
 - 2) He wants disciples to be HOT or zealous.
 - c. James 5:20 *"Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."*
 - 1) What this passage suggests to me is that a lot of shortcomings (failings) in a person are overlooked if they are good at saving souls.
 - 2) The contrast is brethren will tolerate a lot in a preacher that **has passion for the lost** and is able to motive others in saving souls.

C. Some quotes that I want to leave with you:

1. "What is the chief end of preaching? I like to think it is this: It is to give men and women a sense of God and His presence."
~ *Martyn Lloyd-Jones*
2. "The preacher is not a chef; he's a waiter. God doesn't want you to make the meal; He just wants you to deliver it to the table without messing it up. That's all."
~ *John MacArthur*

3. “The **test** of a preacher is that his congregation goes away saying not, ‘**What a lovely sermon,**’ but, ‘**I will do something!**’ ”

~ *Francis de Sales*

4. “Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not whether they be **clergymen** or **laymen**, they alone will **shake the gates of Hell** and set up the kingdom of Heaven upon Earth.”

~ *John Wesley*

D. The most valuable possessions in the world are SOULS.

1. Jesus said, "*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matt. 16:26)
2. Once we recognize the value of our souls and the value of the souls of others, we should want to do all we can in soul winning.
3. Winning souls is **thrilling**, adds true meaning to life, and **starts a fire** burning Satan cannot extinguish.
4. The reason many **churches** are dying is:
 - a. Many **Christians** are not active in winning souls, nor do they seem concerned enough to do what they can do to **help** make it happen.
 - b. Sadly, many have not experienced the joy that is had by leading another to Christ.
5. Leading souls to Jesus is **not impossible** when one loves God, loves the souls of others and is **diligent** in his effort to learn what to teach (truth) and how to teach it.

This material was designed to help develop preachers was put together by Robert Waters.