
CUTTING IT  *How to Deliver a Message* STRAIGHT

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Some Thoughts About Preaching	1
The Homiletical Tension	4
Considerations for the Effective Delivery of an Expository Sermon	4
Improving Your Preaching	12
Selected Bibliography	13

contents

CUTTING IT STRAIGHT - LEVEL 3

HOW TO DELIVER A MESSAGE

I. Some Thoughts About Preaching

Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching.

Phillips Brooks

There is no doubt about this; effective speaking involves action; and that is why I stress that the whole person must be involved in preaching.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The most effective preaching comes from those who embody the things they are saying.

John Poulton

Sermon delivery is an important aspect of the preacher's work. At this point many preachers fail. They may gather excellent material for their sermons. The sermon itself may be well organized and skillfully done. Yet when the preacher opens his mouth in the pulpit, the sermon dies. There is no positive, enthusiastic response. This must be corrected. The preacher must not only prepare his sermons well, he must also deliver them well.

Jerry Vines

First, you must learn to go up to the pulpit. Second, you must know that you should stay there for a time. Third, you must learn to get down again.

Martin Luther

Delivery should be the spontaneous product of the speaker's peculiar personality, as acted by the subject which now fills his mind and heart.... Delivery does not consist merely, or even chiefly in vocalization and gesticulation, but it implies that one is possessed with the subject, that he is completely in sympathy with it and fully alive to its importance, that he is not repeating remembered words but setting free the thoughts shut up in his mind. Even acting is good only in proportion to

the actor's identification with the person represented—he must really think and really feel what he is saying. The speaker is not undertaking to represent another person, to appropriate another's thoughts and feelings, but aims simply to be himself, to speak what his own mind has produced.

John A. Broadus

Let every man, called of God to preach the Word, be as his Maker has fashioned him.... The good and the evil in men of eminence are both of them mischievous when they become objects of servile imitation; the good when slavishly copied is exaggerated into formality, and the evil becomes wholly intolerable. If each teacher of others went himself to the school of our one and only Master, a thousand errors might be avoided.

C.H.Spurgeon

Be natural; forget yourself; be absorbed in what you are doing and in the realization of the presence of God, and in the glory and the greatness of the Truth that you are preaching...that you forget yourself completely.... Self is the greatest enemy of the preacher, more so than in the case of any other man in society. And the only way to deal with self is to be so taken up with, and so enraptured by the glory of what you are doing, that you forget yourself altogether.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

A theology which does not take fire, I maintain, is a defective theology; or at least the man's understanding of it is defective. Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire. A true understanding and experience of the Truth must lead to this. I say again that a man who can speak about these things dispassionately has no right whatsoever to be in a pulpit; and should never be allowed to enter one.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

When I have thought of the preaching of certain good men, I have wondered, not that the congregation was so small, but that it was so large. The people who listen to them ought to excel in the virtue of patience, for they have grand opportunities of exercising it. Some sermons and prayers lend a color of support to the theory of Dr. William Hammond, that the brain is not absolutely essential to life. Brethren,...you will, none of you, covet earnestly the least gifts, and the dullest mannerisms, for you can obtain them without the exertion of the will.... Labor to discharge your ministry, not with

the lifeless method of an automaton, but with the freshness and power which will render your ministry largely effectual for its sacred purposes.

C.H. Spurgeon

There is no such animal, in and out of captivity, as a born public speaker. In those periods of history when public speaking was a refined art that demanded close attention to the laws of rhetoric and the niceties of delivery, it was even more difficult to be born a public speaker. Now we think of public speaking as a kind of enlarged conversation. Gone forever is the old grandiloquent style and stentorian voice. What we like to hear at our dinner meetings, in our church services, on our TV sets and radios, is straightforward speech, conceived in common sense and dedicated to the proposition that we like speakers to talk with, and not at, us.

Dale Carnegie

To be poor in words is to be poor in mind.

Charles Koller

The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.

Charles Koller

In delivery, next to the voice in effectiveness is the countenance; and this is ruled over by the eyes.

Cicero

The expressive power of the human eye is so great that it determines, in a manner, the expression of the whole countenance.

Charles Koller

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

The Apostle Paul, I Cor. 2:1-5

Nobody ever outgrows Scripture: the book widens and deepens with our years.

Charles Spurgeon

II. The Homiletical Tension

Unfortunately, some have created an unnecessary tension between the content and delivery of a sermon. Two emphases have emerged in books, journals and discussions that can be captured in two philosophies:

Option 1: Since the power is in the Word of God, the content of the sermon is the main issue in our preaching.

Option 2: Since people will not listen to what is not interesting, the delivery of the sermon is the main issue in preaching.

But there need not be a debate about the content and delivery of an expository sermon. God's truth is so infinitely valuable that it demands clarity of understanding and presentation. The elements of content and delivery in preaching are to work hand in glove so that the content is actually delivered to the people.

What you say is more important than how you say it.
But how you say it has never been more important.

Daniel Akin

III. Considerations for the Effective Delivery of an Expository Sermon

IMPORTANT NOTE: The follow considerations presuppose a commitment to thorough exegesis and exposition.

A. The Character of the Preacher

1. Perhaps the most dangerous pitfall of preachers is the temptation and possibility of delivering in a sermon what we are not willing to live in our lives. Nothing will undermine a man and his ministry more than a hypocritical discrepancy between his message and his life.

2. However, it is inevitable that we will be on occasion called to preach a greater message than we are living. When this happens, recognize it and admit it when appropriate.
3. I Timothy 4:16!

B. The Nature of the Audience

1. Exegete your audience before you prepare and preach (i.e., are they students, adults, seniors, unbelievers, mature or immature believers, or a mixture of many different kinds and ages of people).
2. Evaluate the presuppositions you are making with terms, theology, exegetical insights, and illustrations.
3. Be aware of special needs and the circumstances of the audience (e.g., recent tragedies, celebrations, or experiences).
4. Ask yourself what the audience might be thinking or asking during your reading of the text.
5. Consider the unique contexts in which the audience will apply your message.

C. The Reading of Scripture

1. The Scriptures were meant to be read! And Scripture reading is a specific charge to the man of God (I Timothy 4:13).
2. The way we read the Bible communicates how we view the Bible. Read it so as to suggest that you believe the passage is of great significance.
3. Scripture reading becomes an oral interpretation of the passage.
4. Determine ahead of time what will be emphasized.
5. Read at a pace that will allow the hearer to grasp the meaning.
6. Check pronunciations!
7. Read expressively. Bring out the emotion, tone, and emphases with appropriate volume, passion, pitch and

pace. Utilize the pause when it is needed.

8. Familiarity is the key to expressive reading.
9. Read the Scriptures aloud in your devotions.

D. The Clarity of the Content

1. If you aim at nothing you will hit it every time.
2. Clarity comes from preparation and familiarity with your sermon.
3. Ask yourself how easy it would be to take notes on your sermon if you were listening to it.
4. Listen to your tapes regularly.

E. The Mastery of the Material

1. Most mistakes in public speaking come from lacking familiarity with the material being presented.
2. Prepare your notes in a way that is easy for your eyes to "grab" information clearly and quickly. With the use of computers there is no excuse for having notes that are a hindrance to good communication. Experiment with fonts, font size, color, highlighting, spacing, paper size, etc.
3. Finish your sermon before Saturday night! Allow time for getting familiar with it so that adequate editing may occur.
4. Rehearse the sermon over and over in your mind, as well as out loud.

F. The Utilization of the Voice

1. Learn how to take care of your voice especially before you preach. Get a good night's sleep the night before you preach; avoid dairy, citrus, and carbonated drinks before you preach; avoid screaming and yelling before you preach (Saturday football should be watched with Sunday preaching in mind!); rest your voice between services; wash your hands as often as you can (this will minimize the chance for getting sick—especially wash them as soon as you leave a service!); and learn to drink lots of water.

2. Vary intensity, projection, pitch, and rate to avoid monotony.
3. Use the pause effectively.
4. Recognize the unique features of your own voice and understand how to best use it. This is best accomplished by asking others (esp. your wife) to give you feedback and by listening to your tapes.
5. Keep some cough drops where you sit before the service.

G. The Use of the Language

1. Become a student of the English language. Two helpful tools are *Woe is I*, by Patricia O'Connor and *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White.
2. Read! Read! Read! The best way to build your vocabulary and improve your use of language is to read. Because books and other printed material have been edited, you will train your mind to think more precisely, which will impact the way you speak and write.
3. Identify your verbal bridges and eradicate them (e.g., "uh," "um," "we see that," etc.).
4. Prepare a manuscript of what you are planning to say, even if you don't take one into the pulpit.
5. Avoid circumlocution—saying many words but never what you intended to say.
6. Don't use words to show off. Our goal is to make an impression, not to impress.

H. The Tone of the Passion

1. The tone of the delivery must match the tone of the message.
2. Never let passion drown compassion.
3. Passion can be expressed in many ways. Use more than one.
4. If everything is important, nothing is important.

5. Genuine passion comes from authentic convictions, anything else is mere theatrics.

I. The Minefield of Humor

1. Be careful!!!
2. Don't tell jokes just to be funny. There are only a few who can do it well and the pulpit is not to be confused with a comedy club.
3. Timing is everything. Poorly placed humor can rob the heart of conviction.
4. Derive your humor from real life, not canned humor books.
5. Never make fun of your wife, family, or friends. You are always the safest object of humor.
6. Be very careful using humor that you find in places that people may find offensive (e.g., TV, movies, etc.).
7. If you think the comment is doubtful, stay away from it.
8. Better to have too little than too much.
9. BE CAREFUL!

J. The Behavior of the Body

1. Maintain good eye contact.
2. Be natural.
3. Identify your nervous gestures and stop making them.
4. Posture communicates, so develop good posture.
5. Use your hands naturally.
6. Smile, a lot!

K. The Sharpness of your Dress

1. Be appropriate! The issue is not the right or wrong way to dress, but the appropriate way to dress.
2. If there is a question, always dress up rather than down. It is safer and more comfortable to be over-

dressed than underdressed.

3. If dressing well does not come naturally to you, then seek out help.
4. Shine your shoes, starch your shirts, and button your jacket.
5. Be appropriate, conscientious, and smart.

L. The Hook of the Introduction

1. The introduction may be the most important part of the sermon. Even if the primary content is not in the introduction, the desire to listen to what you have to say is won or lost in the opening moments.
2. An introduction should be designed to introduce, secure attention, set the tone, and arouse attention.
3. Don't waste time here; have one introduction not several.
4. Never promise more than the sermon can deliver.
5. Don't apologize for anything (e.g., "I'm sick," "I've been busy," "I've not had time to prepare like I would have wanted," etc.).
6. Be confident and authoritative because you have a word from God!

M. The Outline of the Material

1. Attempt to make your outline easy to remember. Using parallelism and alliteration is helpful, but never compromise accuracy for cleverness when outlining.
2. Review the points as you go. This assures that the audience knows where you are and where you are going.
3. Whenever possible, make the points of the outline contain the application (use imperatives as much as possible).
4. Make sure that all points relate to the proposition. A good sermon has one point, and the outline explains and reinforces that point.

5. When using PowerPoint, be careful of putting too much up on the screen, especially Scripture. This might actually discourage people from bringing their Bibles. Listening is to be active, not passive!

N. The Appropriateness of the Conclusion

1. "More sermons are ruined by a poor conclusion than for any other reason." — Steven Olford
2. Land the airplane, cut off the engine, and throw the keys out the window! In other words, don't have multiple conclusions.
3. A conclusion should sum up and call for a decision.
4. Don't use your closing prayer to say what you didn't say in the sermon.
5. Never say "in conclusion," "as we close," or "let me finish by saying." This will tell the audience that you are done. Just listen when someone says this; the audience begins to get ready to leave.
6. Don't go overtime. Respect the time that the service is supposed to end.

O. The Effectiveness of the Illustrations

1. Don't use canned illustrations.
2. Look for biblical illustrations first.
3. Reading will provide the best sources for illustrations (e.g., *World Magazine*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Reader's Digest*, the newspaper, books—especially nonfiction, the internet, science and nature, and Paul Harvey—nobody tells a story like he does).
4. Be careful of consistently being the hero of all your personal illustrations.
5. Involve your wife, family, staff, and even congregation to think about what you are preaching and look for illustrations with you. This will do more than get you illustrations, it will invite them into your ministry!
6. Don't over-illustrate. You want the audience to go away thinking about God and His Word, not you and your

story.

7. Don't announce the illustration.
8. Give credit when you should.
9. File your illustration and the date you used it.

P. The Care of Your Tent

1. Being in shape will impact your preaching more than you think.
2. Eat well as a pattern of life, and especially before you preach.
3. Know how your body responds to different foods and drinks (e.g., caffeine does different things for different people).
4. Sunday morning begins Saturday night! Guard your Saturday evenings and get plenty of sleep.
5. Go easy on Sunday afternoon if you are preaching Sunday evening.

Q. The Consideration of the Clock

1. Recognize that the time your people give you is a gift. Multiply the number of people to whom you are preaching by the time of your sermon and you will get an idea of how valuable time is.
2. The best way to communicate to an audience that you don't value their time is to preach longer than the allotted time. If there is a consistent problem getting finished, check the components of the service and your own preparation to see where the breakdown is.
3. Identify the portions of the sermon that warrant more time than others and plan appropriately.
4. Communicate regularly with your music leader to make adjustments in the order of service.

R. Odds and Ends

1. Never turn down a breath mint! (And never be caught without one.)

2. Become an interesting person.
3. Read the Scriptures with inflection, feeling, and passion.
4. Be yourself. Don't imitate others.
5. Teachers incur a stricter judgment (James 3:1).
6. Power is derived from the Bible, not our delivery.
7. Cultivating big farms takes well-stocked barns—buy good books.
8. Don't overstate the obvious.
9. Don't overuse the Greek and Hebrew or you will undermine your people's confidence in their English Bibles.
10. Preach your own sermons. Doing otherwise is stealing.
11. Be the first one to the service and the last one to leave.
12. Don't resign on Monday!

IV. IMPROVING YOUR PREACHING

- A. Watch videos and listen to tapes of your sermons.**
- B. Ask for honest feedback from trusted sources.**
- C. Listen to other preachers and learn from them.**
- D. Regularly read books on preaching.**
- E. Regularly read books and articles on theology and doctrine.**
- F. Plan your preaching. Then keep in mind what you are and will be preaching so you can "fill the files."**
- G. Involve your wife in the preparation and evaluation process.**

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