

Suggestions for Effective Preaching

1. *The most important part of preaching is preparation.* Good preaching is communicating the truths of God's word. This is accomplished through (1) having something worth saying and (2) investing the effort to develop a logical, orderly, structured presentation.

The way to have something worth saying is to spend the time in God's word to learn what it says. Repeating what you have learned from others, even if true, is not effective preaching. It is powerless because there is no authority behind empty words that lack the conviction that comes not from simply believing something to be true but knowing it to be true. There is a difference. You can learn truth from others, but you do not own a truth in your soul until you have invested the time to search out the matter and honestly satisfy your conscience, at which point that truth becomes internalized. When you study things for yourself, you will invariably discover new things that you have not heard before. This will be a blessing to your soul, a benefit to your audience, and proof that you have been a Berean.

Strong content without taking the time to organize it is sloppy laziness that is not appropriate for a workman who wants to be approved. Once you have the content, you must organize it and reorganize it until the structure is sound and the flow is logical. This makes it easy for the audience to follow and facilitates understanding.

Verses properly understood are inarguable. They are facts. Thus, the key to persuasive preaching is to eliminate the preacher's opinion entirely and instead base every statement on a verse. A well organized presentation will place verse upon verse in an order that leaves no gaps in logic and does not ask the reader to assume anything. This type of preaching is effective because it presents to the hearer the word of God in a coherent order that is irrefutable.

Irrespective of how smart or eloquent you are, it will be apparent when you preach whether or not you have prepared. It is said that the battle is won before the first shot is fired, and this is true in preaching. It is in the hours and hours of preparation that (1) you find gems of truth from God's word that need to be taught and (2) God's word changes you from the inside out. Exhaustive preparation leads to excellent preaching. There is no shortcut.

2. *Dress presentably.* Suit and tie may not be necessary in all instances but generally you should be at least as formal as a button down shirt, sport coat, and slacks. People will begin to form an opinion of you before you even begin to speak based upon whether you look the part. If your dress and demeanor suggest that you do not view what you are doing as important, your audience will be inclined to agree.

3. *Start strong.* Quickly get into the content of the message and do not consume time with lengthy introductions. Often people waste time at the beginning because they have not prepared and have very little in the way of actual content to share.

4. *Tell 'em what you are going to tell 'em, tell 'em, tell 'em what you told 'em.* This is time honored advice and is true. It is very hard for an audience to understand the structure of an oral presentation, and therefore, the speaker must be very intentional and repetitive in providing such structure. Your presentation should have two or three main points that you can state in thirty seconds at the beginning of your message. This structure will then be repeated and relied upon subsequently during the message.



5. *What makes preaching effective is the quantity of God's word that it contains.* Typical preaching consists of three points that alliterate, stories, jokes, lengthy illustrations, Greek word studies, and opinions. All of these are a waste of time. Your goal should be to cover as many verses effectively as you can during your allotted time. By avoiding your own opinions and by filling your teaching with verses, you will preach with power because power comes from God's word.

6. *The key to dealing with nerves is proper focus on what matters.* We may be nervous prior to or while speaking because we care about how we are being perceived. What we need to do is to quit caring about what others think of us and focus on preaching God's word clearly. If we have thoroughly prepared, our hearts will be gripped with essential truths from God's word that our soul will yearn to communicate, and our burning desire will be to get those truths across without concern for how we are perceived.

7. *How to avoid "um" and other fillers.* Speak in short, complete sentences. When you get to the end of a sentence, stop. Do not fear silence because you worry the audience may be thinking that you do not know what you are going to say next. Silence is your friend. It allows your audience to understand that a thought has been completed. They can then digest that thought, catch their breath, and wait for you to begin your next thought. Additionally, a prolonged silence is a great way to get everyone's attention if the audience is becoming distracted.

8. *Finish strong.* End on a high note. Stop at the appointed time so that the meetings may run smoothly.

9. *Things to avoid. Jokes.* Preaching is not stand up comedy. *Complaints about not having enough time.* You know beforehand that time is limited, and it wastes time to complain about it. Those who complain about not having enough time for all of their content are actually revealing how little content they have when they waste time in this way. *Inside references.* Referring to inside information that only certain members of the audience know is an unfair use of the time of the vast majority of the audience. *Personal stories.*

