

## The Compassionate Delivery of a Sermon

The delivery of the sermon is the most dynamic moment of the preaching experience. In that moment, all sermon preparation is brought to fruition or frustration. If the sermon is delivered effectively, the preacher with grateful joy forgets the hours of toil in preparation. But if the sermon fails, all the labor and study will seem like a heavy and useless burden.

The gospel is a proclaimed gospel. Thus, a sermon is not a sermon until it is delivered. A minister is not a preacher until the message is communicated to others.

In spite of its importance, delivery is often neglected by preachers. They spend little time trying to improve this area. If you are convinced of the centrality of preaching, you will always be looking to improve your delivery in preaching.

### I. The Preacher's Personality

A. The "first law" of preaching: be yourself.

#### B. The preacher's emotions

1. Delivery does not start with the voice or body, but with the spiritual maturity of the preacher.
2. Your level of spirituality will be seen in your eyes, your face, your voice, your gestures, your posture, and your attitude toward the audience.
3. If there is a conflict between emotion and statement, emotion will be the most powerful and the most evident.
4. You cannot hide fear, anger, bitterness, joy, etc. "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance."
5. A preacher will be most effective in delivery when speaking from a sense of divine purpose and conviction.
6. The preacher must work at maintaining his poise.
  - a. Poise is disturbed by fear. The size of the crowd, the attitude of the crowd, the content of the sermon, etc.
  - b. Lack of poise is easily detected by the audience: flushed face, unsteady hands or knees, rapid or shallow breathing, a dry mouth, strained pitch, etc. Extreme fear can result in forgetfulness or absolute inability to speak.
7. Don't look for fear to be totally removed. Tension makes for readiness and zest in delivery.

8. Ways to improve poise:
  - a. Thorough preparation
  - b. Concern for your audience
  - c. Reliance upon God
  - d. A good attitude toward the situation
  - e. Physical relaxation

## II. The Tools of the Trade

### A. The preacher's voice

1. Proper care
  - a. The preacher's most important tool is his voice.
  - b. Taking care of your voice is part of the obligation you accept when you answer the call to preach.
  - c. Good speaking voices are developed. You can train yourself to speak well.
2. The production of speech
  - a. Respiration
    - 1) Respiration is the act of breathing. Steadiness of vocalization, projection, rate, pitch, and poise all depend in part on proper breathing.
    - 2) Breathing for preaching should be diaphragmatic or abdominal.
    - 3) Air must be taken in quickly and expelled slowly.
    - 4) Proper posture will aid in maintaining proper breathing.
  - b. Phonation
    - 1) Phonation involves pitch, range, and inflection.

- 2) Improper use of phonation will cause you to lose your voice.
- 3) Your normal relaxed speaking voice is your normal pitch. You can vary the pitch, range, or inflection for emphasis; but not as a norm.
- 4) The change of pitch will help with expressiveness and interpretation.

c. Resonation

- 1) Resonation has to do with the tone of your voice.
- 2) A nasal, harsh, or breathy sound can be distracting to the audience.

d. Articulation

- 1) Sounds are shaped into words by the tongue, lips, and teeth.
- 2) Clearness of speech is important to communication and essential in preaching.
- 3) Articulation has as much to do with being understood as it does with volume or loudness.
- 4) Laziness - failure to open your mouth, or lack of flexibility in your facial area will add up to a failure in articulation.

e. Rate

- 1) Rate will need to vary with the size of the audience, the acoustics of the building, and the nature of the sermon.
- 2) Generally, the larger the crowd and the more difficult the acoustics, the slower the rate must be.
- 3) Often the sermon material will determine the rate.
- 4) A good rule of thumb is, "Proper rate is varied and rapid enough to show vitality, and slow enough to assure distinct articulation."

5) The “dramatic pause” is a good tool for emphasis.

f. Projection

1) Projection affords a strong and round tone, not from the throat, but from the diaphragm.

2) By projecting, the preacher can speak with correct volume and force without changing the basic quality of the sound or damaging his voice.

g. Variety

1) We must avoid a sameness of speech or monotone.

2) Our goal is a conversational delivery. Listen to normal conversation and think about how people naturally change their voices to express themselves to their audience.

B. The Preacher’s Body

1. Preaching involves more than your voice.

a. If a perfect preacher existed, no one would know it, because the perfect preacher is one whose delivery is unnoticed in communication.

b. Incorrect use of the body will call attention to itself rather than the message.

c. The preacher cannot afford to preach two sermons: one with his voice and another with his body.

d. The best speaker is one who speaks with the body and thus by using his total personality communicates the message.

e. Don’t be chained to certain gestures. The body action should be motivated by the message.

2. Appearance

a. First impressions are important. You are preaching before you ever speak.

b. Your dress should always be appropriate.

c. Three rules: conservative, neat, and clean.

### 3. Posture

- a. Your posture begins with how you       sit       on the platform.
- b. Exhibit                   alertness                  . You should show interest in everything taking place in the service.
- c. Once in the pulpit, your weight should be distributed   evenly   on your feet. Avoid swaying back and forth or rocking on your toes.
- d. Don't slouch, and work on keeping your hands out of your                   pockets                  .

### 4. Eye Contact

- a. The eye is the window to the       soul      . You must at least give the impression that you are looking at your listeners.
- b. Don't look at       one       person too long. Keep your eyes moving across the congregation.
- c. Avoid looking at the floor, the ceiling, out the window, etc.
- d. Good eye contact gives the audience the assurance of your desire to                   communicate                  .

### 5. Gestures

- a. Gestures involve the whole body—the arms, hands, head, shoulders, and eyes.
- b. Gestures should be motivated from                   within                  .
- c. Gestures should be coordinated with the rest of the body and flow of the message.
- d. Gestures should be                   appropriate                   to the occasion, the size of the crowd, and the nature of the sermon.
- e. Gestures should be                   varied                  . Don't get into a rut.
- f. There are four conventional gestures:
  - 1)                   Index                   finger: location and mild emphasis
  - 2) A clenched       fist      : dramatic and strong emphasis

- 3) The palms up: affirmative and pleading emotion
  - 4) The palms down: disapproval, rejection, or contempt
- g. There are three planes of gestures:
- 1) The upper plane: From the shoulders up—the most powerful and reverent thought.
  - 2) The middle plane: From the shoulders to the waist—where all emotions can be expressed adequately.
  - 3) The lower plane: From the waist down—negative thoughts.

#### 6. General body movement

- a. Too much body movement is distracting. Changes in position should be natural.
- b. A change in position can be especially effective when making a transition in the sermon.
- c. Mannerisms should be avoided such as tugging at your clothing, hands in pockets, hands behind you, leaning on the pulpit, etc. Any of these can be used for emphasis.
- d. It doesn't hurt to video-tape yourself preaching to see what you look like to the audience.

#### Conclusion:

Delivery is that which draws the audience into the truth that you are preaching. It is vital that we develop this area. Charles Finney was once asked by a New York newspaper if they could print his sermons. He replied, "Sure you can print the sermon, but you can't print the fire!"