

A MANUAL IN

**NON-BORING
PREACHING**

**HOW TO SPEAK
SO THAT PEOPLE LISTEN UP!**

by Jerry Moffitt

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Southwest School of Bible Studies**

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Chapter One

YOU HAVE TO BE HUNGRY

Preaching—an art and a task

Yes, preaching is both an art and a task. Some have more natural ability, some less. You have more natural talent to preach than some of your preaching brethren, and you have less than others. Many of the students in my classes have much more natural ability than I. But if there is a God-given ability, there is also a God-given task. We have all heard of the Athenian orator Demosthenes, who ran up and down the hills of Greece and recited poetry with pebbles in his mouth. Needless to say, he not only lost his speech impediment, but he became a great orator with a strong voice.

Often I would go to the church building, lock the doors, and preach my sermon up to five times. I keep a pulpit at home (an old music stand) and never go to worship having not just preached my sermon.

The excellent preacher will, as soon as he moves into a new town, go to the library and check out every book on public speaking, and he will make sure he carefully reads each one. He will spend time analyzing his audience, even sitting in a chair in the pulpit area and visualizing where brother Grumpy and sister Gossip sit.

The preacher who cares will not fall into a rut. He will go to any righteous length to insure that he will never submit his audience to boredom, or inflict them with dullness. Please, my preaching colleagues, have mercy on the brethren. Attentively watch all speakers, careful not to imitate their bad habits. Truly good delivery is a work in which we labor to improve. It is a worthy task.

After all the spiritual side of our religion has been discussed, after the character of the speaker is discussed, after Bible content is emphasized, a very important practical side of preaching remains — delivery. The raw fact is that a preacher knows that his ability to get and hold a job depends greatly on his speaking capability. Further, it is just as true that like it or not, top-notch speakers are able to influence, for good, more lives than passable preachers. An excellent speaker can burn sinful thoughts right out of a heart, unleash the power of God's word in the human mind, and lift a sinner into new life.

One might say, "I believe the power is in the word." He is right (Rom. 1:16; Jer. 23:29; Heb. 4:12; Jas. 1:18). But before one can listen to God's word we must have his attention and awareness. An excellent speaker has members of an audience on the edge of their seats with their ears wide open. Then he skillfully tosses great chunks of God's word into open hearts.

Another will say, "Well I believe brethren with good and honest hearts will ideally listen even to screeching, scratching monotones." Well, some might, but who wants to make the rest angry?

Additionally, even good and honest hearts (Lk. 8:15) are not always ideal. Poor things! Even they can get enough! Why punish them because of their good and honest hearts anyway? And you need not! If you care, if you study and restudy this book, if you will let the items of this book infiltrate your sermons, I promise you will become a skilled preacher, not merely a good one. You will be an interesting preacher! Following are some reasons why you will let this book have a chance to benefit you. Really think on them.

1. You love souls and your work as a preacher so much that you will go to any extreme to enhance your ability to reach them.

2. You will let this book help you because you *can* help yourself. You will probably, if you really try, increase your speaking ability fifty percent.

3. You are the only person who *can* help you. As much as your wife loves you, she cannot generate desire and work. She cannot be “hungry” for you. She is generally not able to critique you. Further, no elder or member of the church is likely to take you aside and tell you you are “plain dull and boring.” But they and others *will* think it.

4. You will let this book help you because you will be happier as a skilled speaker. You will enjoy a greater sense of accomplishment.

5. You will work with this book because everyone likes a challenge, and excellent preaching is a challenge. It is something you can get your fingers into and at which you may enjoy working. So, dig in! I promise you won’t be sorry.

My friend, Jesus so spake as never a man spake (Jn. 7:46). When you make up your mind to be the best speaker possible, you join Jesus and the ranks of countless other great preachers. Why be a good speaker when you could be a great speaker?

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This is the key to the whole book—you must use it with pitched desire. Do you remember when Jesus said, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”? He had several word choices for hunger. He could have chosen one for the rare state of famine, but he chose the more habitual and constant word. He chose the hunger of daily need, of subsistence. That is the hunger you must have to use this book properly, to become a surpassing speaker. If you do not have that craving, we promise you little. But with that strong appetite do the following:

1. Read the book through from cover to cover in as short a time-span as possible. Aim for not over one week.

2. Next go back to the book and find one point you want to incorporate into your preaching. Then try it out in your next sermon. Making sure other areas are going well, particularly dwell on chapter two — *How To Get And Hold Attention*.

3. Keep trying until you master that point, and until you can perceive a noticeable change in your preaching.

4. Groove it until it is coming along naturally, then take another point from the book and start working on it the same way. You may be able to work on two or three points at one time. Also, do not perceive that one or two points are a minor step. They will be something new and refreshing. Brethren will begin to listen to you more acceptably. One or two changes will actually make you an utterly different speaker. Brethren will start telling you so.

5. Keep adding new skills and grooving them, but every few months take and reread the book straight through, OK?

Come on now! What have you to lose?! Is it not worth the effort?! Yes? Then let you and me get on with it with all our might.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”
Solomon the King, Ecc. 9:10

Chapter Two

LEAPING LIZARDS! QUIT BORING YOUR CONGREGATION!

How to get and hold attention

This chapter cannot stand alone or be the whole ball of wax, but it probably will be the most important chapter for you. Therefore, you will notice that it is by far the longest. Many a preacher's wife packs up every two years because her husband is oblivious to techniques to be an interesting speaker. Furthermore, some preachers do not seem to care. What an abundant blessing — that we are not able to read the brethren's minds while we bore, tire, weary, and annoy them. Bless their hearts; they hang in there weary sermon after weary sermon, tedious hour after tedious hour, monotonous minute after monotonous minute. Enough! Enough! Enough! Stop it, for crying out loud!

YOU CAN BE INTERESTING! YES YOU CAN!

Now here is what you have to do. First, do not read this chapter once and set it aside. Let it function as a thermometer to take the temperature of your sermons. Read it often. Second, lay your rough draft of your sermon in front of you, and use the fifteen points of this chapter as a checklist. Check them one at a time to see if they are incorporated in your sermon. If not, take a few moments to add that point where needed, or where it will fit. A little thought will accomplish this. Then rework the sermon with point two in mind, then point three, etc. After you do this to a number of sermons, these points will begin coming automatically. Your whole style of preaching will change. Do not quit checking the checklist then, but keep it handy for a constant refresher course.

Now I hate to tell you this but someone must. You are not as interesting a speaker as you could be. In fact, sometimes you are dull! What are you going to do about it! I hope you toss and turn all night until you make up your mind to change. Let us notice these fifteen points that will change your preaching.

1. USE LANGUAGE EFFECTIVELY TO HOLD ATTENTION. Words and phrases can have an animated glitter, a vibrant effervescence, or a humdrumish aridness. Furthermore, the drabest language in the earth is slang. Ugg! Slang has a short-lived effectiveness. It briefly conveys a freshness, then its vigor is immediately spent. Nevertheless, many preachers use and overuse it beyond the point of tiresomeness, all the way to nausea. A few examples are: *lousy*, *hoopla*, *swinger*, and *up-tight*. In writing this book I have allowed it to be informal and popular, for that is the way I speak to my students. But a sermon is more formal than a book on speech or a speech class. Avoid slang in the pulpit!

2. HAVE GOOD SOUND STRUCTURE IN YOUR SENTENCES. Too many preachers use a sort of flat, uninteresting series of short sentences of near equal length. They all have identical structure. I tell you, it's like beans for breakfast. Use variety! Use complex sentences! Try an occasional question! Use the pause, the whisper, the one-word sentence. Give the brethren some relief! Change your structure! Really begin to communicate.

3. WATCH YOUR FIGURES OF SPEECH. One, do not use trite, hackneyed ones. I am toiled with hearing about those uncoordinated wretches who cannot walk and chew gum at the same time! Let us hear about the lady who is so clumsy she has to pull off the road to honk. Please! Come up with something fresh! You simply do not want people to know what you are going to say before you say it. But some do know! Now you fill in the missing word on these trite clichés:

cool as a _____
mad as a wet _____
sound as a _____
as white as _____
last but not _____
better late than _____
ripe old _____
no sooner said than _____

4. TALK ABOUT WHAT INTERESTS THEM. Now I know a real preacher of the gospel is going to spend a lot of his time preaching on what they *need* to hear rather than what they *want* to hear. Yet often what they want to hear, what they are interested in, is what they need. They have problems with prayer and worry. They are interested in how to conduct themselves at their work. They wonder and fear the task of raising children. They need to know how to *feel* forgiven as well as how to *be* forgiven.

I regularly have a debate, a written debate, or a house debate going. I, at those moments, am extremely interested in "baptism" or "one cup." But it is neither wise nor fair to subject the congregation to a long series of sermons on those interests. Instead, I try to think about their needs, what concerns them, what confronts them. To do this, you as a preacher must know your congregation. To do that, you must engage yourself in conversation with them every chance you get. Listen, really listen to them. Then speak courageously and Biblically on what interests them. Now before you choose that next sermon topic, do some visiting, talking, and thinking. You will be gratified at the results.

5. USE STORIES. Jesus constantly spoke in stories. He literally enchanted people. You will be an interesting speaker if you deal in personalities. Furthermore, there are a myriad number of Bible stories. The Holy Spirit knew what he was doing. He knew that people could understand great lessons best and retain them the longest if they were cased in stories. I believe God providentially allowed Old Testament events to happen the way they did so they could teach us lessons (I Cor. 10:11). The Bible is replete with stories. Are you preaching on pride? Use

Haman (The Book of Esther). Are you talking of lust? Use Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39). Are you talking of greed? Use Absalom (2 Sam. 15). I suggest that you set aside a portion of your study time to simply reading the Bible. You will find that with these stories fresh on your mind, they will be absorbed into your sermons.

Proverbs 15:1 says a soft answer turneth away wrath. To illustrate that verse I told the congregation about the time I absentmindedly drifted to the wrong side of the road and ran the sheriff off the road. I described the strange feeling I had when, recovering my car to the right side of the road, I looked in the rearview mirror, and saw him whirl his car around and come after me with lights flashing. I described the redness in his face and his clenched teeth. Then I described how he completely changed when I said I was sorry and had done a foolish thing. Hip hip hooray for Solomon! A soft answer did turn away wrath. I might have been the only preacher in jail that day. Anyway, use stories.

Occasionally a preacher has gotten a book of stories and told them as if they happened to him. There is no way around it; this is dishonest. If you use a book devoted to stories say, "It is just as if I were . . .," or "What if I . . .," or some such device to let them know it is not realistic.

Then again I have had preachers say to me, "I never have interesting, graphic, or humorous things happen to me." Yes they do. It depends on how one looks on life. Tell the normal events of daily life, dress it up with a sage point of view, and use it to explain and clarify your point. At the same time, it will ornament your sermon and imbue it with sprightliness.

I tell you, good preachers are all story-tellers. They develop, by constant practice, the ability to tell a tale, spin a yarn, and even act it out a little. My students always laugh when I tell them that good, interesting preachers have to be a little nuts, have to be to a degree bit actors, and have to develop a tinge of show biz. If any one challenges me on that I'm prepared to make them inspect the Old Testament prophets. Regarding things they did and said, we would call them mad clowns and showboaters. Anyway, if you are in the field of communication you have to sacrifice, just a little (just a little mind you!) your stateliness, station, and pride. If you tell a story and tell it well, in an interesting way, you will not have an inattentive man, woman, or child in the pews.

Too, when possible, tell a story that involves struggle. Who fought who for what? We all love a contest. We all love a scrap. The world prizes a "spute." That is why the Super Bowl is so popular. But I tell you that there are struggles in the Bible that rival, believe it or not, even the T.V. soaps. They are more interesting than anything on T.V. Tell them about Jacob and Laban, Joseph and his brethren, David and Saul, and Elijah and the false prophets on Mount Carmel. Furthermore, there are struggles you know that would explain and instruct a portion of the Bible. Use struggle in your sermons! Use stories!

6. BE TANGIBLE AND CONCRETE. Culture, demeanor, refinement, logic, and a good voice are not substitutes for a concrete point. Don't say Ralph is stubborn and intractable. Tell them he would hang in there, determined against a supposed curve ball, swinging at it just before it banged

into his ribs. It didn't curve! But he stubbornly stood there hoping it would. Don't say your grandfather was poor. Say that he had to wrap gunny sacks over his shoes in winter.

Once God wanted to tell Judah they would one day be restored, even though all hope would be against it. How did he tell it? How did he interest them? How did he tell it so they could not forget? Read Ezekiel 37 and notice the bewilderment of the prophet as the Spirit sets him down in the midst of a valley full of bones. There were very many and they were very dry. As the prophet prophesied sinews are laid on them. Raw, revolting flesh is next, followed by a covering of skin. The wind blows over them and they start to breathe and finally stand up on their feet. "Can Judah be restored?" the sons of Jacob ask.

"Can these bones live?" Jehovah asks. How clear! How concrete the message becomes!

Has Zion been forsaken by Jehovah? Will he not remember them anymore? God answers, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" (Isa. 49:14,15).

"No" is the resounding and concrete answer. Be concrete!

So we want to understand the power of God's word. I always illustrate the power of the word by a concrete example. I tell about the time my wife Barbara bought a little booklet on self-hypnotism. I describe how I got her to relax, and then began telling her that her index finger was getting lighter, and lighter, and lighter. "It wants to float," I would say. "All the weight is draining out of it," I continued. Then I tell the congregation how her finger slowly began to rise. There is power in words and I gave them a concrete example of it.

Or I would tell them about the time we were going to make a beachhead landing. While circling for a long time before "hitting the beach," we bobbed in the ocean like a bottle. Two friends started telling another of my friends how pale he looked, how green he looked. They kept it up until I looked back and saw him leaning over the side doing—you know what! Mere words made him sick. There is of course much more power in the word of God (Rom. 1: 16). Also there is power in a concrete example. Take a hint from the way God writes. Be concrete, not abstract!

7. DEMONSTRATE YOUR INTEREST AND ENTHUSIASM. My little boy came in laughing and excited about a T.V. show. "Look dad," he said passionately, "here's how he sits in a chair." Then he put his head in the seat of a chair. Before I knew it, I too was hooked on the show.

We too little realize that our attitude conveys a potential contagion. It is either soul-stirring excitement or so-what feelinglessness, depending on us! If you are really in a dither about what you are saying, really animated with it, truly thrilled, fascinated, agitated in front of them, I guarantee you will have a congregational epidemic. How we act influences others. I am almost ashamed to tell this story. Surely a bright, intelligent human being, as we all are, should not be physically moved by the mannerism of a dog! But I was. I was driving up a steep hill when I looked to my left. There standing sleepily off the road was a large shaggy dog. As I came up

even with it, it opened its jaws and let loose the most enormous yawn you could imagine. Then, drat it, before I reached the top of the hill I simply could not suppress a spin-off yawn of my own. Influenced by a dog! A dog! If that is so, how much influence can my bodily activity have on other human beings?

In my speech classes I always drag myself up to the pulpit. Once there I begin to lean and droop. I let my face sag and my body go limp. Then in a slow, low, monotonous voice I begin to talk about how we need passionate, fire-enkindled, enraptured speech. I laggardly and ploddingly tell them how we need energy, animation, briskness, zeal, earnestness, vivacity, vigor, spirit, enthusiasm, and keenness. Of course the message is clear. The words will not convey their true message if the body and voice are out of tune.

If you are going to thrill and move your audience, you will have to have great doses of stimulation, fire, ardor, fervor, eagerness, excitement, and enthusiasm.

All too often a speaker will come before me and deliver his speech. The words are all there. He has eye-contact, natural gestures, illustrations, stories, plenty of Bible, and a well-structured outline. But something is missing. Some connection is not made. Something is visibly lacking. He has not grasped the audience. There is an indefinable gap and a great void between the preacher and the audience. He is detached and aloof. In fact, often he seems to be detached from his words. The words barely touch his tongue as they fly so straightly over the heads of the audience. He delivers a sermon rather than talk briskly to his audience.

Then there are other speakers. They seem to reach out and draw in their congregation. There is almost an invisible pull. The audience is caught up in the moment. The speaker lives, feels, thinks, breathes no other thing than what he is saying precisely at that moment! He is surrounded by his words! He is enveloped with his sermon! He is saturated with the occasion! There is a rich rapport between the speaker and his audience! Nothing can harm the moment because the speaker is swathed and swaddled in the message! They cannot but listen! Their jaw goes loose! They are carried to and fro! He has them and they are his till he lets them go! We say they are in a mesmeric or hypnotic level of listening, and probably, in some way, they are. But I insist that this is done by the speaker's interest and enthusiasm! Nothing else! Nothing else under the starry sky but gusto, verve, and earnestness motivates them.

"But," you will say, "I don't feel that way! How can I be excited when I am not?" This is a valid and natural question. I will give you several things to think about. First, you must immerse yourself in the subject before you can immerse yourself in the moment. Preparation is one key ingredient to dynamic preaching. As you study your sermon, digging deeply into God's word, you will thrill to learn new things about old themes. You will get excited over interesting materials. You will have a barely controllable urge to tell others. What do you do when you see a shooting star? You gasp and point and exclaim excitedly, "Look!" You should not be preaching if you cannot get a little warm enthusiasm from what you study in the Bible. Yes, study is the key. I once had an older preacher tell me he quit studying years ago. He had enough sermons to last two years and he moved on after that. Think of that! Shame! And he had the audacity to tell me that

one day I would need study no longer. Was he an interesting speaker? Of course not. He was boring and, frankly, a most ignorant preacher in many areas where he should have been excellent.

Please do not get too offended with me when I say go slow on the hospital visiting, the youth parties, the backslapping social life of a preacher. Do what really needs to be done in all areas because you do it as every Christian should; but if you are going to be a gospel preacher you are going to have to study, study, and study!

Second, act enthusiastically. I'm not telling you to be deceiving or a hypocrite, only that the body has a profound effect on the mind. This is borne out in countless books. The mind and body are so intertwined that to affect the one is to influence the other. Everyone knows this. That is why athletes say "I'm the greatest!" This is why coaches have their teams shout, "We're number one!" While attending a seminar on communication we were instructed to get up the next morning and shout, "I feel great!" One young man said he felt a startling surge of excitability when he shouted it several times at 6:00 A.M. that morning. "You did?" the instructor asked.

"Yes, I did," the young man replied. "The guy in the next room screamed something to the effect, 'I'm going to rip your face off if you don't quiet down.'"

Nevertheless, the body and the voice affect the mind. Just as your enthusiasm has an effect on the audience, so also your body has an effect on your mind. So stand up there. Tense your body a little. Get an intent look on your face. Put some vigor into your words. Use some expansive gestures. All this is helpful. It is like priming the pump. Your mind will quickly take over and begin to surge forward on its own momentum. Try it. It will greatly help.

Third, what do we do when things are difficult? We pray! Pray to God! Tell him your fears, needs, and good intentions. He can do things all the speech coaches in the world could not accomplish. Pray for constant interest and enthusiasm. If you mean well and do not doubt, God will answer your prayer (Mark 11:22-25).

8. USE HUMOR WISELY. Humor is captivating and enthralling. It disarms and is winsome. People will love you for your humor, unless it is cutting or irritating. Unless you really have a knack for humor you best be careful, and maybe even shy away from it as you would a tarantula. Humor must be warm, not stinging, silly, or humiliating. It should not make fun of people, for love is kind (I Cor. 13:4). It must not be even a kissing cousin to anything lewd or risqué. Also, you must never use laughter for laughter's sake. Cowper said, "Tis pitiable to court a grin when you ought to win a soul." Yet the Arabs say, "All sunshine makes a desert." And Solomon said, "A merry countenance drieth up a backbiting tongue" (Prov. 25:23). A good speaker will have the house come down in laughter one minute, and on the verge of tears the next. Be careful. Know what you are doing all the time. But if you have the knack for humor, use it! Sprinkle your sermon with a little salt, a little Attic wit.

9. HAVE EMPATHY. The preacher who sympathizes with the congregation individually will fall into a rich and lovely circumstance. Sometimes a preacher will express that the congregation

doesn't love him. I hate to say it, but you get what you give. I knew a young man who listened hour after hour to the plans and problems of college students. He desired to know their needs, their feelings, their struggles, their victories. I have never seen a young man so loved. You get what you give. Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give unto your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

I believe it is a fundamental law of human thought that people respond to one who has showed love toward them. God made us that way. The congregation will be blind to your crooked nose and buck teeth if they think you love them. They will put up with your polka dot tie and cowboy boots. You can literally tear the top off their head, crush their toes, and flay them alive. Still they will respond to your sermon and turn around and try to comfort you, because they know it was not easy for you to preach like that. They know you love them. You see, you ask about their hurts, want to know the achievements of their children, and always greet them with relish. You marry their children, bury their dead, and weep and laugh with them. Oh yes, they will listen to you avidly! They will hang onto every passage you give them, all because they know you love them, and that you pray for them. Do you want to really captivate? Be empathetic, sympathetic, and loving.

10. OVERCOME YOUR RESERVE AND SENSE OF BASHFULNESS. I frankly admit that this is the most difficult thing for me, and one of my weak spots. Yet, because I am hungry to communicate, because I know I can overcome it, I try to prevail over it.

A preacher cannot afford to be shy, bashful, reserved, retiring, demure, and timid. If you are going to be a good speaker, there are going to be times when you must embarrass your wife! One preacher was talking about desire to go to heaven. He likened it to the desire he had as a young boy for one of his mother's cookies. It was high upon a shelf. As he told the story he climbed half-way up on the pulpit. One man saw it as a little child and said he never forgot it.

Baxter, in his biography of Raccoon John Smith, tells how Smith was preaching on eternal security. At the close of his outdoor sermon he jumped off the platform and grabbed hold of a tree limb. As he swung there, high above the ground, he shouted, "If I let go will I fall?" Again he cried, "If I let go will I fall?" Then he let go and tumbled in the dust. They gave the invitation and several came forward.

I used to take several boxes of various sizes into the pulpit with me. I would label one "good dirt" and the smaller one "apple seed." To illustrate the point that if we plant the same seed (the word of God, Lk. 8:11) it would produce the same crop (Christians - not Baptists, Methodists, and so forth). I would pour some "apple" seed into the box labeled "good dirt" and ask the audience "What will it produce?"

To my dismay, the first time I did it about five children shouted, "Apples!"

I decided at that moment to play along. I said, “That’s right,” and I pulled an apple out of the box. So I continued, “Now I wait ten years and pour apple seeds in the ground. What will it produce?”

They again shouted, “Apples!”

So I pulled out another apple and said, “I wait 1900 years and plant the same seed. What will it produce?”

Again they cried “Apples!” But I managed a puzzled and startled look on my face as I pulled out a turnip, then a cucumber, then an orange. Then I finished my lesson, talking of the absurdities of denominationalism.

I’m sure some in the audience were mortified by my theatrics, but I tell you no one was asleep that day. And most appreciated it.

11. THE PREACHER WHO DOES NOT PUT FORTH THE EFFORT TO HAVE SOME SURPRISE, SUSPENSE, OR DRAMA IN HIS SERMON WILL PAY THE PRICE. The audience will be inattentive. As a boy, before I obeyed the gospel, I heard a sermon I will not forget until the day I die. The preacher started out by saying there was a lot of trouble going on in the congregation. He said he was going to do like the prophets of old and call names. He said he was serious about it and that he wrote the name of the chief troublemaker on the large card he held. Whether fired or not he was going to show it to the congregation. Then he began to specify all the crimes this person had committed, going into details. I tell you, I quit playing with my ol’ pocket knife and other paraphernalia I usually was preoccupied with, and I began to listen up, to the sermon. Because of the way the preacher acted, and because of what he said, it was evident that some of the audience were squirming. Finally the moment came. A gasp went up in the congregation as he turned the card around. It spelled a name all right - Satan!

On another occasion this same preacher got behind the table where the communion was prepared. Everyone wondered why, but as his sermon began to develop it was evident why. He spoke with feeling about the Lord’s death and the Lord’s supper. It was one of his best sermons.

It is cricket to announce to the audience that when you stand on the right of the pulpit you will hold a false doctrine, and when you stand on the left of the pulpit you will defend the truth. Then you can do some role-playing, taking turns, making and answering arguments. They hear a debate, and not a person in the audience will be unaffected.

When debating a member of the Bible Church, I announced to the audience that I would eat my hat when my opponent could produce one passage that said we were saved by faith only. After making a great thing out of it, I pulled out a large cowboy hat and showed it to the audience. If it would have helped I would have put it on and worn it through the debate. In fact, why didn’t I?!

Advocates of faith only assume that the phrase “by faith” means faith only. I showed the audience where it says by faith Noah built an ark. Then I mused whether the phrase “by faith” really meant “faith only.” If so, then Hebrews 11:7 says Noah built an ark by faith only. Then I pulled out a toy model airplane and asked my opponent to put it together and build it by faith only. I told him I would eat my hat when he did that also, and if he couldn’t do it, “By faith,” in Rom. 5:1 and other passages did not mean “faith only.” Now why did I not wear that hat the rest of the debate? Shucks! However, be that as it may be, we must have the presence of mind to add surprise, suspense, and drama to our sermons.

12. CHANGE THINGS UP EVER SO OFTEN. It is only wise to do that regularly. When college students first eat cafeteria food they exclaim about how great it is. After they have been there a while, they begin to wonder why the food gets so bad. Actually it changes not at all. They simply get over familiar with it and get tired of it. The same is true of preachers. “A new broom sweeps clean.” But after a while, I promise you, all your sermons begin to sound the same. Break things up! Here are a few suggestions. One, change your topics. A preacher tends to have several favorite topics (hobbies) to which he keeps coming back. Soon the audience is sick of it and begins to growl. It would be good if preachers dated their sermons and went back and noticed the summary sentences to see if the congregation is getting enough of a varied diet. The thoughtful preacher will prepare a master-list to check his sermons by. Then he can quickly note what is lacking. I know one preacher who preached on baptism so much, as important as that is, that the brethren talked about him. Others are known for talking on faith, adultery, or such like. Stop it! Have a little diversity!

Two, one way to ensure a change is to preach various series. A series on prayer, church discipline, the Holy Spirit, salvation, worry, the home, attitudes at work, the most common sins, and others, will break up the sameness of it all. The saints may believe a new cook has arrived!

Three, you insure that they get variety and a balanced diet when you preach expositively through books of the Bible (notice, a short chapter is devoted to this). I will sometimes start through the book of Mark on Lord’s day morning and Acts on Lord’s day evening. Then every four or five sermons I would break the order with a short series or at least one sermon. Of course when I came back to the particular book of the Bible I would have to recall and review, but at least they were not bored by a stale diet.

Four, pray about it!

13. DON’T DEVELOP DISTRACTING MANNERISMS. We need to be on the alert for them constantly, and maybe a friend or your wife will notice them. One mannerism might be a word you over use. You might say “and. . . and. . .” over and over, sermon after sermon. Perhaps it is a certain gesture you repeat and duplicate and redo. The congregation may be climbing the walls before some harassed soul pulls you off. They may “go around the bend!” One speaker had the mannerism of standing on the side of his foot. Another would stop periodically, open his coat, tuck in his shirt, rebutton his coat, all while preaching. He did it every sermon, and the brethren began to expect it. But all the while the brethren were distracted while they sat there and watched

him. They got a little rickety. Another preacher waited so long facing the audience before he started his sermon that he almost drove one complaining member mad.

Perhaps a pronunciation will be your mannerism. I used to pronounce marrow, with an “are” sound until a friend corrected me. Again, I pronounced chāff as chāff. What you must do is this. Find in your congregation a speech teacher, an English teacher, or a very skilled technician of the language. Use the best you have. Then explain that you never knew a preacher that did not mispronounce some words. If they tell you from time to time that they think you mispronounced a word, look it up in your dictionary to check it out. Remember, such things distract from what you are saying. They draw attention to the man, not the message.

The tape recorder will also help. It will tell you many things about yourself. It will tell you if you are perky, nervous, too fast, or too slow. I have never preached in a congregation where I could not place the recorder in an inconspicuous but handy place. Anyway, ask your wife, a good friend, an English teacher, all, to help you see things you cannot notice without them. Don’t be prideful now! You will always be better off with a little constructive criticism and a display of humility. Don’t persist in driving the brethren crazy! Get rid of all mannerisms!

14. HAVE AN INTERESTING DELIVERY. I want to talk about two styles of delivery. One I call the conversational tone. This is the style of speaking now taught in all schools over the land. The other I call the dynamic delivery. This is the style of preaching our best meeting preachers use. Which is best? Which should you have, cultivate, and develop? Develop both! In fact, there is really not as much difference in the two as you might expect. Let us describe them individually.

The conversational tone is much like the name by which it is described. It is the same delivery you use when talking to your wife or any individual. However, when you are in a large room, such as a church building auditorium, you speak that much louder. Your gestures are broader and naturally more expansive.

You might say, “Well that is easy. All I have to do is just get up there and talk naturally.” No that is not quite all. Unless you are very unusual, your normal, everyday speech is not vivid and animated enough to be interesting and compelling. You may have to amplify and enrich and spice up your normal conversational tone even before you make it more expansive for a large audience. How do you do that? You practice reading the Bible and also speaking, all the while trying to be more expressive. Exaggerate! Play with it! Get very deep in voice, then very high. Try to sound like a bully, then a sissy, a little boy, then an old man. Go to the church building and practice delivering a sermon, but exaggerate, magnify, expand, amplify, hyperbolize, over color. Be extravagant! If you practice this, it will begin to color, to a pleasing degree, all your speech. Just a small amount will rub off.

Now let us say a few things about the dynamic delivery. This is and ought to be the conversational tone high, gamy, elevated, and powerful. It is much louder, but also much more animated. It is characterized by earnestness. It moves more and is fervid. The speaker is more

excited, more expressive. He is more eager, active, and powerful. It is not just loudness and foot stomping and pulpit beating, for he may slide down a peak to a mere wisp of a whisper. Then he is gone again, flailing his arms, agitating, turbulent, impassioned, excitable. The scriptures roll off his tongue; they carry the audience away.

No, it is not hurly-burly, hullabaloo, or pandemonium. He is not fanatical, hysterical, or rabid. But he gets to a fever pitch; he inflames, ruffles, evokes and provokes. The audience is not agog, in a dither, or flustered. But they are moved. All the while he is in perfect control.

How do you develop such a tone? Again, you practice, practice, and practice. You have to find a place where you can be alone. Then you go a little crazy. Only by practicing that way will you learn to preach that way. Don't think of it as mere loudness, and do not appear as if you are angry. But if one tenth of what you do in private rubs off and remains there when you preach publicly, you will be successful. Another key is simply trying to be more forceful and dynamic. You will be.

However, what I advocate is that you blend the two styles. Why not have two arrows in your quiver? Why not reach down and find two tools in your work box? And why not use them both in one sermon?!

You start off with a vivid, expressive, amplified conversational tone. You build and build. You come near the climax of a point. Then in an appropriate way you actively, powerfully, and dynamically drive the point home and clinch it. Then you can pause, revert to the conversational tone, release your audience, let them go; then start a crescendo of building once again. There you have used the conversational tone and the dynamic approach effectively blended together.

Then again, these two approaches need not be blended. Some sermons lend themselves to pure conversational tone. Perhaps you are teaching rather than motivating, consoling rather than reproving, educating rather than persuading. You may need only a vivid conversational tone all the way.

Or, perhaps you want to motivate, or persuade, or inspire. Then it may be that the whole sermon needs the dynamic approach.

Now when do you use these two styles? My experience is that meetings should have much of the dynamic approach, for there you are motivating. So also should it be used in sermons that are a call to action, sermons that inspire, some sermons that reprove and rebuke. The conversational tone should be used in sermons that edify, clarify, teach and console. The type sermon that calls for extreme vigor, and the type sermon that calls for the conversational tone are usually obvious.

Now I would like to make a personal judgment. The dynamic approach is not the best for day-in, day-out preaching. First, the brethren who dislike it (and some do), who think it is too emotional, too artificial, really do dislike it. Too, those who do not dislike it begin to tire of it rapidly. It seems to me that in local work you are better off with the vivid conversational tone. Regularly

you blend the two, and occasionally you have a sermon that requires the pure dynamic approach, but the bulk of your preaching is a bold, animated, conversational tone.

I do not know why it is, but speakers tend to be “either-or”; they want to be all dynamic or all conversational. I am against that. Brethren need both. Both add variety to the weekly sermons. Great speakers master and use both. Which is hardest for you? Work on that.

15. USE THE BIBLE EFFECTIVELY AND SKILLFULLY AT ALL TIMES. I believe any sermon is a failure that does not effectively and skillfully use plenty of Bible. I do not care what the occasion is, God’s word is better than our word. But to use God’s word requires planning and work. Let us see.

First, you must develop a way that works for you to memorize God’s word. I start on Monday and memorize up to fifty passages by Friday. I take a passage, as much as I can remember without looking, and read it out loud three times. Then I look up and say it three times without looking. Then I go to the next phrase or the next verse and do it that way. By Wednesday and Thursday I start linking the phrases and verses together. On Friday I read one time each passage that goes together. Then I look up and quote the verse one time. After going through all the verses one time like that, I go back over all of them again, quoting them without reading them. Then I know I have them down. Then Saturday and Sunday I quote them as I practice with my sermon outline. Needless to say, there are few sermons where I do not quote much Bible. You must find a similar system that works for you.

Second, learn by practice to read the Bible interpretatively. Hold the Bible flat in either hand. Take the other hand and place it on top of the open Bible. Let that top hand have its long middle finger just under the line you are reading. You can look up, establish eye-contact, and recite the portion of the line you remember, and when you look down again you sight over your middle finger and have immediately found your place. Move your middle finger down line by line as you read. You can use your Bible to gesture, as well as the rest of the body. Hold the Bible up between the stomach and the chest so you do not have to bob your head too far up and down. Now when you read, read out loud with understanding. Use all the techniques of voice that you use to express yourself while speaking. Note chapter six on how to use the voice. All this makes your sermon more effective and interesting. People will not as likely drift off when you pick up your Bible to read.

Third, besides those passages that you quote verbatim, you should have throughout your sermon those passages which you paraphrase and to which you give the chapters and verses. These must be practiced along with the rest of the sermon, but sometimes you must, before that, read them several times before you can put them into your own words. You should have plenty of these to insure that you have good Biblical content.

Last, you can also use chapters and verses to establish a point, without quoting or paraphrasing them. You might say “Does the Bible teach you must be baptized? Yes! Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16: 16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21; Col. 2:12.” Merely

quoting the chapters and verses adds supportive evidence to your statement, as well as centering their mind on the authority of the word.

Now, if you have noticed, we have demonstrated four ways to use the Bible effectively. Practice them until they are a part of you. They are what delivery is all about.

In summing up this chapter, we will simply say that we have discussed fifteen points that will make you an interesting speaker. Bring what you have to those fifteen points, avidly throw yourself into them, diligently work with each of them, and top it all off with incessant prayer to the God who made man's mouth, and you will become an interesting speaker. For heaven's sake, do it!

REVIEW OF THE FIFTEEN POINTS

1. Use language effectively to hold attention.
2. Have good sound structure in your sentences.
3. Watch your figures of speech.
4. Also talk about what interests them.
5. Use stories.
6. Be tangible and concrete.
7. Exhibit interest and enthusiasm.
8. Use humor wisely.
9. Have empathy.
10. Overcome your reserve and sense of bashfulness.
11. Have surprise, suspense, and drama in your sermon.
12. Change things up every so often.
13. Don't develop mannerisms.
14. Have an interesting delivery.
15. Use scripture effectively.

DO'S

1. Keep your body straight and exude vitality.
2. Cultivate inner excitement.
3. Remember we change our feelings by changing our physical actions.
4. Use the thunderous pause.
5. Keep moving.
6. Frequently picture yourself as interesting and dynamic.
7. Establish a rapport with your audience.

DON'T'S

1. Be careful about using slang.
2. Don't fall into mannerisms.

3. Never be detached or half-hearted.
4. Don't drag and shuffle on the way to the pulpit.
5. Don't slouch, shrink, or look blank once you get there.
6. Don't talk too fast. People simply can't hear and follow you.
7. Don't let the dynamic approach cause you to speed up too much.
8. Don't be the same type preacher all the time. Read chapter 6 on how to vary the voice.
9. Don't look too relaxed and detached. "If the sermon is that relaxed," the congregation may think, "it may not be very important."
10. Don't look over the audience's head; look them right in the eye.
11. Don't be a nervous speaker, fidgeting with your Bible, notes, tie, or the pulpit. You will do nothing but distract the audience.
12. Don't startle your audience by uncalled for shouts, banging on the pulpit, or slapping your Bible. It will most likely irritate more than get attention.
13. Don't make a scene if a baby is crying or teenagers are cutting up. Handle it later if at all possible. Not only might you distract your audience, they may have their mind on the incident and never hear another word you say in the sermon.
14. Don't offer the invitation while the songleader is asleep!!!
15. Don't use visual aids too often as they can become a kind of mannerism. Also, they can lose their effect if overdone.
16. Don't always try to have unusual sermons. That too can be a mannerism.
17. Don't preach when you have a sore throat! You risk permanently marring or losing your voice. The congregation and the elders will understand. DON'T DO IT!
18. Don't always be hard as nails or soft as a grape. It is wrong for a preacher to think he is not preaching unless he is tearing someone's hide off, and it is equally as wrong to be afraid to reprove and rebuke. God's preacher will be able to be balanced.
19. Don't wallow in big words and technical jargon. Jesus never did,
20. Don't run, prance, or hop up to the pulpit. You don't want the audience to be thinking about that when they should be thinking of your sermon.

Chapter Three

EVEN THE BABIES SAY AMEN

How to make your meaning ever so clear

While in the U.S. Marine Corps a friend of mine described how he got his rifle inspected for stock defects. He explained:

Lt. Fuzz said “Harrumpt.” I took that to mean, “Give me the rifle.” He then said, “Ummpt.” I took that to mean, “It’s all right.” Next he said to me, “Umm.” I took that to mean, “Here, take your rifle and go.”

Yes my brother, it is a sad day when the saints have difficulty interpreting what you say. So, let us carefully notice the following:

HINTS FOR EXACT UNDERSTANDING

1. ALWAYS BE AS SPECIFIC AS YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH. Instead of “sin,” talk about adultery, lying, gossip, worry, social-drinking, or homosexuality. I often say something like the following: “I do not wish to hurt anyone’s feelings, and I ask you trust that I mean well. I promise I seek not to ridicule or slander, but I do want to be clear and I do not want to be misunderstood. So let me say: One, Paul never was a Baptist. Two, Peter never heard of the Methodists. Three, John was not a Lutheran. And you, my friends, can become a Christian without ever joining a human denomination.” Be specific!

2. DRAW A PICTURE RATHER THAN EVALUATE. My daughter Kim came to me and asked if she could be the one who dipped out the ice cream for them all. I said it was all right. Then Jeremy came to me and asked if he could dip his. I told him no, because I had told Kim she could do it for Charis and him. After he had been gone a few minutes, Kim came back and said Jeremy wouldn’t eat his ice cream because he couldn’t dip it. I told Kim to go tell him that was fine with me, and that I was sorry he felt that way. A few minutes later I passed by and noticed Jeremy had changed his mind and was eating ice cream.

“Now,” I asked my speech class, “how do I describe Jeremy’s change of mind? I could make the evaluation that he reversed himself, or that he backed down. I could say I intimidated him. “However, I think all agreed that the following was much more colorful: “Jeremy’s stubbornness caved in and fell to the ground like a feed sack full of warm cow guts!” Now I know that is a horrendous description. Further, to my delight, none of the students seemed to think that they would use such a vivid illustration in the pulpit. However, I think you get the point. Describe rather than evaluate. Instead of saying that David was not perfect, you might say, “He lied, pretended, committed adultery, and killed.” So remember, describe rather than evaluate.

3. ILLUSTRATE YOUR POINTS. When talking about how the Holy Spirit does not work by a direct operation, I would tell the audience that my left hand is the human heart, while my right hand represents the Holy Spirit. I would ask them if the Spirit worked on the heart directly, and I would strike my right hand directly on my left. Then I would hold my New Testament in my right hand and quote Eph. 6:17 where the word of God is said to be the sword of the Spirit. Then I would strike my Bible on the palm of my left hand (the heart), and ask if the Lord did not work through the medium of the word. As I continued to lightly smack my Bible on my left hand, I would quote Ps. 19:7: “The law of Jehovah is perfect, converting the soul.”

Illustrations are one of the most important items you should have in a sermon. In fact, it is wise to briefly illustrate each of your major points, being sure to not overdo it. But it is better to have too many illustrations than to chastise the congregation with abstract reasoning. Are you talking about greed? Use Gehazi as an illustration (2 Kings 5). Are you talking of stubbornness? Tell them about Saul (I Sam. 15:23). Are you talking of conviction? Tell about Stephen (Acts 7).

Where else do you get illustrations? From life! Be an observer of life. Be a keen recaller of events in your life. When talking about love not behaving itself unseemly, I wondered how I might illustrate it. A little reflection brought an event to mind that had happened over fifteen years earlier. I was in a movie with a friend when a baby began to cry. I remarked to my friend, “That baby sure is loud.” Then my friend stood up and in a most unseemly way shouted “Shut that baby up!” Yet, alas, love becometh not itself unseemly. Another friend once rode his horse into a bowling alley. Surely that was a little unseemly. Yet love becometh not itself unseemly.

If your illustrations are clear, and if they really mirror your point, I guarantee there will not be a deaf ear in the house. Use illustrations. Learn to spin a yarn in an interesting way. Preachers, as Jesus, need to use illustrations. There are thousands of stories in your life which you can make interesting to an audience. However, do not tell too many of the same variety—i.e., soldier stories, tennis stories, work stories, relative stories, etc.

4. BE SPECIFIC ABOUT NUMBERS. The “death” angel did not kill a great many Assyrians, or a bunch of them, or a considerable number of them. He slew 185,000 in one night. When the Assyrians awoke the next morning there were 185,000 brethren whose breast did not heave (Isaiah 37).

Samson did not kill a lot of Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. He did not slaughter a great crowd or a bunch. He slew 1,000 Philistines (Judges 15). Be specific about numbers. Specifics preach. They will lather!

5. USE COMPARISONS. Think them out in advance. Notice:

“The kingdom of heaven is *like* unto. . . “
”Though your sins be *as* scarlet,
they shall be as white *as* snow...”

Let us learn from the greatest communicator of all time—the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13). In the word of God he carefully used comparisons. So we say:

“Worry among brethren is as common as automobiles and gas stations.”

“That puppy,” my mother would say, “is as ugly as home-made soap.”

Our brethren a couple of generations ago would say, “A false teacher is as low as a snake in a wagon track.” So listen for, read, notice, and coin comparisons to make your sermon sparkle with clarity and freshness.

6. TAKE THE TIME TO RESEARCH A LITTLE SO YOU CAN BE MUCH MORE CLEAR. Goliath was six cubits and a span. So? Our brethren are having trouble with the metric system and you want to pull cubits and talents and firkins on them!? He was over nine feet tall and his spear head weighed not only six hundred shekels, it was twenty-five pounds. The forgiven man was forgiven a debt, not of 10 thousand talents but of ten million dollars. And he threw his brother in jail not for one hundred shillings but rather two thousand dollars (Matt. 18:23-28). You know which is clearer and more interesting! Now, do it! Please! Your congregation will appreciate the work you have done. They deserve your best, and you must be clear for you have a lot to offer them.

7. ADHIBIT HOMOGENEOUS AND ARTLESS PARLANCE, CANT, AND PHRASEOLOGY. At this point, having read the lead-in, you may have thrown the book against the wall. If not, let us quickly explain that we are really for plain, simple, unornamented, down-to-earth, direct, forthright, straight from the shoulder, down to brass tacks, English. What our lead-in really should say is that we must develop and nurture a love of plain language.

Now, as we will notice later, we are not advocating worn out slang, youth jargon, or trite expressions. But we *are* insisting that we not use complicated, over sophisticated, complex jargon.

“And he opened his mouth and taught them saying,
Blessed are the impecunious in spirit
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they that ululate for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the demure; for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after probity:
For they shall be filled.”

Bah! Away with it! Jesus was never a prissy professor. He was a man of the earth, a mechanic of wood. We preachers and teachers do well to imitate him. Matt. 16:13-19 simply says:

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto

them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hast not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

AX ON THE ROOT said something like the following. Had Peter been like some today, it might have read:

Who say you that I am?

And Peter answered and said: Thou art the Christological incarnation, the Protracted Logos, the Eschatological Prefix of the macrocosm, the Eucharistic Commemorative of hagiology.

And Jesus answered and said unto him ... HUH?!?!

8. DO NOT TRY TO SET A RECORD FOR GROUND COVERED. I once heard a speaker make a ten minute talk. He told the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, launched into Daniel in the lion's den, told the story of Nebuchadnezzar, and finally wound it all up with a barrage of points and lessons. The whole thing passed in front of our eyes so fast that it was blurred, incoherent, and murky. He was a good speaker, but he did what we preachers are prone to do—cram as much into our sermon as physically possible. Let us slow down and drive in a couple of major points. One lesson or point is not terribly sinful, especially in a ten minute talk. Slow it down. Trim it out a little.

9. RESTATE YOUR IMPORTANT IDEAS IN DIFFERENT WORDS. The Bible does:

“There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.”

“Where the fire is not quenched and the worm dieth not.”

“The smoke of their torment goeth up forever and ever.”

Sure, you can overdo this and bore the audience, but if you constantly do it wisely it will help simplify your lesson. I once read about a preacher who got in the pulpit to preach and noticed that his wife had left a note. It said “KISS.” After the sermon, he told her how sweet it was. She replied, “NO, no, no! It doesn't mean 'a kiss.' The letters stand for 'Keep It Simple Stupid!'” Yes, to change the words one time will often help to keep it simple.

We often need to translate our studies into clearer words for the brethren. They have not studied as many critical commentaries as we. The story is told of one preacher who preached a very technical sermon on the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the proof we get from it of the Christian religion. He refuted all the alternatives: the swoon theory, the geographical hypothesis, etc. After he was through an old timer came up to him and looked him in the eye. He said very loudly, “Young man, you did a fine job, a fine job of preaching. You are evidently very smart and have learned a great deal. But I *still* believe Christ was raised from the dead!” Restate important ideas in different words.

10. AVOID FOREIGNISMS. True, the brethren need to know a few Greek words: maybe *eklesia* (church), and *baptizo*. But usually you need to justify your use of foreign words. My policy is to not usually mention the Greek word unless it sounds like an English word which we get from it. Sometimes I will say to an audience, “What does this word sound like?” Then I will mention *metamorphoo* which is the word from which we get *metamorphosis*. Then I tell them, “That is the word we have in Romans 12:2. It says, ‘And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed (*metamorphoo*) by the renewing of your mind.’ We must, like the butterfly, go through a metamorphosis.” Or I will say, “Can you guess what word Paul used in 2 Corinthians 9:7; ‘for God loveth a cheerful giver’? He used *hilaros*, the word from which we get our English word *hilarious*. Yes my brethren, we need be hilarious givers.” Sometimes I say, “What kind of effort do we need to use to enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus used a significant word as translated by Luke. He said, ‘*Strive* to enter into the strait gate.’ The word our word strive translates is that significant word—*agonizomai*. Yes, that word is the word from which we get our English word *agony*. Brethren, Jesus is saying ‘Agonize to enter in the strait gate.’” But as a rule, avoid foreignisms. They irritate more than they impress. If you use them, you should have a purpose for using them.

11. USE CORRECTNESS. Collect grammars as you would debates or commentaries. If you use poor grammar a portion of your audience will lose confidence in you at the worst, and be distracted at least. The speaker who uses *irregardless* for *regardless*, *bust* and *busted* for *burst*, “*can’t hardly*” for “*can hardly*,” will hurt himself with his audience. Use a good grammar. Devote a portion of time each day to study it. Many of the brethren may think, “If he’s weak in grammar, maybe he’s also weak in doctrine.” Good grammar comes easy for some, but it is difficult for others. Do the best you can!

12. USE APPROPRIATENESS. Here you must cultivate a feel for what is proper and what is not. Be cautious, prudent, and vigilant in using words on sex. Believe it or not, you cannot use many versions of the Bible verbatim. Use care in 2 Kings 18:27; Isa. 36:12; Heb. 12:8. Expressions and word-choices which were appropriate in 1611 may be vulgar in our day. Learn to use euphemisms, mild expressions for those expressions that may offend.

Slang is almost always out in a Sunday sermon. It accomplishes little and comes across to many as being immature and uncalled for. It is too informal. “If your sermon is that casual, perhaps it is not important,” is what your audience may think. You could take slang, youth jargon, and trite expressions, put them in a sack and shake them up, and the first one to fall out would be poor sermon material. You do not want the congregation to peg you as lacking freshness and originality. So away with “I’m going to tell it like it is,” etc. Banish such youth jargon as “groovy.” Do not call Goliath a “big dude,” nor Pharaoh an “old boy.”

You, as a preacher of the gospel, have the task of being clear without being distracting. Go over and over these points. Bring them to bear on your next sermon. I guarantee you will not only be more clear, you will be more interesting. Now notice the following important do’s and don’t’s.

DO'S

1. Do be specific.
2. Do describe rather than evaluate.
3. Do illustrate your points.
4. Do use comparisons.
5. Do develop a love of plain language.
6. Do use correctness.
7. Do use appropriate language.
8. Do use active rather than passive verbs.
9. Do avoid trite and worn out expressions and clichés.

DON'TS

1. Don't be abstract.
2. Don't overdo the number of illustrations.
3. Don't use "cow guts" or even "guts" or such like in a sermon.
4. Don't use pedantic or pompous language.
5. Don't use technical terminology, foreignisms, or wordy language.
6. Don't constantly splatter the congregation with novel words. Who do you think you are, Alexander Campbell?
7. Don't use slang and youth nomenclature.
8. Don't be afraid of using "I" or "you" in your sermon.

Chapter Four

ESRTURTUC FO EVUAL EHT

The Value of Structure

With a little organization we can take the nonsense above and get:

STRUCTURE OF VALUE THE

With a little more organization we can get:

THE VALUE OF STRUCTURE

Let us face it, we live in an orderly universe. Planets precisely rotate around suns; every compartment of a honeycomb is precisely alike. We file and organize papers in a system. We humans are very orderly in spite of ourselves. In truth, it might be said that we are in a quest for order. We have learned that things are better that way.

While I was in the Marine Corps I was exposed to the most rigorous organization and orderliness I ever experienced. In my footlocker every item had a precise place. If the toothbrush were wrongly next to the shoelaces the Drill Instructor (D.I.) would close the locker and roll it across the floor until every item was mixed up. Then I had to restructure it quickly. If a bed sheet were out of line the D.I. would tear the bed apart and leave it all over the floor. Sometimes they would tear apart all the bunks in the whole billet, throw them on the floor, empty all the laundry bags on top of them, pour sand all over that, and then allow us a little time to get it swept up and all back neatly in order. Believe you me, we were philosophically pensive as we reorganized our billet.

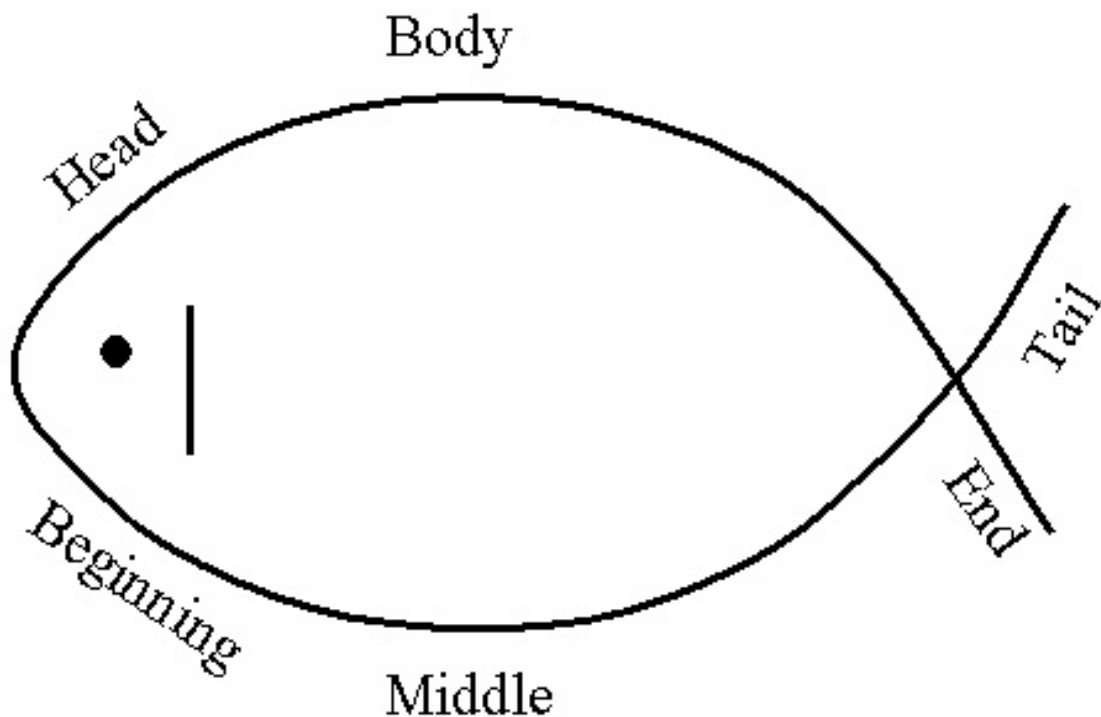
Of course there are those free souls to whom organization is unimportant. One acquaintance in infantry training was the most disorganized noncommissioned officer I ever saw. When approached about it he had a stock answer: "Don't sweat the little stuff." While carrying a rocket launcher on an infantry exercise a member of his squad, while holding a rocket, said, "Hey, do you load this thing into the front or back of the launcher?"

My friend replied, "Don't sweat the little stuff."

Once I came upon him outside his billet and stopped to see what he was doing. There he was, sitting with a razor blade in his hand, removing all his stripes from his shirt. He had been "busted" to a private. I stood there a while and could not resist. I said, "Don't sweat the little stuff?"

He looked up, and with his usual devil-may-care attitude repeated, "Don't sweat the little stuff." You see, those nonconformists who refuse to organize do not fare well in this life.

Every once in a while, as Carnegie said, a speaker will launch into a sermon like a child would like to eat—desert first, milk next, then meat, then desert again, then vegetables. No! No! No! A sermon must be organized! Our frontier preaching brethren knew that a speech must have structure. They thought of a sermon as being like a fish:



Truly a speech must have a beginning and middle and end. Let us note a basic four part outline that can be adapted to almost any type of sermon. Look at it carefully, then we will discuss each part. It is called Barne's Basic Outline.

- I. Beginning:
 - A.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - B.
 - 1.

- 2.
- 3.
- II. Summary sentence:
- III. Middle:
 - A.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - B.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - C.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- IV. End:
 - A.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - B.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

THE BEGINNING

There are three functions of the Beginning, of a speech.

1. THE BEGINNING IS USED TO GAIN ATTENTION. This is just another sermon, or is it? Your beginning will tell them. Maybe it includes a story, has a word of suspense or a note of humor by those who can use humor. You can gain attention by some illustration.

One young preacher arose to speak, and with every characteristic of one who was all hush-hush and secret, he told the congregation. he was going to talk on the *secret* doctrine of the church. He then dangled them some more before talking on fasting.

Sometimes a word of suspense is sufficient. You might say, "Brethren, some of you are not going to like what you hear today." Or, if you want to immediately get the elders sitting on the edge of their pews just say, "All right! There is something I've been wanting to get off my chest for a long time." What about the following lead-ins:

- a) “This morning I’m going to reveal what Jesus would say to you if he had only one thing he could say.” Then talk on “little faith.”
- b) Or, “I’m going to talk today on a doctrine you will have difficulty believing.” Then talk on God giving up on people (Rom. 1:26,28; 2 Thess. 2:11,12).

2. IN A BEGINNING YOU MAY ESTABLISH YOUR RIGHT TO SPEAK. You might reveal your study and how it led you to some startling conclusions. In a sermon on dancing I once revealed that before I was a Christian I had played at countless dances as a rhythm guitarist in a Rock and Roll band. I told somewhat of what I had observed on and off the dance floor. On another occasion, when I mentioned smoking in a sermon, I mentioned that before I quit smoking because of its bad influence, I smoked three packs of cigarettes a day.

But, whatever the sermon, sometimes the Beginning must be used to win the right to speak.

3. THIRDLY, A BEGINNING MAY BE USED TO PREPARE THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE LESSON. You may need give background, preliminaries, or definitions. Especially is this true when speaking expositively—a type of preaching, we will commend to you later on. But in a Beginning on “church discipline” you may need to define discipline. Once I used a lot of time making some preliminary statements about who I was *not* talking to in the sermon. I then warned the others that it was going to get on their toes more than any sermon I had ever preached there. So, a Beginning can prepare the congregation to accept and understand the sermon.

It must be kept in mind that you are not to make points in your Beginning. That is reserved for your Middle. THE BEGINNING MERELY LEADS UP TO AND INTRODUCES THE SUMMARY SENTENCE.

THE SUMMARY SENTENCE

The summary sentence should always be a complete sentence. It sums up in one sentence what the sermon is all about. It is introduced by the Beginning, and it is never weakened by making it a question. It is always an assertion for it is more forceful that way. It is the first part of the sermon that should be devised. After it is selected, the Beginning should be devised to introduce it, then the Middle devised to develop it.

Its purpose is to give the congregation a handle on the sermon, a ray of light into it. In hearing it they have in their mind the gist and scope of the whole lesson. Further, it obligates a preacher to a certain path. Notice the following summary sentences:

- “I’m going to tell you the story of David and Goliath, emphasizing three great lessons.”
- “We should be meek people.”
- “I am going to tell you how to pray.”

THE MIDDLE

At this point the brethren know what is coming and are prepared to handle it. Your Beginning has led them up to it, and your Summary Sentence has presented the scope of it. Now it is the design of the Middle to develop the Summary Sentence and present it.

There are five things to consider about the Middle.

1. YOU SHOULD AIM AT HAVING THREE POINTS. People simply cannot absorb, hang on to, and remember more than three points. Some sermons are practical with only one point, while occasionally a sermon will demand a whole fist-full. But usually when a preacher says, "Point six ..." he has delivered a failure.

But one will say, "I cannot get it all into one sermon." True, so use a series of sermons to do it slowly and carefully. Announce and preach to the congregation a series on some topic such as the Holy Spirit, baptism, instrumental music, dynamic faith, the art of prayer, etc.

2. EACH POINT SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUMMARY SENTENCE. In fact, if a preacher is not sure about this the author would recommend that parallel language be used in the Summary Sentence and the points of the Middle. For example, notice this Summary Sentence.

II. Summary Sentence: *We must be faithful people.*

Now note the following points of the Middle.

- III. Middle:
- A. *We must be faithful people in prayer.*
 - B. *We must be faithful people in work.*
 - C. *We must be faithful people in giving.*

Notice the words in italics in the Summary Sentence are completely parallel to the words in italics in the points of the middle. Thus one knows that his Middle is not diverted from what the Summary Sentence promised it would be.

While preaching in the Ozarks, I had the experience of "coon" hunting after services on Sunday evening. A "coon" dog would be severely punished if it got off the trail to chase a flushed rabbit. But many preachers start off in one direction and get diverted ever so often. They chase rabbits! Structure in general, and a development of a good Summary Sentence by a good Middle prevents this. So, one way or the other, make sure your Middle develops your Summary Sentence. Also, it will help the interest and attention of the congregation if the main points that you have covered are repeated. As you close out a point review your points so far discussed.

3. IN THE MIDDLE YOU MUST OFTEN TAKE CARE TO HAVE A LOGICAL PROGRESSION. Some themes progress in an orderly way. You cock a gun before you fire it, and you load it even before that. So in talking about firing a gun you would not start with handling the “kick.” So also one must present becoming a Christian before he discusses falling from grace. He should talk of faith before repentance for that is logical. A careful inspection of any topic usually reveals a logic of one point being before another.

4. EACH POINT SHOULD HAVE A TRANSITIONAL SENTENCE TO THE NEXT POINT. This smoothly moves the audience from one point to the next. For example:

“Now that we know how to become a Christian, let us see how to remain one.” Or,
“Further, we should pray because God answers prayer.”

These transitional sentences can be written out in the outline and they will make for a smoother, more orderly movement of the sermon in the minds of the people.

5. Fifthly, YOUR MAIN POINTS SHOULD HAVE LOGICAL SUBPOINTS. These suggest themselves readily to the mind. Note the following examples of logical subpoints.

- II. Summary Sentence: We must always pray and not faint.
- III. Middle:
 - A. We must always pray and not faint because God answers prayer.
(Now note the logical sub-points)
 - 1. God answered David’s prayer.
 - 2. God answered Jesus’ prayer, Jn. 11.
 - 3. God will answer your prayer, Mark 11:22-25.

Also, the sub-points may well be examples, scriptures, or illustrations. Now we are ready for the End.

THE END

The reason we have an End is that we do not want to leave people hanging. I hate to tell you this, but unless you are in a constant stupor on Lord’s day, you have noticed that the brethren watch for the End like people in a parked car on a hot day look for the caboose of a passing train. Once I gave the plan of salvation three minutes into my sermon and was dismayed to note more than a few “nervous nellies” grabbed for the song book. It’s as if you trigger a basic animal instinct or something. But our concluding remarks can do several helpful things.

1. THE END CAN RECAPITULATE THE MIDDLE, RESTATING EACH MAIN POINT. DON’T REPREACH THEM HOWEVER!!

2. YOU CAN HAVE A CALL TO ACTION. For example, “After this sermon on work, let us quit talking and go to it.”

3. IT CAN MAKE APPLICATIONS. You may say, “We have seen what happened to Israel when they doubted; now what about you my brethren, when you pray and then continue to worry?”

Usually we conclude our sermons with an invitation. You need not have an elaborate plan of salvation if you are skillful enough to incorporate it into your sermon. Or, you can tie the plan of salvation into your sermon:

“Today we have seen that Christians should never worry. But I must say, there are some people who should worry. If you have never obeyed the gospel. . . .”

You may want to merely give a separate plan of salvation at the end, but some will accuse you of having two sermons. Also, the whole point, and mood, and realization of the sermon will be lost. Nevertheless, it would be lost eventually in the service anyway.

As a final word regarding the End, I would say that you should give as much care and time and attention to your Beginning and End as to the Middle. One captures the ears of the congregation; the other nails the Middle home. They are extremely important in every way.

Finally, in preaching, much of the success of a sermon depends on what is done on Monday through Saturday. A sermon should be so carefully organized that your audience at all times has their bearings and know precisely where they are. They should not have to wonder what you are driving at or what the sermon is intending to establish. They should be relaxed and comfortable because they are “into” it. A well structured sermon which has the four points we have discussed will be a “boon” to your listeners. Nothing is more dull, boring, and irritating than to sit in an assembly wondering what the preacher is trying to accomplish. So we recommend that this week, you design your Sunday sermons as we have taught you to do. Use the outline, copying it down to the periods and colons. Then we think that you will see that it, like a sharp blade, will slice through the task you wish to accomplish. Before we list some important do’s and don’ts we have a brief, oversimplified, but correctly formed sermon for your inspection.

I. Beginning:

A. The text of Philippians 2:14-16 is full of lessons:

1. There is the lesson of murmuring and complaining.
2. There is the lesson of being blameless.
3. There is the lesson of being harmless.

B. Verse 16, however, says that Christians should hold forth the word of life.

1. The imagery is that of a lighthouse holding forth the light for struggling ships.
2. But there are some things Paul left unsaid because they are taken for granted.
3. They are:
 - a. First, man is lost.
 - b. Second, the word of God will save.

- c. And third, there is no one but the Christian to hold that word forth.
- II. Summary Sentence: Tonight we will answer why we hold forth the word of life.
- III. Middle:
 - A. Firstly, we hold forth the word of life because mankind is lost.
 - 1. Jesus said in Matthew, 7:13,14 "Enter ye in . . ."
 - 2. Paul said in Rom. 3:23, "For all have sinned . . ."
 - 3. You may be lost tonight simply because you have not obeyed the gospel, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 - 4. So we hold forth the word of life because mankind is lost.
 - B. Secondly, we hold forth the word of life because the word of life will save.
 - 1. Notice a few passages which teach that the word of God saves:
 - a. Rom. 1:16
 - b. I Cor. 1:21
 - c. I Cor. 15:1,2
 - d. James 1:21.
 - 2. This is what Ps. 19:7 says: "The word of Jehovah. . ."
 - 3. So far we have noticed:
 - a. Mankind is lost.
 - b. The word of God will save them.
 - 4. Now, having covered those two important facts, let us proceed to the point that has practical application for us all.
 - C. Thirdly, we hold forth the word of life for there is no one else to hold forth the word of life but ourselves.
 - 1. Sinners will not rebuke sinners, neither will the blind lead the blind.
 - 2. God did not give the great commission to angels.
 - 3. God told us to do it:
 - a. Matt. 28:18-20
 - b. Mk. 16:15-20
 - 4. So the early church was evangelistic, Acts 8:4.
 - 5. We must hold forth the word of life because there is no one else to do it.
- IV. End.
 - A. We have seen the following:
 - 1. Mankind is lost.
 - 2. The word of God will save them.
 - 3. There is no one else to save them but us.
 - B. Do you wish to be saved today?
 - 1. You must believe, Jn. 3:16.
 - 2. You must repent, Acts 17:30.
 - 3. You must confess, Rom. 10:9,10.
 - 4. You must be baptized, Mk. 16:16.
 - C. The song says:
 - 1. Brightly beams our Father's mercy

From the light-house ever more,
But to us, He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.
Trim your feeble lamp, my brother.
Some poor sea-man tempest tossed;
Trying now to make the harbor,
In the darkness may be lost.

2. If you will respond to the invitation come as we stand and sing.

Quite often a preacher has to try to persuade his congregation. Below is a simple outline that may be used for a one point persuasive sermon. If you have more than one point you can use the previous basic outline.

- I. Introduction:
 - A.
 - B.
- II. Difficulty:
 - A.
 - B.
- III. Answer to the difficulty.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
- IV. Summons to execute that answer.
 - A.
 - B.

In the Introduction you lead up to the difficulty. The rest are self-explanatory. Now notice some important do's and don't's.

DO'S

1. Use an outline which is logically structured.
2. Have the whole logically connected by the parts.
3. Keep progressing toward the end; keep moving!
4. Use transition sentences between points.
5. Do trim and cut your sermon almost until it's crippled.
6. Do restate your main points from time to time.

DON'T'S

1. Don't weaken the sermon by having over three points in the middle.
2. Don't get bogged down.
3. Don't try to preach too much in one sermon.

4. Don't try to make points in your introduction; let that be done in the middle.
5. Don't make your summary sentence a question.
6. Don't make your summary sentence embrace two or more subjects you wish to develop. Stick to one.
7. Don't make your summary sentence a title of the sermon, but rather a summary of the sermon.
8. Don't rephrase your sermon in your conclusion!
9. Don't use over-kill in making a point. Do you want to drive the brethren up the walls? If not, then do not belabor a point, piling one argument on top of another, one explanation on the summit of another, one scripture on the crown of another. Why annoy and irk the brethren?

HIS RIGHT HAND DOESN'T KNOW FOR BEANS WHAT HIS LEFT EYEBROW DOETH

Non-vocal preaching

The distinction between vocal and non-vocal preaching is clear. Under vocal we have voice and pronunciation. Non-vocal, as we will see, is that which can be seen, which is visual: gestures, posture, etc.

Non-vocal transmission is important for two reasons. One, some say it has greater credibility. It is hard to lie with the body. Two, it is believed that 75% to 95% of all meaning is conveyed by bodily activity. This seems high to me, but it underlines the importance of this chapter.

We use bodily activity to say what we say with the voice, as when we show with our hands how long the terror smitten fish was which escaped. We use non-vocal activity to press a point, as when we pound the pulpit, awakening a percentage in every audience which are bound to doze. We teach with our posture, agree with the nod of our head, show doubt with a raised eyebrow, complement what we say as when we raise our hand and say, "Stop!" Sometimes we contradict what we say with the voice by what we say with our body. One student said "two" as he held up three fingers. Sometimes our fist is emphatic while our eyebrows and mouth sag calmly. Our body can contradict itself. Our right hand may not know what our left eyebrow doeth! All in all, the body plays a role in a lot of different areas. At this point, let us look at five different areas of concern in non-vocal transmission.

1. FIRST, LET US LOOK AT POSTURE. Posture is more important than we may realize. We have such movies as "Walking Tall." We discuss being "upright," or "straightforward." We talk of "looking in the eyes," "face to face," "down in the mouth," "stuck up," and on and on. Yes, posture is important. One who slouches shows defeat or resignation. Straight standing is a positive trait. It shows confidence and self-assurance.

A preacher who has the truth, we expect, will have his head high, his back ramrod straight, his eyes level, his body in control. You say a whole lot on your way up to the pulpit. I realize the need for looking where you are stepping, but you should try to keep your head up, after a glance down, and your eyes need to be level.

Your posture also becomes a problem once you are in the pulpit. All preachers are tempted to lean on the pulpit. Some even cross their shins, bracing one foot on its toe. All this relaxed leaning does is convey that you are not very wrapped up in your sermon. It shows disinterest, lack of urgency, and often is distracting. **DON'T LEAN ON THE PULPIT! DO YOU HAVE TO HELP THEM GO TO SLEEP?!**

Also, most at some time or other have trouble knowing what to do with their hands. I counsel my students to lay their hands naturally on the pulpit. This is fine if you do not start leaning on them. There is also nothing wrong with allowing your hands to hang at your sides. I know this feels awkward, but it does not look that way. Furthermore, the more you do it, the more natural it feels. I would suggest that you not speak with your arms akimbo, or with them folded in front of you. These positions also are too relaxed, and some see these as negative, uncertain gestures. All in all, the effective preacher gives much attention to his posture.

2. WATCH YOUR MOVEMENT IN THE PULPIT AREA. Some preachers feel the need to walk to one side or the other. However, this can be completely distracting. The dictum here is, do not go to the side unless you justify it to the audience. Perhaps you walk to the side and close in to your audience to press a vital point. You are getting as close to them as possible in order to really talk to them. They sense that, and your movement is understandable. Maybe you come out from the pulpit to talk more personally to them, or to tell a story. That would be justified in their sight. But to go from side to side with no evident change in sermon material is distracting.

Further, if you do not have a lapel microphone, do not move away from your microphone. There is nothing more distracting than straining to hear what a preacher is saying. In fact, it is downright exasperating, and, there will be plenty of older people in any congregation who cannot hear too well. Also, if you have a weight problem, be sure to work on it. I know it is not easy, but it is distracting for you to walk out to the audience with an innertube hanging out, or your stomach peeking out from under the bottom of your vest. It would be less distracting for you to stay behind the pulpit.

3. GIVE ATTENTION TO YOUR FACIAL EXPRESSION. I saw one speaker who gestured as widely with his eyebrows as some speakers do with their hands and arms. The face alone can show: worry, anger, dislike, confusion, embarrassment, fear, humor, affection, and many other emotions. The frightening thing is, we often have very little knowledge of what our face is conveying. Some preachers go for years and never realize they look like they are ready to bite nails all the time. As if they were baptized in curdled milk, they fan their sourpuss visage all over the auditorium. They never realize, and no one ever tells them, that their eyebrows look like a “gathering storm.”

I always tell my students that they should practice and repractice every sermon. But it is far better if you would do this every time in front of the ol’ mirror. It is astounding what it will show. We will often be surprised. My music teacher used to laugh at me because he said I looked like I was going to cry whenever I played the violin (I never told him that’s the way I always felt). Yet was I surprised! I did not know that I looked like that! But what surprises await you?! Use the mirror! It will help get your sermon and your facial expression in synchronization.

4. ESTABLISH EYE-CONTACT. It helps to hold the congregation’s attention, and eyes also have a way of communicating. They can reveal that you are frightened, guilty, confident, intense, or embarrassed. In fact, it is extremely difficult for the eyes to lie. You should establish eye-contact in a personal way with your audience as you talk. That is one reason why you need

practice and more practice on your sermon before you can deliver it. That practice allows you to be more free of your notes so you can have better eye-contact.

Now I would caution you not to look over the heads of your audience. Some speech books actually recommend that you do that if you are frightened, but it does little to relieve stagefright. It is always better to see your fears rather than let your imagination magnify them. Also, your audience will notice that you are looking over them. and they will guess why or at least wonder why. So, establish eye-contact. Take both your eyes and place them firmly in the right eye of one member of the audience after another. This is what you do in direct conversation. It is important that you do it when speaking to an audience. Don't talk until you see the whites of their eyes.

5. GIVE CONCERN TO GESTURES. You may be aware that gestures used to be elaborately classified. A hand to the face meant shame, etc. The theory now, and I heartily agree with it, is that gestures must be natural. But what if you do not gesture? How do you learn how? How do you learn to gesture naturally? Being careful not to develop any mannerisms, you might practice acting out ideas. Pretend you are holding a large ball or a long ladder. Then try to communicate to yourself in a mirror without your voice. This kind of practicing gets you used to gesturing.

Always remember that gestures must be adapted to speaker, audience, and occasion. In a large auditorium your gestures must be more expansive. A big preacher should not have gesturing that is so, so delicate and wee they look like he might just squash a grape any minute. Then remember that you must never copy another's gestures; neither plan them and write them into your notes. They should arise from within and in every way be natural. N.B. Hardeman was a great preacher. Alas, while speaking he would hook his thumbs in his pockets. A whole covey of the preacher boys would go out to preach, as if their success depended on whether or not they hooked their thumbs in their pockets. Let us say firmly that N.B. Hardeman was a great preacher in *spite* of his thumbs being in his pockets, not *because* his thumbs were there.

Furthermore, gestures must never call attention to themselves. In fact, if one comes to you after a sermon and says he enjoyed it because your gestures were so beautiful, you have failed in your gestures. They should be like the background to a picture or the bass sound in a piece of music, noticed only if absent.

SMITE THEM HIP AND THIGH

A few more words

Yes, you are ready to throw yourself into your next sermon. You have many new ideas to put into practice. You will make them listen! You will ask no quarter and give no quarter! It is you and they. They want to drift off, and you want to make them listen to you. In fact, you insist that they do! You will smite them hip and thigh (Judges 15:8) if they do not! Here are a few further suggestions which may help you.

1. YOU ARE DEFINITELY AFFECTED BY THE CLOTHES YOU WEAR. President L. B. Johnson walked past the desk of one of his assistants and looking at the clutter said, "I hope your

mind is not as cluttered as your desk.” The aide went to work, cleaned it up neatly, only to have L.B.J. walk past a few days later and say, “I hope your mind is not as barren as your desk is.”

Well, the congregation may think, “I hope his use of the Bible is not as sloppy as his dress.” Or they may think, “I hope he’s not as scatterbrained as his shoes look.” We can be stubborn right here and say that the way we dress is our own business, and that it is not fair. Well, do we feel better for getting that off our chest? However, fair or not, the fact remains we are condemned or approved before we begin to speak. Also, it won’t kill us to have a smile. As the Chinese say, “He who cannot smile ought not keep a shop.”

Then, too, the way you dress has a psychological impact on *you*! You will simply not feel your best. You will have nagging doubts. You will not feel boned to a fine edge if you do not dress your best! Also, the congregation wants to be proud of you. As unscriptural as it may seem, you are their preacher. They will set you down beside any preacher in town because they think the world of you. So don’t go promenading downtown in your holey T-shirt, cowboy hat, tennis shoes and green tie.

2. DON’T FIDGET. An audience is as inquisitive as a cat. You are busy talking about faith, and they are curiously wondering what you are fooling with up there in the pulpit. “Is he fidgeting with his notes or his Bible? Maybe he’s looking at his watch!!” Like a kitten, an audience cannot help but follow a moving object. They soak in every nervous movement, every twiddle of the thumb, every twitch of our hand on our tie, every sweet gesture we make as we brush back a golden lock of hair. Then for some strange reason they begin to wonder what on earth we are talking about! Don’t fidget, and keep your hands away from your face.

3. LEARN TO SIT PROPERLY. In a word, keep both feet on the ground. Don’t cross your legs. Sure, everyone else does, but why follow a multitude to do evil. IT LOOKS BAD. TRULY IT DOES!

4. BE ATHLETIC. This is just a bit of advice, but I suggest that in some way you should be athletic. Don’t let walking up to the pulpit be the severest form of exercise you get. Jog, walk daily, play handball, tennis, or work out at a gym. Do something! Not only will it give you poise and stage-presence, it will add years of effectiveness of your preaching life. Don’t miss a trick. Leave no stone unturned. Hurl yourself into the items of this chapter! Heaven is worth every thought and effort.

DO’S

1. Do stand up straight and tall.
2. Do allow your hands to hang at your side.
3. Do justify your movement in the pulpit area.
4. Do lose that extra weight.
5. Do practice in front of a mirror.
6. Do establish eye-contact.

7. Do use gestures.
8. Do dress your best.
9. Do put both feet on the floor when you sit.
10. Do be active and athletic.

DON'TS

1. Don't slouch.
2. Don't lean on the pulpit.
3. Don't put your hands in your pockets.
4. Don't fool with things while you stand up there.
5. Don't look over the heads of your audience.
6. Don't dress sloppily or in a novel way. If you want to do that, become independently wealthy first.
7. Don't ever say, "I can't."

Chapter Six

LIKE THE CANAANITE OF OLD, THE HOLY WHINE HAS GOT TO GO

Use of voice

Your voice is your number one tool in your delivery, and we have already warned you not to abuse it. He who speaks with a sore throat risks the rest of his life. This is not a preacher story to scare you. I could name some great preachers who ended up with a voice that was as irritating to listen to as an old bull frog. One medical doctor told me how one preacher's speaking with a sore throat caused the vocal cords to bruise, which led to a growth, which led to the possibility of malignancy, which led to an operation, which led to a near ruined career. Believe you me, that doctor's preaching made a believer out of me. So, I have said the first thing I wanted to say concerning the voice.

The second thing I want to say is GET RID OF THE HOLY WHINE! Of course I hope you really do not have such a thing, but many preachers do! We are speaking of that peculiar sound some preachers develop in their voice which slips out on Sunday and strangely vanishes on Monday. It goes to worship with you and sneaks out both in speaking and in praying. In your normal speaking you say "odd" and "mod" and "Todd." But when it comes to religion, and when it's Sunday or Wednesday night you say "Gaud Almighty." Don't you know that your brethren notice that, and maybe even (horrors) talk about it?! Look, you probably don't look like a preacher, why affect to sound like one? Get rid of that sanctimonious sound, that inspired inflection, that sinless intonation. It smacks a little of hypocrisy, and you are no hypocrite. So quit (if you ever did) half swallowing your words or you may one day strangle on them. Don't roooooooll them uphill either. The brethren love you, not a mere affectation!

FOUR TOOLS OF VOICE

1. THE FIRST TOOL WE HAVE IS LOUDNESS. Common sense ought to be used here, but I have noticed that some of my students are very unskilled in determining whether they are loud enough. One student spoke and I told him to double it in loudness. He made it a little louder and I said "More!" I kept on until I got him louder. Then I told him to speak at that level. He said in bewilderment, "That loud!?" Yet he was speaking just loud enough to be heard without straining. Then I must tell you, if a congregation has to strain to hear you they usually won't, and believe you me, it nettles and ruffles them.

In loudness the dictum is to speak a little louder than you think you need, and have a friend at the back of the congregation listen to you to see if it is enough. Usually it is not, for those in the back have to listen through a noise obstacle course made up of crying babies, sneezes, and other distractions.

Another time for loudness is when you build up to a point to hammer it home, or when you stress key words. Loudness is our speaking tool to stress important words, concepts, and ideas.

2. THE SECOND THING WE NEED TO EMPHASIZE IS PITCH. Excitement is usually expressed with a high pitch, sadness with a low pitch. Changes of pitch which come by sliding are called inflections. Notice:

worm?"

"Would you like to eat a
"I not!"
would

We all know a monotone (one level) is boring. Your normal conversational tone may be pretty one-level. If so, you must change it by practicing, hitting extra high levels in a sentence along with extra low levels. Also try to think of someone who uses extra varied levels and listen to them. Begin to listen carefully to others. Practice varying until it becomes a part of you. Varying your speaking will make your voice much more listenable. The brethren will appreciate it, so wear out that tape recorder.

3. THE THIRD THING WE NEED TO STRESS IS RATE. Young man, how many times must those dear, sweet, aged sisters plead with you to slow down? They really can't hear you when you talk that fast. You know that. Please do not argue with me and try to tell me you cannot retard your speed. I did! They came to me and asked and I did it. Also, I liked it much better. I was more relaxed and could choose my words more carefully. Really, I enjoyed it more, but the thing is, you can do it! They will follow your sermons better if you slow down, and if you will slack off. Stroll and saunter a little bit. It need not cause you to lose intensity. Quit making your sermon into a cannonball express.

But more than that, rate can be an effective tool in meaning. Speed can indicate meaning. When sad and heavy, deep and serious, we go slow. When happy, joyful, or excited we go fast. All this gives meaning to what we say. Furthermore, rate comes not only by the gap between each word, but by cutting short or prolonging vowels. Sure, there are limits. To go too slow is boring, too fast provokes strain. But the common problem, especially of young preachers, is velocity.

Now what we ask you to do is roll up your sleeves for a little work. Get your tape recorder and say a few words of admonition as to an audience. Say parts of it fast, then repeat it saying the same parts slowly. Notice the difference. This difference can be used effectively. You are building a point. You slow down and go through a crescendo, a rising of the loudness. You speak more earnestly, and more swiftly. Then you come to the point, and you slow down and slowly and deliberately say each word. Yes, slowness can emphasize just as effectively as speed. That which is different emphasizes! Here is the value of the pause. It literally thunders in its silence, and the skilled speaker uses it effectively, though a little sparingly.

The speaker with the best speaking voice varies it greatly and skillfully to intone meaning. He varies it in loudness, pitch, and rate in virtually every sentence. Having said that, I would next have my students speak, then show them how they could vary their voice in three ways. Yet there is no reason why you cannot toy with it yourself. I strongly recommend that a tape recorder, if you do not have one, is a good investment for a preacher. Your work will pay off. Don't let up! Be tireless, relentless in your desire to be the most effective preacher possible. You can greatly improve if you are determined enough. Work at varying your voice in the three ways we have already discussed.

4. THE FOURTH VARIABLE YOUR VOICE HAS IS QUALITY. This is what makes your voice you. If your voice has an unpleasant sound, seek further help than that provided by this book. If your voice scratches, or whines, or has a nasality you may need special help. If there is a college near, consult their speech department by going to the head of the department. They will be glad to help, and will probably direct you to some books loaded with exercises. If there is not a college or university near at hand, see the head librarian at the public library. Don't be modest, we all need help on certain things. I have had speech teachers work on a modulation in my voice. After much patience, I have been completely rewarded, and so will you! When it comes to those qualities which make you an effective speaker, be a lot bulldogish!

A FEW MORE HINTS

1. BREATHE PROPERLY. Some preachers have difficulty being heard because they breathe incorrectly. Shallow breathing is often at fault. You need to use the diaphragm. Do you!? Here is a way to find out, and at the same time to practice correct breathing. Lie down on a couch and put a book on your stomach. The stomach should rise far up when you inhale. That is because your diaphragm enlarges to make room for a deep breath. Practice, practice, practice. Breathing in the throat is a careless habit. Quit it!

2. OPEN IT UP. WIDER! WIDER!! Your voice will carry better if you open your mouth. One speaker I know has a habit of speaking through clinched teeth. I have heard brethren say they can't understand him. Practice opening your mouth by saying, "Obadiah, Obadiah, Obadiah." Stretch your mouth by placing the four fingers of your hand in it. Do this when driving, or the morning before you preach. Furthermore, before I go to worship service to preach, I warm up my lips and tongue. Do these. Say: "Ou" (bringing lips together in a pucker), then "e" (stretching your mouth in a wide grin that shows your clinched teeth). Say ou, e, ou, e, ou, e, ou, e, ou, e, over and over.

Then to limber up the tongue say:

Hey digga digga dum . . . digga digga digga dum.
Hey digga digga dum . . . digga digga dum.

Say it over and over, faster and faster. Persist in all these things. Vibrant preaching is lost or attained according to what goes on before Sunday. Practice, work, labor, and I pledge that you will begin to have people listen attentively. This is your life; it is worth all the effort!

DO'S

1. Vary your loudness, pitch, and rate to have more pleasant speech.
2. Get rid of all affected speech.
3. Do speak loud enough to be heard in the back,
4. Work and work, making a pleasant voice.
5. Limber up your mouth, tongue, and lips.
6. Breathe from the stomach.

DON'T'S

1. Don't speak when you have a sore throat.
2. Don't affect a voice mannerism.
3. Don't speak too fast.
4. Don't breathe shallowly. Rather breathe from the stomach.
5. Don't ever quit working on voice improvement.

Chapter Seven

THE HEEBIE-JEEBIES

Handling stage-fright

Baxter says this of Racoon John Smith's first preaching effort:

He was finally persuaded to lay aside his scruples, and one evening, at the social prayer meeting, he consented to say a few words to the people. His heart, on that occasion, was full, for the song and the prayer had stirred his spirit, and the inspiration of the hour was on him. The room was crowded; the blaze from the hearth shone full upon his face, as he arose and stood with bashful emotion near the little table. He gazed on the faces around him; and a strange, bewildering torrent of feeling rushed to his heart. His mind was suddenly darkened; the thoughts which he had meditated for the occasion left him. He tried to recall them, but he could not; his lip quivered, and he was speechless. Turning from the stand, he rushed from the house into the darkness without. He fled across the yard like one affrighted, intending to quit a place where the Lord had thus rebuked him. But as he ran, his foot struck against something, and he fell, and for a moment, he lay stunned on the ground. When he arose, the cloud seemed to be lifted from his thoughts and it came back to him clear and distinct; and he felt he had the power of utterance once more. He returned to the house, where his brethren still sat. Standing in their midst again, he spoke with such fluency and fervor of soul ...

What is this thing called stage fright? Actually, it is a supercharge of energy. God made us so that when faced with great danger, our body could dump adrenalin into our bloodstream, giving us instant power. It stimulates the heart and even retards bleeding. Only we do not have many physical threats anymore. Speaking is not a violent physical assault. It is a mental confrontation, only our body does not know that. It still produces adrenalin and readily gives it to the body. We are tense, shaky with energy, breathing rapidly. But convention requires that we just stand there. Thus we tremble.

Big Foot Wallace was an Indian fighter from around Austin, Texas. He had been in all types of scrapes and skirmishes all his life. But he never faced real terror until one time he was face to face with an audience. His speech did not come off the way he planned it. It went something like this: "I don't know why I'm scared of you. I can whip any one of you by yourself, and if you'll just step outside I'll prove it!"

When I first started preaching at Ovilla, Texas I noticed that I was a little nauseated every Sunday morning before the song leader announced that I would now preach. I remember thinking one Lord's day, "If I stand up, I'll throw up!" I did not however. Soon after that I had to preach one Sunday evening at a large congregation. During the prayer, right before I spoke, my jaw

started shaking so much that had I spoken at that moment it would have sounded like some form of jabbering tongue speaking! But somehow I got control before disaster. Then once when teaching a class in Michigan, an elder asked a particularly distressing question that fairly put me on the spot. It so took away my breath that I had great difficulty replying, and I actually could not for a few moments. However, I think after you read this chapter, you will see that if you suffer an attack of stage fright you are not in bad shape. Let us notice some pertinent facts about stage fright.

1. STAGE FRIGHT WILL ACTUALLY MAKE YOU A BETTER PREACHER. That release of energy becomes a driving force that aids you in completing your task with a flourish. It puts a glow in your cheeks, a blaze in your eyes, and animates your bodily activity. If properly controlled and understood it can ignite you on fire!

But occasionally a boaster will say he never has *his* blood run cold! He is probably right. There are some who simply love to talk so that they can hear their own voice. Further, this class of speakers all have one thing in common—all of them. They are all dull, boring, wearisome, tedious, lackluster, humdrum, drab, and in every way uninteresting. If they had any wit about them they would have the good sense to greatly care what type of job they did. Actually, those who suffer acutely from the quavers, like Raccoon John Smith, often, because they care so much, become the greatest speakers. So you suffer fear, butterflies, and nervousness! So you flutter, shake, and falter with the jitters. One, you are in good company, and two, it will actually aid you. To understand this actually helps you control it. It begins immediately to subside.

2. REMEMBER, GOOSEFLESH USUALLY SUBSIDES AFTER THE FIRST FEW WORDS. So hang in there, it will vanish rapidly.

3. TOO, BUCK FEVER BECOMES LESS AND LESS OF A PROBLEM THE MORE EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE. It will never completely leave, but it will not terrify you the rest of your life. In fact, though you will always have a touch of it, the shivers should disappear after the first few weeks of local work. Then you will only be plagued with it in new, rare, and difficult situations. Finally not even those will give you a problem.

4. THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO ABOUT KNEE-KNOCKING, TEETH-CHATTERING PANIC. The first and main thing you must do is be prepared to speak. This is the archenemy of every chickenhearted moment. Preparation is the golden key. Be prepared and you have it licked! When you know your subject, are full of it, then it is hard to doubt yourself.

5. NOTE THESE! One, take several deep breaths. This calms your nerves and fights that shortness of breath that we are often plagued with. Two, if you are sitting in a chair, pull up on the seat to get rid of physical tension. No one will notice, and it will relax you. If standing, lock your hands behind you and let them pull against each other. The physical strain, again, will relax you.

Every once in a while a potential speaker will say he cannot teach a class or make a talk because it makes him nervous. He thinks something is wrong with him, and that he is the only one who must contend with it. You and I know that that is not so don't we? Even if it plagued us severely, however, all our life, we would still preach, because through preaching souls are saved (I Cor. 1:21).

. . . and if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain.

Jeremiah 20:9

DO'S

1. Do be prepared before you speak.
2. Realize the heebie-jeebies are common, and that they always pass.
3. Remember that a little nervousness is actually good for you.
4. Take a deep breath and subtly apply tension to your chair.

DON'T'S

1. Don't ever get discouraged due to stage-fright.
2. Don't ever be caught unprepared!

IT'S 11:00 P.M. WHAT WILL I PREACH TOMORROW?

Preaching Expositorily

Many preachers will tell you that the most difficult thing in sermon preparation is deciding on what to preach. I have found that to be true, but what I am about to tell you will virtually solve that very difficult problem. It is called expository preaching. I have studied what authors have written concerning it, and I must admit that much of what is written discourages rather than encourages it. They somehow make it complicated and difficult, and so, I'm sure many preachers are afraid to try it. Fiddlesticks! It is not hard at all, and to be truthful with you, I am about convinced that this ought to be by far the main type of preaching we do. It is truly the most Biblical, and it also has this advantage over "topic preaching": it is contextual. Let me demonstrate how it can be used.

First, let us suppose you wish to preach about the story of David and Goliath because there are some lessons there you think the congregation needs. Using the basic outline which we studied in chapter two, for the Beginning you tell the story point by point. After you have quickly paraphrased the whole story, your summary sentence will be something like this: "Today we will carefully notice three signal lessons found in this story." For your Middle you develop each one of the lessons. Then for your End you can call to action, summarize, and give an invitation. In outline form the sermon will look something like this, though it would be much more complete:

- I. Beginning:
 - A. Let us notice the setting of the story of David and Goliath.
 - 1. The Israelites and the Philistines face each other, drawn up for battle.
 - 2. The champion Goliath challenges daily.
 - B. David arrives.
 - 1. He came to bring food to his brothers.
 - 2. He hears the challenge of Goliath.
 - 3. He receives permission to fight Goliath.
 - C. Goliath advances and curses.
 - 1. David met his taunts with replies showing trust in God.
 - 2. David struck with the sling and stone.
 - 3. Then he cut off Goliath's head.
- II. Summary Sentence: There are three lessons from this story which we will now view.
- III. Middle:
 - A. There is the lesson of trust.
 - 1. David said God would deliver up Goliath, I Sam. 17:34-37.
 - 2. David said the battle was the Lord's, 17:47.

3. We need this lesson ourselves.
 4. We need this during adversity, Jas. 1:2-4.
 5. We need it in tribulation, Jn. 16:33.
 6. We need it when challenged, I Cor. 16:13.
- B. Then there is the lesson that we should do our part.
1. The reason David did not use the armor of Saul was only because he had not proved it, 17:39.
 2. He did take the best he could use, a sling and a stone.
 3. And notice he did not take only one stone; he took five just in case, 17:40.
 4. In verse 47 we find David trusts in God, but he does take five stones so he can do his part.
 5. It is possible that we do not receive things because we do not ask of God, Jas. 4:2.
 6. But it is also possible that we do not receive because we do not do our part.
 7. Let us pray fervently and trust, but let us always remember to work.
- IV. Conclusion:
- A. Notice these two great lessons:
1. Trust in God.
 2. Do your part.
- B. We can easily apply this lesson further.
1. We trust that God forgives our sins on the basis of the blood of Christ.
 - a. Jn. 3:16.
 - b. Rev. 1:5.
 2. But we must do our part.
 - a. We must repent, Acts 3:19.
 - b. Having believed and repented, we must be baptized, Mk. 16:16.
 3. If you would respond to the invitation, please come.

What a simple way to preach! Tell a Biblical story, then simply go back and pick up two or three lessons from the story. Too, the lessons are not hard to find, God makes them obvious on every page, in every story. So this is what you can do. Start in Genesis and go from one story to another, preaching your way through the Bible. You will never lack a sermon. You will never worry about whether you are preaching the Bible. This is the most Biblical and most contextual type of preaching. Remember also that people love a story, so you will have one interesting sermon after another. They will always be Biblical, and they will always be useful and edifying. Again, you can preach the New Testament on Sunday morning and a series through the Old Testament on Sunday evening. Every few sermons break it up with a couple of topical sermons or with a series on some important subject.

What do you do if you do not wish to preach a story? What if you need to preach on a portion of scripture such as Philippians 2:5-10. Again, tell them what the passage says, then go back and pick up two or three points. If it is a relatively short passage you could read it, however it is my

judgment that unless you are an exceptional reader, you will lose the attention of your audience. It is better that you maintain eye-contact and tell them what the writer says. If you do read, read interpretatively. Put yourself into it. Read conversationally, meaningfully, making the sense. Use variation in pitch, rate, and loudness. But let us see a sketch of what could be done with Phil. 2:5-10. Remember, this is merely a sketch of a sermon. A complete sermon would be fleshed out much more with examples, illustrations, stories, etc. However, we have enough here that you can see what we are talking about.

- I. Beginning:
 - A. Romans 8:29 tells us what the whole purpose of life is all about.
 - 1. We are to be conformed to the image of God's son.
 - 2. That is our whole purpose.
 - B. However, it is put another way in Phil. 2:5-10.
 - 1. That says we should have the mind of Christ.
 - 2. We have heard that before.
 - C. Let's view the whole passage so we can see what the mind of Christ is.
 - 1. First Paul says this admonition! Have the mind of Christ.
 - 2. He said Christ was on an equality with God, but Christ didn't feel the need to hold on to it.
 - 3. So Christ emptied himself.
 - 4. He took the form of a servant.
 - 5. He was made in the likeness of men.
 - 6. And being found in the fashion as a man he humbled himself.
 - 7. And he became obedient even unto death.
 - 8. Therefore God highly exalted him.
- II. Summary Sentence: Let us go back now and see what the mind of Christ consists of.
- III. Middle:
 - A. First, the mind of Christ is a mind of sacrifice.
 - 1. Christ gave up an equality with God and emptied himself, all for our benefit.
 - 2. Sometimes we dwell on what God did, John 3:16.
 - 3. But Christ also sacrificed, John 10:17,18.
 - 4. Yet Paul says we are to have the mind of Christ.
 - a. Then we need to sacrifice.
 - b. We need to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, Rom. 12:1.
 - B. Secondly, the mind of Christ is a mind of humility.
 - 1. Christ humbled himself, v. 8.
 - 2. He left heaven and became a mere man.
 - a. Think of that!
 - b. It would be as if we left our station and became a mere worm.
 - 3. If we have the mind of Christ we will be humble people.
 - C. Thirdly, the mind of Christ is a mind of obedience.
 - 1. Christ became obedient even unto death, v. 8.

2. He said his meat was to do the will of the Father, John 4:34.
 3. Then Christ is the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, Heb. 5:8,9.
 4. If we have the mind of Christ we will be obedient people.
- IV. End:
- A. We have seen the mind of Christ is:
 1. A mind of sacrifice.
 2. A mind of humility.
 3. A mind of obedience.
 - B. Have you the humility to obey God?
 1. You must believe, John 3:16.
 2. You must repent, Acts 2:38.
 3. You must confess, Rom. 10:10.
 4. You must be baptized, I Pet. 3:21.
 - C. Then you must present yourself a living sacrifice.
 1. Jesus said, Mk. 8:34.
 2. If you would respond to the invitation, come!

There is nothing more to tell. Expository preaching is that simple, that fun, and that edifying. It is the best you can do, and you will never have to spend till 11:00 P.M. Saturday evening wondering what to preach!

Chapter Nine

GETTING THE BRETHREN ALL FUZZED UP

Some final do's and don'ts

DO'S

1. DO HAVE THE PROPER CHARACTER TO PREACH. A preacher must be faithful (I Tim. 1: 12), non-earthly (Col. 3:1-3), and loving (I Cor. 13). If people respect your character, think you love them and have their interests at heart, they will let you operate on them. If not, they will not listen to you, no matter how interesting you may be,

2. PREACH THE WORD, FOR SALVATION COMES THROUGH THE WORD (I Cor. 1:21; Jas. 1:21; 1 Cor. 15:1,2; Rom. 1:16). If the word is not preached, the world will turn to fables (2 Tim. 4:34).

3. USE GOOD PRONUNCIATION AND DICTION. A good dictionary is a must for the preacher. Say Lazerus, not Lazereth, Aquila, not Aquilla. Further, do not use slovenly, slurpy, or sloppy speech, the “slurvian” dialect. To illustrate, notice that some say: “I scream; you scream; everyone screams for I scream” (ice cream). “Did you eat?” “No, did you?” in the “slurvian” dialect is as follows:

“Jet?”

“No, ju?”

We don't want to be over precise and get into stilted speech, but we must learn to say our words crisply and clearly.

4. AGAIN, LET ME SAY, PRACTICE YOUR DELIVERY. Why not? We practice art, music, drama, sports. Why not practice delivery? It makes you familiar with your outline, helps make your transitions smooth, allows you to detect trouble spots, aids you in pronouncing trouble words, cultivates expression, and gives you an opportunity to try out and perfect different things. As we have said, get the tape recorder and check your rate, pitch, loudness, inflections, pronunciation, pauses, and diction. Practice! Practice! Practice!

DON'TS

1. DON'T READ YOUR SERMONS. Some very bright men have fallen into that trap. They read every word, thus sacrificing eye-contact, the conversational tone, expression, and variety. Besides all that, it is most frequently boring. So merely use notes.

2. DON'T MEMORIZE YOUR SERMON. It will come out artificial, lacking in spontaneity, if it comes out at all. Sometimes the best of memorizers come up blank.

3. DON'T PUT YOUR NOTES ON DISPLAY. Notes are acceptable to an audience. They know that notes help you hew to your course, and that they relieve you of the fear of forgetting. But you should not flap them around up there, as they will be distracting. Try to make them fit into the background, and conceal them somewhat. I have found that you can fold a couple of sheets of 8 ½ inch by 11 inch paper in half and put your notes on them in book form. You usually will need only 2 sheets per sermon. Later you can punch holes in the left side and keep them chronologically in a small notebook.

4. DON'T BE GLUED TO YOUR NOTES. Be so familiar with your outline that all you need is an occasional glance. Even this is made while you are still talking, so that there needs to be no awkward pause. So don't be wed to your notes.

5. DON'T, WHEN PERSUADING AN AUDIENCE, BE AFRAID TO PRESENT BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE. THEY ARE APT TO THINK OF THE OTHER SIDE ANYWAY, AND YOU MUST EFFECTIVELY TAKE THEIR POSITION AWAY FROM THEM. Of course you do not present both sides and let them take their pick. The obligation falls on a preacher of the word to frankly say where he stands. But if you will mention their arguments and answer them, you stand a much better chance of changing their mind. They will be more inclined to listen to you.

6. FINALLY, DON'T BEGIN TO THINK YOU ARE NOT PREACHING UNLESS YOU ARE TEARING AN AUDIENCE UP. True, a preacher is to reprove and rebuke (2 Tim. 4:1,2, but there are also other purposes in preaching. Notice:

- a. In your sermons you need to teach and edify (Acts 20:32).
- b. In your sermons you need to console and comfort (John 14:1-3).
- c. In your sermons you need to inspire (Heb. 11:1-12:2).
- d. In your sermons you need to fortify (Jude 3).
- e. In your sermons you need to prepare the brethren and inoculate them (I John 4:1-3).
- f. In your sermons you need to produce joy and hope (I John 1:4; Rom. 15:4).

Every once in a while a preacher begins to think of preaching as warfare and the brethren as the enemy, and he proceeds accordingly. You have such statements as "tore em up," and "skinned em," and "I ripped their scalp off." Some preachers say such things proudly, as if they have met some test of honor and have come out bravely. Not only is this a bad attitude, the trouble with this is that a congregation needs a balanced diet. One said it well when he said the task of a gospel preacher is to comfort the afflicted, and to afflict the comfortable. Yet still, I have little respect for a preacher who is afraid to reprove and rebuke.

CONCLUSION

The end of the whole matter is this: you are in the best work in the world. There is no end to the good you can do if you pray without ceasing, and if you work unceasingly as the devil works. When you have labored with this book as we have asked remember, “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” May God bless your every good intention. May all we preachers one day finally meet in glory.