

TTT381 - Guidance For Those Hosting Parts of Sunday Worship Series. Part 8 - Preaching and Teaching

Do you ever wonder what to preach about—or even if you can preach? Where should you start? What matters most so you can preach confidently and the congregation goes home inspired? I have answers for you in this episode!

Today, we continue a series exploring why we do what we do at a Sunday gathering. Last week, we focussed on the closing prayer. Today's topic is preaching (most of what follows also applies to teaching).

I have as many books on this topic in my library as any other. Summarising them is impossible. Over 370 of my speaking tips are on my YouTube channel. Here is the playlist link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wySh_B9UqjY&list=PLssKYNRILIE_A3ckUf7NrtJEqNVbft98J&pp=gAQBiAQB

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wySh_B9UqjY&list=PLssKYNRILIE_A3ckUf7NrtJEqNVbft98J&pp=gAQBiAQB. Today, I will restrict myself to a few basics.

I am not defining preaching rigidly here. We are not laying out any one format as superior to others. Preaching can include a talk, discussion, small group work, Q & A and several other styles. What matters are the following issues of substance.

Jesus - the focus

Every sermon is about Jesus at some level. The topic or text might be on Moses, but remember to tie what we learn to Jesus and our lives of discipleship. In other words, make it relevant to us and our walk with Christ - *2 Corinthians 4.5 - "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."*

Jesus - the example

Look at Jesus's example for inspiration on preaching, especially his parables (See this tip on preaching the parables: <https://youtu.be/-a19dUMAmFs?si=x3ewPDmfPLsR3l4K>).

Inspire

Inspire us. If you talk well about God as Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, our hearts will be stirred by hope to greater faith and love. Inspiration is more important than direction or information.

Information

It's a common mistake to think that conveying information about the text, context, or God himself is the most important thing. We need *some* background information, but only enough to make the passage come alive. The chief function of preaching is to exhort. Teaching may contain exhortation but will focus more on education.

Exhort

Exhortation is achieved not by volume but by connecting us with the awesome and inspiring nature of the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, which moves the heart and the will.

Acts 13:15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

Be Yourself

Take inspiration and lessons from other effective speakers, but do not copy. Someone said preaching is 'truth through personality.' Are you trying to sound like someone else when you speak? Please don't. You have a personality for a reason. Reading the public teachings of Jesus and Paul, it is clear they spoke differently. If the book of James is a collection of sermons, as many scholars think, they also 'sound' very different from Jesus. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are different in style as well as content. Imagine if every preacher sounded exactly the same. Not only would we get bored, but something more profound would be lost - authenticity.

One Point

Check the parables of Jesus. They almost always have one point. Sermons are generally best when they have one central point, which sub-points may develop. Make sure you can explain your sermon in one sentence. Once you can do that, you can be confident you have a clear point. Then, develop that point.

Length

As the author and speaker David Bercot said, “Your message may be nearly perfect in every other respect, but if you preach longer than you are supposed to, you can quickly lose the goodwill of your listeners.” Plain Speaking, p95.

Leave people wanting more, not less! The point about clarity above is essential. I have noticed that the likelihood of overrunning increases in direct proportion to the lack of clarity regarding the lesson's point.

Question

Let's say you are finishing your lesson preparation. As you review it, ask yourself: What does this lesson look like for the congregation on Monday morning? How can they apply it? If you cannot answer those questions, re-write your lesson until you can. Additionally, ask yourself: Is God the inspiration? In other words, not your ideas or agenda, but the LORD himself.

Conclusion

As you might imagine, in my 40 years of preaching, I have both used and abused all the tips above. The perfect lesson does not exist, and that's fine. The goal for any speaker is not perfection but growth.

See my teaching tips playlist for over 370 preaching and teaching tips and counting. Search for any topic you need. If what you want isn't there, please tell me, and I will prioritise making a video on that issue.

Any thoughts? Please speak to me.

Next time

We will explore the significance of the closing prayer.

God bless, Malcolm

Please add your comments on this week's topic. We learn best when we learn in community.

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<https://aim.moodlecloud.com/>.

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Please send me your questions or suggestions. Here's the email: malcolm@malcolmcox.org.

If you'd like a copy of my free eBook on spiritual disciplines, "How God grows His people", sign up at my website: <http://www.malcolmcox.org>.

Please pass the link on, subscribe, and leave a review.

Keep calm and carry on teaching.

God bless, Malcolm