

TTT 405. "Your Voice Matters" Tips for new and inexperienced speakers. Part 10 - Audience effects content. 11 March 2025

Teaching Tip 405 | "Your Voice Matters". Part 10 - Audience effects content. Tips for new and inexperienced speakers | Malcolm Cox

Today's Tip

Today we continue exploring a tip from my friend Anna Oliver. Anna says:

"Who is your audience? What is their age/culture/religious background? Aim to engage them by saying or doing at least one thing they would be able to relate to. Our current society is no longer interested in listening to a 30-minute talk on a topic if there is no attempt by the speaker to engage them/draw their attention.👍 Hope that helps."

Anna's tip is so significant we're taking several episodes to unpack it because it has several different facets. Today, we will explore a second one aspect of this topic. Come back next week for a third one.

What helps us ensure that we are connecting with our audience? The content and the style of your talk must be influenced by your audience. Let's explore two Biblical contexts.

What is the difference between Peter and Stephen?

After considering the general context of your lesson and the specific people who will be listening, it is time to decide how this will shape what you say and how you say it. Let's look at two stunning examples of how the context of the audience shaped the lesson's content. This is best done as an exercise. Please attempt the exercise before looking at the conclusions I have listed below. You might like to pause the video or audio recording for a few minutes. You don't have to take a long time. The point is to notice what's happening rather than do an exhaustive analysis.

Skim Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 7

Make notes on the following questions:

1. What do you see that is similar in the two situations?
2. What is similar in the content of the two lessons?
3. What do you see that is different in the two situations?
4. What is different in the content of the two lessons?
5. What might account for the similarities and differences in the lessons?

Here, we have two powerful Christian preachers full of the Holy Spirit and faith. Peter and Stephen believe the same things. They have experienced the same things in Christ. They are both talking to Jewish people in Jerusalem in the early days of the New Covenant. However, their lessons are not the same. The chart below indicates some of the differences between Peter's and Stephen's speeches:

Context	Peter (Acts 2 – General Jewish Crowd)	Stephen (Acts 7 – Sanhedrin Leaders)
Tone	Persuasive, hopeful, inviting	Bold, confrontational, accusatory
Main Point	Jesus is the Messiah and Lord	Israel has always rejected God's messengers, including Jesus
Use of Scripture	Fulfilled prophecy (Joel, Psalms)	History of rebellion (Genesis to the Prophets)
Call to Action	Repent and be baptised	Exposes their guilt—no explicit invitation
Result	3,000 converted	Stephen martyred

Peter and Stephen knew who they were speaking to. They were very different audiences. The content of the speeches was shaped by the context and their audience.

Reflection

Consider your next audience What is the mix of Christians and non-Christians? What about cultural background? How about the age range? Will people expect edification, education, an appeal to discipleship, a call to repentance, or something else?

Next week we will explore how to connect with our audience in a way that helps them to give you their attention.

Questions

How will your understanding of expectations change the way you shape your lesson?

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/>.

Do you have a question about teaching the Bible? Is it theological, technical, or practical?

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>.

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Keep calm and carry on teaching.

God bless, Malcolm
