

Preaching the Gospel

A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.

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GREAT RECEPTION

What a great reception you gave the first issue of this little magazine! Here are some of the welcome comments.

I have forwarded it to several in this congregation suggesting that they may want to ask you to put them on your mailing list.—*Ken Williams*

I am forwarding it to the men in our congregation who are interested in preparing and presenting lessons. Also to a young friend in Texas. *Clarence Johnson*

It should do good. Much of the preaching I hear suffers in organization. That makes it hard to listen to and hard to remember. I hope you can help all of us who read it. *Sewell Hall*

Good article, Paul. I will be working with a young man through the summer and I will share your good comments with him. Thanks for sending it. *Steve Fontenot*

Good Stuff. *Mark Roberts*

Thanks for the material! We pray that good will be done for the sake of the gospel. *Larry Ray Hafley*

A good beginning - with many good pointers. *Gene Tope*

May I have permission to reprint a small number of them for distribution to young men in the congregation here? *Randy Blackaby*, New Carlisle, OH

I think I might read it myself and get a better grip on what I need to expect from the pulpit, and maybe it will help me to pay better attention and gain more from each lesson. *Maryandra (Kendall-Ball) Wiser*

I enjoyed your first publication. It is well written and is packed with experience. I will float this out to others. *Ken Craig*

I used the section Who Should Preach? in an article Paul Williams sent out in this morning's bulletin. *Hendrik Joubert*

Thank you, brethren. Your encouragement means a lot to me. May God bless this effort for good.—Paul Williams

***Preaching the Gospel Magazine* is published about the middle of each month. It is free by e-mail, R24 per year by post. Those who receive it are encouraged to print it for others. The attached file is formatted for printing on both sides of the paper, with room to punch holes on the left for inserting in a notebook.**

AN OVERVIEW OF OUTLINING

Batsell Barret Baxter, in his book *Speaking for the Master*, has a short section called, “THE TRADITIONAL OUTLINE.” In a few words it gives an excellent summary of what a sermon outline should be. Here is that section found on pages 90-92.

THE TRADITIONAL OUTLINE

Of the two basic plans of speech organization discussed in this chapter the traditional plan is by far the more widely used and the more generally useful. It has been standardized quite generally so that rules for constructing it can be named:

1. Begin with your proposition. Having a “purpose sentence” before you the entire time of preparation, you are more likely to achieve your goal.

2. Divide your outline into three major parts: *Introduction, Discussion, and Conclusion.* Each major division of the speech should be marked by inserting the word “Introduction” or “Discussion” or “Conclusion” in the center of the page. Each division will have its own distinct, separate set of numbers. The Introduction will have its own **I, II, III**, as needed, while the Discussion will have its own **I, II, III**, as needed, and the conclusion also will have a **I, II, III**.

3. Include only one item or statement in each unit. The relationship between items in the outline can be shown only if each item is separate. Never say:

I. The Jordan River is interesting both because of its history and because of its physical make-up.

Instead, say:

I. The Jordan River is interesting because of its history.

II. The Jordan River is interesting because of its physical make-up.

4. Select a consistent set of symbols to show the relationship between main points and subordinate points. The most common and perhaps the best system is as follows:

I.

A.

1.

a.

(I)

(A)

(B)

(II)

b.

2.

B.

II.

5. Show the relationship between main points and subordinate points by proper indentation. An indentation of three spaces is usually satisfactory.

6. Use complete sentences for all main headings and sub-headings. Full sentences make the outline more intelligible. They also insure that the speaker himself will remember the materials of the speech at some later time. Some months after use an item listed simply as “Illustration of the dog” is likely to be meaningless. Use a complete sentence.

7. Phrase each statement as it is to be spoken to the audience. Instead of saying, “Tell them about the example of Joseph,” say, “Joseph was always true to his convictions.” This makes for a better style in the speech, which does not have to be translated into different words before being delivered.

Correct outlining requires a disciplining of the mind, but speakers must pay this price for effectiveness. Alert, ambitious speakers are happy to pay it. Lazy, indolent speakers prefer to get by with less effort. At first, the process may seem to be a bit difficult; but careful adherence to these rules through the early years of a speaking career will be deeply rewarding later when the system becomes habitual and easy.

Keep It Simple

After living and preaching in South Africa for four years, my family and I returned to America in 1972 where we spent almost one year. I preached some sermons for the Plainfield, Indiana church where I had been preaching before we left for South Africa. After one of my sermons one of the brethren came to me and said, "Paul, your preaching is simpler than it used to be." I considered that the best compliment I received all year.

There is a great difference between a sermon and something which is written. In the writing of Paul there are words and ideas which take a lot of study to understand properly. Because the material is written, the reader can pause, read it again, think about it, and compare other verses. However while listening to a sermon we cannot do this. The sermon has to be simple and plain enough so the hearer can understand when it is spoken.

1) First of all, we should use words which are easy to understand. The greatest teacher the world ever knew used the simplest language. He taught the deepest truths in words which everyone understood.

When it is necessary to use technical words such as redemption, justification, reconciliation, or propitiation, we should carefully explain the words in a simple way.

The preacher must have a good vocabulary because he must study and understand many things. But when he explains those things in a sermon, he must remember that many in his audience will not understand all the words which he understands. When preaching, keep your vocabulary simple.

2) The preacher's outline should be simple. The main points should be stated so simply and clearly that when the preacher gives them to the audience in his introduction, the hearers will easily understand what he is going to prove and how he is going to do it.

3) The preacher should use scripture in a clear manner. Explain the verse in its context, then show that your application is the correct meaning. A few scriptures explained carefully are worth more than many scriptures which are not clearly explained.

4) Preach to the children. In the church where I first did full-time preaching a brother would pray, "May the preacher make the sermon simple enough so that the children will understand." I have thought of that often. It is not possible to keep children "entertained" all through a sermon, but we should aim at the simplicity which is necessary for children. I notice that when I have the attention of children and explain something for them, the adults listen with their whole attention and get the point very well.

5) Understand that very many in the audience may be ignorant of the subject you are speaking about. "Never underestimate the ignorance of your audience" is a rule taught to me early. Make your lesson so clear that the ignorant and unlearned will be able to understand. The ones who already understand more will not be left out. They will appreciate what you are saying and may well get points which the ignorant will miss.

Keep it simple!

"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." – 2 Timothy 4:2

THE PURPOSE STATEMENT

I have a “thing” about the purpose statement. I think it is VERY important, especially for the beginning preacher.

The purpose statement is a sentence which tells what you want to accomplish in the sermon. You may read this statement to the audience, or you may not, but it is what governs your entire sermon preparation and delivery.

You may have a purpose when you begin your study. As you gather your material, you may want to revise your purpose statement. But when you put your material together into an outline, it is essential that it is in a form which will accomplish your purpose. Only then do you have a real sermon.

Here are some sample purpose statements:

1. My purpose is to prove that having faith only without obedience in baptism will not save a person.

2. My purpose is to show what God has given to move sinners to repentance, and to do this in such a way as to cause sinners to repent.

3. My purpose is to rebuke members of the church who are showing a lack of enthusiasm and to encourage them to return to their first love.

If you examine these purpose statements you will see that each clearly shows what you want to accomplish in that sermon. Each sermon will be entirely different from the others because you are aiming for a different result.

The purpose statement is important because it helps you to organize your sermon and keep you on the straight path to your conclusion.

The Preaching of Jesus

In the ministry of Jesus preaching occupied a central place. Although greatly tempted to give primacy to other methods of approach to the world, he “came preaching.” In the synagogue at Nazareth he described himself as having been divinely ordained “to preach good tidings to the poor . . . to proclaim release to the captives . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:16-21). And all the gospels give unforgettable pictures of the itinerant Preacher, in the synagogues, on the mountains, by the seaside, going from village to village, drawing after him almost unbelievably large crowds, and amazing the people by his words of grace and the authority of his teaching. John, writing many years afterwards, remembered vividly his Lord’s preaching in the temple during one of the great feasts. Of one day he reported that “Jesus cried in the temple, teaching and saying . . .”; and of another, the last day of the feast, that he “stood, and cried, saying, “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink” (John 7:28, 37). His preaching was a cry, urgent in its compassion and masterful in its urgency.

--John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, pp. 1,2