

What Does the Bible Teach About Effective Speaking?

(Adapted by Paul R. Blake from an article written by Batsell Barrett Baxter, "Ten Commandments for Effective Speaking")

Introduction:

- A. Think of a preacher you consider to be effective (entertainment ability, emotional manipulation, clever stories, or deep knowledge of secular matters)
 - 1. What makes him effective? What does he do to hold your attention, impart understanding, and produce positive results in your life?
 - 2. What of Bible class teachers, conversationalists, and leaders?
 - 3. Consider the things that come together to make an effective communicator of the truth.
- C. This lesson is for:
 - 1. Those who are preaching, teaching classes, or leading by instruction.
 - 2. Those who plan to do the same one day.
 - 3. Those who want to know why their favorite teacher or preacher is effective.
 - 4. For everyone to reconsider their own standards of what makes a good teacher.
- D. Things that have nothing to do with being a good preacher or teacher:
 - 1. Entertaining, dynamic, exciting -- carnal, shallow
 - 2. Educated, intellectual, deep -- carnal, secular
 - 3. Good looking, good dresser, good mixer -- carnal, social
 - 4. These things say more about your tastes than it does about the speaker or the message.
 - 5. More often than not, what makes a popular preacher makes an ineffective Gospel speaker.
- E. What do the scriptures say?
 - 1. Good preachers and teachers prepare themselves to become better preachers and teachers - Ezra 7:10; Psalm 78:2-7; Prov. 22:17-21
 - 2. Good preachers and teachers do what is right, not what is popular - Jer. 32:33; 2Tim. 4:2-5
 - 3. Good preachers and teachers care more about those they preach to and teach than they do about themselves - 1Thes. 2:3-12
 - 4. Good preachers and teachers instruct others to be preachers and teachers - 1Sam. 19:20; 1Kings 4:38; 2Tim. 2:2

I. SELECT A GOAL YOU CAN ACHIEVE

- A. The speaker must set a goal for the lesson. Otherwise both the preparation and the speech will be "like a leaf dancing on a tree," constantly in movement, but getting nowhere. Many a speech lacks a proper goal, and its rambling, purpose-less, fruitless nature is often painfully apparent to the audience and disappointing to the speaker. Before facing an audience a man needs to decide what he wants to accomplish, and of course it ought to be an aim within reach. Having chosen his goal, he should write it out in a proposition, and then direct all his efforts toward achieving it.

II. CHOOSE A SUBJECT THAT FITS YOU, THE OCCASION, AND THE AUDIENCE

- A. The number of possible subjects is determined primarily by three factors:
1. The speaker's own background of information or experience,
 2. Appropriateness or inappropriateness to the occasion,
 3. The interests, training, and needs of the audience.

III. EARN THE RIGHT TO SPEAK BY WORK AND STUDY

- A. A man who addresses one hundred people for half an hour has used up fifty hours of their collective time. A sermon must contain a great deal of meat in order to be worthy of the time it takes; and that meat needs to be well prepared and ready to be assimilated.

IV. TOUCH THE BASIC HUMAN MOTIVES OF RESPONSE

- A. The speaker who achieves a high degree of success in influencing people has learned to direct his appeal to their God-given, basic human motives. It is comparatively ineffective to tell a man he ought to go to the Red Cross and give a pint of blood. Instead, point out that a pint of his blood will save a life, possibly that of a child or mother.

V. MAKE A THOROUGH OUTLINE

- A. Men are seldom moved by a careless, haphazard teaching. They expect and appreciate some reasonable plan or structure. In order to provide this, a speaker usually must draft a careful outline of his material. The outline is to a speech what the skeleton is to the human body.
1. A hearer should be able to listen to the speaker and reproduce the outline in notes during the lesson.

VI. BEGIN AND END THE SERMON IN A FORCEFUL MANNER

- A. The beginning and end are the places of greatest emphasis in any speech. If the speaker is to gain and hold the attention of his hearers, he must begin well, for the first few sentences often win or lose the battle. It may also be won or lost in the closing sentences. An otherwise good sermon can be ruined by a weak beginning or an ineffective close.

VII. BE CONCRETE AND VIVID

- A. Human beings think in terms of pictures. Henry Ward Beecher states, "He who would move men must either tell stories or paint pictures." It is the speaker's task to paint pictures with words, so that the hearers carry away concrete and visual impressions rather than vague concepts or generalities.
1. Jesus used parables; I use stories with nearly every invitation.

VIII. KEEP PACE MOVING TOWARD YOUR GOAL

- A. Hundreds of interesting side roads beckon the traveler when he sets out on a journey, but he must ignore them in order to reach his destination. So, in speaking, every subject has many related side areas that must be ignored.

- B. Before any fact, quotation, illustration, or other piece of material is introduced into a speech it must face the question: "Does it aid in achieving the goal?"

IX. THINK IT THROUGH AND PRACTICE IT ALOUD

- A. Spend time meditating on what you plan to say. Make thinking about it a comfortable pattern of thought.
- B. However wonderfully composed a speech may be, it is all for nothing if the speaker forgets it or garbles it in delivery. Repeated oral practice is the best precaution. Go over the outline until the plan is vivid in your mind.

X. BE ENTHUSIASTIC, GENIAL, AND CONVERSATIONAL WHEN YOU SPEAK

- A. If the proof of the pudding is in the eating, the test of a speech is in the delivery. All that goes before may be in vain unless it is effectively delivered. In our age the simple, direct, conversational style is best. Say what you have to say in an enthusiastic manner and as simply and directly as you can. A speaker who likes people and lets them know it will be appreciated in return.

Conclusion:

- A. Preach and teach in such a way that when you go to bed at night you can sleep well, when you near your last days of life you can be content that you pleased the Lord.
 - 1. You don't get to that point if:
 - a. It's all about you. Some people believe that what they want and what is right is necessarily the same thing. Contemporary mental health has taught them how to believe that their personal wants and what is right are the same thing, by suppressing their conscience.
 - b. It's all about promoting your family or leaving a legacy. I have known too many good preachers damage their effectiveness and ruin their character putting family above the gospel.
 - c. It's about anything but a pure altruistic motive.
 - 2. Acts 20:18-27; 2Tim. 4:6-8