

Preaching Intelligently or How to Preach to Dumb People

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You ask me, why this topic? I was sitting in a sermon of another person, and as always it seems (I like my own preaching maybe 70% of the time), I didn't like the fellow's presentation or delivery and I was making some mental notes so that at least in my own preaching I can avoid what I saw. I realized that a lot of my mental notes would benefit others, especially young preachers, novice preachers.

Criticism of the Sermon

First of all, there was no title. What good does a title do? It introduces the theme and topic of your sermon. He started with reading and then expositing the passage. Everybody does things differently and because somebody does something different than me, it is not necessarily "WRONG". But in the end analysis, the impact on the audience is what is important.

Note very carefully that the lack of a title and lack of an introduction in a sermon hurts the presentation. A title, the statement of the theme or topic or what the whole thing is about sets the hearer's mind to receive what comes after. He just dumped this on us. An introduction with a clarification of the theme or topic is an excellent way to start off a sermon.

When you "jump into" a sermon without moving the audience's mind to what you are talking about, They have to play "catch up", and they may not "catch up" until the middle or end of the sermon. They are fighting to understand what you are talking about. That is a bad way to start a sermon. Just a bad way. Preachers think introductions and statement of the theme are time-consuming, but they are not. They direct the audience to stay with you, but averting them where you are going.

Lack of a clear theme or topic

Plan to go nowhere and that is where you will take them. -David Cox

I am a preacher that has preached 3 to 5 sermons a week, and I produce Sunday School lessons for teens apart from that. I am no in-expert in sermons. But I never caught his theme. I got a general idea of what he was talking about (the sermon was good actually, it had good base material, and the preacher was excellent at explaining and just expressing his ideas). But I could not grab the theme. He was playing around God's will for the believer,

and I agreed with his statements about that. That was the central focus of his sermon, and I think there were excellent elements there, but it was like it wasn't put together well or something. (And like I have never in 30+ years of preaching gone into the pulpit at 50% and did lousily. No, I have and I excuse preachers for that. But it didn't come together for an excellent sermon overall because he didn't direct our thoughts from the beginning.

What is a topic or theme?

Yea, you tell a young preacher boy to make a topic and announce it first, and he says, "*Well today I am going to talk about the Bible.*" Okay, we kind of got that because we came to a church and are hearing a sermon. You would disappoint us if it was not about the Bible.

Well, this guy could have said, "*I am preaching about God's will*" and he still wouldn't have gotten it. To make a good theme or topic, consider the sermon as a debate. The other side is the audience, and their position in this debate is "*I am good, I will not be moved from my beliefs nor my practices.*"

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Your side of the debate of a sermon is to move them. A topic is your first broadside against them. It is your opening statement as to what they need to do differently in their life, or what they need to believe differently, clearly and forcefully stated. Some examples, we need to pray more. Why and How? It is wrong for a Christian to drink alcohol. It is wrong for a Christian to go to places of sin for entertainment. Jesus is fully God. God's will is specific on a lot of things but leaves it up to our preferences on others.

These topics open the battle cleanly, and we know from that statement what the issue is and what the preacher is going to try to convince us to be in agreement with his position (and hopefully this is the Bible's position, he needs to use that as a basis for convincing us).

The Discipline of preaching a theme

A theme as we have outlined above informs the audience where you are wanting to go, where you hope to take them. If a person gets up and leaves for some reason after the introduction of your sermon, and just "takes your word for it," he should immediately walk away knowing what the sermon was about. It should always be pro-active.

Pro-Active Sermons

A pro-active sermon in my mind is a sermon with a clear application that is usually given at the end. If it is explained during the middle, it is repeated at the end in the conclusion.

Pro-active sermons are sermons that have a "Call to action." Actually, in a technical sense, you did not preach a sermon if there are no clear calls-to-action in your sermon. You taught a college Bible class. I am not against teaching, it is necessary. But Sunday 11 AM should

be dedicated to sermons, not Bible classes. Some churches and preachers everything is a Bible class. These congregations know all the details of the Tabernacle, the seven churches of the Apocalipsis, the twelve tribes of Israel, the 12 Apostles, but they don't have any practical exhortations to live their lives better. Sad.

As a preacher, the Sunday morning worship service has the most people, people who only come once per week, and these marginal people may not even really be saved, and it is where backslidden people are most likely to slip in and out.

Even in a Bible class, a really good Bible teacher will make points in his lecture notes that will be applied. An application can be put into a Bible class lecture. It works excellently. People will get more from the class.

But there is a mentality among some to never challenge your people. That that is a sin. It is not. Look at Jesus' preaching and the prophets and the NT. Peter's challenge on the day of Pentecost. **YOU KILLED THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE!** Repent! Wow! How forceful a sermon! This is what leads people to repent and be saved, and repent and live pleasing lives before God. How can this be wrong?

I wouldn't badger my people, but I do come close when I call them out for things that they do wrong. If our relationship breaks, and they leave our church over it, so be it. I risked and lost trying to make their lives better before the Lord. Fault me for that. I will take it. I try to be kind, gentle, and loving. But I will tell them the truth, and the whole truth. I will tell them what they **NEED TO HEAR!**

Preaching to Dumb People

Let's face it, people today are just "dumb". They are not experts in Scripture even though they pretend to be just that. They are dumb. Look on the Internet at the beliefs and practices of groups.

How do you reach into these kinds of people's minds and "get traction"? By getting traction, I mean, so they understand you and are actually edified or improved spiritually? First of all, don't preach to adults. The adults you have in your typical church have the mind of a 10-year-old, and I have seen 10 years that could beat many adult Christians.

Secondly, be extremely explicit and clear in what you say. In education, they teach to say what you are going to say, then say it, and then summarized saying it again. In other words, repeat, repeat and repeat. It is hard (but you can do it) to over repeat your concepts. Repeat the theme a half dozen times in the sermon. Tell the audience your major points of the sermon, at every transition from one point to another, repeat all of the points, and then at the end, repeat them again. That kind of repetition is necessary when you deal with people. Put it on an overhead or on monitors. Make a copy of your sermon notes and give it out before, during, or after the sermon. Post it online. Every single point of reinforcing your arguments and points helps.

It is amazing how I am in sermons and outlines as my life's profession, and I get lost in following people sermons. I don't know where they are going with what they say. I fear that they don't either. Their sermons are fancy sermons. They throw out a bunch of topics unrelated to each other, and then they pick up and follow those topics as it suits their fancy at the moment. It is here, then there, and then the other, but what is the connection between these points?

God is good. The word God comes from the word good. God gave us flowers, birds, bees. I saw a flower one time which was gorgeous. Women are also gorgeous sometimes. The prudent woman of Proverbs 31 had to be. You know women should fix themselves up to look pretty. I saw a hot dog one time that was really yummy! You know flowers look pretty besides a pretty girl. A really gorgeous woman is also restrained in her appearance. She does reveal herself. Homosexuals and perverts are the opposite. Paul condemned them in Romans 1.

In this example, the concepts are flying all over the place without any real connection one to another. This is not a sermon, this is the babbling of a lunatic. You have no idea where he is going or how he got there. Unfortunately, many sermons in pulpits are just like this.

Dumb preachers make dumb church members, and this is what Satan wants. If he cannot stop people from going to church at all, then go sit under a "dumb preacher".