

SECTION 34

Speaking

Speaking (Grammar, eyes, diction)

“How Do I Speak?”

(some general observations/some helpful suggestions)

“First, you must learn to go up to the pulpit. Second, you must know that you should stay there for a time. Third, you must learn to get down again.”

(Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, pg. 393)

“Delivery should be the spontaneous product of the speaker’s peculiar personality, as acted by the subject which now fills his mind and heart.... Delivery does not consist merely, or even chiefly, in vocalization and gesticulation, but it implies that one is possessed with the subject, that he is completely in sympathy with it and fully alive to its importance, that he is not repeating remembered words but setting free the thoughts shut up in his mind. Even acting is good only in proportion to the actor’s identification with the person represented—he must really think and really feel what he is saying. The speaker is not undertaking to represent another person, to appropriate another’s thoughts and feelings, but aims simply to be himself, to speak what his own mind has produced.”

(Broadus, *Sermons*, pgs. 264-265)

“Let every man, called of God to preach the Word, be as his Maker has fashioned him.... The good and the evil in men of eminence are both of them mischievous when they become objects of servile imitation; the good when slavishly copied is exaggerated into formality, and the evil becomes wholly intolerable. If each teacher of others went himself to the school of our one only Master, a thousand errors might be avoided.”

(C.H. Spurgeon, *C.H. Spurgeon Autobiography Volume 1: The Early Years, 1834-1859*, rev. ed. [reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1962], pg. 234)

“Be natural; forget yourself; be absorbed in what you are doing and in the realization of the presence of God, and in the glory and the greatness of the Truth that you are preaching ... that you forget yourself completely.... Self is the greatest enemy of the preacher, more so than in the case of any other man in society. And the only way to deal with self is to be so taken up with, and so enraptured by the glory of what you are doing, that you forget yourself altogether.”

(Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching*, pg. 264)

“A theology which does not take fire, I maintain, is a defective theology; or at least the man's understanding of it is defective. Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire. A true understanding and experience of the Truth must lead to this. I say again that a man who can speak about these things dispassionately has no right whatsoever to be in a pulpit; and should never be allowed to enter one.”

(Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching*, pg. 97)

“When I have thought of the preaching of certain good men, I have wondered, not that the congregation was so small, but that it was so large. The people who listen to them ought to excel in the virtue of patience, for they have grand opportunities of exercising it. Some sermons and prayers lend a color of support to the theory of Dr. William Hammond, that the brain is not absolutely essential to life. Brethren,...you will, none of you, covet earnestly the least gifts, and the dullest mannerisms, for you can obtain them without the exertion of the will... about to discharge your ministry, not with the lifeless method of an automaton, but with the freshness and power which will render your ministry largely effectual for its sacred purposes.”

(C.H. Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry* [reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1960], pgs. 316-317)

“There is no such animal, in and out of captivity, as a born public speaker. In those periods of history when public speaking was a refined art that demanded close attention to the laws of rhetoric and the niceties of delivery, it was even more difficult to be born a public speaker. Now we think of public speaking as a kind of enlarged conversation. Gone forever is the old grandiloquent style and stentorial voice. What we like to hear at our dinner meetings, in our church services, on our TV sets and radios, is straightforward speech, conceived in common sense and dedicated to the proposition that we like speakers to talk with, and not at, us.”

(Dale Carnegie)

“To be poor in words is to be poor in mind.”

(Charles Koller, pg 113)

“The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”

(Charles Koller, pg. 113)

“In delivery, next to the voice in effectiveness is the countenance: and this is ruled over by the eyes.”
(Cicero, quoted in Koller, pg. 55)

“The expressive power of the human eye is so great that it determines, in a manner, the expression of the whole countenance.”

(Koller, pg 35)

I. The Minister’s Vocabulary

Words are the preacher’s “friends.” A rich vocabulary is a great asset. Three aims are to be kept in mind as preachers develop their vocabularies:

- **Accuracy** – Three books live on the preacher’s desk: the Bible, the concordance, and the dictionary.
- **Clarity** – Communication is the goal of ministers. The words used must be understood by others.
- **Refinement** – Trite expressions and gutter language ought to be avoided. A preacher’s use of language demands good taste. Appropriate word usage promotes the “unhindered flow of thought from the heart of the preacher to the heart of the hearer” (Koller, pg 115).

II. How to Control Your Butterflies

Everybody gets nervous before speaking to an audience. The trick is, the best speakers control the butterflies-and actually use them to their advantage. Here are some easy-to-remember tricks:

- **Give yourself tons of prep time.** You’ll be shocked at how relaxed you can be when you’re *sure* you know your material inside and out.
- **Don’t let your gestures give you away.** Stand straight, make eye contact, keep your head up, and move calmly. *Don’t* fiddle with a pen, fold your arms, or clench your hands.

- Remember: That duck is paddling furiously underneath the water. Remember this: *Nobody* looks as nervous as they feel. Remind yourself that your nerves are the driving force behind the energy in your presentation-but that doesn't mean anyone has to see them.
- Talk to a friend at first. For the first two or three minutes of your talk, pick out the friendliest face in the crowd, and talk to that person. Having a one-on-one conversation is a lot easier than speaking to a group, and this is a good way to relax yourself.

(adapted from *How to Be a Better Communicator*, by Sandy McMillan [Industrial Society]).

III. Techniques to Help You Survive Those Presentation Rough Spots

(by Stephen C. Rafe, President of Rapport Communications, *Communication Briefings*, October 1998, Volume 17, Number 12)

1. Drawing a blank

- Try a little humor.
- Consider “shirt-tailing.” Here’s how it works:
 - ◆ *Simply repeat* the last part of the last sentence you delivered. Then add onto it with a further thought. Next, repeat the last part of that sentence and add to it. Keep on going in this manner as long as necessary.
 - ◆ *Next, go on.*
- Practice the techniques. A little practice will help you think of sensible sentences you can use if you need them. And knowing you can resort to “shirt-tailing” also will ease your mind and free it from nervous thoughts such as: “I’ve lost my place. What do I do now?”

2. Annoying Speech Filters

- Uncover the root causes. When “ah’s” and “um’s” slip into your communication, it often signals one of the following: You’re in a situation where you’re uncomfortable with the topic, the audience, the situation or yourself.
 - ◆ *Topic:* Before you speak, make sure you’re totally comfortable with what you need or plan to say. Do what all the presentation experts suggest. *Examples:* Rehearse before colleagues who will candidly assess what you say. Tape your speech and listen for possible glitches. Videotape it and watch for distracting mannerisms. Prepare answers to questions audience members might ask.
 - ◆ *Audience:* Consider what it is about the audience that’s causing concern. Then deal with whatever it is through the rational, logical side of your brain.
 - ◆ *Situation:* Recall your most- and least successful presentations. Sort out the similarities and differences between the two. Then gradually change the least successful aspects of the previous presentations into ones more like those where you did better.

- ◆ *Yourself*: Examine what's happening to cause this. Do you feel "inferior" to the task, the subject, or the audience? Again, you'll need to persuade yourself that you have an interesting message, one which your audience wants to hear, and that you're the right person to present it.
- Use counter-conditioning. You should train yourself to perform another "behavior" to replace the one you want to change. This is called "counter-conditioning" and it's very effective. In the case of annoying filters, you would teach yourself to:
 - ◆ *Pause* at the beginning of each new thought or every two or three sentences.
 - ◆ *Focus* on the purpose of that thought, and speak only when you're ready.

3. Success Guidelines

You can also avoid situations that may cause you to draw a blank or resort to "ah's" and "um's" by following these guidelines: Use material you feel comfortable with. Address audiences that feel "right" for you. Speak in situations where you feel confident. And boost your chances for success through preparation and positive self-talk. Also see "Talk is, like, you know, cheapened." (Colleges introduce classes to clean up campus "mallspeak") by Kate Zernike, *Boston Globe*, 1-31-99; A1.

IV. Preaching the Sermon (Ramesh Richard)

Delivery relates to the preacher-his face, gestures, and voice. These are called nonverbal media of communication. The use of the face, gestures, and voice sometimes has more impact than the content of what you have to say. Nonverbal media should be used very skillfully and appropriately. Your body talks along with your mouth and there needs to be parity between them.

Your Face

People watch your face for how you feel about the sermon, yourself, and them. Eye contact with your audience must be maintained as much as possible. Look directly at your audience, pick some one on each side, and speak to this people, personally.

Your Gestures

Just like your face, your body talks. It will add to or subtract from your verbal communication. There are three possible relationships between your body and your words:

- **Inaction:** Your body is stifled or disabled.
- **Overaction and wrong action:** Your body becomes the main focus of the audience's attentions.
- **Appropriate action:** Be natural as you communicate and your gestures should give the same message as your words. Your body language can effectively reinforce your points: The pointing finger, the querying eyebrows, the wide arms, the clenched fist, the open palms, and many others, if done naturally and at appropriate places in your sermon, can be assets to your presentation. Your whole body is at your disposal to enhance your verbal material.

Your Voice

The tone of your voice communicates more than the content of your talk. Use your voice effectively. Find the appropriate pitch and quality and develop variety in speed and volume.

- **Pitch:** Is your voice too deep or too high?
Do you vary your pitch?
Are you able to inflect your voice to communicate feelings such as joy, urgency, command, or affirmation?
- **Quality:** Does your voice have a nasal sound?
Does your voice have a harsh sound?
Do you sound smooth and relaxed?
- **Articulation and pronunciation:** Do you speak clearly and carefully?
Do you pronounce words correctly?
- **Speed or rate:** Do you talk so fast that your audience can't keep up?
Do you talk so slowly that they are bored?
Do you pause briefly on occasion?
Do you vary between fast, slow, and paused speech?
- **Loudness or volume:** Do you speak loudly enough so that everyone can hear you without straining to do so?
Do you speak softly enough so that you don't bombard the listener?
Do you vary the volume?

V. Haddon Robinson and “The Dress of Thought” (Chapter 9)

3 essentials

1. A Clear Style

- Clear Outline
- Short Sentences
- Simple Sentence Structure
- Simple Words

2. A Direct and Personal Style

3. A Vivid Style

- Communication that taps a listener's experience appeals to both mind and feelings.
- A minister must appeal to the senses.
- A minister must learn to think in pictures; he must visualize details.
- Vividness increases when you employ fresh figures of speech.

VI. 6 Observations on “How to Preach So People Will Listen”

(Haddon Robinson, Chapter 10)

1. The effectiveness of our sermons depends on two factors: what we say and how we say it.

2. Nonverbal language

- Nonverbal language possesses strategic importance in public speaking.
- Our words, intonation, and gestures communicate ideas.
- Research and experience agree that if nonverbal messages contradict the verbal, listeners will more likely believe the silent language.

3. Grooming and Dress

- A basic rule of grooming and dress for the preacher is that they should fit the audience, the situation, and the speaker.
- Dress and appearance cause us to make judgments about others without really being aware of why we make those judgments.

4. Movement and Gestures

- Gestures help us explain and describe.
- Gestures emphasize our speech.
- Gestures maintain interest and hold attention.
- Gestures put the speaker at ease.
- Gestures help our listeners experience what we feel as they identify with us (empathy).
- Gestures should be spontaneous.
- Gestures should be definite.
- Gestures should be varied.
- Gestures should be properly timed.

5. Eye Contact

- Eye contact ranks as the most effective single means of nonverbal communication at a speaker's disposal. Eyes communicate.
- Your people need to see your face.

6. Vocal Delivery

- The voice conveys ideas and feelings apart from words.
- A speaker emphasizes what he says in only four ways-by variety in pitch, punch, progress, and pause.

VII. The Preacher and Communication

(by Steven and David Olford, Chapter 11 in *Anointed Expository Preaching*)

A. The Preacher should avoid the following:

- Swaying
- Grasping the pulpit tightly and never letting go
- Using only one hand or arm if you are able to use both
- Always pointing one finger or having clinched fists
- Holding the Bible in a flippant or dishonoring way
- Putting one hand in a pocket, especially if you have keys or coins in the pocket
- Looking at one section of the audience or one spot on the wall the whole time
- Gestures that scold when you are not scolding

B. The Preacher should preach with:

- An apocalyptic purpose
- A theological position
- A Christological priority
- An eschatological perspective
- A dependence upon a soteriological power

VIII. Cutting-edge communication

Some things can be said only in a sermon. Some things can be said more effectively in a sermon than in any other form of communication.

1. *Appealing to heart and mind.* Have you ever seen a discussion group that really speaks to both heart and mind? I've never seen it done well.
2. *Building Evidence.* A good preacher brings the listener to a glorious theme. The preacher can bring point after point; the evidence builds.
3. *Opening eternity.* Preaching opens up the horizons of eternity. Preaching holds up the Word as a mirror, which makes us squirm.

(D.A. Carson, research professor,
New Testament, Trinity Evangelical
Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois)

“It’s All in the Delivery”
From the Paper to the Pulpit to the People
By
Joel Gregory

I. Introduction

A sermon is not a sermon until it is preached, getting the message off the paper, into the pulpit and out to the people. This involves an enthusiastic and challenging delivery, implementing both nonverbal and verbal communication. Both are extremely important to the effective contemporary biblical preacher.

II. What does non-verbal sermon delivery include?

- A. Dress and appearance-preacher's appearance should be conservative, dignified and “normal.”
- B. Body posture or position is very important.
 - 1. Body position should be erect, with head and shoulders back.
 - 2. To some extent, preaching begins the moment the preacher enters the worship center and is seen by the congregation.
- C. Gestures
 - 1. Four kinds of gestures
 - a. Index finger gesture-gives mild emphasis and location.
 - b. Closed fist or closing-of-the-palms gesture expresses extreme forcefulness.
 - c. Palms up gestures-positive, affirmative and inviting.
 - d. Palms-down gesture-indicates rejection or negativism.
 - 2. Other characteristics of gestures
 - a. Should be definite.
 - b. Should be varied.
 - c. Should be appropriately timed.
- D. Eye contact the most effective and important factor in non-verbal communication.
 - 1. “Hook up” visually with people.
 - 2. Eye contact should be inclusive, corner to corner, choir to balcony.
 - 3. Don’t favor one side of the congregation over another.

III. What are the aspects of verbal sermon delivery?

- A. Content is more important than delivery, which is the vehicle that presents the message.
- B. 5 factors of delivered speech that enhance or detract from preaching:
 - 1. Rate of speech-not too fast, not too slow, not too predictable.
 - 2. Pauses-brief pause is for absorption; longer pause is for getting attention; interim pause is for times of transition.
 - 3. Pitch-the variation of the tones of speech.
 - 4. Volume-a conversational, but dynamic, delivery is the most accepted among contemporary audiences today.
 - 5. Projection-“throwing the voice forward” using appropriate breathing techniques.

IV. Total impact of the delivered message

- A. Involves the factors of content, pace, pitch, body language, intensity, application and more.
- B. Extremes
 - 1. Appearing overly dramatic
 - 2. Appearing unenthusiastic and indifferent in the delivery
- C. Who is at fault when the preacher cannot preach with joy, excitement and enthusiasm?
 - 1. The Gospel?
 - 2. The congregation?
 - 3. The preacher?
- D. How to deliver a message that is “real preaching.”
 - 1. Preach knowing that *you* need the message as much as those to whom you are preaching.
 - 2. Remember the abiding sense of God’s call. He has spoken and you have responded to His call to proclaim His Word.

V. Conclusion

Contemporary biblical preaching is a discipline of presenting balanced sermons that share the whole message of God’s Word. It includes exposition, illustration and application ... in order to bring the “then” into the “now.”

Preaching becomes a speech event between the “then” and “now,” and the Word that “was” becomes the Word that “is.”