

## **SECTION 35**

### **Improving and Evaluating Your Preaching**

❧ **HINTS FOR IMPROVING YOUR PREACHING** ❧

*“Our business is to present that which is timeless . . . in the particular language of our own age.  
The bad preacher does exactly the opposite: he takes the ideas of our own age  
and tricks them out in the traditional language of Christianity.”*

C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, p. 93

**I. Introduction**

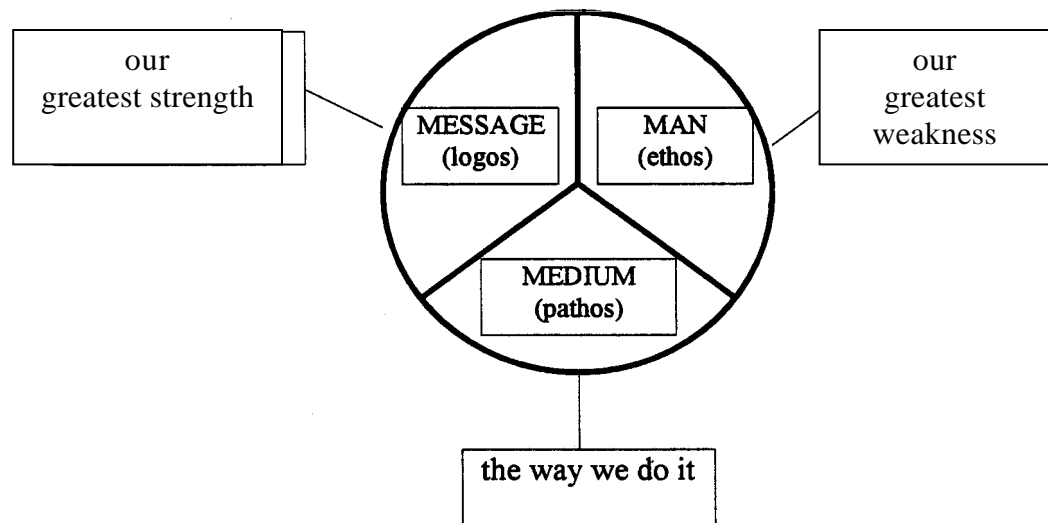
Howard Hendricks of Dallas Seminary notes that “Biblical exposition is persuasively and urgently communicating the exact and full meaning of a text or passage of Scripture in terms of our contemporary culture, with the specific goal of helping people to understand and obey the truth of God.”

5 Implications:

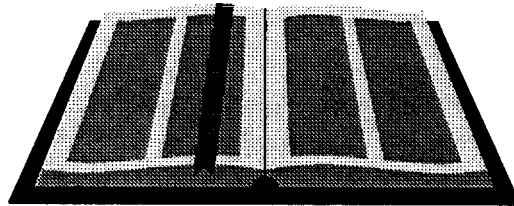
1. Your preaching must have a sense of urgency. There must be a passion for truth and a fire in your soul.
2. Your preaching must focus on the meaning of the text. Your preaching must be text driven. Biblical truth must be deposited in your people's mind and not reserved in yours.
3. Biblical truth must be related to contemporary culture, to reality, to the here and now.
4. Understanding biblical truth is not an end in itself, but a means to obedience. We want changed lives not full heads.
5. Effective preaching is more than exposition of the text, it is the communication of life changing truth. Did they get it? Can they apply it?

## II. 10 Principles for improving your preaching.

1. Utilize modern technology and ready at hand tools.
  - a. Audio and video tape your messages for review and critique. Be transparent. Develop the humility to receive constructive criticism.
  - b. Watch yourself in front of a mirror. When is the last time you did this?
2. Be Christ-centered in your preaching. You do not want people leaving worship saying, “What a wonderful sermon.” You want them to say, “What a great Savior.”
  - a. Cultivate your own devotional life. You must have a daily walk with God.
  - b. Recognize that your people gather for a worship service not a preaching service. Cultivate an overall context that prepares your people to hear the word. [Regularly evaluate the structure and effectiveness of your worship.]
3. Continually remind yourself of three essential components of the communication event.



- a. Become a student of the [immediate] culture (context) in which you preach. You must know your people. Spend time with them. Jesus did.
  - b. Remember people are shaped by events even more than they are shaped by ideas.
  - c. Recognize that in a sense the medium is the message. What we say is more important than how we say it, but how we say it is important!
4. Demonstrate the relevance of Biblical truth to present-day life.



ORIGINAL  
CONTEXT  
1st century

## GAP

OUR  
CONTEXT  
21st century

Problems--different

Principles--the same

- a. Be a student of the word and the world.
- b. Present timeless truth in a timely fashion.
- c. Never forget, "it is a sin to make the Bible boring."

***"It is humiliating to belong to a race that can make anything as exciting as truth dull."***

-Josiah Royce

5. Move beyond the cerebral, the cognitive.
- a. Knowing--intellectual (mind)                      CONTENT (logos)
  - b. Doing--volitional (will)                              CHARACTER (ethos)
  - c. Feeling--emotional (emotions)                      COMPASSION (pathos)
- (1) Beware of the danger of over-loading the circuits.

(2) Are you helping your people to see the “how to...”

(3) Settle for nothing less than obedience and a changed life.

*“What is honored in a country is cultivated there.” -Plato*

6. Decrease your predictability quotient.

Concerning Jesus it was said, *“He stirs up the people... by his teaching.”*

-Luke 23:5a

a. Vary your voice, pace and gesture.

b. Never forget the impact of the face and eyes.

c. Take advantage of technology.

d. Don't be strange, but do be creative.

7. Focus on the neglected end of the communicational spectrum.

## **COMMUNICATOR**

Teacher/Preacher

## **RECEPTOR**

Hearer/Learner

a. We must become receptor-oriented.

Ask the question, “How will my people hear this?” (Remember the parable of the soils.)

b. Meanings must find a home in people and not in messages.

c. Teaching people how to listen is a task worth pursuing.

8. Secure regular and honest feedback.

a. Interview persons in your congregation and ask for their feedback.

b. Form a pastor's support team for consistent and open evaluations of your message content and delivery. (Note the evaluation form at the end.)

c. Use questionnaires for random evaluations and input.

9. Become an interesting and infectious person.
  - a. You cannot impart what you do not possess. You will preach out of the overflow of who you are.
  - b. Your credibility in the long run will determine the lasting effectiveness of your communication.
  
10. Let the text determine the shape of the message while you continue to do the basics.
  - a. Track the verbs (remember verbs are action words).
  - b. Explore key words in your exegetical work.
  - c. Work the basics:
    - (1) **Introduction** - 3 to 5 minutes. Grab their attention.
    - (2) **Exposition** - Explain the Bible. What did they learn and leave with that they did not have when they arrived?
    - (3) **Illustration** - Be clear and relevant. Develop the art of good story telling.
    - (4) **Application** - Show them how the text will work in their lives. Be relevant. Be specific.
    - (5) **Motivation** - Inspire them to obey the Word.
    - (6) **Conclusion** - Bring the message home appropriately and with focus.
    - (7) **Invitation** - Give a clear, compelling and complete invitation. Tell them what you want them to do and how to do it.

# Sermon Evaluation Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Preacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Message: \_\_\_\_\_

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Sermon Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Scale

5 = Superior

4 = Good

3 = Satisfactory

2 = Needs Work

1 = Needs Serious Attention

## Introduction

- \_\_\_\_\_ Aroused interest or attention
- \_\_\_\_\_ Addressed a need
- \_\_\_\_\_ Oriented the listener to the subject
- \_\_\_\_\_ Proper length
- \_\_\_\_\_ Introduced the sermon idea

## **Structure**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Main points were clear
- \_\_\_\_\_ Main points were complete sentences
- \_\_\_\_\_ Main points related to the main idea
- \_\_\_\_\_ Subpoints clearly related back to their main point Transitions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unity of message
- \_\_\_\_\_ Progress in message

## **Conclusion**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Built to a climax
- \_\_\_\_\_ Appropriate to sermon
- \_\_\_\_\_ Climax
- \_\_\_\_\_ Drove home the sermon idea

## **Content**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Solid exegesis
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relevant to hearer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Showed where he was in the text
- \_\_\_\_\_ Explanation of material
- \_\_\_\_\_ Content

## **Illustrations**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Interesting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Related to the point
- \_\_\_\_\_ Handled by the speaker
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sufficient
- \_\_\_\_\_ Varied

## **Application**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Clear
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relevant
- \_\_\_\_\_ Specific
- \_\_\_\_\_ Based on Scripture text



## **Style**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Correct grammar
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vocabulary
- \_\_\_\_\_ Choice of words
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diction

## **Delivery**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Volume
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vocal variation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Distracting mannerisms
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gestures
- \_\_\_\_\_ Eye contact
- \_\_\_\_\_ Physical presence (dress, posture, etc.)

## **Speaker's Strengths:**

## **Speaker's Weaknesses:**

## **Comments:**

## CHUCK SWINDOLL ADDRESSES THE ISSUE OF QUALITY COMMUNICATION...

... as we find it in Paul's message on Mars Hill as recorded in Acts 17:22-31. He points out seven basic components of quality communication.

- 1. He started with a jolting attention-getter.**  
*"Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects" (v. 22).*
- 2. He used a relevant illustration to amplify his opening remark.**  
*"For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD'" (v.23a).*
- 3. He employed an interesting yet brief transition into the body of his message.**  
*"What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you" (v. 23b).*
- 4. At the heart of his message, he presented sound theology in clear, easily understood terms.**  
*"The God who make the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him,..." (vv. 24-27a).*
- 5. He held their attention by making it personal ... he even quoted from their own literature.**  
*"...as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring'" (v. 28).*
- 6. He challenged them with a theological truth woven neatly in Athenian culture.**  
*"Being then offspring of God we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man" (v. 29).*

**7. Finally, he “drove home” the application (“all everywhere should repent”) by a declaration of two inescapable facts (God’s judgment, Jesus’ resurrection).**

*“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (vv. 30-31).*

Swindoll goes onto note: “A warning is in order ... strategy calls for quality. It’s not as simple as dumping a half-ton load of religious whine, a hodge-podge of verbs, nouns, and adjectives, but preparing the heart, sharpening the mind, delivering the goods with care, sensitivity, timing, and clarity. It’s the difference between slopping hogs and feeding sheep ... study hard, pray like mad, think it through, tell the truth, then stand tall. But while you’re on your feet, don’t clothe the riches of Christ in rags. Say it well.”

## Preaching Evaluation

### Scale

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor			Average			Good			Outstanding

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### I. The Preacher and his delivery.

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1. Posture.

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2. Clothing and appearance.

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3. Eye contact and facial expressions.

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4. Mannerisms.

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5. Gestures.

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6. Voice and delivery.

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**Scale**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Poor

Average

Good

Outstanding

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**II. The Message and its content.**

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1. Introduction.

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2. Exposition.

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3. Illustrations.

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4. Application.

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5. Exhortation.

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6. Conclusion.

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7. Invitation.

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**Comments and Observations:**

## **SOME GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUR PREACHING**

1. Study, watch and listen to the sermons and methods of great expository preachers.
2. Cultivate a disciplined study and prayer life.
3. Continue to grow in your knowledge of the biblical revelation. You are called to be a life long student.
4. Remember your people benefit most from messages which apply the Bible to real, contemporary needs.
5. Planned sermon series aids the preacher in gathering material, allowing the subconscious mind to work, and saving time.
6. An understanding of the biblical, historical, and theological foundations of preaching and teaching make for a deeper understanding of the preaching task.
7. Variety in illustrative material heightens interest and retention in the sermon.
8. An understanding of the art of rhetoric and logic will improve sermon composition and delivery.
9. An understanding of educational teaching and learning theory, when applied to homiletics, results in better preaching. People remember 10% of what they hear and 50% of what they hear and see. Provide and utilize study aids.
10. Your people will receive more from your messages if they have been led to honor, read and study their Bibles on their own. Work at working yourself out of a job.