

## Lessons Learned from Sermons Preached

People decide if they are going to give us their attention in the first 60 seconds . . . our energy and our content during our intro sets the energy of the room for better or for worse. So as the communicator, set the energy where we want it by bringing your energy based on the room size

Set the interest of the congregation by having a well thought out introduction . . .

- Ask a Rhetorical Question
- Tell a personal story and have them wonder how it is relevant and then tie it into the passage
- Tell a humorous story and bridge to the passage
- Show a video that builds interest and intrigue without setting it up

If we have too much material, which we most definitely will, and we go into the pulpit with it all, we will talk really fast with no pauses and no cadence trying to get through the material, which will make us monotone, and people will tune us out. The magic of preaching a great sermon is writing out a 50-minute sermon and then skillfully trimming it to a 30-minute sermon, that is where all the work takes place

We have to talk with our hands and our feet. Don't put your hands in your pockets, don't fiddle with your rings, we all do weird things with our hands when we are nervous. (TED Talk Data on hand movements). Also, the great communicators move around and talk to the entire room with their feet and their entire body.

If you haven't preached 100 times and become very proficient, you should probably manuscript your entire sermon because it forces you to think through your content, illustrations, and transitions. It also helps you gauge how long it's going to take to preach it.

The illustrations carry the passage for months or years, not vice versa. Our work is to exegete and illustrate. Seminarians will listen to us exegete, our target market (the back row) will only dial in if we can illustrate our exegesis and communicate it clearly.

Filler words ("um, uh, and so") are what we use when we are uncomfortable with pregnant pauses. When we talk in a hurry to "get through the material", we never pause to give the listener time to process

On difficult passages or topics, ALWAYS ask and answer the obvious objections the listener has to what we are saying. For example, if we are preaching against the love of

money, we have to ask and answer “Who wants their job or their small business to make more money this year than last year?”, and is that the love of money to always strive for more? Or if we are preaching on the qualifications for an elder, we have to ask and answer, “Why can we support a woman for President of the United States but not as a local church elder?” Don’t leave obvious objections in the minds of the listener.

Our job is to make the text simple, not complex. Complexity makes the Communicator look smart and astute but it does not serve the listener. The average American and average South Carolinian reads at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. We are more and more Oral Learners. Being smart is great, being relatable is better.

For the same reason as above, don’t bounce around to 5 different passages in a single sermon. First, people can’t keep up with that pace. Second, if we are hitting that many passages we have too much material or too many points. Third, it intimidates the guy we are trying to reach and makes him think he could never do that, whereas if we just stay in one passage and he watches us exegete that passage, then that seems obtainable to him.

Three days after the sermon if there were five points even the preacher will not remember them, but if we really sit down on one point and have a great illustration, people might remember it for decades. We can’t pull this off every week, but it is the fact of the matter so make it your goal.

Authenticity is King. Real Life – Real Faith is more than a slogan. Authenticity about how we interact with the text and how we both obey and disobey it makes us human and believable. No vulnerability or authenticity in our preaching makes us appear either flawless or fake.

Always use inclusive pronouns when bringing the real challenges from the text to make sure we are preaching to ourselves as part of the congregation as well as others (e.g. “We” need to pray without ceasing, “we” need to confess our sins to one another, etc.)

Do your best to leave the congregation wanting “a little more”, not “a little less.” They will leave saying either, “That was good, I would like to hear him again” or “that was good but he was kinda rambling there at the end.”

Average attention span is 7 minutes, so try to think through how to give people a break at 7-10 minute intervals with a joke, with a rhetorical question, with a simple, “Hey, you guys still with me?”