

How To Preach So People Will Listen

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This is called the “School of Ministry,” so we’re going to be looking at the textbook this morning. We’re going to be covering chapters 9 and 10 of Haddon Robinson’s book on Biblical Preaching. The two issues I want to look at this morning, these two chapters, is first of all the ninth chapter is “The Dress of Thought.” Secondly, we want to look at “How To Preach So People Will Listen.” Think about this for a moment, this is what’s at stake. Let me tell you why you need to listen to these two chapters. Can you imagine spending all of your time studying for two or three days the message, you come to the central idea of the text, you have the complementary outline, you’re able to explain the whole text, but because of the words that you use, or the lack of words that you use, or your mannerism nobody hears what you say. Or, another way of saying it, you prepare your sermon and you get to church, and you left it at home. That’s what this is equal to. I’m kind of trying to express to you how important these areas are that we want to look at this morning.

Haddon Robinson, starting in chapter 9, says, “Not all preachers write out their sermons, nor do preachers who write out sermons write out every sermon, but the discipline of preparing a manuscript improves preaching,” and it does. That’s why it’s so wonderful to write it out, and then when you write it out, you go back and make notations, you make changes. I’m always doing that. I don’t care how long I’ve worked on a sermon, I’m always messing with it, and you will do it up to the moment that you go on. That’s what I do.

Proverbs 25:11 says, “Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances.” “The difference between the right word and almost right word,” wrote Mark Twain, “is the difference between lightning and a lightning buck.” Our choice of words is called style. Everyone possesses a style—be it bland, dull, invigorating, precise—but however we handle or mishandle words becomes our style. Style reflects how we think and how we look at life. Style varies with different speakers, and individual speakers will alter his or her style for different audiences and different occasions. Addressing a high school class, for instance, may demand a different style from what you’re used to in addressing a Sunday morning congregation. The polished wording used in a baccalaureate sermon would sound completely out of place in a small group Bible study.

Your sermons should not be read to a congregation. Reading usually kills lively sense of communication. Neither should you try to memorize your manuscript. Now, he says this, and I know we talked about this already, “Rehearsing several times aloud without your manuscript. Make no conscious effort to recall your exact wording. Simply try to get your flow of thought clearly in mind.” I don’t do that. I don’t know of anybody who does that. I think John said he’d feel like a geek if he did it. You’re looking in front of a mirror and preaching to yourself in a mirror. That’s rather difficult, but what I do do is I sit down and inside my mind I’m reading it out, and in myself I’m preaching it within myself. I’m just preaching it, and I work through it. When I come across illustrations that I’m going to use, I try to think of how can I say this illustration

without literally looking at my notes and reading it word for word, unless it's a quote. I try to do that. I try to formulate so that I can just look at the audience and just give the illustration. I think that just makes it flow so much easier.

Strong transitions carry a heavy burden in spoken communications. They take up more space in a sermon manuscript. Listeners hear your sermon only as a series of sentences. Transitions serve as a road sign to point out where the sermon has been and where it is going. Transitions, therefore, are longer and more detailed than in writing. In our mind and on our notes we see those transitions, so we need to announce them, "Point number one," announce it. Then, when you finish with point number one, "We just looked at point number one. Point number two," and then announce it so that they are hearing it. You know it in your mind, we know our notes, they don't know our notes, so we're physically saying it.

There are three different styles of delivery. First, is a clear style. We must be clear. A sermon is not deep because it's muddy. Whatever has been thought through can be stated simply and clearly. We need to think of, What is the simplest way I can say this? How can I just say this in the fewest amount of words? Remember, more than 18 words gets muddy? So, how can I just say this just so simply? For preachers, clarity is a moral matter. It is not merely a question of rhetoric, but a matter of life and death. If we believe that what we preach either draws people to God or keeps them away from Him, then for God's sake, and the people's sake, we must be clear. We are reminded that the offensive preaching doesn't come when people do not understand us because they understand it all too well, or at least they are afraid they will have to understand it.

A clear outline: Zigzag thinking can be straightened out only by outlining your overall thought before working on the details. Now, we talked about this, the central idea of the text. We talked about that. What is, you give a title, what is the thought of this passage in 18 words, very simply. Now, it's a wonderful thing when you can put within that the complement where you then ask the question and then answer the question through the outline. If you're able to do that in 18 words, that is just absolutely wonderful.

Short sentences: Here it is. Furthermore, to be clear, keep your sentences short. Rudolph Flesch, in *The Art of Plain Talk*, maintains that clarity increases as sentence length decreases. According to his formula, a clear writer will average about seventeen to eighteen words to a sentence and will not allow any sentence to wander on over thirty words. In your sermon manuscript, short sentences keep your thought from tangling and therefore are easier for you to remember.

Simple sentence structure: Keep sentence structure simple. A clearer, more energetic style emerges when you follow the thinking sequence. Complicated sentences have additional disadvantages, they slow the pace of the sermon. Henry Ward Beecher put it, "A switch with leaves on it doesn't tingle." So, it slows it down. You don't get the same whip. You don't get it because the leaves are slowing your swing down. It's slowing you hitting the point, getting to what you want to say.

Simple words: Simple words also contribute to a simple or a clear style. I love this illustration. This is so helpful. Any citizen who has battled with an income tax return wonders why the Internal Revenue Service cannot say what it means, so then the lawyers get in and the lawyers embalm it and make it even more difficult. Here's another one, the propositions. Have you ever read through the propositions on that sheet that you get in the mail? Just say, "No." That's pretty good, just generally. Now, every once in a while say, "Yes." But the way they write it it's almost the opposite of the way that you would interpret it. You'd have to get a lawyer to read you the propositions so you know how to vote is what it is.

Theologians and ministers, too, seem to keep themselves in office by resorting to language that bewilders ordinary mortals. Beware of jargon. Specializing vocabulary helps professionals within a discipline to communicate, but it becomes jargon when it is used unnecessarily or with people who do not understand. Martin Luther, great quote, "A preacher should have the skill to teach the unlearned simply, roundly, and plainly for teaching is of more importance than exhorting. When I preach, I regard neither doctors nor magistrates or whom I have about 40 in the congregation. I have all my eyes on the servant maids and the children. If they learn, men are not well-pleased with what they hear. Well, the door is open." If they don't like what I say, go on back out the door is basically what he's saying. So, while it takes years to get through seminary, three years to get through seminary, it could take ten years to get over seminary.

Again, and I've heard this before. I've heard people teach, and when they're speaking to a congregation, they're using words like, "eschatology," "pneumatology," which is the study of the Holy Spirit. They talk about the hypostatic union of Christ. Now, I don't have a problem with that, but if you're going to use those terms, you have to explain what you mean. You cannot expect people to...here's a term I hear pastors use all the time, and it drives me crazy because I think a simple explanation. They say, "You know, you need to be sanctified for Jesus Christ." Well, what does "sanctified" mean? Set apart for His service, set apart to glorify Him. Then, say it, "Why aren't you set apart? Live for the Lord." Now, you don't even have to use the word "sanctify." But if you want to use the word "sanctify," and then not explain it, people are going, "Okay, I just missed what he said. I don't even know what he was trying to say."

Use a short word unless you find it absolutely necessary to use a longer word. This is good. Long words have paralysis in their tails. Seventy-three percent of the words in Psalm 23, seventy-six percent of the words in the Lord's prayer, and eighty percent of the words in 1 Corinthians 13 are one-syllable words. All the big things in life have little names. Okay, check this out: life, death, peace, war, dawn, day, night, hope, love, home. One syllable, that's all they are.

Abraham Lincoln said, "No matter how accurately a phrase or word expresses a speaker's meaning, it is worthless if the listeners do not know what it means." You could be absolutely theologically accurate, but they don't know what you said. You spend all that time preparing that sermon, you spent three days preparing the sermon, blood, sweat and tears getting the central thought of the passage, you did all of that. You did the outline, everything. You even worked it into 18 words. I mean, you did the whole thing. Then, you get up there and use these

words, and they're going, "What did he say?" I mean, that's sad.

I was with a pastor that was rushing to go to church and he has his Bible with notes from Genesis to Revelation. He puts it up on the car to put his coffee in the car and then drives off. I don't know where that Bible is. It's someplace in the streets of San Bernardino. I do not know where it is. Again, how tragic that is. That simple little thing—you didn't remember to grab it—causes you to lose something that was so important.

Abraham Lincoln says, "So that the most lowly can understand you and the rest will have no difficulty." If you go for the lowly, you go for those that if they get it, the rest will get it, then that's good. Jerry Vines says, "The success of a message depends on it being understood. If the message is not grasped, then all else is lost. Clarity has to be the beginning point and the most important point of style. This does not mean that you should talk down to a congregation, instead your rule of thumb should be don't underestimate you audience's religious vocabulary or underestimate their intelligence."

Secondly, is a direct and personal style. Speakers will use questions where writers may not. A question invites the listener to think about what the preacher will say next, and often it is used in a transition to introduce a major point or new idea. A couple of Sundays ago I was speaking on the reunion of Joseph and Jacob. It was 22 years. Of course, Joseph was given for dead. They brought back his garments torn up with blood on it, "An animal killed him." His dad never thought, of course, that he would see him again, and then he comes to Egypt and they have this reunion. Of course that reunion is just a picture of the future reunion that all of us are going to enjoy in heaven.

So, I asked the congregation, "Who do you look forward to being united with? Who is it?" So, I used a name, "Mrs. Allison is one I want to see. I want to see Mrs. Allison." No one knows who Mrs. Allison is. Let me explain. Back in '75, I moved to Texas. My whole family were Christians, and I said, "I'm outta here. I don't want to be around these Jesus freaks," so I moved to west Texas. My landlord was the widow of a pastor. Her name was Mrs. Allison. She was in her eighties, and she wore a dress with a tool belt around her dress. She had a hammer and carried a saw, amazing woman. I didn't even know how to work a microwave, and she would invite me over for dinner and always set up the tv trays in the living room. Guess who was on tv? Jimmy Swaggart. Mrs. Allison would invite me over, "Oh, come on." "No, no." "I'm not going to take no for an answer. You come over. I prepared dinner, come on." She really knew how to cook, so I would go there and sit there.

There was a Wednesday night and Mrs. Allison invited me to church, and I went to church and I received Jesus Christ in October of 1975. Two years later, I called her and spoke to her. Another year later or so, I went to call her, and she had gone to heaven. I want to tell Mrs. Allison, "Guess what, Mrs. Allison? I became a pastor. What you did was so important. You led me to the Lord. You loved me. You kept reaching out to me." So I said, "That's who I want to see when I get to heaven. I want to see Mrs. Allison."

You ask a question like this, “Who would you like to see when you get to heaven,” and “Who do you want to have a reunion with?” Any speech appropriate in lively conversation fits preaching. This doesn’t mean, of course, that anything goes. Poor grammar, gutter language or faulty pronunciations may unsettle listeners like a giggle in a prayer meeting. That’s inappropriate. All of these raise doubts about a preacher’s competence. Lloyd Perry observed the language the preacher employs should be contemporary, readily recognizable by the average man or woman. The phraseology used should be in terms of present needs and problems. Jesus Christ used a language of life that confronted people where they were, and then awakened positive response. The people always knew what He was talking about because He used terminology that was familiar to them. We all know this, you know, “Look at the lilies of the field, the sower and the seed,” they knew all of this. This is an agricultural area in Galilee. They knew this.

What about the use of slang? It gets mixed reviews. You know, “Vibing, doomer,” all these kind of trendy terms they use. I mean, every once in a while I’ll use a slang term because...do you ever get in the pulpit and you’re just so frustrated? I’m like so frustrated. It was Father’s Day and we went to Chili’s. We’re sitting there at Chili’s, and in comes this father with I think a two- and a three-year-old son. He sat next to us, and during the meal of about an hour, he’d drop F-bombs in front of his wife and his two children for about an hour. I walked out. I said, “This is so ghetto.” Then, I went off on, “I go to Walmart, and there’s people wearing pajamas. This is so ghetto!” Then, I went off on, “You guys that don’t open the car door for your wife, that’s ghetto.” Sometimes, every once in a while, you can use a slang word, and boy people go, “Hmmm.” They get their attention.

It’s funny. One of the girls in our church had to drop her husband off and he forgot his credit card. She had to run in her pajamas, and one of our pastors was there. Boy, she never forgot that one, wearing pajamas into Walmart. She got caught.

Thirdly, a vivid style. To get your listeners to experience your message, therefore, you must appeal to their senses. You do this directly through both sight and sound. Your congregation sees your gestures, your facial expressions, and they hear what you say. You must stimulate the senses indirectly through your use of words. Your vividness increases when you use specific concrete details and plenty of them. He goes on and says, which I think is a good idea, if you’re going to use the word, “I went to the grocery store to buy produce,” he suggests, “I went to buy cabbages, I went to buy cucumbers, I went to buy carrots,” or “I went to buy oranges.” You say, “The individual, with a weapon, killed my next door neighbor.” You would use a heavy lead pipe. You bean them with a heavy lead pipe. You say, “ Oh, you know, one of the major cities in the United States.” You would say Chicago, Dallas, San Francisco. You just use a name then it kind of draws people and they go, “Oh, I know that place. Yeah, you’re right. That’s a large, large city.”

Metaphors and similes like lobsters must be served fresh, not stale. Outdated phrases, okay, here we go, “long story short,” “knocked it out of the park,” “the one-two punch,” “been there, done that.” Okay, let me use some of the newer ones, “This is unprecedented.” I am so tired of

that phrase, "This is unprecedented." How about this one, "This is so surreal." Oh, here's my favorite one, "That's a threat to democracy." "Oh, let's circle back." Or, how about this one, "That's authentic," or "the end of the day." These terms get used so much.

While we speak the eternal message, it must be in today's words. Now, one of the things he suggests, I don't think it's a bad idea, study magazine ads or radio or television commercials for easily understood language that speaks to the inhabitants of our culture.

So, how can you shun the sin of boring people? First, pay attention to your own use of language. Watch how you converse with people. Watch how others converse with you. Make sure that you're engaged when you're talking to them. Look them in the eye. Talk to them. Look at them. Don't be looking at the ground kicking the concrete. I mean, look at how you're communicating. Look how they're communicating to you.

Study how others use language. I think when we listen to other messages, we listen to podcasts, we watch other people, we listen to how they do it and we go, "Wow, I like that. I like how he said that. I like how he did that." I think listening to others preach is a wonderful thing, especially if you're a pastor, you're always giving out, you want to be fed yourself. It's a good thing to listen to others and see how they handled the passage, how they said it.

And then read aloud. This is interesting. I don't know how many of us do this, reading aloud does two things for you. First, your vocabulary will increase. As youngsters, we learn to speak by listening and imitating you long before we could read or write. Reading aloud re-creates that experience. Secondly, as you read aloud a style better than your own, new patterns of speech, and creative wording will be etched in your mind. You will develop a feel for picture-making language. Okay, that's chapter 9. I can't believe we just did chapter 9.

Now we're in chapter 10, "How To Preach So People Will Listen." Now, this is interesting. I like this statement. Most books on preaching say a great deal about the development of the sermon but little about its delivery. Now, that's a problem, isn't it? Because if you spend all of your time putting the message together, and then you crash and burn on delivery, what good was it all? I mean, this is a good point. Don't agree with everything, but I mean it's something to think about, and every one of us may apply it. The reflection in the way that we preach while ministers spend hours every week on the sermon construction, they seldom give even a few hours a year to thinking about their delivery. Your sermons do not come into the world as outlines or manuscripts, they live only when they are preached, so it's no good just sitting here, you've got to say it, right? You have to say what you prepared.

The effectiveness of our sermons depends on two factors: what we say, and how we say it. Both are important. In order of significance, the ingredients of making up the sermon are thought, arrangement, language, voice, and gesture. In the priority of impressions, however, the order is reversed, gestures and voice emerge as the most obvious and determinative part of preaching. Your delivery matters a great deal.

The writer of Proverbs underscores the power of nonverbal communication when he observed in Proverbs 6:12-14. Listen to this. “A worthless person, a wicked man, is one who walks with a”—false—“mouth, 13 Who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers; 14 Who, with perversion in his heart, continually devises evil, who spreads strife.” It’s not so much what he’s saying, it’s what he’s doing. He’s signaling, he’s pointing, he’s doing quite the opposite. So, first, our nonverbal language has strategic importance in public speaking. He gives the example. In fact, our actions may often be more expressive than our words; to place the finger on the lips says more than be quiet.

Edward T. Hall sums up the finding of social scientists when he observes, in addition to what we say with our verbal language, we are constantly communicating our real feelings in our silent language, the language of behavior.

Secondly, both research and experience agree that if nonverbal messages contradict the verbal, listeners will more likely believe the silent language. I’ll give you an example. Some years ago, I used to go to India all the time. I’ve been to India like probably 25 times. The flight is basically a 25-hour flight. Sometimes you break it up, but basically at the end of the day it’s like a 25-hour flight. I came back. This woman really wanted to talk to me, so I’m sitting there talking to her and she noted that during my conversation, which she was telling me was important, I yawned three times. She said to me, and I quote, “Pastor Terry, I’m sorry if I’m boring you.” Now, she wasn’t, and I said, “Please forgive me. I just came back from India, for two weeks I will be yawning. It doesn’t matter if I’m talking to the President, I’m going to yawn. That’s just the way it is. It’s no reflection on what you’re saying, what you’re saying is really important, and I like what you’re saying, it’s just that I’m just not used to the time change.” She picked up on that and she thought that because I was yawning, I wasn’t interested in what she had to say. Now, we can do the same thing. We get up to the pulpit, we yawn, we’re like this, you know, “Oh, it was a rough night,” you know. And, people are picking up on this. They’re thinking, Wow, I hope pastor has something to say. He doesn’t look like he had a good night. Man, it’s like a rotisserie night in bed all night. I don’t know.

Thirdly, observation about effective delivery is that it begins with desires. If we are excited about our passage, it’s going to come through us. You’re excited. You love what you’re going to say. It’s going to come through. If you don’t like it, that’s going to come through. It’s just going to come through. It’s going to be there. When we concentrate on ideas with the desire to make listeners understand and accept them, strong delivery just comes naturally. It just does because we’re excited about it. Saying that public delivery resembles conversation, however, does not mean that our ordinary ways of speaking are necessarily our best ways.

I’ve seen some speakers come up, and they’re like this. They stuff their hands into their front pockets, and they’re like this. And, that’s fine, if we’re out there having coffee. That’s fine. But at the pulpit to be doing this, I mean, come on. That is saying a lot, it really is; and they’re sitting there fidgeting with their goatee, and they’re a female, I’m just kidding. This is Southern California, land of fruits and nuts, but they’re doing that. They’re shuffling their feet, and kind of looking down. It’s like, what’re you doing? In the pulpit, therefore the movement of your body

must be disciplined to be effective. It needs to be disciplined. At first attempts to improve your delivery will feel unnatural. Novices may insist that they should abandon any effort because a minister is not an actor.

Someone says, "You know, pastor, I noticed that when you're teaching you have your hands in your pockets, that just seems kind of disrespectful." "Well, that's just the way I am. I don't know if I can change that." You're being stubborn. You need to knock it off. If someone says they don't like it, knock it off. It's not a big deal, pull your hands out of your pockets. ("That's just the way I am. That's just how I talk. That's just the type of communicator I am."

Now, this is fun. What are some nonverbal factors in delivery to which we should give our attention? Okay, here we go, grooming and dress. First Corinthians 9:22, "To the weak, I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some." Paul established a basic strategy for Christian communication. In matters of moral indifference, what matters most is not your feelings, but the feelings and attitudes of others. Because grooming and dress make a difference in how listeners respond to us, they should make a difference to us as well. You may not care about what you wear because you say, "Hey, I want to be comfortable," and we'll talk about that. But if it bothers other people, and it does, then we need to change. A fundamental rule of grooming and dress is that you should fit the audience, the situation, and the speaker.

Years ago, we had a local mortuary in our town. People were dying all the time, so I was going in there, and they finally said, "You know, Pastor Hlebo, we love the way you give the message and stuff, can we ask a question? Would you be willing to do funerals for people that don't have a pastor and don't have a church?" I said, "Yeah, I'm open to it, if it will work with my schedule." They said, "Because we would really like to use you in that way." And, I was used a lot. One day, one of the funeral directors said, "I've got to tell you something, Pastor Terry, I'm amazed at how you dress." I had a tie, a long-sleeved shirt, and a sport coat. I thought, Okay, how am I dressed? He said, "A lot of pastors come in wearing jeans and polo shirts." Now, any of you that have recently been to funerals, funerals are a mixed bag, but I would say there a quite a few people that wear suits, so what in the world are you dressed to go on the golf course. I mean, what is that? I think it's bad. I don't think it's good. I mean, come on, at least wear a long-sleeved Oxford shirt with a tie. I mean, you can do that. We need to dress that way. We need to dress appropriately.

I know of a church, the pastor went in on a Sunday with holes in his jeans. I don't care if that's the style, and I don't care if they're Diesel jeans that cost \$400, that's ghetto. That's slang, by the way. That's ghetto. I don't care if the young people are doing it, you're 60, so you know what, you need to get over it. That's insanity. I know one pastor used to come in, it looked like he had pulled his shirt out of the hamper and decided, "I'll wear it again," pulls it out, it's all wrinkled, and he would show up Sunday morning with a t-shirt that was wrinkled with jeans and chucks. Unbelievable. It's so ghetto.

A program of regular exercise and proper diet can trim off excess pounds that sometimes

hinder communication. Okay, that's not bad. Oh, you'll love this one. Good grooming also includes the use of deodorants, toothpaste, and breath fresheners. Get a clue. I mean, it's so bad you've got to say this. You've got to comb your hair, you've got to put on BO juice, you've got to put on deodorant. You've got to brush your teeth. Here it is, while we may dress to be conformable, clothes should make others comfortable with us as well. Remember Paul says, "I'll just go the extra mile because of them." We need to be aware of culture expectations of our community and then dress appropriately.

As a general rule, a public speaker will dress one notch higher than the audience. A woman speaker, for example, may wear a skirt while women in the audience wear slacks or jeans. A male speaker may wear a tie when men in the audience are wearing sport shirts. In most Sunday services, a suit for a man or a woman is appropriate. Now, I don't do it all the time, but I wear sport coats. I always, always, always, always, and this is just me, and I learned it from Pastor Don McClure. I was under him for five years, and I've watched him. Always wear a long-sleeved Oxford shirt. Always wear dress slacks with dress shoes. I don't wear \$200 white tennis shoes; I don't wear those. I know that's kind of another trendy thing. You've got these pastors watering \$1100-1200 sneakers on Sunday morning with their jeans and everything else. But, to wear a dress shirt and slacks, that's just me, and that's what I do. I just feel like I need to be up a notch. You know, there's people coming in with flip flops and bathing suits, so I want to be a notch above that is what I want to do.

Movement and gestures, God designed the human body to move. If your congregation wants to look at a statue, they can go to a museum. That's great. Here are the basic principles for movement and gestures and content should motivate. First, sometimes you need to move. I know some pastors get up and they move around. I know John does that. I love this podium. I hate these, they always keep going up here and go down here. And, the lapel ones, I sound like I'm talking from a trash can. This is wonderful. I don't move all around. I do move a little bit, but I don't move all over the place. But you want to move around, you don't want them to think, Is he breathing? He just turned 69, is he breathing?

Secondly, content should motivate movement also means that some speakers should move less. Gestures maintain interest and hold attention. Gestures also help listeners experience what we feel as they identify with us. I used the illustration the other day. I was coming out of an elevator. You know, everybody here knows elevator etiquette, right? When you come to an elevator, you let people exit before you go in, right? I had a woman almost knocked me down. I was stepping out, and she literally just, the door opened and she ran through as I was coming out. I was almost like blocking. That'd be a point in which I, "Whoa!" Then, again, I used the word ghetto, that we need to learn how to get into an elevator, how to get out of an elevator, and all that.

You see a woman carrying boxes and you stand there and go, Is she going to make it? Is she going to make it? How about helping her. I see this on a plane. We're on a plane, and here's a woman trying to lift the carry-on and all the guys are going, Is she going to do it or not? I get out of my seat and, "Here's such a gentleman," boy your bar is low. Just help her do it. I mean,

I'm mad.

Okay, here are four characteristics of expressive gestures. First, spontaneous gestures, you spontaneously, "My son was running through the doors," and I went like this, putting your hands over your eyes. This person says, "Pastor, guess what I said?" And you go, like this? These are all different ways that we can do that. Secondly, definite gestures should also be definite when you make a gesture, don't go half-hearted. Thirdly, varied gestures, repetition of the same one gets old. Fourthly, properly-timed gestures, a good gesture either accompanies or precedes the word of a phrase that carries and so forth.

Okay, this is so important, eye contact. This might be actually one of the most important areas of preaching because when you're saying something and you look at the audience and you see people going, you're probably not hitting the mark and you may need to say, "Let me explain what I mean by sanctification." Then, after you say it they go, they got it! You're watching them. You're looking over our audience, and they're on their iPads checking to see if their Amazon package came, and you see you're not getting their attention, so you just say, "Hey, guess what happened to me yesterday." When you're watching the audience, you can do that. You can kind of see where they're at. They're fidgety.

I know one of the things that I love making eye contact at funeral services because there are people that will sit and face that wall and they're letting you know, "I don't want to be here. I am only here because she's my mom. That's the only reason I'm here." So, speaking to them, I say, "You know, there's folks that don't want to be here this morning. I didn't plan on being here," because you can see the crowd, you see how they're responding.

Vocal delivery, speech consists of more than words and sentences. Your voice conveys ideas and feelings apart from words. Listeners make judgments about your physical and emotional state whether you are frightened, angry, fatigued, sick, happy, confident based on the tremor of your voice. Other speakers muffle their sound by speaking with a tight jaw, lazy tongue, or clenched teeth. Open your mouth when you speak, open it wide. There's some people, I know some of the sound guys here would say, "They're hard to mic." They're just hard (mumbling). Speakers, on the other hand, emphasize what they say only four ways, by a variety in pitch, punch, progress, and pause. Use of these, or a combination of them, becomes the punctuation of speech. It is a variety of these elements that makes delivery interesting.

Again, there are some pastors, I have such a hard time listening to, they're so animated. I don't know about you, I just don't like that. They're acting out Peter and they're screaming, "Oh, God! I'm going to die!" They're going on, and I'm going, If I had Prozac, I would take it right now. I would do it. I don't know about you, I don't like that. That's just not me, and I know there are some people that like that. They love acting out the sermon and voices shrill, and then it's loud and then it's this and it's that. By the time the end of the sermon, I'm just like worn out.

Pitch involves the movement of the voice up and down the scale, in different registers, with various inflections. Sometimes changes in pitch are called melody. Monopitch drones us to

sleep or wears upon us like a child pounding on the same note on the piano. We have one guy I used to listen to. He used to say, "Point in case, case in point." Every paragraph ended with that.

Punch, variations in punch or loudness can achieve both interest and emphasis. A change in volume communicates the relative importance of ideas. Again, we can do that. Now, this is important. In the past centuries, preachers had to shout in order to be heard. Today, with effective public address systems, shouting is no longer necessary or even desirable. Does anybody here like to be yelled at? I got saved in the Assemblies of God. The pastor walked the pews, and he was yelling. I know one thing, you didn't go to sleep. He may have walked on you, you know?

Progress, you can achieve emphasis through changing the progress or rate of your delivery. Sometimes in the summer you're looking down at your notes and say, "Oh, quickly, turn over to 1 Corinthians 13, for just a moment, just real quickly." And, right away, "Oh, that's different," and quick just run over there. You're just kind of changing it up a little bit. Some speakers have gained a bad reputation for speaking too rapidly, but their problem may be that they fail to vary their rate.

Pause, I did this the other day and it was amazing. I just stopped for maybe five seconds. Now, that seems like a lot. I mean, I just paused for a second and just looked. People were going. It's amazing what a simple little pause can do. If you're not used to it, you just constantly talking, talking, talking, talking, and all of the sudden you stop and you go, and they're going, He's trying to think. It's fun to watch someone on their feet. It's fun to see this. He says many speakers are afraid of silence. They do not have enough self-control to pause for long, so they fill their sermons with word whiskers such as, "Er," "Uh," "So," "Ah," or "Amen," "Praise God." Those are all fillers. It's like putting peas in goulash. They put the fillers in. There is nothing quite as engaging as watching someone think on their feet. A few speakers misuse the technique by pausing too long and sounding melodramatic.

Rehearsal, rehearse your sermon before you deliver it. Again, we've talked about this the second time now. Again, I don't say it out loud. I don't look in a mirror, but I do go over my notes. Every Sunday morning I get to the church around 6:15, first service is at 8:30 and 10:30. I go in there and I take out my pen, I have a yellow marker, I have a pink marker, and the most important things get hit with pink. That gets my attention. The yellow is something I definitely have to say. So, I'm all done with my sermon, I start writing notes. I start writing little things next to it, and add this to it, make this little thought, and do this so that when I get all done, though I thought I had it done, it's not done because now I've got all these other additional marks, and I have these little notations that I have. Rehearsing also improves delivery, and it does because you may not be saying out loud, but you're saying it in your mind.

While preachers are more than actors, they should not be less. Effective delivery must be practiced because you cannot think about delivery much as you speak. The good habits acquired in your preparation will come more easily in the pulpit.

Lastly, feedback. I've only done this probably just a few times. I have a hard time trying to watch myself. I don't like doing it, and I know that he recommends it, and I know it would be beneficial, God help me. I don't want to watch myself. The thing is, some love watching themselves. I don't like watching myself, but it could be beneficial and people will give feedback, that would be a wonderful thing, "You know, Pastor, I noticed that you were leaning on the pulpit, I noticed that you were doing this." Take that to heart. That's wonderful that someone would even say that to us.

The conclusion is, be yourself. Don't try and be somebody else. We are all unique persons that God wants to shine through, that's the point.