

Exploring New Listeners

I. Presuppositions of Apologetic/Evangelistic Preaching in a Postmodern Era:

A. Churched

1. Increasingly biblically and doctrinally naïve (characterized by lack of basic knowledge of Scripture and doctrine among most, but also by overly simplistic and zealous categorization of doctrine and practice in some).
2. Divided generationally between those wanting the church to speak to moral, political agendas and those wanting the church to address mercy, justice issues.
3. Evangelicals attend church based mostly on whether they think the Bible is preached and the pastor is perceived as warm, cordial in the pulpit (little denominational loyalty unless previous experience in a denomination with high membership obligations).
4. Strong opinions/preferences regarding worship style (mainly determined by music) not based on discernable Scriptural principles.
5. Strong desire for community relationships but little interest in committing significant energies or time to community building or leading.
6. Likeliest to stop regular church involvement in college years; and most likely to re-engage when children come, but fewer will re-engage than were engaged prior to college.
7. Overall lifestyle, career, financial, marriage, family and entertainment choices will vary little from surrounding culture (PCA pastors will most address issues of morality, materialism and family).
8. Little understanding of the redemptive nature of Scripture or the power of the Gospel to transform individuals and culture.

B. Unchurched

1. Increasingly biblically ignorant, but believe in God (who is generally in charge of things, can be called upon when trouble comes, and will judge really bad people while being gracious to those who are “basically good”).
2. Religion in general perceived as the cause of intolerance and tension, although appreciation for individuals who are sincerely religious, merciful and not judgmental.
3. Pluralistic in religious understanding; no consistent worldview.
4. Pop culture immersed; experiential, visual, narrative learners.
5. Suspicious of authority, science, logic and power; desiring life anchors but lacking confidence of absolute truth.
6. Little or no worship style preference.
7. Residual moral compass regarding integrity in business interactions and fidelity “within” marriage, but it can easily shift for personal advantage.
8. Longing for deep relationships but often scarred and distrusting.

II. Preaching that Connects to the Postmodern Churched and Unchurched

- A. Biblical (The authority and power of the Spirit reside in the Word; rightly handled it is the power of God beyond any human means or wisdom. Enablers: accurate exegesis, clear structure, frequent Bible reference)
- B. Personal (Enablers: an identifiable FCF, personal HIA's, redemptive vulnerability, appropriate cultural referents, and inductive structures)
- C. Addresses Pain ("The preacher shouldn't be the only one who fails to see the waves are 12' high"; provide Gospel hope. Enablers: identifiable FCF, personal illustrations, sensitive applications, topical sermons – see example)
- D. Gives Clear Direction Regarding Life Issues (Enablers: clear application, interrogatives for points, inductive methods, topical-expository messages)
- E. Strong Narrative Component (Enablers: FCF, redemptive method, illustrations, illustrating the applications, narrative structures)
- F. Redemptive (providing the hope of the Gospel with the humility that comes from knowing that all is of Him. Enablers: redemptive/historical method, exposing grace principles in all Scriptures, avoiding the Deadly Be's alone, making God the hero of every text, showing where every text stands in relation to Christ's person/work, making love for Christ the motivation and enablement of application.)
- G. Anticipates and Addresses Objections without Animosity or Ridicule (Enablers: humility of a grace message, using interrogatives and questions for propositions and main points, commending the integrity of honest questions, asking questions listeners would ask in dialogue with the message – and answering with gentleness and respect.)
- H. Lifts to a Higher Goal than Self (Enablers: calls to selfless service, expression of compassion toward opponents, unambiguous stand for truth and righteousness -- with humility)
- I. Designed for Oral Context (Enablers: use of repetition, key terms, motifs, controlling images, colloquial expression, conversational speech, cultural referents, tonal cues, pause, boldness – see following pages on "Orality")
- J. Without jargon or pretence (Prepare for the unchurched *before* they are present by being willing to say profound things simply rather than making complexity the mark of orthodoxy. Enablers: Radical excision of all church jargon, locating Bible references by page #, and careful definition of terms needed for expression of faith, e.g. salvation, sin, justification, etc.)

III. General Principles of Evangelistic Preaching

- A. We are calling for a verdict/response; not merely informing
- B. We must make sure the following are clearly articulated:
 - Christ's Work
 - Human Need
 - Personal Response Required (faith and repentance)
- C. We need the following to be truly effective:
 - Fervor w/ biblical authority and love
 - Prayer for the Work of the Holy Spirit

IV. Distinctives of Evangelistic Preaching

A. Differences for Informed and Uninformed

1. Challenge the uninformed with "Felt Needs" for point of contact; then, lead to biblical needs and biblical promises that require a faith response.
2. Challenge the informed with inconsistencies or "non-dependables" (i.e., idols they are trusting that are sure to fail such as baptism, success, relationships, etc.), or untrustworthiness of other hopes (e.g. "I'm basically a good person").

◇ Uninformed must be informed as well as called to repentance (e.g. Men of Athens). Informed must be touched with inconsistencies or "non-dependables" and called to repentance (e.g. Woman at the Well).

B. Commonalities for Informed and Uninformed

1. Tell all exactly what they must do — make sure the truths and requirements of the Cross are plain.
2. Try to anticipate what people do not understand (e.g. Make clear what repentance requires. "Trust in Jesus as your Savior," may mean something quite different than you intend if "trust" and "Savior" have not been explained. Say precisely what prayer should be prayed. Tell exactly what is expected and what will happen during an invitation, or later private commitment.)

◇ For all times and places: Beginning with a clear FCF gives every sermon opportunity to be evangelistic because it requires a Christ-dependent response.

V. Keys to Preaching Effectiveness in a “Conversational” Culture (Orality Principles)

A. Provide a Path for the Ear

1. Signal Importance with Repetition

- Echo key words, phrases or motifs (especially helpful if kept brief)
 - Repeat *words* for emphasis (Holy, Holy...)
 - Repeat *phrases* for idea development (God’s word is ... see below)
 - Repeat *motifs* for theme development (Christ and Ceasar met ...)
- Alliteration {most abused tool} can warp and cliché, but still powerful
 - 1. *Those God calls he claims.*
 - 2. *Those God claims he corrects.*
 - 3. *Those God corrects he cleanses.*
- Parallel Phrasing with vocal cues to signal new ideas {most used tool}
 - 1. *God's Word is "powerful."*
 - 2. *God's Word is "law."*
 - 3. *God's Word is "love."*
- “Term Consistency” (expositional rain) to knit idea/organization together
 - Illustrate what you explain using the same key terms
 - Apply what you explain using the same key terms

2. Provide Directions with Recognizable Symbols

- a. Use Cultural Referents (using what is familiar in culture to capture the ear)
 - i. Bible (most common shared literary referent 50 years ago)
 - ii. Commercials (most common shared literary referent today)
 - iii. Pop Songs (second most common shared literary referent today)
- b. Create New Referents
 - i. Coined Words, Rhyme or Word Play to create "mental hooks"
 - ii. Neologisms "Be-attitudes" or "Therefore"="there for"
 - iii. Puns- I Pet. 1: 23 "You have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God."

3. Lead with Questions (create a “dialogue” by asking questions, esp. transitions)

B. Turn the Ear into the Eye

- Use Imagistic Language
 1. *Satan's ways are a web.*
 2. *Satan's pleasures are a trap.*
 3. *Satan's promises are a cliff.*
- Provide Controlling Images

A Brief Guide for a Topical Message

Advanced Homiletics

What is a Topical Message?

A topical message gets its main idea from a text, but that subject is developed and divided according to its nature rather than according to the nature of a single passage. The divisions and development of the subject may be drawn from other texts or even from other sources than Scripture. For example, a sermon on how our country should respond to abortion might have an entire main point dealing with how our country has dealt with abortion in the past. This main point would not be derived from Scripture, but would be used in the development of the subject that would ultimately be addressed by a text (or texts) dealing with the sanctity of life.

In contrast to an expository message, a topical message uses the primary text only to obtain the proposition (i.e., main subject or theme). The content of the message could be derived from many different passages of Scripture or sources outside of Scripture (e.g., surveys, historical trends, contemporary observations). Still the sermon intends to bring the truth of Scripture to bear upon a particular subject but not necessarily through the direct development of the starting text or a single text. The sermon has biblical authority as the various texts are expounded and accurately related to the topic.

A Sample Outline for a Topical Message

Text: Lamentations 3:23, " His compassions never fail. . . they are new every morning, great is your faithfulness."

Introduction

- Introduces concept and terminology by human interest account (From the Bible or life, told with "lived-body detail")
- Introduces a Fallen Condition Focus from the Text
- Introduces the Proposition

Example: Offer a story of faithfulness amid trial or of turning for help to something that can't help us. Then note that the people in our illustrative story are like the people in the text. We too face these difficulties or temptations. We doubt that we can turn to God. Believers doubt because . . . Those outside of the church doubt because . . . Both need to know why we should turn to God amid trial?

Proposition: God remains faithful even through our trials.

Analytical Question: Why should we trust God's faithfulness in our trials?

{Note: In an Inductive Sermon such a question could serve as the Proposition}

First Main Point: God never leaves us alone

(state, place, prove)

- *Text:* 2 Timothy 4:16-17, "At my first defense no one stood with me . . .but the Lord stood by my side and gave me strength . . ."
- *Explanation:* Paul's situation, what it means that the Lord stood with him and strengthened him. Cross reference: Psalm 23, "He prepares a table in the presence of my enemies."
- *Illustration:*
- *Application:* God standing with Paul teaches us that we can trust God in our times of trial? How are we like Paul? Instruction? Correction? Rebuke? Encourage?

Transition: God shows his faithfulness by standing with his people when they are left alone.

Analytical Question: But why should I trust God's faithfulness if I depart from him?

Second main point: God never lets us go

(state, place, prove)

- *Text:* Luke 22:31-32, "Satan has asked to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your strength may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."
- *Explanation:* Peter's situation. How Christ holds on to Peter despite denial.
- *Illustration:* Lived body detail.
- *Application:* God never lets go. What instruction does God's relating to Peter give us? How are we like Peter? How does Christ's relation to Peter here correct us, rebuke us? What encouragement does Christ's relation to Peter here offer us? (categories of hearers, hard-hearted/soft-hearted; believer/unbeliever)

Transition Question: Why should we trust God's faithfulness when life makes no sense?

Third Main point: God's grace never fails

Text: I Corinthians 12:8-9

OR

God's Faithfulness Demonstrates His Sovereign Care

- *Text:* Job 1
- *Illustration:*
- *Application:*

Conclusion: Summarize and end, with a human interest story from the Bible or life, and pointing us to God's faithfulness.