

Preaching Christ in a Post-Modern World

Notes on Lecture 12

Applying Christ: Getting Inside Their World Part One

By Tim Keller

Methods for writing application

1) Discipline who you spend time with

The application of a sermon should change in style depending on the people who are hearing the sermon.

You tend to preach to the people who are most on your heart. Some evangelical leaders preach sermons for other evangelical preachers because they are immersed in the thinking of the culture of evangelical leaders. Deliberately diversify preaching to the context of the people. Speak to non-Christians. Understand how they think, in what categories? Address the needs of the culture in sermons. Entice Christians to bring non-Christians by preaching to non-Christians using their language and culture. Preach to people who aren't in the room.

Preach like this "God is wrathful. God is angry at sin. I know some of you find that hard to understand but consider this...."

The easiest way to think about the concerns of non-Christians is to read content written by people who disagree with you. The best way to do this is by reading magazines. Read articles that reflect the viewpoints of people who are on the street.

Make sure you spend time with a variety of non-Christians and Christians who disagree with you.

2) Think in lists of people

What does this text say to: mature Christians, non-Christians, backsliding, sceptics etc

If you put application at the end of a sermon you can lose peoples attention. Collect application near the end whilst applying the text throughout the sermon.

3) Create an inter-sermon dialogue

Ask direct questions that you answer in your own sermons.

Don't say "many people twist truth to look good", say: "How many of you know this past week that you've twisted the truth to look good?". Turning statements into questions helps people to engage.

4) Anticipate objections

This comes from spending time with people who don't agree with you.

5) Don't pass by the pliable moment

Sometimes when preaching you realise that you have the audience's attention.

6) Let the text control you rather than your temperament

If you're a naturally affectionate person, you'll love to speak about God's love. If you are a harder person, you'll tend to speak about God's authority and truth. Reach for having a forceful affection.

If you're always encouraging and not warning, your people will eventually stop growing. The reverse is also true.

Don't always keep the same tone; change your tone with the text.

How to enter and change a worldview

You need to sprinkle apologetics into your sermon. Practise presupposition apologetics in preaching. This takes a persons view of the world, enters in and then challenges it. Drill a deep hole into the worldview and plant the dynamite!

1) Gaining plausibility with language

People are not going to listen unless you learn to speak their language. If you make people work too hard on deciphering your language people get exhausted and tune out.

2) Gaining plausibility with non-verbal communication

The sing-song ministerial voice of Scotland and Wales work fine in Scotland and Wales but not in England. Britts like the conversational style. English people don't like a rhetorical grand style. Don't sound like a politician or a salesman.

3) Enter the worldview

To enter a worldview means to know it, to show sympathy for it, and to identify with the parts that you can as a Christian.

a) Know the culture

Prove to the people that you know their worldview well. Use illustrations that are relevant, quote their lyrics, watch their TV shows, read their papers, speak to the people.

b) Sympathise with the culture

Don't just say "this is just the way it is". Show people that their worldview is destructive and wrong bringing spiritual death. Show sensitivity.

c) Move from the right known thing to the right un-known thing

The post-modern person loves grace and forgiveness (maybe not the concepts but certainly the words!). By common grace, right spiritual culture overlaps post-modern culture. Find the truths that they affirm. Start by entering the worldview (drilling the hole).

Eg talking to secular kids about sex. "The Bible is pro-sex and love. God is for good sex." Then, start speaking about the culture perversion of sexuality.

Show the incompatibility of the worldview. Show how justice must exist alongside grace. Show that forgiveness can only happen when sin is offensive.

Provide a new view of God while explaining the cost and reward of changing.