

Preaching on Purpose

Ezekiel 37:1-10

Now that is powerful, transformational preaching! This is a pretty extreme example, but there is an amazing power whenever a prophet or prophetess delivers God's message in the right way at the right time! I'm convinced that there's **nothing we do that can transform more individual lives & transform an entire ministry more than preaching God's Word.**

Consider the power of the **written** word of God. God inspired his message in written form for a reason. In the bible, we have the eternal, inspirational, unstoppable, unchangeable truth of God.

But as amazing as the written word is, **it becomes even more transformational when it's preached. And that was God's plan all along.**

Consider some of these Scriptures. 1st, from Jesus:

John 12:49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say & how to say it. I love this. Even though **J was the very word of God, he still needed direction from the Father ~ not only what to say, but how to say it.**

John 7:46 No one ever spoke the way this man does, the guards replied. They'd all heard countless Rabbis & teachers...but they'd never heard anyone speak like J His preaching rallied a crowd & riveted their attention.

John 8:30 Even as he spoke, many believed in him. The direct & immediate result of J preaching was faith.

Paul: **Acts 14:1** At Iconium Paul & Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews & Greeks believed. Why did a great number of people believe? Because they prayed? Because of their relationships? I'm certainly not discounting either of those things...but the bible says the reason a great number of people believed was **because they spoke so effectively.** What if they hadn't spoken so effectively that day?

Peter: **1 Pt 4:11** If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God.

Our purpose as preachers of God's Word is to speak in a manner that not only **doesn't undermine** the power of God's word, but that **actually unleashes** it!

Today we want to talk ~ **6 practical keys** that can help us to do just that—so we can be the **most effective & successful preachers** we can possibly be.

We're going to go really fast today, cause so much to share. Really, this is a 4 hour workshop so buckle up & don't imitate how much we're cramming into such a short period of time.

(5 mins)

The 1st key

1. **Passion (John: 2 min)**

Probably the most important key to effective preaching is your passion behind it. Considering everything I just shared in the intro—we should be super passionate & excited whenever we have the opportunity to preach.

We're not just trying to fill a sermon slot or avoid embarrassment—we have the distinct honor & privilege of preaching the living, enduring, word of the Almighty God. **Wow!!!**

Even apart from any of the actual words you share, *your passion to wield the sword of the Spirit is what people will feel & be moved by & stirred by.*

By being passionate ~ preaching & by preaching w/passion, *you can actually impart your passion for God into the hearts of your audience.* It really does rub off on them.

Didn't we all experience that last night w/ Turek?

I've known evangelists in the past who would regularly copy entire sermons from denominational websites. Honestly, that really troubled me. It's not that those sermons were bad, but *How low is your passion for God's Word when you're poaching it rather than preaching it?*

Now, there are a lot of ways we Preach the Word: D time, D group, BT, Leaders Meeting, Testimony, Welcome, Communion, Campus Devo, Midweek, Sunday sermon...but the *passion* to share God's word should be the *same regardless of the setting* & the *same* regardless of the size of the audience—*whether speaking to 5 or 5000.*

(Barri share—5 mins)

2. Preparation (John: 3 mins)

As ministers, nothing we do impacts more people in less time than preaching. Of all our responsibilities, preaching gives you the biggest bang for your buck. It's worth investing a lot of time in preparation.

Consider this:

*If you have an audience of 100 & preach for 30 minutes...50 total man hrs given to you,
How much time in preparation is that worth?

*Research has shown that preaching is the #1 reason guests return to a church.
How much time in preparation is that worth?

*God's Word is either made *appealing & impacting* or *boring & bland* based on your preaching.
How much time in preparation is that worth?

I'd venture to say one of the greatest weaknesses in preaching in our fellowship is insufficient preparation

There are probably a lot of diff't reasons behind that. *Maybe:*

- ~We're "overly spiritual" & think only God's Words matter & ours don't;
- ~We don't schedule sermon preparation in our calendars.
- ~We don't realize how much better our sermons would be if we did invest > time.
- ~We just don't know how to invest the time in preparation.

The fact is, like any endeavor, the more time you spend preparing & practicing, the better your preaching will be.

So how much time in prep is enough? Practically, it's difficult to quantify as every preacher is diff't.

- ~For me right now, after preaching full time for 35 yrs,
Normal Sunday: ~10 hrs/sermon, including powerpoint
Sometimes it's double that.
Wed or Thurs (5 hrs), Fri or Sat (3 hrs), Sun (2 hrs)
Conference or Workshop lesson: more like 30 or more.

One thing that really helps my preparation is preaching sermon series—I almost always preach in sermon series.

- ~Usually 6-8 weeks long—some topical, some expository
- ~Helps me focus my preparation & prepare way in advance
- ~Reduces the stress & time spent wondering what to preach on
- ~Allows me to go a lot deeper in the study
- ~Creates a sense of anticipation w/in the audience.

(Barri share—4 mins)

3. Organization (6 mins)

As professional speakers, it's really important that we learn how to craft our sermons in a manner that's understandable, memorable, & reproducible.

Some speakers have a decent message, but it's just not very well developed. It's more just a collection of good thoughts loosely tied together. It probably made perfect sense to the preacher when they were writing it, but it just wasn't purposefully, deliberately constructed, so it's difficult for the audience to follow it...& the impact is significantly lessened.

Other speakers are really compelling & engaging; they produce a great experience for the audience... but later on you can't really summarize what they talked about; you can't even really remember it; & you definitely can't reproduce it & pass it on to others.

Again, our goal is to organize the message in a way that makes it understandable, memorable, & reproducible. I want to give you a few tips to help with that.

First, Create an effective outline

Handout gives a bunch of info ~ how to do this, on the Climb Conf website.

I want to encourage you to go over that handout closely. Be careful not think you already know how to create an effective outline; don't gloss over it. VERY few people outline their sermons well. The way you develop your message, from title, to main points, to content within a point makes a huge difference in the impact of the sermon.

In the NT you can see both great examples of this & not so great examples.

Paul's letters are super well organized—esp. Romans...
or also the writer of Hebrews

Whereas Peter, awesome as he was, was just all over the map in his letters.

In addition to outlining, another tip to help w/ organization is:

Write out your sermons

Writing them out word for word can help you make every word & phrase count; it forces you to cut out the fluff. You may not want to do that every time...but it really helps to do it periodically cause it trains you how to organize your thoughts well.

And a tip if you do that—write like a speaker not as an author; consider how others will hear it, not how they'd read it

Use contractions & informal words

And another, helpful & under utilized tip is:

Become a Wordsmith

Your word selection can make a huge difference in making the sermon understandable & memorable & reproducible.

Don't get "overly" spiritual & think that word smithing is a gimmick & doesn't matter—it absolutely matters.

We see some great examples of this w/J: [Like Mt 10: I am sending you](#) out like sheep amongst wolves, so be as shrewd as snakes & as innocent as doves...

We also see it in Paul's letters. Consider Eph 6 when he asks for the church to pray for his outreach. He doesn't just say, Pray for my evangelism...but he said, [Pray also for me that whenever I open...](#)

Or how about Heb 11: [who thru faith conquered kingdoms](#), administered justice, & gained what was promised. They shut the mouths of lions & quenched the fury of the flames & escaped the edge of the sword...the world was not worthy of them.

[Again, Turek did a great job w/ this last night...& so did Kyle](#)

[Some tips on word smithing:](#)

Create Catchy Titles ([thumbnail](#))

Create catchy, parallel points (fit together well): Same number of words, syllables, common letters

["Behold the Sage Jesus" "Become a Sage in Jesus"](#)

[The main points in this lesson:](#) Passion, Preparation, Organization...

Create Sticky Statements: Recently did a sermon for Manila called, Who is Like You? from the Song of Moses in Exodus where Moses says God works wonders & my sticky statement was:

["Do you wonder if God is working or do you see God working wonders?"](#)

It can take a lot of time & thought to come up w/ a good sticky statement, but it's worth it.
[Use a synonym finder](#)

BREAK BREAK

[4. Nutrition \(John: 5 mins\)](#)

You've heard the phrase: You are what you eat. Over time, what we ingest is what we'll become. Nutritionists often say our meals should be colorful—having a wide variety of different proteins, grains, vegetables, & fruits, etc—to make sure our body is getting all the nutrients it needs.

Not only true in our physical bodies, but in the spiritual body as well. [Our preaching feeds the flock](#). The content of our preaching over time will either result a [healthy well-nourished flock](#) or a [sickly, malnourished flock](#).

A few practical tips to make sure we're providing a good spiritual nutrition:

[Use Your Whole Bible](#). I often look back on my messages over a year or several months & ask myself: What parts of the Bible am I leaving out? [OT, Rev, Prophets](#)

[Balance Your Intentions](#).

What are you trying to accomplish w/your sermon?

Share: In Manila, reviewed a year of my sermons, lots of diff't topics, but basically all had the same thrust...*you need to do better & you need to do more*
Half the audience responds, Yes, I want to do better & want to do more
Other half responds, I'm not good enough & can never keep up.

Now I try to balance the goals or intents of my sermons: some are *challenging*, some are *convicting*, some are *educating*, some are *comforting*...
Some *call to repent*, some *call to recommit*, some *call to remember*, some *call to reflect*...

Choose your main emphases. What do you want people to focus on the most? In past--*purpose*; I think it was too narrow. Now think, *"God" Jesus, or "faith & love" or "Heart"*
Each year I have an annual theme to help in that way; By Faith...

Share your pulpit.—guest speakers may feed the flock in a diff't way than you do. As much as I love to preach, I've made the most of getting guest speakers for zoom sermons—this past year we've had 10 diff't out of town couples speak.

(Barri: 4 mins)

5. Connection (John: 7 mins)

Illus: *Have you ever plugged in your phone charger at night, then grab in am & realized it never actually connected...*that's exactly what can happen in our preaching.

When all is said & done, the impact of your preaching will never surpass your ability to connect w/ your audience. You could have the best content, using the best Scriptures...but *if you can't get it into the hearts & minds of your audience, you've missed the whole point.*

Connection is just that; it's the *conduit between truth & transformation.*
Our purpose as preachers is to take the truth of God's word & instill it in the hearts of our audience so they can be transformed—WE'RE the connector between the 2.

Jesus was a master at this, whether talking to the woman at the well, the fishermen on the shore, the farmers in the fields, or the kids on the corner—*he connected.* Even though he was the perfect Son of God, he found a way to identify, relate, & connect w/everyone.
This has to be a top priority every time we address anyone or any group.

Often see ads ~ how to improve your *connection speed* w/wifi...we need the same w/ our audience.

Some tips to improve your connection speed w/ your audience.

Know your audience--teens, campus, young singles, older singles, single parents, marrieds, seniors—non XN, XN, age in the Lord: how can you connect w/ each?
You can't connect w/ each group each week...but you better over the course of time.

Make the messages relevant—to their needs & issues; current events
I don't want to preach on every current event, but I do want to shepherd the flock w/God's Word as they face those current events.

And when an event is really big, like Covid, Racial Divisions, you better believe I'm preaching about that. I used to not do that, but I sure do it now.

Be vulnerable--share weaknesses & struggles that others can relate to; not always in past, but your challenges in the present; that show you're just normal. Many already think you can't relate to them cause you're FT...show them otherwise.

Maximize non-verbal communication: Purposefully use every tool at your disposal: eyes, face, hands, sounds, movement, **eye contact**; hold bible up—takes effort & feels unnatural at first, but helps!

Avoid nervous or distracting repetitive expressions or habits
Fix your hair your glasses Grab the mic Grab podium

Maximize verbal communication: tone, volume, inflection, **silence**—**practice w/alphabet**; practice reading passages & names & places; use proper grammar/pronunciation: like when to say raise, when to say rise, lay, lie
Avoid over-repeated words or phrases: **Amen to that?** "Ummm" "Like"

Show feeling; people connect w/ feeling more than facts. Some are naturally better at emoting in the pulpit than others—so purposefully work on that if you're not.
Express it all: happy, sad, hurt, concerned, compassionate, excited, angry, frustrated, confidence, shame, determination. **Like Psalms**—every human emotion documented there.
Share your life & the gospel; show yourself—your hobbies, your dreams, etc.

Use great illustrations: stories (**improve your story telling**), current events, movies, songs, etc

Create effective slides: Choose great images—pic itself, pixel count, size; Use current & readable fonts, clear colors

(Barri: 5 mins)

6. Inspiration (3 mins)

The mediocre teacher tells, the good teacher explains, the superior teacher demonstrates, the great teacher inspires. William Arthur Ward.

In today's day & age, **people want & need to be inspired more than anything else.** Whether I'm leading a staff meeting, a personal bible study, a discipling time, a mid-week, or a Sunday sermon, this is one of my primary goals: to inspire my audience. I want them to leave more inspired than when they came in.

World, life, self & Satan tear people down & **there is little that can build them up & move them forward like great biblical preaching.**

There are all kinds of things that inspire people—again, **purposefully use every tool you can!**

Vision, success stories, passages, quotes, praise, build their confidence, give them faith...inspire them & they will do better & be better!

Become a student of inspiration so you can become a master of inspiration.
Watch other preachers, coaches, teachers, politicians...

Passion Preparation Organization Nutrition Connection Inspiration

There's so much more we could add to this list, like: **Imitation...Innovation...Conviction**

But the bottom line is:

We all have the incredible opportunity & responsibility to preach God's Word; nothing we do can transform more lives in a shorter period of time. **Let's all make purposefully make the most of it.**

I hope these 6 keys will help you do just that.