



# A Guide to Delivering an Impacting Sermon

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Those who are about to deliver a sermon for the first time, or for those that do it rarely, the thought of getting behind the pulpit may be a scary one.

There are many reasons we can fear the event. Public speaking is daunting. We may fear judgement, or we may fear that we will fail to deliver well, that is, we will be boring or confuse our audience. We also want to get the message right. We want to share what we feel God is saying. It is important.

Sometimes that fear is enough to hold us back, but if we want to grow in our gift, then we need to bite the bullet and stand up there in faith., Remember, we are not alone, God will never leave us or forsake us, however there are a few things we can do that will assist in making the experience a positive one. The first is **preparation** the second is **delivery**.

Not every sermon is delivered in the same way. Every speaker has his / her own style, but one thing all good speakers have in common, is that they have prepared. They know their material. The better prepared we are, the easier it will be to deliver a good sermon. Being prepared empowers us and also allows the Holy Spirit to minister through us. We can't speak out scripture we don't know.

So where do we start? There are five points that can put us in a strong place to deliver an impacting sermon:

1. Have Clarity
2. Press the Point
3. Write it Down
4. Deliver Well
5. Conclude to Action



# 1. Have Clarity

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Have clarity or clarify our point – what is the message that we are sharing? This should be able to be stated in a sentence or two. If it takes longer, then perhaps too much material is being covered.

There are a few questions we can ask ourselves when we are preparing a sermon:

- Is there a problem that we are providing an answer to? This could be how the bible teaches us to overcome temptation or what to do when we need healing.
- Do we want to bring a word of encouragement? We may want to share on how much God provides for us in all situations, or how He loves and protects us.
- Is there behaviour we want to challenge? Such as, how the bible shows us to forgive each other, or to be a joyful giver.
- Do we want to teach on history? This may be sharing truths about Hebrew tradition or the significance of New Testament culture.

If we can't clearly state what our message is, then we need to go back to the drawing board

Knowing the type of sermon we want to deliver, is the first step in creating a sermon that is going to impact the audience.

The next step in gaining clarity is to provide ourselves with a strong foundation for our message. We can achieve this by answering these questions:

- What is the revelation we are sharing?
- What other scriptures apply?
- Are there examples in our life or the lives of others that confirm this?



## 2. Press the Point

Press the point means to make sure the congregation go away with the teaching and that it is not forgotten the moment the closing prayer is shared.

It is important that the congregation know exactly what it is that we are saying. They need to be able to grasp the point of the message simply and be able to repeat the point back to us at the end.

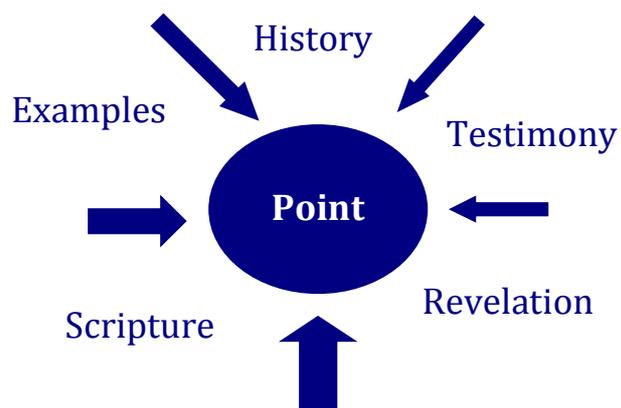
Can the congregation later tell us what we shared, what our sermon was about?

A message, no matter how great, is little more than hot air if no one remembers it. An impacting sermon is one that people remember, one that people talk about after it has finished and one that people think about during the week.

If we think about the sermons that have stayed with us, we can examine how the speaker pressed the message, how he / she shared their sermon in such a way that we remembered it, that it impacted on us and changed us.

An interesting example of this is the speech presented by the Rev Martin Luther King Jnr – “I have a dream.” He relayed that message / thought / sentence many times during the speech and it was presented in a way that has not been forgotten.

The first step was to clarify the message to ourselves; the second is to make sure the congregation gets it.





### 3. Write it Down

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Write down our message – writing the message clarifies the main points we want to share. We may start off with a few pages, writing everything we feel is relevant.

Once we have all the notes, we can start to put them in a logical order and eventually when we edit them down, we can end up with a few bullet points with scriptures and some examples. Writing down our message gives us an overall look at our material so we can see that:

- It flows in a logical order and makes sense
- We have stayed on track and not wandered off our point
- We have not tried to cover too much material
- The scriptures and our material work together
- Our examples help support our message

When we have finished writing it down, it should be clear in our minds and clear on the paper. If someone picked up our notes and failed to understand the point of our sermon, then we may need to re-look at what we have written down.

When we write it down, it should all flow and make sense

Everything should flow, from what is in our minds, what is on our paper and what comes out of our mouths. This does not mean that we speak our notes verbatim but it does keep us on track.

Having confidence in our material will mean that we can relax and allow the Holy Spirit to move during our sermon delivery.

Another helpful reason to write it down is that we can then put it aside for a few days, come back to the notes and re-work them if we need to. Often when we continue to meditate on our message we can find that we have something else or different to share. We will also not have to rely on memory which can be an added stress.



## 4. Deliver Well

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Delivering an impacting sermon has the same foundation as all good public speaking:

- Craft our introduction – capture the attention of the congregation from the first moment. The introduction is very important. We need to set the scene of where we want to take the congregation. Start strong and finish stronger.
- Connect with the congregation – this is more than giving people eye contact. This is about drawing each person in so they know that we are speaking to them as individuals as well as to the room as a whole.
- Listen to our voice – our voice is the carrier of the message so it is important to be aware of how we sound. Are we talking too fast? Are we talking at a monotone level, never varying pitch, tone or volume?
- Gestures – Are we punctuating our words with gestures? For example we know how big a fish that got away is because of the hand gestures given.
- Visual aids – do we need them? PowerPoint can be useful to draw people’s attention to scriptures or statistics.
- Use the space – standing behind the pulpit can de-energise the message. It also limits our ability to connect with the congregation.
- Act confident – even if we feel our insides are like jelly, we need to stand straight, strong and confident and never confess inadequacy.
- Handle the unexpected – there can be a lot of things that can happen, such as the Power Point doesn’t work or a child is disruptive. Keep going and / or handle the issue with confidence and poise.

Capture the attention of the congregation from our first sentence and keep them with us to the end



- Obey time constraints – a sermon that goes for too long will lose the ear of the congregation. Unless we are seasoned speakers, a long sermon will not be an impacting one.
- Let our style shine – whatever style we have, such as, an encouraging speaker (Joel Osteen, TD Jakes) a teaching speaker (Andrew Wommack, Joyce Myer) or one that brings an understanding of the impact of tradition and culture (Shane Willard, Joseph Prince) we need to deliver our message that way. Watching others move in their gift will help us to identify where we fit in and what our style is.

When we have delivered our message, it is important to follow up with feedback. Honest feedback from a mentor or another trusted source will help us identify areas that may need more attention and assist us to fine tune.

It can be hard to hear constructive words however, they give us a view we are unable to see ourselves.

Feedback can provide us with new ideas and ways to bring across our message more powerfully and it can also give us a chance to hear about what we are doing well, what is working.

Another way of gathering feedback is listen to a recording of our message. We will hear how many times we um and ah, if we are talking too fast or if we are unconsciously repeating phrases, which can after a while irritate our listeners.

Constructive feedback provides us with an outside view which can be invaluable for our progress

God anoints his people to do what He has called them to do. There is power when we stand and minister the Word of God. It is also important to remember, that we are learning and each step we take is one step closer to where we want to go. No sermon delivered today is perfect.



## 5. Conclude to Action

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Conclude to action – what the message should do, is encourage the congregation toward change. The end of our sermon needs to be strong, uplifting and conclude to action. If we have delivered an impacting sermon, they will be committed to act, such as, a change in behaviour or digging deeper into their bibles for revelation.

The concluding statements are our opportunity to turn the responsibility for the transformation we have been speaking about, over to the congregation. They need to know exactly what we are encouraging them to do and we can be inventive when bringing our message to a close.

Rather than a quiet thank you, we may want to look at other ways to have a positive finish, such as:

- A loop close – such as: ‘so we have arrived back at where we began’
- A challenge close – what we are going to ask them to do
- One word close – focusing on a word that sums up our sermon
- Phrase close – focusing on a phrase that sums up our sermon
- Title close – if our title is unusual or unique bring it back to the title
- Finish a story close – leave a story unfinished during our message and then bring the sermon to a close with the end of the story
- Quote close – finish on a famous quote

There are many other options but a quiet fizzle is not the way. We need to finish with a bang. After all there can be no greater topic than the Word of God and what our Creator has to say.

Remember not only is God and all of heaven on our side, so is the congregation. They want us to succeed and they wanted to invest their time listening to us, so go for it!

All the best and God bless.

All feedback gratefully received – [info@cvc.org.au](mailto:info@cvc.org.au)