

**TheWordWorks**

# **Expository Preaching Module 1: For the Preacher**

**Delivery that gets the big idea across**

## Aim of this module:

To learn to deliver a sermon in a **manner** that gets the big idea of the sermon across

## Recap

The Big Idea



Expository preaching is preaching which teaches the author's **main point** in order to achieve the author's **purpose** in a **current day situation** similar to the situation of the original hearers

## The aim of effective delivery

To cause the big idea of the sermon to be heard well. Any kind of delivery which distracts the hearers from the big idea is not effective, even if it is able to hold their attention

## 6 tips for effective delivery

### 1. Maintain eye contact as much as possible

We start with an oldie but a goodie. Keeping good eye contact is good communication 101. People feel like you're speaking to them when you look at them. If in doubt, ask any despairing parent whose kid speaks to them while browsing through their phone!

How do you maintain eye contact when you've got a written sermon script in front of you and you're afraid to take your eyes off it in case your mind goes blank suddenly?

- a. Learn your script well. Be familiar with the logical flow of the sermon as expressed in your sermon outline. Practise saying your script in front of the mirror. When you're super familiar with the ins and outs of your script, it can free you to speak the contents of the script without slavishly following it word for word. All this helps you look at your hearers as you speak.
- b. Having a visually easy to follow script helps a lot too (See module "Writing a clear sermon script" for some tips on how to do this). A glance down at your visually-easy-to-follow script should tell you where you are in the sermon. It'll also tell you the first few words of a new sentence which should prompt you to complete the rest of the sentence without needing to look at the script.

## 2. Vary your pace, volume and pitch to match your content

A monotone, evenly-paced delivery is one way to guarantee “prayerfulness” in your people. Variation in pace, volume and pitch makes a speaker much more compelling to listen to. However, how do you decide when to increase the pace, lower the volume or up the pitch?

The rule of thumb is that it needs to *match the content* of what you’re saying. It’s like a song. Songs consist of the lyrics (the content) and the music. The music needs to *match the content*. The majestic lyrics of the hymn “Crown him with many crowns” needs to be matched by majestic music. If it is sung to some sappy, sentimental tune, there’s a mismatch. The right music to the lyrics amplifies the content. The wrong music to the lyrics dampens the content. It’s the same with preaching. The delivery (pace, volume, pitch) amplifies the content. Bad delivery (like mis-matched music) dampens the content.

Here are some examples of delivery matching content:

Content	Pace, Volume and Pitch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Background, context, recap</li><li>• Exciting parts of a narrative with lots of forward momentum (“He went into the town. There sat a crippled man. The man cried out to him.....”)</li></ul>	Fast pace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solemn (“Hell is eternal, conscience, torment”)</li><li>• Suspenseful (“Do you what’s so scary about death?”)</li></ul>	Slow pace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shock/emphasis (“WE OUGHT TO BE SHAKING WITH FEAR”)</li><li>• Forceful exhortation/pleading (“Don’t be kidnapped by the false teachers!”)</li></ul>	High volume, high pitch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tender pleading (“Can you see how much God cares for you?”)</li><li>• Wrapping up. Final words (“Will you.....?”)</li></ul>	Low volume, low pitch

## 3. Vary your face to match your content

A brother in church once told me that I was smiling as I was preaching about judgment. He said my facial language didn’t match my verbal language. I was shocked! I wasn’t aware of it. I now realise that smiling is my default go-to expression when I’m nervous!

Just as your voice (pace, volume, pitch) should match the sermon’s content, your facial expressions should too! If you’re preaching about judgment, let your facial expression show the solemnity of the subject. If you’re preaching about the joy of salvation, let your facial expression show it! An emotionless face (or worse, an emotionally inappropriate face), when speaking about emotional matters, conveys to your hearers that you don’t really believe what you’re saying!

Practice speaking your sermon in front of the mirror if you have to!

## 4. Pauses are your best friend

Pauses in a sermon are very effective for drawing attention to what you will say after the pause or to allow the impact of what you’ve just said to sink in. Examples:

*Jesus turns to the man who disavowed him THREE TIMES and says .... (pause here to allow the suspense to build and for the surprise of Jesus' words to land hard) "Feed my sheep"*

*We thought the disciples were the good guys. But here we find out that they're every bit as blind and hard hearted as the Pharisees and Herod! (pause here to let this shocker sink in)*

## **5. Use your hands (but not too much!)**

Hand gestures are really useful in preaching. Here are some ways they can be used:

- a. They can be used like an exclamation mark at the end of a sentence to make the point emphatic. A short punch. The hand stretched out toward the hearer.
- b. They can be used to highlight adjectives ("the breadth, length, height and depth of Christ's love", "his strong arm" etc)
- c. Counting fingers used to signal the recap of points already covered ("So, what we've seen for far is, #1 Jesus is the Christ, #2 Jesus is a suffering Christ. Now, #3....")
- d. They can be used to visually signal progress/deterioration by using hands to plot a graph going up or going down ("His faith in God progress like this over time....")

However, be careful of using excessive hand gestures! When it is used all the time and at inappropriate places (e.g. places where there isn't emphasis required), it can be distracting and tiring watching you. It's like hearing twinkle twinkle little star with every other note sung at high volume!

## **6. Watch your "Uhs" and "Ums"**

Most of us, when we are nervous, resort to fillers to fill in quiet spaces in the sermon. These are typically the "Uhs" and "Ums" in between sentences or when we've finished a sub-point in the sermon. We're usually not aware we're doing this and it usually takes someone else to point it out. Aim to cut this out as far as you can because it can be distracting for your hearers.

The next time you preach, ask a friend to help you identify what your filler is. The growing self-awareness of your filler will help you be more deliberate about a quiet transition between sentences/sub-points.

## **Exercise**

Take 300-500 words from a sermon you've preached before or are going to preach. Stand up and practice preaching it in front of a friend. This friend should read this training document before your preaching and give you feedback on the following:

1. Was there good eye contact from the speaker or did it feel like he/she was reading from the script most of the time?
2. Was there appropriate variation in the speaker's pace, volume and pitch?
3. Did the speaker's facial expressions convey the emotional content of what he/she was saying?
4. Did the speaker use any pauses effectively?
5. Were the speaker's hand gestures appropriate to the content conveyed or was it distracting?
6. Did the speaker use any fillers?