

Detailed Points for Delivering Effective Messages

Here are some points that will help to ensure quality sermonettes, split sermons or sermons in any season.

Remember that preparation is the key to effectiveness of a message and the speaker. Take time to give your message the attention it deserves!

Be message-conscious: Constantly look for resource material. Regularly read newspapers or news magazines. You might on occasion view an educational or historical television program. Take note of articles and books dealing with societal issues, international relations, local, national or world trends, and so forth. (Often, a light reading of the content in books can be sufficient to be aware of what is being discussed.) Developing these habits enables you to include current and factual examples in a message, adding to its effectiveness.

“Preach the Word” (II Tim. 4:2)! It is hard to go wrong when quoting the Bible. You are always safe staying within its pages. Make it the foundation and center of messages. Teach what it says, not your own thoughts or ideas. Any book or article you might use should only serve as an illustration or example, not the central subject matter. (As a side note, ministers are to preach only from the original King James Version, but remember to change the “thees” and “thous” to “yous,” “walketh” to “walks,” etc. It is permissible to occasionally reference other translations, but these should not be our primary Bibles from which we preach.)

Be extremely careful with speculation—in fact, it is better for most speakers to avoid it. Do not bring your own thoughts, theories or pet ideas. Vanity is usually involved when a speaker does this. It is far better to stay in the framework of the doctrines that were restored to the Church. They offer an immense pool of topics to pull from. Mr. -----’s book *The Bible’s Difficult Scriptures Explained!* contains a wealth of sermonettes—the task of the speaker would be to use the book as a foundation, and then make the subject “live” with compelling stories and examples. (If you regularly give sermonettes in a local congregation, every third one should be on a difficult scripture.)

Remember the difference between a sermon and a sermonette. A sermon is 70 to 75 minutes (split sermons are 45 minutes) and covers a broader topic and contains many points. By contrast, a sermonette is 10 to 12 minutes and takes one small point and expands or magnifies it—it is not a “mini-sermon.” For example, you would give a sermon on corn. In it, you would talk about the entire plant, the stalk, leaves, roots, silk, tassels, ear, kernels, etc. However, in a sermonette you would instead focus on the germ contained in the kernel, and expand on it. A sermonette would incorporate two or three verses, or perhaps two or three brief passages in some cases. The tendency is to try to cover too much in this short message—avoid this pitfall, and your listeners will benefit. A sermonette’s purpose is to introduce the service and spiritually prepare God’s people for the sermon.

Think about your audience. Will they truly benefit spiritually from the subject matter? Are you giving them meat in due season? Be sure to pray about your message, asking God to instill in you a loving and concerned approach for their benefit.

The mechanics of speaking are important, so do not leave this area neglected. Apply the principles of speaking learned in Spokesman Club. Be sure to have a thought-provoking introduction that grabs attention and interest, a clear SPS (specific purpose statement), and definite, recognizable points in the main body that are developed logically and with proper emphasis. Your speaking should be easy to follow and understand. Do not leave your message without a solid conclusion that motivates the brethren to take action. Keep in mind that when

speaking, you are taking the listeners on a journey that has a beginning and an end, so do not lose the audience along the way.

Determine to always improve your grammar and diction. Be on guard for habitual mispronunciations and grammatical errors, and work zealously to overcome them. If needed, study books on these areas.

Do not allow your inadequacies to be excuses from growth. We are speaking on behalf of Jesus Christ—there is no need to be nervous or fret about our messages. Rather than focusing on ourselves (both before giving the message and during it), we must focus on our audience, and how we can best serve them. Moses was concerned about his shortcomings, but notice how God encouraged him: “And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since You have spoken to your servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you should say” (Exo. 4:10-12). God is able to work with each of us, despite any speaking faults we might have.

A few other fine points on delivery: There is no need to thank the song leader—that applies to the Toastmaster in club, but is unnecessary in services. Also, make sure your jacket is buttoned, your tie is straight, your collar sits properly, your name tag is off (during the Feast of Tabernacles), and your hair is neatly combed. Generally keep your hands out of your pockets (better to gesture with!). Refrain from references to, or speaking directly to, individual members of the audience. Make sure to scan the whole room and make eye contact with individuals in various areas of the congregation (rather than habitually looking only left or right). And last, but not least, remember that you should be speaking, not reading. While it is fine to read excerpts from an article or book—and of course the Bible—we should not be glued to our notes, which limits eye contact and keeps us from connecting with our audience.

What you are speaking loudly. There is a saying that illustrates this point: “I can’t hear what you are saying because of what you are.” The example you set is critical and includes all areas of your life— your marriage, mannerisms, choice of entertainment, childrearing, etc. It can make the difference in the effectiveness of your message and the willingness of the brethren to receive it.

Above all, ask God to work through you! Seek His help, guidance and inspiration. Ask for what only He can give you—His Spirit, mind, thoughts, values and views. Never try to go it alone. You are speaking on God’s behalf, so always ask Him to be there with you. The moment you think you can do it on your own; you will be in front of the congregation alone. Actively and diligently seek God’s help!

Whether or not you currently give sermons or sermonettes, keep in mind that as the Church grows, you could be called upon to serve in this way. Remember and apply these points—good fruits will result!