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Habits and Practices which Enhance or Deter Effectiveness in the Pulpit

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HABITS AND PRACTICES WHICH ENHANCE
OR DETER EFFECTIVENESS IN THE PULPIT

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Practical Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Earl Edwin Weis
June 1945

Approved by: Leif Lued
Richard R. Cucumner

WRITING AND PRESENTING WRITTEN REPORTS
 IN THE SPECIALIZATION IN THE FIELDS
 (Outline)

I. There are a number of presuppositions for effective delivery.

a. The writer's training and development of the person is important.

b. The path must be logical.

c. The writer's attitude is very important.

d. The writer's knowledge of the subject is important.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Outline	111
I. Presuppositions for Effective Delivery	1
II. Preparation of the Manuscript	28
III. Memorization	43
IV. The Delivery Itself	50
Bibliography	64

1. The writer must have the proper attitude.

a. It must be to the point.

b. It must be as brilliant as it allows attention to itself.

2. The message must be adapted to the audience.

a. It must meet their intellectual level.

b. It must be suited to their area.

3. The word usage must be well planned.

a. Variety is helpful.

b. Vulgarisms must be avoided.

c. Abstract, viva language must be used as well known.

4. Special consideration must be given to general structure and type of composition.

III. The correct method of presentation must be used.

a. Figures are to be avoided.

1. A verbatim declaration is too stiff.

2. Absolute language should be out of the question.

b. The enthusiastic, emotional delivery is best.

**HABITS AND PRACTICES WHICH ENHANCE
OR DETER EFFECTIVENESS IN THE PULPIT**

(Outline)

- I. There are a number of presuppositions for effective delivery.
 - A. The proper training and development of the person is necessary.
 1. The youth must be trained.
 2. Secondary education is more important.
 3. Training demands good seminary requirements.
 - B. A proper zeal for the task is essential.
 1. The preacher must be of Christian character.
 2. A usable supply of material must be built up.
 3. Penetrating Bible work is indispensable.
 4. Prayer life is necessary.
 - C. The preacher must have an insight into problems.
 1. He must find his hearers' needs.
 2. He must be able to do something about them.

- II. Careful preparation of the manuscript is required.
 - A. Meditation will help the preacher in his preparation.
 - B. Organization of the material he has gathered is an important part of his work.
 - C. The speaker must give due attention to style and composition.
 1. He must be sure first of all that he has something worth-while to say.
 2. The style must reach the ideal situation.
 - a. It cannot be too crude.
 - b. It cannot be so brilliant that it attracts attention to itself.
 3. The message must be adapted to the hearers.
 - a. It must meet their intellectual level.
 - b. It must be suited to their area.
 4. The word usage must be well planned.
 - a. Variety is helpful.
 - b. Vulgarisms must be avoided.
 - c. Elevated, vivid language must be used at all times.
 5. Special consideration must be given to general structure and types of composition.

- III. The correct method of presentation must be used.
 - A. Extremes are to be avoided.
 1. A verbatim declamation is too stiff.
 2. Absolute impromptu freedom is out of the question.
 - B. The extemporaneous, functional delivery is best.

- IV. The delivery itself needs special emphasis.
- A. The demands of delivery supply motive.
 - B. Natural reactions follow the demands.
 1. The preacher applies the message to himself.
 2. Empathy is effected.
 - C. The mechanics of delivery must be practiced.
 1. The speech mechanism needs training.
 2. Proper body control must be achieved.
 - a. The preacher is judged by his posture.
 - b. Natural gestures help illustrate.
 - D. Useless, irritating mannerisms must be avoided.

**HABITS AND PRACTICES WHICH ENHANCE
OR DETER EFFECTIVENESS IN THE PULPIT**

I. Presuppositions for Effective Delivery

"A good speaker or preacher is born, not made." "You either have effectiveness or you don't." Such statements are often made by students who fail to recognize the importance of developing themselves in the art of speaking, or by pastors who feel that they have no time for improving themselves in that matter of delivery. But it must be remembered that there is room for a great deal of improvement in every speaker. When the thought to be expressed concerns the soul-winning, redemptive news of God, it places great responsibility and privilege on the speaker. Nothing short of perfection in speech is adequate. The preacher should use every facility at his command in striving toward that perfection.¹ When delivering the message of the King, the preacher cannot afford to leave out of the account any slightest element which would make for effective speech. His posture, his facial expression, his tone of voice, his literary style in the phrasing of his truth, as well as the content of his thought, all have to do with the determining of the question whether God's Word through him will

1. William C. Craig, The Preacher's Voice, p. 8.

return unto Him void or whether it will accomplish that
²
 whereto it is sent.

In composition, it is obvious that the more important part of our preparation, as regards material for writing, is rarely what we do after projecting a composition, but rather what we have been doing throughout the years of our life. We can not often acquire suddenly even the facts we need; we can never acquire suddenly the power to think. The thing one writes will depend in part upon the knowledge a man had before he undertook the investigation, and upon³ the good judgment he has been forming from childhood.

This fact holds true in a much greater degree as far as the preacher is concerned. A man cannot be effective in the pulpit if he has not received proper training and undergone a development of his person over a period of many years.

At the first consideration, it might seem a little far-fetched to establish a relationship between a man in a pulpit and the training he received in his early youth. But even the training a boy receives does mean much in moulding a man who is truly effective in the pulpit. That holds true already as far as actual delivery is concerned (proper speech habits, self-confidence, etc.), but it is still more significant in view of the personality which the effective preacher must have. Secondary education means

2. Ibid., p. 8.

3. Thomas, Manchester, Scott, Composition for College Students, p. 2.

even more in this line of development. Apart from the character which grows in those formative years and the general knowledge and training the young man receives, the student in college should get special training in speech if he expects to be effective in the pulpit some day. In years gone by, virtually no opportunity was given for the student to learn anything about speech. But in more recent years, the need has been recognized and steps have generally been taken to give the necessary training. The mechanics of speech should be taught to all students. But it does no good to teach a person how to do a thing if you don't give him practice in actually doing it. For that reason, extra-curricular activities as debates, oratorical contests, and general speech contests are of great benefit. They give the student a chance to put into practice all the theory he has learned. He can have his difficulties pointed out to him. He can receive encouragement. He can receive the all-important experience which will teach him to think on his feet, to feel free before an audience, and to gain the confidence in himself which he needs. Every person must go through this process sometime before he can be an effective speaker. It is cruel to make a man wait until he is in the pulpit to do it. There is a big difficulty, however. That is the fact that in most instances only the ones with special interest take advantage of the opportunities

to speak which they receive. The students who need the training most are the ones who are last to avail themselves of it. Efforts must be made to make it as general as possible.

The real work for learning to become effective in the pulpit must be done in the theological seminary. It is there that the "loose ends" of all the training a man has previously received are drawn together. Specialized training is given in theology to make a well-rounded man ready for the ministry and effective in the pulpit. As far as the education in general is concerned, the greatest gain is not the accumulation of facts and theories, but rather a habit of study, a disciplined mind, the student outlook, and a point of view.³ There are various obstructions in the way of creating the future pastor in a seminary. One fact which tends to repress pulpit power is found in the very process of ordinary theological training. In spite of the elevation of religious scholarship, the development of pulpit power shows in the graduates little advance, in many instances. Under ordinary conditions, the seclusion of the student, for the six or eight years of his classical and seminary course, from contact with the real life of the toiling world to which he is at length to minister, and his constant dealing with abstract thought,

3. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 78.

and breathing a scholarly atmosphere, is not conducive to that "love of the people" which is a high qualification, or the "sympathy with their wants" which makes the foundation of the preacher's efficiency.⁴ Especially in the past few years, seminary students have seen much more of the world about them, but the danger indicated is still there. One big factor that helps men deal more with people, learn their needs, and thereby become more effective in the pulpit, is their opportunity of serving in a vicarage or internship. This arrangement is being used more than formerly, and it together with the other methods are training men well.

In the theological seminary, too, more emphasis should be placed on speech training. One authority observes that in a group of sixty ministers, meeting in a seminary's summer conference, and representing graduates from various theological institutions, of ten to twenty years ago, almost three-fourths had had no speech training of any sort, either in college or in seminary.⁵ This often results in the situation that a young man, when "finished," is sent out to a luckless congregation with everything in the art of speech to learn, generally by crude experiment on a long-suffering people. James Black says that the fault lies with the college curriculum in many cases. He continues that we do not treat the training in the art of speech with sufficient

4. J. Spencer Kennard, Psychic Power in Preaching, p. 7 f.

5. John L. Casteel, "College Speech Training and the Ministry," Quarterly Journal of Speech, vol. XXXI, no. 1, p. 74.

respect and courtesy. Some professors regard the subject as a little beneath the dignity of the college, and as contributing mainly to flashy and meretricious arts. A stray hour now and then--as is frequently the amount given--is not enough for a class of speech-training. After all, the one thing a man has to do in his professional life is to speak, and to speak often to an audience where there are countless trained speakers. What chance will his message have, for persuasion, for drive, for power, for conviction, if he has no sufficient training in effective deliverance? The average student--I am inclined to agree with Black--does not lack "matter" or a fine knowledge of his subject: but he does lack the art of presentation and the technique of preaching. ⁶ Overcoming this difficulty and becoming efficient in delivery means real work. There is no short cut to good vocal training. It must be based upon knowledge and understanding which must be followed by long practice and constant attention. Students for the ministry too frequently consider that they have garnered the few necessary credits. But the great challenge of their work should spur them on to constant effort toward improvement. ⁷

Beside the formal education the seminary student receives, he gets more essential training for the develop-

6. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 42.

7. William C. Craig, The Preacher's Voice, p. 12.

ment of a person really effective in the pulpit as a vicar or candidate. Any young man should welcome an opportunity to engage in pastoral work under an experienced coach. What does the seminary student need so much as the insight that comes through entering homes? There he can learn how to deal with all sorts of people. Even if he were nature enough to qualify as an expert in young people's work-- which proves to be unexpectedly difficult--would that be ideal for them or for him? In ten or fifteen years he will seem too old for that kind of service. After he has lost his youthful spirits, what will he do the rest of his days? As for the young people, the modern fashion of herding them off by themselves does not appear to have worked so well as the advocates used to predict. Why not let the student deal somewhat with sick folk, as well as shut-in friends, and allow the mature pastor time to show his heart's concern for the young people. What the seminarian needs is general experience, real training.

Another key factor in the development of the person is the adaptability the young man must learn as assistant. In the seminary the young man may have thought of himself as about to be engaged in gigantic enterprises for saving the world wholesale. Now he finds that he must learn how to get along with all sorts of human beings one by one. Somehow he must adapt his sweeping generalizations to the

needs of a pious old German woman whose heart has been broken by an awful war. Despite the recent craze for young leaders, he must serve under a mature pastor who knows that God loves aged saints. In short, as in matrimony, being an assistant calls for countless adjustments, and for team play. At times, the young man may be inclined to consider his work as a sort of routine drudgery. But he should be certain that he is being developed into a full man.⁸ We are told that the overflow of heart is necessary to give the lips full speech. What is still more important is that a full life is required to overflow the heart. So the preacher makes his prayer, "O fill me with Thy fulness, Lord, until my very heart o'erflow." The old hymn line helps him, too, "Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole"--and then he confesses the way to be that--"I want Thee forever to dwell in my soul."⁹

Besides the proper training and development of his person, the effective preacher must have the proper zeal for the task. He, above all other men, must be a man of character--Christian character. The building of character is the highest ideal and the most serious work of a man's life. In the preacher it is not completed when he begins to be a builder of character in others. He is bound to

8. Andrew W. Blackwood, Pastoral Work, p. 208 ff.

9. Russell D. Snyder, Reality in Preaching, p. 135.

raise the volume and value of his own manhood to its highest perfection. He must be educated manward, as well as Godward, through the whole range of his nature. He must be the kind of person who knows men, and how to direct, and lead, and be an example to them, in sympathy with all that is natural, with all that is human in them. He will not be worldly, but he will understand the world. He will not be a participant in wrong-doing, but he will know what wrong-doing is; and to the wrong-doers, he will know how to speak a strong and searching word. He will go among men, live among them, and see and learn how they live and what their habits are, their frailties, their temptations. His character must always be evident. He should be a consecrated man. He should have power with Christ enthroned in the heart. His every ambition, every personal aim, every effort should be concentrated in a sublimely humble surrender to His purposes, His love inflaming, constraining. Christ shining in the life is eloquent and persuasive before the lips are opened, and is felt warming and illuminating all the utterances of the lips. The explanation of the marvelous pulpit power of certain men of very modest talents is in one word--
 12
 consecration.

The personality of a man in the pulpit is important.

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10. J. Spencer Kennard, Psychic Power in Preaching, p. 31.
 11. David H. Greer, The Preacher and His Place, p. 163.
 12. J. Spencer Kennard, Psychic Power in Preaching, p. 43.

People want practical preaching. It is not easy to define practical preaching. It depends so much on the time, and the place, and the congregation, which is generally very much mixed, and a score of other things which the preacher cannot well have in mind when he is preparing his sermon. What men really mean when they say they want practical preaching is that they want personal preaching, preaching that has in it the personality of the preacher. ¹³ We listened to some men preach and felt that we would like to listen to them often. They helped us; they inspired us; they seemed to touch and awaken what was best and purest, what was divinest in us, and to bring it out and express it, and to make it, for a time at least, ascendent and dominant in us. Somehow, they always managed to make us feel as though they had a personal message for us, simply because it was their own personal message, a message which they themselves, in their deepest and innermost souls had found and felt to be good, and which, therefore, produced an echoing response in us. ¹⁴ What is the reason? Life responds to life, and enthusiasm to enthusiasm. That is, then, the distinctive thing in preaching. It involves, of course, the giving of instruction. But it involves something more than the giving of instruction, for that, as we have seen, can be given in other ways. With the giving of in-

13. David H. Greer, The Preacher and His Place, p. 84.

14. Ibid., p. 73.

struction there should be the giving of life.

Before a man can be a preacher he must be a person. Before he can grasp truth he must be true himself. Before he can be an interpreter he must be his own best self. He must have eyes that see and a mind that responds. ¹⁵

The zeal a preacher has for his work should lead him to build up a constant supply of material he needs for his work. Aristotle remarks that no knowledge comes amiss to the speaker. His head must be filled with knowledge, and the knowledge must be well-ordered so that he may know where to look for a particular kind of argument. The speaker must be provided with a selection of premises (facts) from which to argue on the possible and most timely subjects he may have to discuss; and in emergencies he must seek his premises in the same way, by referring, not to vague generalities, but to the facts of the subject on which he is speaking, including just as many of the most important ones as he can. The more facts he has at his command, ¹⁶ the more easily will he make his point. Naturally, this same fact may be applied to sermons. As a study of effective sermons will show, the way to preach with interest is to use facts, facts, facts. Many of the facts come from the Bible, especially from the text chosen; other facts are from life and thought today. In the modern sense of the

15. Russell D. Snyder, Reality in Preaching, p. 129.

16. Lane Cooper, The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 155 ff.

terms, there is no first-class popular writing or speaking without the use of concrete facts.¹⁷ From where should these facts for the sermon be accumulated? Many of them can be taken from secular writings, but much is bound to come from the studies in theology the minister makes.

The preacher should make the reading of commentaries and of printed sermons a regular element in his pursuit of theological study after his graduation from the Seminary, even as a lawyer will continue to study legal treatises, as a doctor of medicine will keep himself abreast of the times by reading reports and journals. The preacher should study commentaries and read printed sermons principally for the purpose of widening his knowledge of method and for accumulating a fund of information which will be ready for use when needed. His mind must be a reservoir of facts, observations, arguments, quotations, and illustrations, which rise to consciousness while he is studying his Sunday's text.¹⁸

But the preacher should never yield to plagiarism. Plagiarism in a preacher or any one else is generally and justly regarded as a very reprehensible thing; and when we find out (and we usually do find it out) that a man has been stealing the words of another, we have no further use for that man. But there is a plagiarism in theology as well as a plagiarism in language, and it is

17. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 188.
 18. Th. Graebner, Inductive Homiletics, I, p. 10.

possible not only to steal from books, but also to steal from creeds. In general, a plagiaristic preacher is not an effective preacher. And yet, it seems that much of our preaching to-day is of that plagiaristic kind.¹⁹

Dr. John H.C. Fritz, in his Pastoral Theology, quotes Luther's view in these words:

Likewise it is also not good that there are some lazy preachers, who rely upon such and similar good books for the purpose of getting a sermon out of them; they pray not, they study not, they search not the Scriptures, as if the reading of other books made it unnecessary for them to study the Bible itself.²⁰

That leads us to the consideration of another important presupposition for effective delivery, namely, very penetrating Bible work.

Dr. Fritz quotes Luther:

Thou shalt know that Holy Scripture is a book compared with which the wisdom of all other books is foolishness, for it alone teaches of eternal life. Therefore thou shalt utterly despair of thine own knowledge and understanding, for with that thou shalt never attain it, but with such foolhardiness thou wouldst cast thyself and others together with thee, even as Lucifer did, from heaven down to the abyss of hell. Rather go to thy closet and bend down thy knees and very humbly and earnestly pray God that He may through His Son give unto thee His Holy Spirit, who shall enlighten and guide thee and give unto thee the true understanding, even as David does in the 119th Psalm, saying, 'Teach me, O Lord,' 'give me understanding,' 'make me to go in the path

19. David H. Greer, The Preacher and His Place, p. 76.

20. Op. cit., p. 8.

21

of thy commandments.

In every congregation, the one person who should be an authority on the Bible is the minister. That is his work. To become anything of an authority one needs to spend a great deal of time in the study of the Bible. This study cannot be concentrated in a period of time, but it must be a day-by-day study, continued year after year. Nobody has ever begun to exhaust the Bible. The more one studies the Bible, the more he will be impressed with its wonderfulness and with its inexhaustibleness. It must be studied with an open mind, not with the attitude that it is just something you already know anyway; but one must always be expecting to find in it something more than he knows, and which will add to his knowledge. ²² It is expected that the minister knows his Bible. But what if he does not? Then it will be impossible for him to do his work effectively. Before the imagination can work in the field of the Bible, there must be a good knowledge of it on hand. Blackwood says that no matter how keen the insight, the minister must study his Bible, for if he doesn't, he cannot depend upon Mother Hubbard's cupboard to supply ²³ him with biblical facts.

There is a danger that the preacher's Bible study will

21. Ibid., p. 3.

22. David H. Greer, The Preacher and His Place, p. 145.

23. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 212.

resolve itself into a study of facts only. This must be avoided. The minister needs the Word for his soul as well as his congregation members do. He must use the Word of God for strength and assurance--for power. The minister needs respite from the many duties of his work if anybody does. He can find help above all in his Bible. Kennard describes the refreshing power of the Bible in very descriptive words. He says:

A man may keep his brain and heart forever fresh and springlike by drinking of the river of God's pleasure, in nature, in human life, in the life especially of the young, entering with sympathy into their jubilant spontaneity, hopefulness and good cheer, above all, by browsing in the perennial dewy and blooming fields of the living Word.²⁴

Also in preparing his sermons the minister needs biblical insight. He should use such insight when he spends his time studying the Bible. It is necessary for him to consider the many things the Bible stresses which he must use in his sermons to meet the needs of his people. It is not possible for the preacher to turn automatically to his concordance, his Bible dictionary, and other sources to find the passages inspired by God to meet the definite needs dictated by his parish. Yes, he might be able to get by with that sort of method, but he will never thereby become truly effective in the pulpit.

24. J. Spencer Kennard, Psychic Power in Preaching, p. 41.

Truly effective preaching must be textual and also Scriptural. Such preaching meets the people's needs. In order to convey the Spirit of God to them, the preacher must use God's Word. It is impossible to preach God's Word to others unless the preacher first lets God speak to him through His Word. The place of the Bible in a man's preaching will be an index and reflection of the place which the Scriptures occupy in his thinking, in his own personal worship, and in his life.²⁵ Biblical preaching enables the minister to grow, because it requires him to feed his soul by using God's Word at all times. Under God, the value of what the minister says from his pulpit depends in a large measure on what is in his heart. That in turn depends on how carefully he nurtures his soul. And if a minister wants to keep his soul strong, he must feed it daily from the Book of Life, in the spirit of faith and prayer.²⁶ If we look at the Scriptures through the eyes of Jesus Christ, we shall see what He saw. We shall see God. We shall see God's will for us and also for all men. We shall see our Savior and the Captain²⁷ of our souls.

The pastor should have a real incentive for the diligent study of his Bible in keeping at hand something for

25. Russell D. Snyder, Reality in Preaching, p. 9.

26. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 222.

27. Russell D. Snyder, Reality in Preaching, p. 18.

his members who come to him. As a shephard, he should have as his rod and staff his Bible and prayer. There has been much written about the way a man should use the Scriptures in preparing to preach. Someone should write on the pastor's need of searching the Scriptures every day so as to be ready for his parish ministry among men and women. "A church-²⁸ building program calls for a Bible-loving minister."

Closely associated with the matter of consecrated Bible study for the pastor is that of sincere prayer. The pastor's life should be one of prayer. It is in his communion with God that he receives the strength to go on in spite of anything that happens to him. Prayer cannot be a mere form or phrase, but it must be a living reality to him. Besides keeping his own life a life of prayer, the pastor must make prayer influence and guide the lives of his people. He prays with them in Church, but he should also join them in their homes in prayer. Prayer is indeed a great help in providing the proper zeal a pastor must have in order to be truly effective in his pulpit.

In order to be effective in the pulpit, the pastor must know something of the needs of people in general and particularly of the needs of his own members. Today man wants in a sermon a vital presentation that is relevant

28. Andrew W. Blackwood, Pastoral Work, p. 226.

to a life groping for eternity. This is not a formal requirement that could be satisfied by oratory and by psychology. It presupposes on the part of the preacher an experience that is rooted in the divine foundations of life and reality.²⁹ Through the years, there has been a steady cry for what is often called humanness of preaching. It seems as if there has been a gain in that direction of late. That kind of preaching desired seems to begin to discuss the truth from the standpoint of men, from their nature and need and actual experience. It does not lower the demands of the truth, the authority of God's Word, but it more frankly admits the difficulties of belief and life, the limitation of human power, and it tries to make truth reasonable and present it in such a way that it will seem desirable, possible, practical.³⁰ If the preacher wants to be effective at all, he must awaken such feelings and present such motives as are strongest with his own hearers. They must spring from the level of the hearers, from their memory, experiences, and familiar observations, since motives drawn from things foreign to their actual life will meet no response. Already in 1895 David H. Greer recognized that fact. It was then that he wrote:

29. Russell D. Snyder, Reality in Preaching, p. 53.

30. Arthur S. Hoyt, The Pulpit and American Life, p. 229.

Before, therefore, I can hope to tell you anything about the method of your preaching to-day, I must try to tell you something about to-day. For it is to to-day, and not to yesterday, that you will presently preach. You must never forget that. And how can you preach to to-day, unless you have some knowledge of what to-day is? And what is it? How may it be described? To answer such questions fully would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. Society to-day is not simple in its composition, but multiform and complex. The tendencies in it are not only numerous, but various, and often indeed contrary. They run in different directions, and currents and eddies are in it proceeding in different paths. That is what makes society today so interesting³¹

There is a lot of food for thought in the words quoted from Greer. The needs of the people give us one of the primary considerations for contemplation for effectiveness in the pulpit.

The following are John Dewey's five steps in the method of teaching:

1. A felt difficulty
2. Location and definition of the difficulty
3. Suggestion of possible solutions
4. Development by reasoning of bearings of suggestions
5. Further observation and exploration leading to acceptance or rejection of the solution.³²

These steps show the great significance of needs of people in the teaching process. Preaching is concerned with needs even more than average teaching. It actually begins

31. David H. Greer, The Preacher and His Place, p. 39.

32. Halford E. Luccock, In the Minister's Workshop, p. 56.

with the problems bothering people, or the predicaments they are in. Dewey says that real thinking begins with a felt difficulty. We can easily see the truth of this in the commonest actions of people.

The pastor sees the needs of the people about him. He sees that there is something wrong in the basic thinking of many of the people under his care. He often thinks there is a great decline in religion in many of the homes of his parish. He observes that in some of the homes only now and then family prayers are said, Bible stories read, and children instructed in religion. A certain degree of change seems to be inevitable. Because of our mechanized civilization all the members of the family now may not find it easy to sit down together at meals. In fact, the desire may actually be lacking. Home has come to be only a place where you come to change clothes to go somewhere else.

One of the outstanding needs is that of overcoming fear. It is the strongest emotion of the heart--except for love. It is fear that causes war and panic and all sorts of evils. In the typical congregation of today, many of the members are like the disciples in the boat on Galilee. Timorous souls today ought to hear the Lord saying through the preacher: "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

The cause of fear is the lack of faith in God. The cure of fear is faith in the Living Christ. It is the business of the preacher to know and minister to human life with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to know the needs of human life, its struggles, its privations, its hardships, not in a general way as one learns about it in books, but in a particular way, as one learns about it from personal knowledge of it. It is the business of the minister to learn of it in that way. In the performance of that business, the minister cannot be afraid. He must do his very best at all times. David Greer says to men studying for the ministry:

You must be students of human life; not simply as it was yesterday, but as it is to-day. The story is told of a theological instructor in one of our seminaries, whether true or not I know not, and it matters not, that he was in the habit of saying to his pupils in his closing lecture to them, 'Three things are necessary, young gentlemen, to success in the ministry,--grace, learning, and common sense. If you have not grace, God can give it to you. If you have not learning, man can give it to you. But if you have not common sense, neither God nor man can give it to you.' His purpose, I presume, was to impress upon them, not so much the hopelessness in certain cases of acquiring common sense, but the desirableness of acquiring it in all cases. And surely it is desirable, not only in a layman, but also in a clergyman.³⁴

34. David H. Greer, The Preacher and His Place, p. 158.

The minister is to use that common sense in dealing with his parishioners to study their lives and see their needs.

To be effective in the pulpit, the preacher must have sympathetic insight into the nature and needs of men. The insight must be such that comes, not from viewing them through the medium of books simply, but through the transparent medium of intimate personal friendship. This pastoral insight must be utilized at all times. When the minister comes into a home which is lying under the shadow of a sudden sorrow, or when he welcomes into his study a friend who has stumbled and fallen into a beastly sin, the pastor should be able to see into the depths of the soul, much as the specialist in medicine looks at the heart through the fluoroscope. Pastoral insight enables the minister to diagnose the disease of the soul. It also enables him to determine what he should preach every Sunday. Naturally, the needs of men are very similar from age to age. But the minister must recognize the needs and treat them in the light of his present day. Noyes points out that God speaks an authoritative Word through the needs of the wider world in which preacher and people together live their life. In the needs of that larger world the preacher hears the voice of God laying His demands upon those who are devoted

to His service. The message must fit into the needs of the people and help to meet them. The minister sees the needs through the windows of his parish. He is the minister of that particular congregation and he knows that nothing human is alien to it. ³⁵ The distinctive genius of the Christian ministry lies in the fact that the minister is both preacher and pastor. The message of the Christian minister can grow both out of the historic records of his faith, and also out of a day to day sharing of the varied life of the people to whom he preaches. Every good sermon is in a sense a conversation between the preacher and the individuals with whom he stands in the special relationship. The authority with which he speaks derives its power from the knowledge he acquires of the ³⁶ people's needs, problems, and hopes.

A tremendous force that rouses the needs of the people for help and comfort they can receive only from God is the war. The preacher will probably mention the war explicitly. He has missed a great opportunity and obligation if the people go out from church without seeing the war in which they are involved against the right horizon. We can't see the issues of this period truly unless we are reminded that God still loves. Noyes says that the responsibility upon the shoulders of the preacher was never greater than now,

35. Morgan Phelps Noyes, Preaching the Word of God, p. 23.

36. Ibid., p. 24.

when the spiritual poverty of a shattered world is written across the sky where the searchlights peer by night for the death-dealing bomber, when the voice of the commentator with war news is never silent; nor does the strain of the thing fade away. The wide, bitter differences of opinion as to what is the Word of God for this hour indicate that the task of the preacher is not a simple one in this world at war.

The typical pastor has been showing praiseworthy concern for the young men and women enrolled in the armed forces. Practically every pastor has such in his group. The pastor must also deal with the people here at home. In the bloodiest and bitterest period of American history, many pastors learned how to comfort their people in times of fear and grief. When the casualties come in, there is really a need for comfort. There have been a great many hearts and homes bleached white with loss. Black states that millions of people to-day would sell their souls just to know the fate of those whom they loved and lost. Some people are turning to fancy faiths and quirky mediums, grasping for an assurance that only the love of God in Jesus can provide. Now there is a great outlook for a true faith, a prepared court of hearing. People, more than ever, are open to see the mystery of life, no longer shut and sealed with petty dogmatisms. Men have been taken

37. Morgan Phelps Noyes, Preaching the Word of God, p. 86.

into the wastes of the world, and their eyes are dark
 with mystery.³⁸

The needs of the people are obvious to the pastor who views them in the light of the previous discussion. What can be done about them? It is through the Bible that the preacher can supply the heart needs of his people. It has been said that the preacher must live with the people in order to know their problems; and with God, in order to solve them. The sermon will be concerned with divine power for human needs among the people.³⁹ Some might wonder just which portions of Scripture can be used most advantageously to treat the needs of the people. The man who really studies the Word of God will know. For him, there will be no special difficulty in finding a passage to meet any crying human need. He will rather have a difficulty in deciding which passage to prefer.⁴⁰ He must then be sure to interpret those passages in terms of today. Much so-called biblical sermonizing is almost post mortem. The mistake of many preachers is in dealing with biblical facts without taking time to discover what they mean today, and what difference they should make to the layman who must keep his feet on the rock in a time of uncertainty and dread.⁴¹

38. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 53.

39. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 218.

40. Ibid., p. 212.

41. Ibid., p. 188.

The required insight into the needs and problems of the people will do something for the preacher. It will give him a sort of human screen through which to pass his material. It will give him a new selection. It will help him choose the things which have a human destination and a human origin.⁴² This insight will make the preacher conscious of big truths. It is the big truths that heal. It is healing that men need. There are puzzled and burdened hearts in every congregation, whose hurt perhaps is concealed under a twisted smile: business men and women who are worried equally by the problems of failure or success; people with inarticulate prayers for the life or soul of some loved one: a home with a great big hole in it that nothing human can ever fill: nameless sorrows that tears can never ease, and people who keep living though they have nothing left to live for: memories that are just one longing ache, or those that bite like venom.⁴³ All these enumerated needs certainly are big in the lives of the people in the parish. They must be dealt with in the light of God's Word. Kennard points out that there is a strong temptation to accommodate our teaching to the mood of the people; to make the Word only scintillate when it should shine and burn; to consult people's whims

42. Halford E. Luccock, In the Minister's Workshop, p. 80.

43. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 46.

rather than their wants, to be popular rather than powerful, and to avoid sinking into insignificance, not by the strength with which we breast the tide, but by the lightness with which we float on the current.⁴⁴ However, such a procedure is utterly deplorable. The conscientious preacher must deal with the needs of the people in a way in keeping with their seriousness. It's easy to see how important a part these needs play in achieving really effective functioning of the preacher in the pulpit.

44. J. Spencer Kennard, Psychic Power in Preaching, p. 8.

II. Preparation of the Manuscript

A preacher who has developed into an exceptionally good speaker may be able to step into the pulpit after many years of preaching and deliver a sermon without any previous preparation. He might even be quite effective. But no preacher could do that Sunday after Sunday and still be effective in the pulpit. Every preacher must develop practices as to the preparation of his manuscript which will enhance his effectiveness in the pulpit.

All the preparation a minister makes for his sermon must have a point in mind. Taking a few facts from here and there, using material from a few books, assembling the matter in a mechanical sort of way will never help the preacher write a sermon that can be effective in any sense of the term. One of the primary functions of the minister in the preparation of his sermon must be meditation. He must keep his thoughts collected. He must avoid aimless rambling along. He must take time out to contemplate and evaluate the passing stream of events. He must consider how he will make his applications in the light of Scriptures. The minister must consider the specific needs of the time and see how he can treat them in his sermon. Rather than aimlessly writing along the lines of his text, he must meditate on the most effective manner of presentation for the particular sermon he is writing, and then decide how

he can use it. Above all, he must plan a deep consideration of the text he is using.

In all his work, the minister must reflect. He does a great deal of reading. But reading is of little avail if it is unaccompanied by thought. The same thing holds true of observation. At the bottom what is important is what we ourselves do with the data we receive. If we do nothing with the data, we will have no ideas of our own, nothing of our own to say, nothing to write. "Observe, read, reflect, record useful material--these four things; and of the four it is the third, reflect, that¹ is the most important."

If a person wants to have something of interest to say, he must have a big store of material from which to choose. The way to build up such a store is to be aware of things--to meditate on them as you observe them. You must capitalize on past experience, paying attention to:

1. What you have done
2. What you have read
3. What you have imagined and dreamed
4. What you have felt deeply
5. What you have believed
6. What you would like to do or see done²
7. What you have heard others tell about.

To these things for the preacher there must be added, of course, constant, deep meditation of the Word of God which is to be the center of his message.

1. Thomas, Manchester, Scott, Composition for College Students, p. 9.

2. Weaver, Borchers, Woolbert, The New Better Speech, p. 114.

Carelessness is one thing that will quickly deter effectiveness in the pulpit. It is easily recognized by congregations. First, the message loses its impact. Secondly, criticism begins. It robs of the proficiency every one hopes to acquire.³ The carelessness may be in a number of departments. Perhaps it is the appearance of the preacher that is careless. Maybe it is his delivery. Often it is the organization of the sermon material that is careless. When the organization is careless, the result is that the preacher doesn't know just where he is or what he is trying to do. The result of that again is that he tends to go on and on in big circles, making the sermon unduly involved and far too long. Mullois, Chaplain to the Emperor Napoleon III, and Missionary Apostolic, already in the year 1867 noted the detrimental effects of a long, involved sermon. "Long sermons bore us," says M. de Cormenin, "and when a Frenchman is bored, he leaves the place and goes away. If he cannot talk, he yawns and falls asleep. Anyhow, he declares that he will not come again."⁴ Mullois explains then that the sermon should be short. At any rate, it must never bore.

In order to avoid carelessness, the minister should plan each sermon carefully. He should see to it that his introduction prepares the hearer for what is to come. It

3. William C. Craig, The Preacher's Voice, p. 9.

4. M. L'abbe Isidore Mullois, The Clergy and the Pulpit, p. 82.

should take his needs into consideration. The main body should impress on his mind and heart the chief aspects of the chosen truth. The closing words should send him forth with a firm resolve to do the will of God as it has been revealed.⁵ In order to have the material organized to accomplish those goals, a good, clear outline is essential. Any speaker in preparing a speech should always first make an outline. He may not use the outline while he is delivering the speech, but it will aid him in ordering his thoughts. It will help him to concentrate on his main point and prevent scattered thinking.⁶ In his preparation for a sermon, the preacher will need good outlines. It is a good practice to draw up a tentative outline first and incorporate the important points in it. Then after the whole matter is given more consideration, a complete outline should be written which contains the entire plan of the sermon and all the material to be brought in.

In arranging the outline, an indispensable advantage is movement. Halford E. Luccock says that any discourse designed to win and then hold attention must have movement. The eye and the mind are made to follow movement involuntarily; and the preacher had better remember that fact. People's attention will follow a sermon as long as it is moving.⁷ As soon as it stops, they relax as if the plot had sagged.

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5. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 184.
 6. Weaver, Borchers, Woolbert, The New Better Speech, p. 298.
 7. Halford E. Luccock, In the Minister's Workshop, p. 123.

Dr. Graebner expresses this same idea in his Inductive Homiletics, where he states that "in every sermon there must be progress from part to part, and all parts must be interrelated in such a way as to find their unity in the sermon-subject or theme."⁸

If you have a good, clear, logical division in your sermon, never hide the divisions or fail to make them known. From a purely homiletical point of view, the announcement of subject and parts is to be recommended. The studied avoidance of such announcements is not in accord with the practice of the great preachers, but it is a regrettable concession to the manner of present-day sectarian preaching.⁹ There are some hyper-sensitive preachers who think that it is artistic to conceal divisions as if they were something indecent, or at least indelicate. But they are far from right. Black quotes Paley as saying that "a discourse which rejects these aids to perspicuity may turn out a bewildered rhapsody, without aim or effect, order or conclusion."¹⁰ When divisions are naturally there--and they certainly should be there--for clearness to yourself and others, announce them frankly.

In this matter of organization, unity is very important. All digressions from the principal thought of the sermon are to be excluded. In the individual paragraph,

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8. Th. Graebner, Inductive Homiletics, III, p. 9.
 9. Th. Graebner, Inductive Homiletics, II, p. 7.
 10. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 90.

it is often good to state the main thought in a clear sentence. This sentence may be placed at the beginning of the paragraph, and then explained, illustrated, proved, or contradicted. It may also be placed at the end. By such a topic sentence, the hearer is advised of the subject of the discussion; and as sentence after sentence passes him, he can relate it to the topic. But if the subject is not announced, the individual sentences must be kept in mind until the reader catches the drift of the discussion.¹¹ Clarity is the important thing and it must be achieved if the hearers are to gain from the sermon. Repetition, too, will often help to make matters clear. Dr. Graebner says that young preachers often announce a thing once and think that it is sufficient. They don't seem to realize that repetition is essential. "Line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, is the abiding law."¹² That doesn't mean that everything is supposed to be repetition, or even that everything must be repeated. But it means that the ideas which are most necessary must be impressed upon the minds of the people by repetition and in other ways. If the material of the sermon is well-organized and planned to gain the interest of the hearers, it will greatly enhance effectiveness in the pulpit.

11. Th. Graebner, Inductive Homiletics, III, p. 10

12. Ibid., p. 21.

In preparation of the sermon manuscript, it is very important to give consideration to the style and composition used. A slovenly style will only deter effectiveness in the pulpit. A brisk, clean style will do much to make the message effective. In ordinary speaking, it is important to have something worthwhile to say in order to hold attention. The preacher doesn't have this problem. He always has something worthwhile and even essential to say. His message is based on the Word of God and always shows his listeners the one thing needful. But the minister must always be certain that he is treating his sermon in a worthwhile manner. He must know that he is ready to do as good a job of presentation as he possibly can. To this end, careful attention as to his style and composition is important.

Every effective preacher will have to determine for himself the ideal situation as to style. He must know that it cannot be crude. Yet, it cannot be so brilliant that it attracts attention to the mode itself at the expense of the subject. As far as the language is concerned, it does not have to be dull. It isn't necessary that the preacher descend to that which is low and trivial, much less to that which is vulgar in order to preach "plain" sermons. On the other hand, simple language is equally far removed from high-sounding phrases, strings of superlatives, and every form of exaggeration. Concerning literary style in

general, Russell D. Snyder states that it is like any other style. The well-dressed man is that man whose clothing is neat, but still does not draw attention to itself. If you meet him, you should feel his warm hand-clasp, see his gleaming eyes and his friendly smile; but you should not notice his dress. You should see the man, not his clothing. The same thing should hold true in preaching. The only good style for the pulpit is that style that never attracts attention to itself. The hearer should be intent upon the truth that is being spoken, but he should not even be aware of the medium through which it is coming to him. A literary style may attract attention either because it is too shabby, or because it is too gaudy or rhetorical. Says Snyder:

The preacher who does not know how to handle words, whose style limps along like a Model T Ford, on one cylinder and three flat tires, has my sympathy; I know from experience just how he feels. On the other hand, the preacher who knows too much about words and too many of them, from whose lips they fall in a torrent, like a cataract in the rainy season, has my prayers; he needs them. In either case the mind of the hearer is diverted from the message to the manner, and that is tragic.¹³

Craig supplies a descriptive term. He suggests that¹⁴ the preacher strive to achieve negative capability.

13. Russell D. Snyder, Reality in Preaching, p. 33 f.

14. William C. Craig, The Preacher's Voice, p. 8.

By that expression he means the ability to communicate thought without any distraction through manner or unusual feature of expression. Any part of the sermon delivery may call attention to itself. If it does, it interferes with communication. Raspy voice, singing to the audience (pulpit tone), assumed affectation, or awkwardness of voice or body or both are dangerous. Theatrical exhibition should be unthought of. All these things deter effectiveness in the pulpit. On the other hand, it should always be remembered that sermons must be adapted to the subject-matter of Christian preaching. This preaching deals with issues of the highest importance to every living person. Therefore the language used must always preserve a most dignified form. The language of the Bible gives the example. It is the highest form of sublime style in all literature. That language should be reflected in the sermon.

15

Another requisite for good style is that the language be adapted to the hearers. It should meet their intellectual level and be suited to the area in which they live. Preaching always must presuppose an audience. Even during the preparation in the study, there should be the shadow of a listening people. To forget them in the preparation is the crime next only to forgetting God. The people must be

15. Th. Graebner, Inductive Homiletics, III, p. 117.

the most regulative thing in the sermon preparation. The form, colour, and tone of preaching must be prescribed by a consideration of them. Otherwise, the sermon could be just an essay or an article. The failure of a great many sermons is the fact that they have too little relation to the audience. Even if they furnish excellent material, they are worth but little as sermons if they don't reach the people for whom they are written. Therefore, in every preacher's study should stand "this shadow of a listening people."¹⁶ Mullois, in France in 1867, realized this same fact. He made clear that for effectiveness in the pulpit, there must be joined to a profound knowledge of religion, a profound knowledge of humanity. He said that to speak frankly, people are not known; not even by the most keen-sighted individuals. They are studied only superficially,¹⁷ in books, in the newspapers, or they are not studied at all.

Mullois suggests that the essential rule of eloquence should be charity. To address men well, they must be loved.¹⁸ Love is the secret of lively and effectual preaching. It should prompt the preacher to give close consideration to those people he is serving that he can preach to them in a most effective manner.

Any speaker must adapt himself to his audience. He must know the physical characteristics. He must ask him-

16. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 39.

17. M. L'abbe Isidore Mullois, The Clergy and the Pulpit, p. 14.

18. Ibid., p. 15.

self of the audience:

1. How large will it be?
2. What age groups will be present--and in what proportions?
3. Which sex will predominate--and in what extent?
4. What will be the physical status of the auditors?
 - a. Will they be tired from a day of hard labor?
 - b. Will they be tired from a long preceding program?
 - c. Will they be lethargic from having just eaten heartily?
 - d. Will they be alert and excited--eager for action?¹⁹

The preacher will know these facts of his own congregation.

He will have what Oliver calls a "selected audience"--one consisting of members who are all assembled with a common interest, as at a meeting of a lodge, a service club, a labor union, or a church.²⁰

The speaker should remember that in no matter what kind of an audience he has, he must show simplicity and directness of address, both in vocabulary and in rhetoric. The preacher should be convinced that his sermon cannot be complicated, but "in addressing all sorts of people, some of whom are uncultured, the minister should make every message simple and attractive."²¹ Just what level of intelligence can the preacher figure on appealing to in his sermon? Years ago, it was definitely the seventh and eighth grade level, but now he can appeal to the high-school level in most communities. But he must

19. Robert T. Oliver, The Psychology of Persuasive Speech, p. 291.

20. Ibid., p. 299.

21. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 107.

see to it that his sermon is plain enough and simple enough to be understood by all his listeners. It is a good idea to presume that the people you are addressing know little about your subject. Men often make the mistake of assuming special theological and general religious knowledge in line with their own on the part of their hearers. They use terms of theology which they themselves often don't fully understand. But the preacher should never use a term even if it is common in his own thinking. Ministers talk together about the Pentateuch and the Synoptic Gospels, about Eschatology or the Divine Attributes; and it is safe to say that to the average hearer those terms are only "confusion worse confounded."²² The preacher has no right to assume that he is displaying ignorance by using simple language. Quite the opposite is the case. Fine use of simple language has been made by the finest intellectual speakers. James Black calls to attention the fact that John Bright and Abraham Lincoln proved what a "piece of power" simple language is in the hands of an expert. The Gettysburg Address of Lincoln is a masterpiece of simplicity and marvellous effect.²³ Likewise the best sermons are the ones which are written in a simple, clear style. A style adapted to the level of the

22. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 58.

23. Ibid., p. 116.

hearers and to their needs is the one style that will enhance effectiveness in the pulpit.

The speaker must have a good choice of words at his command. Thought is expressed by means of words. Even if words are spoken in unmodulated tones, they will have a meaning of themselves. Thoughts and words are closely related. Feeling, passion, sentiment, and emotion are all expressed through words.²⁴ Words are our "intellectual counters, the standard coinage for the exchange of ideas. Clearness, here, depends on one or two things: chief among them is the employment of plain, simple Anglo-Saxon words, accurately and delicately used."²⁵ Aristotle points out that language is composed of name-words, that is, nouns and adjectives, and verbs. He continues by saying that the speaker should use rare words, compound words, and coined words sparingly and seldom, for they diverge too far from custom toward the extreme of excess. In language that is spoken, only the current term, the distinctive name, and metaphors can be used to advantage.²⁶ This applies very definitely to the words a minister should use in the sermon. He should use the plain, simple, exact nouns and verbs to express the simple truths he must teach. Some preachers use vulgarisms, thinking that they are making an impression.

24. Joshua Bryan Lee, Public Speaking, p. 22.

25. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 115.

26. Lane Cooper, The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 186.

Indeed they are. But they are making the wrong kind of an impression. They are seriously deterring their possible effectiveness in the pulpit. They should rather use elevated, vivid language at all times for effectiveness.

The fundamental unit of our thinking is not the letter, the syllable, or the word, but it is the simple sentence or clause. Each sentence is supposed to contain a single thought and be grasped by a single act of the mind. ²⁷ We owe it to the people to express scriptural truth in crisp, vivid, and compelling language. The way to do that is to use sentences that are short, concise, and full of life. If we don't, the scriptural truth may be sadly obscured. Simplicity is destroyed by complexity of sentence structure. If the preacher endeavors to preach that he cannot be misunderstood, he will be very careful in making each sentence say exactly what he wants it to say. He won't attempt to use long rambling sentences, for they would be certain to render the sermon misunderstood to many. ²⁸ Black conveys the same idea in these words:

In regard to language, be short and terse, forming your sentences in a simple construction. Dull, laboured and tangled sentences, with bedraggled dependent clauses, are more responsible for 'heaviness' than any other item in preaching.²⁹

Good sentence structure is a real help for plainness in delivery.

27. Walter Dill Scott, The Psychology of Public Speaking, p. 115.
 28. Th. Graebner, Inductive Homiletics, III, p. 81.
 29. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 54.

A final consideration for effectiveness as to style is that of illustration. When the preacher is engaged in amplifying upon the thoughts contained in his outline, he should not forget the fact that there is no better way to secure and keep the attention of his hearers and drive home his point than to paint a picture in words. That is what illustrations should do. Illustrations are good, but they must be drawn from the general fund of knowledge which the preacher has made his own by his personal study not only of books, but also of people.

30

The preacher who has spent considerable time in meditation in his sermon preparation, has organized his material well, and has given due consideration to the style and composition of his sermon, is well on the way to effectiveness in the pulpit.

David H. Greer, The Preacher and His Place, p. 152.

III. Memorization

After the preacher has his sermon thoroughly prepared, he is ready to undertake another important function of his work, that which Aristotle and Cicero designated as memoria. The term, memorization, supplied as the heading of this chapter is a little misleading. It is not the committing of the sermon to memory verbatim that is a habit which enhances effectiveness in the pulpit. There are a number of possible ways of handling the memoria function.

Many older preachers today give evidence of the training they received in the nineteenth century as to the manner of presentation of their sermons. They were instructed to commit each sermon to memory very faithfully. Some of them have developed an uncanny ability to do that. The man who did not memorize his sermon was often accused of shirking his duty. The trend in recent years has been away from verbatim memory. But there are still many who are in sympathy with that method. Lee expresses himself thus:

There are various degrees of preparation between extempore speaking and the formal address. Just where one ends and the other begins is hard to say. The following are the most generally accepted divisions:

1. The plan of thinking on the whole subject and committing nothing to memory or to paper, but speaking entirely off-hand.
2. The method of jotting down notes and speaking from them.
3. The method of writing out the speech, not committing it, but speaking from notes.
4. The method of writing out the Introduction and the Conclusion and perhaps other important paragraphs and memorizing them, and the outline.
5. The plan of writing out and memorizing the whole speech.

The last is perhaps the ideal method, providing the speaker has the knack of delivering it with all of its original freshness. But time does not always permit of such careful preparation, and so the speaker must be the judge as to which method of preparation he will follow. It is reasonable to believe that a person can construct better sentences and choose better phraseology at his desk, when he has plenty of time, than he can on the spur of the moment. Therefore, we get this guiding star: Work as near toward the fifth method as time permits.¹

This shows that Lee is inclined to think that preachers can do their best work by carefully polishing their language and all else involved in delivery. That is closely in accord with older ideals, but there is a big question whether or not a preacher can come closest to his hearers in that manner.

There has been a wide divergence of opinion about the ideal way to deliver a sermon. At one extreme there is the man who memorizes every message, word by word.

1. Joshua Bryan Lee, Public Speaking, p. 241.

Blackwood quotes William M. Taylor as stating in his Yale Lectures:

Memoriter preaching is the method which has the greatest advantages with the fewest disadvantages.... The memory is like a friend, and loves to be trusted.²

But then he explained that Taylor acknowledged that after ten years of memoriter preaching he had to give up this method. His courage failed him. If the memoriter preacher forgets, he is likely to lose his confidence, and then his method is ruined. As for the man who must preach two or three times a week, it is practically impossible for him to memorize all of them. If he could, the messages might seem mechanical. Instead of speaking straight from the heart, such a preacher might have to grope around for the words. "Who wishes to hear a parrot in the pulpit?"³

A well-written sermon must have at least one revision. Blackwood suggests that rather than write out both morning and evening sermon, if two are necessary, the preacher should write and carefully revise the first, and preach the second from an extensive outline. In that way, one would receive the benefit of careful writing, and also the experience of speaking freely. He says that the trouble about writing much, rather than well, and revising never, is that the more one writes, the worse he writes,⁴ unless he keeps up the sense of style. In consideration

2. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 193.

5. Ibid., p. 194.

4. Ibid., p. 191.

of other evidence, Blackwood's suggestions seem rather too liberal. A good argument for carefully writing out every sermon is this that written work is notable for clearness. Clearness makes it impossible for the preacher to misunderstand his subject and subsequently to be misunderstood by his hearers. It is the result of straight thinking. One should not begin to write before he has the sermon thought through to the end. He should plan his work so that he can write steady until he has completed his sermon. ⁵

The following are representative presentations of methods or styles of presentation. The first is given by James Black in The Mystery of Preaching:

Generally speaking, there are four styles you may adopt in this matter of read or spoken discourse.

1. You may write out fully, word for word, and read fully, word for word, with of course more or less freedom. But substantially the thing is 'read.'
2. You may write out fully and memorize, repeating or recalling your words as written, producing them, as it were, from a photographic plate, or reading off the 'back of your head.'
3. You may write out fully as a discipline in writing, for order, method and language, with the further purpose of clarifying your mind, and giving your treatment some balance and proportion. Then you may speak your message, easily not slavishly, from notes.
4. You may prepare your subject thoroughly, thinking it out as clearly and fully as possible, without putting it down on paper, and then speak your message out of a full mind, trusting to find your appropriate language on your feet.⁶

5. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 190.

6. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 188 f.

Another such presentation is given by Craig:

1. Read Sermon. Preacher is assured of precision and clarity of language. Vocabulary is polished. He will not ramble or digress. There is security. But this method is rarely acceptable. The preacher should look into his people's eyes. The modern congregation wants to be talked to directly.
2. Memorized Sermon. Advantages: Mental exercise, language is precise and vivid. Hesitation, faltering, and phrase substitutions are bypassed. But the preacher usually doesn't have time for hours of mnemonics. It is a lifeless way because the thought is being produced through visual imagination. The page comes between the preacher and his people.
3. Impromptu Sermon. Preacher plans very little. This method is so dishonest and unethical for the sermon that it does not need amplification.
4. The Extemporaneous Sermon. Note the following:
 - a. The occasion is thoroughly studied.
 - b. The explicit purpose of the sermon is defined.
 - c. The text is selected.
 - d. A complete outline is prepared.
 - e. The sermon is written out in full.
 - f. The sermon is read aloud and studied silently to test its logic, coherence, and style.
 - g. The sermon is reduced to a catch-word outline.
 - h. The written sermon is then cast aside for the remainder of the preparation period.
 - i. The sermon is practiced orally.⁷

From these representative presentations, the current preferences are evident. The points substantiating the extemporaneous type of delivery seem to be well taken.

Blackwood describes McLaren's method of extemporaneous presentation. He says that McLaren committed almost nothing to memory, and read absolutely nothing at all from the manuscript. In his study, he made ready as carefully as

7. William C. Craig, The Preacher's Voice, p. 114.

he could, but in the pulpit he used the words which came up on the spur of the moment from his heart as it overflowed. And Blackwood observed that today this way of speaking is probably the most common among biblical preachers in some of its many forms. Extemporaneous preaching would be more effective if the minister would write out at least a sermon a week, and carefully revise it. He should have well-prepared material, but still be able to present it in a free manner.⁸ A big danger involved is that some preachers may try to use this extemporaneous manner of delivery as a means of getting out of some work. They think it should be easier than the memoriter method, and therefore fail to give the sermon proper study. They soon become less effective than they would be with a memorized sermon.

Sarett and Foster suggest that the most effective way to speak, as a rule, is to speak extemporaneously, with no guide except an adequate, well-constructed, memorized outline.⁹ Greer also suggests this manner, with the sermon presentation directly in mind. He explains that to prepare to preach without notes is a much more difficult process than to prepare to preach with them. He says, quite truly, that if you adopt the former method simply as a makeshift, and with a view

8. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 195.

9. Sarett & Foster, Basic Principles of Speech, p. 376.

to finding it easier and less exacting, you are destined to fail. But if you go about your job earnestly and thoroughly, you will not fail. Your rhetoric just may not always be at its best, nor your language the choicest, and you may even hesitate at times; but it will not make much difference to you or to your hearers. In spite of your ruggedness, you will have a power which it would not otherwise be possible to have. ¹⁰ This is the best recommendation for the extemporaneous type of delivery. It is the type which does most to enhance effectiveness in the pulpit.

10. David H. Greer, The Preacher and His Place, p. 184.

IV. The Delivery Itself

Regardless of how well the preacher did the preliminary work for his sermon, he cannot be effective unless he knows how to conduct himself in the pulpit. All of his preparation must point toward efficiency in the pulpit. He must develop a satisfactory, efficient delivery. Although men are naturally gifted differently as far as delivery is concerned, all of them should be conscious of its demands and acquainted with the best ways of making it effective.

The demands of delivery require having something to say (content) and being anxious to say it (enthusiasm). But that is not enough. The speaker must know also how to say what he wishes to say.

Speech is an art, as well as a gift and a grace from the hand of God. It can be cultivated and developed. It can be improved. Just as there is a technique of piano playing, of orchestration, of dramatic expression, so there is a technique of fervent speaking.¹

The speaker cannot hope to improve by simply speaking much--with no realization of what he is doing. He will simply be growing more set in his errors. But in order to improve, it is necessary first of all to have the desirable and correct goal in mind. Therefore, the man who wishes to improve himself must study the art of correct speech. Again, that will not suffice. He must constantly

1. Russell D. Snyder, Reality in Preaching, p. 162.

practice correct speech habits. It is difficult to do that without having a competent critic. If possible, the student of speech should have someone to help him achieve his improvements. He has a mechanical friend which can help him very much. That is a recording device. If a man can hear his voice as it sounds to others, he can soon analyze his mistakes and correct them.

Recording is the only satisfactory means of hearing yourself objectively. The pitch of your voice may be different than you had supposed; the quality may be different; and the enunciation may not be as clear and distinct as you had hoped.²

Accordingly, recording is being used in all well-equipped speech departments.

The actual delivery in the pulpit presupposes a message. The message is central. The value of everything else is that it may contribute to the effectiveness of the message. The sermon is worth only the result it produces. Its purpose is to bring about an influence on the mind, will, and conscience of people so they apply the things they know to be right to their lives. Therefore, the effectiveness of the sermon must be determined by this standard alone. No matter how clever or dramatic it is, if it doesn't do something for the people's lives, it is useless.³

2. William C. Craig, The Preacher's Voice, p. 14.

3. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 108.

Effective delivery demands a specific object of the speech. The general purpose for any speech is to instruct, to entertain, or to move. To entertain is entirely foreign to sermons. But the purpose of a sermon may be to instruct, and it is always to move. The speaker must be careful not to confuse the general purpose with the specific object. The specific object is that particular thing which the speaker wishes to do.⁴ The general purpose of the sermon may be to move, but the specific object would be to lead the hearers to cast all their care upon God instead of worrying about earthly things--or any of the other specific objects possible for the sermon.

The Statement of Aim is the statement of the precise thing sought. It resolves the General Subject into a specific assertion of what the listener is to believe; what he is to do; what he is to see, feel, or enjoy.⁵

No preacher will be effective unless he knows just what he wants to say. If he wishes to affect other people, he must first of all apply his message to himself. Then he is ready to move others by it. Speakers should always be judged by the extent to which they communicate ideas and win response to their ideas. If they are not judged in this way, they often proceed on the exhibition premise. But until they change to a premise of honest communication,

4. Joshua Bryan Lee, Public Speaking, p. 244.

5. Arthur Edward Phillips, Effective Speaking, p. 146.

they will be ineffective.

Such performances in interpretation, in college oratory, in sermons and in political spell-binding, with their self-conscious gestures, inflections, labored achievements of technique, and a host of other affectations often bring public speaking into disrepute.⁶

The preacher must make his speech natural and "functional." If he concentrates on his message with the hearers in mind, he will give a multitude of cues that reveal what his emotional state is, and affectations will be altogether out of place, as they always are in the pulpit.

The preacher's work is to make men see things, feel things, and then act upon them. If he fails in the first, the other results will fail too. An Arabian proverb says, "He is the best orator who can change men's ears into eyes."⁷ Often when a person sees a thing, feeling and doing it go along. The matter of the preacher bringing his message to the cooperative hearts of his hearers is called empathy. That means effort of the speaker or preacher, and a reciprocal effort on the part of the hearer. The attention of the hearer must become a voluntary subjection of his mental and physical activity to his own use in harmony with that of the speaker.

It involves a unity of consciousness; the whole being converges toward the object

6. Sarett & Foster, Basic Principles of Speech, p. 85.

7. J. Spencer Kennard, Psychic Power in Preaching, p. 49.

presented, and is held in captivity--ears, eyes and limbs, and almost the very breath are under the same spell.⁸

If the preacher can achieve this goal, he is achieving results. His sermon then is not an end in itself, or a work of art; it is a tool. It will convince men, and lead them to Christ and to the Christian way of real living.

Accurate practices as to the mechanics of delivery are necessary for effectiveness in the pulpit.

Under God, the popular effectiveness of the biblical sermon depends on the literary style more than the substance, and on the delivery more than the literary style. This may be fortunate, since it is easier to learn how to speak than to know what to preach or how to write. If the biblical interpreter wishes to increase his popular effectiveness, and in time perhaps double it, he should learn how to speak.

Vocal quality is very important for all speakers. It is especially important to the minister. He cannot be effective with a sanctimonious pulpit tone. But he cannot get by with flippant tone either. The conduct of public worship demands a pleasing tone of voice. The minister should know how to use his voice exactly, for he "often meets acoustical conditions that amplify the unpleasant qualities of his voice, or that require skil-

8. J. Spencer Kennard, Psychic Power in Preaching, p. 51f.

9. Andrew W. Blackwood, Preaching from the Bible, p. 192.

ful modulation for the auditory comfort of his congregation." ¹⁰ As a rule, the preacher must use his natural voice with ordinary modulation and variety. He must know that there is no music in a monotone. But there is a "sore throat" in it for him, and somnolence for his audience. ¹¹ The hearers soon can tell when a preacher uses a monotone. They never enjoy it, but usually tolerate it. More and more preachers today are beginning to talk "to" the people in their congregations instead of "at" them. The more closely a delivery approaches the conversational, the more effective it will be. The word "conversational" must be taken in a correct sense in this connection. It cannot mean that a preacher should use that tone and style of speaking which he would use in the comfort of his home. There are natural differences between preaching and what we usually consider conversation. In conversational preaching, there is still:

- 1) Assumption of leadership by the speaker
- 2) Longer interval of speech
- 3) Organization of thought
- 4) Mandatory volume adjustment to the size of the auditorium. ¹²

The point is that the preacher cannot assume a strange, sanctimonious voice which he puts on only in the church. That habit only deters effectiveness in the pulpit. To

10. John L. Casteel, "College Speech Training and the Ministry," Quarterly Journal of Speech, vol. XXXI, no. 1, p. 75.

11. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 183.

12. William C. Craig, The Preacher's Voice, p. 119.

enhance it, he must be natural.

The most important part of delivery is the voice. The voice conditions the whole art of delivery. The speaker must know how to manage his voice correctly to express emotion. He must know when to use a loud voice, when a soft one, and when the normal intermediate. He must also be able to control pitch accurately and purposefully. He must know which rhythms to use at all times. "These are, in fact the three things that receive attention:
¹³
 volume, modulation of pitch, and rhythm."

A primary requisite for good vocal quality is correct breathing. The process of breathing is called respiration. Taking in air is called inspiration, and expulsion of air is expiration. The speaker must give thought and practice to the function and uses of the lungs, diaphragm, larynx, and other speech mechanism. Concerning breathing, he should learn to use the diaphragm and bellows type breathing. "The secret of a smooth, steady, even voice is a perfectly controlled breath
¹⁴
 stream." Breath is really the body of a tone. The final product comes when the speech mechanism with all its parts molds the column of air which comes from the lungs. If the air from which the tones are shaped is supported and con-
¹⁵
 trolled right, the tones will automatically be good.

13. Lane Cooper, The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 183.

14. Joshua Bryan Lee, Public Speaking, p. 17.

15. Sarett & Foster, Basic Principles of Speech, p. 197.

Therefore, before a speaker can produce good tones, he must know how to breathe correctly, and how to control the volume of his voice effectively.

The preacher must also know the significance of pitch and how to use it. Pitch level is a sign which the hearer can detect easily and read at once. High voice, as a rule, indicates excitement, anger, light-heartedness, great weakness; low voice indicates solemnity, august dignity, awed fear, deep meditation, and the like. Voice along a middle range tells that the speaker is calm, and going along his regular way. ¹⁶ It is by the modulation of the voice that emphasis may be easily secured. Modulation means change. The change may be of pitch, volume, or rhythm. The most significant and noticeable modulations are those of pitch. Change of pitch indicates change of mind. In natural conversation, the voice changes pitch frequently and very automatically. But many speakers fail to bring that same change into their formal speaking. They tend to glide along in the same pattern. The preacher should learn to bring pitch stabs and frequent changes into his style for good variety. Such habits will enhance effectiveness in the pulpit.

The man trained in good speech habits will notice very many instances of faulty tone production. Even in

16. Weaver, Borchers, & Woolbert, The New Better Speech, p. 206.

colleges in which speech instruction is given the students, the following is found:

Adequate laryngeal resonance is almost always lacking; excessive nasality and reedy rasps are with us always. These defects of voice production seem to be untouched by undergraduate speech courses. Emphasis has been placed upon compositions and elementary problems of delivery.¹⁷

Craig lists a number of technical faults of the voice and the effects on the speaker. First is the mistake of using too much volume. That leads to abuse, and if done too much overtaxes the vocal chords and eventually causes a vocal disorder. Too high a pitch is also detrimental. A speaker should learn what is his optimum pitch and then use it. The reason a higher pitch is detrimental is that it requires stronger tension of the laryngeal muscles and greater vocal chord effort. Such over-use is needless and only harms the speaker's voice. Another fault of voice production is the glottic shock with implications caused by oversharpe attack upon the initial vowel. Besides giving a harsh effect to the hearer, it is also detrimental to the vocal chords. Habitually clearing the throat has the same ill effect. A final vocal fault is poor articulation. Sometimes it is caused by plain laziness, but more often the reason is that the speaker never received the training necessary for good articulation. It is one thing to ask

17. John L. Casteel, "College Speech Training and the Ministry," Quarterly Journal of Speech, p. 75, vol. XXXI, no. 1.

a person to speak distinctly, and it is another thing to expect him to be able to do it. In articulation, careful attention should be given to correct vowel formation.

Clear articulation is the framework of distinctness of speech. The distinct speaker is heard at a greater distance and understood more clearly than the indistinct speaker.¹⁸

Besides being heard more easily, the distinct speaker also spares the strain on the vocal cords which the indistinct speaker must suffer. It seems as if correct enunciation of sounds escapes the student in the undergraduate department about as much as effective voice production does. There is a general effect of slovenliness. Certainly, the student entering the ministry should learn to produce the sounds of his words with clarity. That is necessary for his profession.¹⁹ He should strive toward the greatest possible efficiency.

Another requisite of effective delivery is good posture in the pulpit and meaningful gestures. As far as posture is concerned, the speaker should at all times be natural and free from strain or affectation. His audience may be won or lost by his position. The preacher has a very difficult job, for his sermon must be delivered from the pulpit. He cannot become lazy in the pulpit, but there too he should learn to bear himself erectly.

18. William C. Craig, The Preacher's Voice, p. 66.

19. John L. Casteel, "College Speech Training and the Ministry," Quarterly Journal of Speech, p. 76, vol. XXXI, no. 1.

Gesture is a kind of illustration. In moments filled with meaning, it may be able to say more than words could. It seems to go back to the heart feelings. Of course, preachers cannot strut or put on in any way in the pulpit, but they should express their feelings by gesture. ²⁰ Lee gives seven significant rules for gesture:

1. A gesture should possess purpose. Meaningless gestures, no matter how graceful, should never be used.

2. A gesture should be positive--avoid vagueness it confuses.

3. Gestures should not be too frequent. Gesture is for emphasis and if used too frequently there is no contrast between the important and the unimportant.

4. Gestures should be dignified. Wild gestures are ludicrous.

5. Gestures should accompany the word and not precede nor follow.

'The stroke of the gesture and that of the voice should be simultaneous, otherwise, the forces are divided, the speech marred, and the strength of the movement wasted.'

The action may commence long before the word requiring the gesture, but when the important word containing the idea is uttered the stroke of the gesture should accompany it.

6. A gesture should be unified. If part of the body suggests one idea and another part suggests another, the force of the gesture is lost. The gesture should focus the whole body on the one idea.

7. Gestures should be varied. The same gesture over and over grows monotonous. It is also tiresome to see the speaker gesture first with one hand and then with the other with even regularity. If gestures are governed by the thought they will have variety. ²¹

These rules show what is expected of the speaker as far as gestures are concerned. The student usually fails

20. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 179.

21. Joshua Bryan Lee, Public Speaking, p. 58 f.

to use gestures at all--or right ones if any. He fails to arouse sufficient "dynamic" in himself to give life and vividness to his presentation. He should have experience and discipline of the effective use of the body as a means of communication and of self-stimulation.

Training will help him a great deal.²² After he once lets himself go, he begins to feel at ease, and then his whole body responds and the stiffness disappears. The eye is a wonderful instrument of expression which should be employed by the preacher. He can say a lot with his eyes. If he has not learned to look his hearers straight in the face, individually and collectively, he is missing a great help of reaching them and keeping their attention.²³ After a preacher once gets into his pulpit, he cannot afford to be employing his attention about his manner, or be thinking about his gestures. If he does, affectation will be the result. He should be concentrating on his message, leaving nature and the previously acquired habits to take care of his manner of delivery.²⁴ If he is so engrossed in his message and so intent on reaching his hearers that his entire person responds to his efforts, he is well on his way to real effectiveness in the pulpit.

Mannerisms in the pulpit should be avoided. All aimless tricks, conscious or unconscious, that offend

22. John L. Casteel, "College Speech Training and the Ministry," Quarterly Journal of Speech, vol. XXXI, no. 1, p. 76.

23. J. Spencer Kennard, Psychic Power in Preaching, p. 104 f. James A. Winans, "Whately on Elocution," quotes The Reverend Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric, in Quarterly Journal of Speech, vol. XXXI, no. 1, p. 3.

the eye or the ear should be done away with. Spurgeon shows how some little trick of manner, by endless repetition, can easily become so irritating that it blots out all the good points of the speaker. Spurgeon tells how a man may begin by nodding his head for emphasis, and end up by swaying like a branch in a high wind. ²⁵ There are a great many such unpleasant mannerisms that should be avoided.

Dr. Graebner includes some in his "Don't's for Young Preachers":

Don't stand rigid like a statue; nor turn your head in exact semicircles, like a sun-flower or a garden-spray.

Don't shift your glance continually. Gaze steadily, without staring, at one part of the audience, then shift the glance slightly and direct it to another part while completing sentence, etc.²⁶

Other mannerisms to be avoided are the following. Don't be pedantic, overdoing articulation and pronunciation, performing mechanical gestures, and, in general, taking on the aspect of some sort of machine or precision instrument. Don't use fillers in speaking. Know your material well, think on your feet, be deliberate where necessary, use meaningful pauses; and meaningless phrases, "ahhhh's," and other grunting sounds will be eliminated. Never assume a scolding attitude in the pulpit. You are not there to berate people, but to bring them closer to Christ.

25. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching, p. 63.

26. Th. Graebner, The Expository Preacher, p. 13.

Don't become accustomed to swaying or rising mechanically in the pulpit. It soon becomes very monotonous. Don't hang in the pulpit in a lazy attitude or assume a "fatherly" position--however the attempt may be. Don't wave your handkerchief around like a flag. If you don't positively need it, keep it out of sight. Don't play with your ring, your watch, your fingers, or anything else. Don't be guilty of anything which would distract from your message. Rather be manly, purposeful, and intent on your job.

Good delivery in the pulpit does not rest simply with the words the preacher speaks in a sermon. It is carried out only by a strong Christian character trained and devoted to live his work. It is based on careful, prayerful, thorough preparation in all its parts and functions. It is presented by a speaker who has dedicated himself completely to the people and his God. Such a person will do his utmost to develop habits and practices which enhance effectiveness in the pulpit.

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