

MESSAGE WRITING AND DELIVERY

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

2 Timothy 1:7 "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

Training messengers is one of the important aspects of discipleship training. In order to train others, we ourselves must grow as effective messengers of God's words. The topic that we want to discuss is not a simple one. My short presentation is not complete at all. But we can learn from one another. I hope that what I share with you may be a springboard to further our collaboration on this important topic. May God raise each of us as excellent messengers of God's word as well as effective messenger trainers.

Part I. Message preparation

This is what I do before writing a message

1. Read the Bible passage several times and listen to the audio Bible until I LIKE the Bible passage and receive FRESH INSPIRATION from it. This does not mean that we should not refer to messages or commentaries written by others. Imitation may be the beginning of creation. But before getting aid from these resources, it is important to receive FRESH INSPIRATION from the word of God. (Luke 3:2) "during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert."
2. The message is God's word that can give clear answers to the spiritual problems that people may have. It is not a literary essay. It is not a Bible commentary. Therefore, it is important to write a message with pastoral concern, not just with a scholastic attitude.
3. Find one clear theme from the Bible passage. Decide the title and key verse.
4. Divide the passage into three (?) parts and decide on three subtitles. These three subtitles must be in harmony with the overall theme and the title. There is no rule to have three subtitles but this is what Spurgeon used most frequently and what I think is most suitable.

Part II message writing

1. The introduction is based on the title and key verse. In the context of our lives, times and problems that we face, it should give clear reasons and importance of the passage. It should tell us one thing that we must learn from it. About ¼

of a page is idealistic. It does not need to be perfect from the beginning. After finishing message writing, you may come back and revise it.

2. Write the message by parts. If you want to write the message as a whole, you may feel greatly burdened. But if you divide the message into parts and write by parts, it is much easier to write each part, focusing on the subtitle that you had set beforehand.
3. Write the message in a way that gets more intense and meaningful. Of course, we will write the message based on the Bible passage. Still we can think about writing it, following a scheme of explanation, development, crisis and climax, like music that is reaching its crescendo (getting gradually louder and more intense). We can divide the message into two parts: explanation and lessons (application). In the explanation and development, we must explain the background and meaning of the passage. In the crisis and climax, we must bring the lessons that are hidden in the passage, and teachings about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In order to make the lessons clear and rich, we may use the methods of contrast, argument and illustration.
4. Write the message with *humor*. Our messages must be sincere. But they can be sincerely boring if they are sincere and dry from the beginning to the end. People like humor if it is good humor. Humor is like a window that brings in fresh wind. Think about a room with no windows. It will be suffocating. Humor refreshes people's attention span so that they can hear the message. It is idealistic to have at least one joke in each part of the message. Try to find the humor in the Bible passage or in our daily lives. For example, when Jesus' disciples marveled at the magnificent temple building in Mark 13, we can imagine that they wanted to take a group photo with Jesus having the temple as their background. Say, "One, two, three, cheese!"
5. Include a few *casual* or *piercing* questions in the message. Questions are very powerful tools in planting the word of God in people's hearts. We see in the Bible that Jesus was the expert in asking questions. For example, you can describe how fearful the women were when they went to the tomb in order to anoint Jesus' dead body, saying, "People are afraid to visit tombs, especially at night or early in the morning." After that, ask, "How about you?" In this way, you can help the audience to participate in your message and stay with you. This is a way of throwing casual questions to engage the audience.

You may ask more serious and piercing questions. Open ended questions are not easy to handle for the audience. If possible, ask rhetorical questions or multiple choice questions. Jesus asked the Pharisees in Mark 3:4 "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" For example, after delivering a message on the importance of having faith in God, you may ask, "Where do you live now? In New York or Chicago or Korea?"

Our physical address may be important. But the more important thing is whether we live in the world of faith or the world of unbelief.”

6. The conclusion is important. In the conclusion we must give clear answers to the questions that we raised in the introduction. It is good to summarize one thing that we must learn from the passage even though many things were mentioned in the message. It is also important to present one clear prayer topic based on the passage.
7. As to the writing style and length: the shorter, the better. The message is not for reading but for listening. Therefore, it is better to write in colloquial language rather than literary or bookish language. Try to write in the way that you speak. If you write in colloquial language, the sentences will get shorter. It will become easier for you to deliver. The idealistic amount will be about 5 pages, taking 25 minutes. Which is better: to deliver a short and well-digested message or a long and poorly delivered message? Of course, the first one is better.

Part III Message delivery.

Message writing is important. But message delivery is also very important. Think about Beethoven’s music. Depending on who plays it, it will sound different and have a different impact on people. Message performance is not about motions. It is about digesting and INTERNALIZING the word of God as well as the message. We should not read the message with just our lips. We must deliver it with all our hearts, minds and strength, using our voices, faces and body parts as DYNAMIC instruments.

1. Digest the Bible passage by performing it as a monodrama. If possible, memorize it. If you do this, you’ve already completed 50% of the preparation for your message delivery.
2. Physical and grammatical preparation: Breathing is very important. Breathe in quickly and breathe out slowly, sustaining it for about 30 seconds. This breathing practice will increase your capacity and confidence to speak fluently. “Divide and conquer.” Divide sentences into meaningful phrases, using dividers (/).
3. step by step message delivery
 - 1) Title – the title is the summary of the whole message. Therefore, it must be read with intensity and meaning.
 - 2) Introduction – Introduction must be joyful and meaningful. From the beginning, we must win people’s hearts. The success of our message may

depend on the first 30 seconds. We must catch people's attention and they must be in tuned with us.

- 3) Subtitles – Read first, second and third like marching orders, with each subtitle becoming louder. The subtitles must be read with great emphasis with the RIGHT EMOTIONAL CONTENT.
- 4) Sentences and paragraphs – EMPHASIZE ONLY ONE THING in a sentence. Avoid emphasizing everything. A paragraph has one point, expressed in the topic sentence. Find the KEY WORD and emphasize it throughout the paragraph. Within a paragraph, notice progressions, transitions and CONTRAST.
- 5) Explanation/story parts and message/lesson parts – The explanation/story part must be speedy, plain and conversational. We can achieve this by bouncing over longer phrases. The message/lesson parts must be slow, powerful and from above. This can achieve this by bouncing over shorter phrases.
- 6) The main part – the main part should be about Jesus. We must be CRAZY about Jesus.
- 7) Conclusion – It is good to memorize the conclusion and speak it with great conviction.

Part IV Voices

We must use at least two tones and inflections.

1. low tone: a base sound. It is not necessarily weak. It is rich a sound that comes from the chest resonance and spreads downward to the ground. It is good to use this tone in order to explain and develop the meaning of the passage.
2. High tone: a tenor sound. It is an awakening sound that comes from the head resonance and spreads upward toward the ceiling. Use this sound in order to emphasize the main lessons of the passage. Use it to testify about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
3. Full sound: a baritone sound. It is the mixture of the low chest sound and the high head resonance. It goes out to the front. You can use it in between the low tone and high tone.

In terms of intensity, we can say that the low tone is at the 1st degree, the full sound, the 2nd, and the high tone is the 3rd.

4. downward/upward inflection: When we talk about bad things or bad news, use this downward inflection. When we talk about good things or good news, use the upward inflection.

Part V Imagination

There is a saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Showing images on the screen helps people picture what is being preached in their minds. Even if you do not show images during your message, try to speak in picturesque ways. Try to show the whole situation.

If we deliver our messages only in words or with our lips, people will feel easily bored. But if we see the mental pictures while delivering our messages, people will also see them along with us. When we draw the pictures in our minds, we should use facial expressions and motions. Check whether we can draw pictures in our minds or not if you practice your message in front of a MIRROR. The famous George Whitefield is well-known for the use of imagination. After hearing his message, people often cried, being moved by his message. He himself often cried being moved by his own message.

Part VI. Message as the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:4 "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power."

The message must come in our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit. The message must be written in an orderly fashion on paper and in our hearts. That is not all. The message must be delivered not just in words but with the moving and convicting power of the Holy Spirit so that those who listen may be born again, repent and make decisions of faith through it. Therefore, we must pray and depend on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Part VII. Message delivery with the audience

We ask people to participate in our message delivery by reading the Bible passage responsively or asking them to read the verses during our message. This is good and necessary. We may ask people to read the Bible passage by gender or age group such as men, women, the young and the old. We can also go further. At the end of each part or conclusion, we can ask people to Turn To Their Neighbor and say to each other, for example, "Don't be a fool. Seek first God's kingdom." If they exhort each other in this way, they participate in message delivery and remember it better.

References:

Lectures to my students, Charles H. Spurgeon
Preaching & Preachers [D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones](#)