

CLASS 18

Developing Excellence in Speaking

CLASS OVERVIEW

In this class we will review:

- The purposes of a sermonette.
- "HOW TO" select an appropriate message for church services.
- Types of sermonette messages.
- "HOW TO" *organize* an effective message.
- "HOW TO" *deliver* an effective message.
- "HOW TO" *evaluate* your own speaking.

Opening Group Question:

- Think of the best sermonette or most helpful sermonette that you have ever heard. What are some of the strong points or characteristics of an excellent and useful sermonette?

We will return to these characteristics, but let us first review several important points about sermonettes.

I. Introduction

Sermonettes are a key part of the weekly Sabbath service. Although not everyone in this room currently gives sermonettes, or will be giving sermonettes in the future, all of us can benefit from the information that will be presented.

- A. For those currently giving sermonettes, the information presented should be helpful as you continue to work to improve the effectiveness of your sermonettes.
- B. For those who may be giving sermonettes in the future, the information presented can be helpful as you begin thinking along the lines of giving a sermonette one day.
- C. For those who do not give and will not be giving sermonettes in the future, primarily the women in the audience, it will be helpful to you to understand the Church's expectations for those giving sermonettes, what is required of them, and the amount of planning needed to give an effective sermonette. Additionally, this information will help you pray more specifically for the speakers. For those of you who are married to sermonette speakers, this information can help you provide your husband with more useful feedback on his message, when he asks for it.

II. Purpose

- A. The purpose of a sermonette is to get people's minds ready for spiritual food and away from the physical world. It sets the stage for the sermon.
- B. It serves to *edify* the congregation on a very specific and focused subject.
- C. It gives a man the opportunity to train for future leadership opportunities.

Points to Remember When Giving a Sermonette:

- Never rebuke or correct the congregation. Use your time for positive input or admonition.
- Be creative, but try not to make a production out of your assignment. Remember, your job is to "help" God's people, not to draw attention to yourself.
- A sermonette gives men with potential an opportunity to grow.
- Keep in mind that the Sabbath service is a team effort with everyone on the team making a contribution in the service of God's people.
- Keep your topic VERY focused. Do not try to cover a major topic or "save" the congregation in 10-12 minutes.
- A sermonette is an opportunity for a speaker to show that he is capable of complying with the parameters of the assignment (time, number of scriptures, message content, etc.).

III. Steps for Selecting a Sermonette Topic (see Handout 1)

Group Question: How might a speaker go about selecting an appropriate and helpful sermonette topic?

- A. Pray to God for inspiration well in advance of your speaking date. Remember that your sermonette is likely to be ineffective or unhelpful unless it is inspired by God.
- B. READ regularly. A speaker should always have many ideas for a sermonette *IF* he is doing his part. Regular Bible study is a **MUST** for any speaker. Also, any additional reading that you can do will be helpful (newspapers, informative magazines, helpful books).
- C. Be on the lookout for ideas. If you stay in a "sermonette topic-searching mode," you will be thinking of ideas all the time. Listen to the topics of conversation at services and at work, observe the "hot topics" in the news, watch how people act, and compare these to your personal Bible study.
- D. Keep a list of sermonette ideas. Many an inspired topic is lost because speakers fail to write them down. Keep a little note pad with you and write down your idea as soon as it comes to mind. You will soon find that you have many topics to choose from for future messages.
- E. Select a subject that can be covered in your time limit (10-12 minutes) and that is pertinent to the congregation's needs.
- F. Try to speak on a variety of topics over time—develop your breadth as well as depth. You do not want to develop a reputation for your interest in only one type of subject. For example, "the prophecy guy" or "the Ten Commandments guy."
- G. Make sure your subject is **VERY specific**. Focus in on **ONE very specific point**. Probably the most common mistake in sermonette-giving is choosing a topic that is too broad.
- H. Beware of novel or unusual subjects or your own personal opinions (this could be heresy). A general rule of thumb is: "**If at all in doubt, ask the pastor.**" If you cannot contact the pastor before you are scheduled to speak, speak on another topic until you can contact him and you get his approval for your idea.
- I. Avoid coming up with a **NEW** truth or **NEW** understanding. Remember Solomon's conclusion, "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecc 1:9). In most cases, "new truth" is merely "old, off-base ideas" repackaged.
- J. Follow what you have been taught through Church literature and from proven ministers. Remember the Apostle Paul's admonition to the Thessalonians, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Thes 2:15).
- K. **ALWAYS** have notes. You, of course, do not want to be "tied to your notes" or read directly from them when you speak, but even the best speakers "lose their line of thought" from time to time. Using notes will help you avoid an embarrassing situation when you forget your place or your point.

- L. Mean what you say! It is essential that you speak with feeling and from the heart. Make sure to pick a topic that you can get excited about. If you are excited and mean what you say, your audience will also be excited. If you are bored with your topic, so, too, will your audience be.

"A speech should not just be a sharing of information, but a sharing of yourself."
—Ralph Archbold

IV. Length of Sermonettes

Generally your time limit is 10-12 minutes (as suggested by Headquarters). Check with your local pastor for specific recommendations for your particular congregation.

V. Types of Sermonettes

There are typically three types of sermonettes—try to limit yourself to sermonettes that fit into the following topics.

- A. Explanation of a difficult scripture.** An example would be:
1. 1 Timothy 4:4—Why doesn't it justify eating unclean meats?
 2. John 14:2—Why doesn't it prove that heaven is the reward of the saved?
 3. Luke 17:21—Why doesn't it justify that the Kingdom of God is merely in one's heart?
- B. Instructive.** An example would be:
1. How to wisely use your second tithe.
 2. How to deal with birthday or Christmas gifts in a godly manner.
 3. How to relate with members in other church groups in a Christian manner.
 4. A loving way to encourage the sick.
 5. A way to ensure effective, daily prayer.
 6. A key to successful fasting.
- C. Exhortation.** Intended to address minor problems. Make sure not to "single out" people, but speak to the general principles and *encourage* all brethren to adhere. An example would be:
1. Being ready for services to begin on time.
 2. Avoiding the use of euphemisms.
 3. Honoring the "hoary" head.
 4. One way to encourage brethren experiencing trials.

VI. Organization of Sermonettes (see Handout 2)

The organization of a sermonette is **crucial**. Without clear organization, your audience will not be able to follow your line of thought and your sermonette will most likely be *ineffective*, not to mention be too long. There are four KEY parts to a successful sermonette:

- A. Introduction.** Very Important—Grabs the audiences' attention and sets the stage for the sermonette.
1. It must be related to the subject.
 2. It should make the audience *want* to listen.
 3. It should include one of the following:
 - A. A story—a recent happening—a fact
 - B. An attention-getting or thought-provoking question
 - C. Present a challenge
- B. S.P.S.** After deciding on a specific topic, write out your S.P.S or *Specific Purpose Statement*. The S.P.S. serves two purposes:
- First, it lets your audience know specifically where you are going with your message.
 - Second, it will keep you focused and on track. Sermonettes that do not have a clear S.P.S.

usually do not come across in a clear, understandable, and useful way.

C. Body. Organize the body of the sermonette into one to three points that directly tie back to your S.P.S.

- *Scriptures.* Choose your scriptures carefully—usually no more than three. You can refer to one or two additional scriptures or read them from your notes, but do not have the congregation turn to them. Typically you should try to reinforce each point with a scripture. Holding your scriptures to a maximum of three will also help you stay within your time limit.

D. Conclusion. A strong conclusion is essential to an effective sermonette. This should be very “tight” and well thought out. Do NOT “wait for inspiration” of the conclusion until you reach the end of the sermonette. Ineffective sermonettes frequently have weak and *poorly planned* conclusions.

The conclusion will generally serve two purposes:

- Summarizes your main points and ties back to the S.P.S.
- Leaves the audience with a powerful memory of the topic. Often “charges” the audience with a task or an action to take, based on the message.

“Tell the audience what you’re going to say, say it; then tell them what you’ve said.”

—Dale Carnegie

VII. Delivery

1. Show zeal and interest—be lively and enthusiastic
2. Be friendly and warm
3. Use *appropriate* intensity to drive a point home
4. Strive to be natural
5. Do not try to impress anyone
6. Pray to God for inspiration and allow Him to use you
7. Reinforce your points with an appropriate personal example, short story or quote. This will help your audience both “connect” or “relate” to the point, as well as remember it! All scriptures and no examples often results in a “boring” delivery.

VIII. Evaluation—Three Ways to Improve Your Speaking

Group Question: How might a speaker work to improve his speaking?

1. **Find role models:** A good way to become a better and more effective speaker is by observing someone else and being able to make a good evaluation. As you watch other speakers, pay attention to what *they do* well and what effective “teaching methods” they use in their presentations. Also, notice what does not work and what is ineffective. Then, try to adjust your speaking to incorporate or omit these points.
2. **Evaluate yourself:** Just as we are reminded by the Apostle Paul to “Examine yourself” with regard to our spiritual state (1. Cor 11:27-31), we should be able to critically examine our own speaking. It may take some practice, but you will develop the ability to “read” your audience and determine how “connected” they are with your message. Also, learn to take some time, perhaps on the drive home after services or Saturday evening, to reflect back over your message and think about the strengths and weaknesses of your message and presentation. Write these down so you can review them and address these issues prior to your next speaking assignment.
3. **Find a loving evaluator in the congregation.** Often this may be your wife. It can also be an honest friend or another “effective speaker” in the congregation. Ask them for honest and *constructive* feedback and suggestions on your message. You might want to ask them ahead of time to look for one or two specific points to help you improve on. Then listen to and act on their observations.

Remember, an effective speaker/teacher is ALWAYS looking for ways to improve. Only ineffective speakers conclude that they can improve no further.

IX. Conclusion

The opportunity to give a sermonette is one that is a privilege and should never be taken lightly. Sermonettes are spiritual admonition and with the responsibility comes trust that is placed in the speaker to lead and guide properly. An excellent sermonette can be very powerful and can really stir the congregation to action. Those giving sermonettes should continually strive to improve and become more effective tools in God's hands. All Christians should be involved in praying for the success of sermonettes so that all can use the message to grow and overcome.

Optional Homework for Next Class: (choose one assignment to complete)

- With your spouse or other Church members, begin discussing the following questions:
 - Why is planning for the future so important?
 - What do leadership and planning have in common?
- Do a brief Bible study and identify several people who were "planners." Also note what and how they planned.

Handout 1—Class 18**HOW TO SELECT A SPEAKING TOPIC**

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- Pray to God for inspiration well in advance of your speaking date. Remember that your sermonette will not be effective or helpful unless it is inspired by God.
 - READ regularly. There is NO reason why a speaker should not have many ideas for a sermonette IF he is doing his part. Regular Bible study is a MUST for any speaker. Also, any additional reading that you can do will be helpful (newspapers, informative magazines, helpful books).
 - Be on the lookout for ideas. If you stay in a *sermonette topic-searching mode*, you will be thinking of ideas all the time. Listen to the topics of conversation at services and at work, observe the “hot topics” in the news, watch how people act, and compare these to your personal Bible study.
 - Keep a list of sermonette ideas. Many an inspired topic is lost because speakers fail to write them down. Keep a little note pad with you and write down your idea as soon as it comes to mind. You will soon find that you have many topics to choose from for your messages.
 - Select a subject that can be covered in your time limit (10-12 minutes) and that is pertinent to the congregation’s needs.
 - Try to speak on a variety of topics over time—develop your breadth as well as depth. You do not want to develop a reputation for your interest in only one type of subject. For example, “the prophecy guy” or “the Ten Commandments guy.”
 - Make sure your subject is **VERY specific**. Focus in on **ONE very specific point**. Probably the most common mistake with sermonettes is choosing a topic that is too broad.
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Handout 2—Class 18**SERMONETTE ORGANIZATION**

The organization of a sermonette is **vital**. Without clear organization, your audience will not be able to “follow” your line of thought and your sermonette will most likely be *ineffective*.

The FOUR KEY PARTS of an Effective Sermonette:

1. **Introduction:** Grabs audience attention and sets the stage for your presentation.
 - It must be related to the subject.
 - It should make the audience *want* to listen.
 - It should include one of the following:
 - A story, a recent happening or a fact
 - An attention-getting or thought-provoking question
 - Present a challenge

 2. **S.P.S.:** After deciding on a specific topic, write out your S.P.S. or *Specific Purpose Statement*. The S.P.S. serves two purposes:
 - First, it lets your audience know exactly where you are going with your message.
 - Second, it will keep you focused and on track. Sermonettes that do not have a *clear* S.P.S. usually do not come across in a clear, understandable, and useful way.

 3. **Body:** Organize the body of the sermonette into one to three points that tie directly back to your S.P.S.
 - *Scriptures.* Choose your scriptures carefully, usually no more than three. You can refer to one or two additional scriptures or read them from your notes, but do not have the congregation turn to them. Typically you should try to reinforce each point with a scripture. Holding your scriptures to a maximum of three will also help you stay within your time limit.

 4. **Conclusion:** A strong conclusion is essential to an effective sermonette. This should be very “tight” and well thought out. Do NOT “wait for inspiration” of the conclusion until you reach the end of the sermonette. Ineffective sermonettes frequently have weak and poorly planned conclusions. The conclusion generally serves two purposes:
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