

Class 105 – Introduction to Public Speaking

Session One Notes – Introduction to Public Speaking

Review: What is the essence of preaching?

Preaching can be defined as communicating the truths of the Bible in a way that:

- Impacts the spirit
- Impacts the soul (will, emotions, intellect)
- Impacts behavior

Review: What is the task of preaching?

Content: having something to say

Form: figuring out how to say it

Delivery: saying it well

This involves:

- Grasping the meaning of biblical texts
- Extrapolating truths, values, principles and prescriptives from the biblical text
- Organizing in a logical sequence
- Communicating material in a positive, meaningful way
- Effectively using illustrations to drive propositions home

Intangibles in our preaching

When we studied “**The Fire of Preaching**” we saw that the Holy Spirit must breathe life through our words in order to *captivate, convict, convince, and confirm*. His Presence behind our words is what makes preaching preaching in the first place.

When we studied “**The Outcomes of Preaching**” we saw that the ultimate results of preaching are not found in things of the moment such as crowd feedback and response, but in the growth of faith in those hearing you: faith that is *born*, faith that is *built*, and faith that is *blossoming*. This may be a long-term rather than a short-term proposition!

When we studied **boldness**, we saw that it is a type of spiritual courage which motivates people to speak the full truth of the Word. Boldness is neither *brash, brave, nor barren*. It is a holy reliance on God that helps us courageously step through the doors of utterance God makes for us by giving us both opportunities to speak and content to share with others.

What is rhetoric?

Rhetoric is the technical term for the art of public speaking and writing. It can be defined simply as the *principles by which we please and persuade people with public speaking*.

In the ancient and medieval worlds, rhetoric was highly valued. Poets and public orators were held in great esteem in Greece and Rome, and their feats were legendary.

In early universities, rhetoric was one of the three building blocks of what we would today call an undergraduate education, along with grammar and logic. No one could study the sciences, or move on from the sciences to study philosophy and theology without first mastering the principles of rhetoric.

Many of the early Christian fathers were trained in Greek and Roman rhetoric, and it is safe to say that these principles, combined with biblical values and priorities, helped to create modern **homiletics**, which is the art and science of biblical preaching. We could say that homiletics is a branch of rhetoric. (Q: What are some other forms of rhetoric?)

Why study rhetoric or public speaking?

If the goal of preaching is to communicate biblical truth persuasively, then we should make every reasonable effort to improve our communication skills. This is an area in which we can all do better – and it’s a comfort to know that speakers are made more than they are born!

1. In a public speaking class we look to become **properly aware of our audience**.

The English poet John Donne said that your style should be appropriate for

- the occasion – where are you and what is happening?
- the subject – what are you talking about?
- the person – who is your audience?

2. Becoming properly aware of our audience also means we must become **properly sensitive to our audience**. This affects things such as

- your choice of vocabulary
- your use of humor
- your clothing
- your overall demeanor

3. Studying public speaking helps us to get better at **attracting our listeners** and holding their attention. We can study how to hold people more effectively with

- personal warmth
- good posture
- pleasant use of gestures
- natural delivery
- good use of humor
- good diction

4. Studying public speaking also helps us avoid **distracting our listeners** as we become aware of those things which can divert their attention or cause them to dislike us, such as:

- clothing distractions
- behavioral tics
- accent problems
- poor grammar

- poor word choice
- misused expressions
- poor body language

5. Finally, in a public speaking course we can learn techniques to help us **become more poised in public** by conquering “stage fright” and learning to handle other problems that inevitably come up in the course of making public presentations.

We can use the principles of effective public speaking to enhance our effectiveness as we share Christ with others, or as we are engaged in business or anywhere!

Taking it from a master

It is possible to create a fabulous speech that can be delivered in just over two minutes. Here’s a political speech that follows both **Harvison’s Law*** and **Uva’s Principle****:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a

final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

* “You don’t have to be eternal to be divine.”

** “Be brief, be brilliant, be done.”