

We asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly. Each month we will post a new contribution on the Starters for Sunday website.

We hope that this resource will assist you to ‘fan into flame the gift of God that is in you...’ 2 Timothy 1:6.

We are very grateful to the College of Preachers for permission to rework this article by Phillip Jinadu, printed in the April 2012 edition of their magazine *The Preacher*, and to the **Rev Alastair Cherry**, former Convener of the Church of Scotland Music Group for editing the article for this resource.

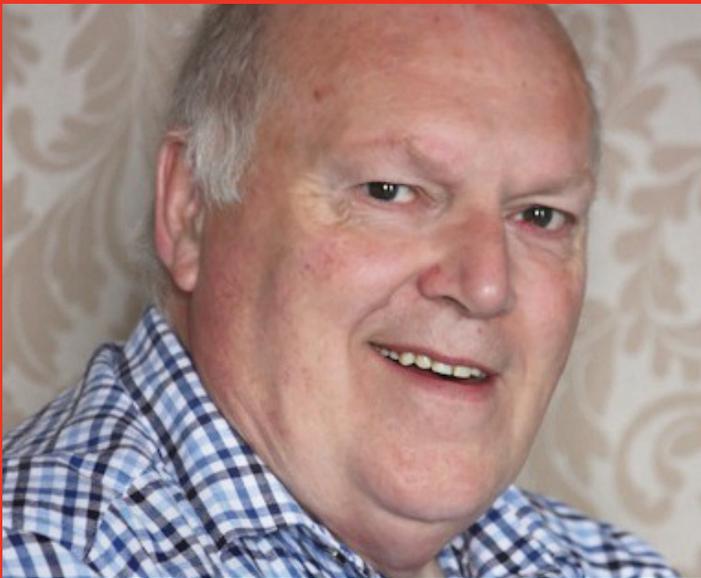
Preaching – what about the hearers?

Preaching is about communication. In our approach to preaching there is a message to give, a speaker who delivers it and an audience who receives it. But which is the most important of the three?

Well of course the message is important; it must be clear and precise, without waffle, or padding and be true to the message it is seeking to convey. But then the speaker is important too; they must speak clearly and deliver the message with passion as if they meant what they were saying. They must also use a neat structure of text with points and good illustrations and be clearly heard by the audience. The speaker too should not have any distracting habits in their delivery.

But of equal importance is the audience themselves – they have to be involved, to be fired up by what is being said, to be able to relate to the script and also to have their hearts changed.





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Rev Alastair Cherry

Artistotle who lived three hundred years before Christ spoke of *pathos*, the ability to empathise with the audience, to be aware of their concerns and aspirations and to engage with them in a journey of dialogue and discovery. That is essential in all our preaching – to be able to relate to the audience.

Engaging an audience

I would suggest we need to concentrate on this a bit more. If we wish to engage with our hearers then we require to try to understand their point of view or where they are coming from. This may not necessarily be from a church background!

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We have been used to a system, probably since the Reformation, of speaking with authority. Ministers tended to have been trained in homiletics and folk tended to respect what they declared, treating them as some kind of expert. However this is no longer the case in the twenty first century and so a different approach to hearers may be required!

Deductive and Inductive schools of thought.

Deductive methods start from the general and then moves to the specific. That we proclaim a truth and then expand the idea, applying it to life and illustrating the points in specific ways.

The Inductive approach is different – it starts from the specific – using the audience's experience and then goes on to general principles. It starts from what the hearer already knows or has experienced, thus they are able to engage and identify with the speaker. So the speaker tries to take the hearers on a journey of discovery but takes them along a well-trodden path, trying to point out things along the way that the hearers may never



have recognised before or having seen them, didn't truly understand what they were all about.

The hearers can then share the conclusion with the speaker, rather than being dictated to by him/her. This is a common experience in life, we do things almost automatically because we know the drill, our life experience tells us what to do, or some similar experience pulls us in the right direction.

For example we stay in a hotel bedroom, we know how the telephone and the television works because of previous experiences in an hotel and the shower; while it may be different from our own at home, we know the general instructions of how it will work and using our past knowledge we usually can get it going.

The Master of Induction

Jesus was the master at inductive preaching. It involved the hearers and a good example could be the parable of the Good Samaritan. [St Luke 10:25-37]

A deductive approach to the parable might be

- **The Introduction.** A light-hearted story that engages the interest of the hearers. 'Today we are looking at how we inherit eternal life. It's about loving God, loving other people and loving ourselves.'
- **Point 1.** To inherit eternal life we first have to love God. Might tell of the four Greek words for the different kinds of love mentioned in the Bible, might refer to the 10 Commandments since Jesus was asked about what the law says.
- **Point 2.** To inherit eternal life we have to love other people. Talk about how difficult this can be – loving folk who don't love us - use example of love in the New Testament and quote from those who have given sacrificially of themselves for others.
- **Point 3.** To love other people you first have to love yourself. Most find loving yourself difficult to do but according to Jesus it is essential if we are to love others.
- **The Conclusion.** Having examined how to inherit eternal life we find it is all about Loving God, Loving others, and Loving ourselves. So go and get on with it.

An inductive approach might be more along the lines of how Jesus taught it.

His approach was more like this.

- **Question 1.** What do you think? How do you understand it?
- **Dialogue.** A good answer! There follows a provocative challenge which leads to a question that needs clarification.
- **Narrative.** There follows a story that is easily recognised by Jesus' audience – it incorporates an easily identifiable scenario with established cultural archetypes with a twist to get you to identify with the wrong character in the story. The clever reversal throws the audience of balance.
- **Question 2.** Who was the neighbour?
- The audience were clearly able to identify the answer
- **Application.** Go and apply it to your lives.

Jesus draws the truth out of the audience themselves which means they will remember it and hopefully apply it in their lives in a dynamic way.





Stories can move an audience. They reach into the depths of our emotions. Good stories can make us laugh or cry or even both at the same time and they can inspire, delight or even devastate us.

Rev Alastair Cherry

Jesus' Style of Preaching

STORIES

Jesus told stories and the crowds flocked to hear them. These stories are as powerful today as they were almost two thousand years ago.

They engage the audience in at least three ways

Engage the attention. If folk are listening to your story there is a hush comes over an audience, and there almost seems like sparks in the air when you begin. Folk engage in the story, particularly if there is a human element in the story. They can picture the place and the characters in their heads, they wish to know what happens next and how the story ends.

Engage the emotions. Stories can move an audience. They reach into the depths of our emotions. Good stories can make us laugh or cry or even both at the same time and they can inspire, delight or even devastate us.

Engage the memory. If it is a good story it will stay with us for ever! e.g. The good Samaritan, the prodigal son[father], the sower and his seed. Maybe that's why he told stories to illustrate the main content, in fact they often were the main content.

Wherever we get our stories from, life experience, politics, parable or film plot – we craft them carefully to reveal their meaning. Perhaps we should spend more time crafting stories than all the other preaching elements put together.

QUESTIONS

One of the best ways to engage an audience is by asking questions. It may be a direct question or a rhetorical one. But most folk will answer a question even if it is an internal answer!

Questions challenge folk to examine themselves – to review their own history and experiences and then respond to them by what the preacher is asking.





Inductive preaching is not about clever tricks – instead it is a well thought through constructed story which by using questions both positive and negative engages with the hearers to make them feel included.

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Compare an opening - “Today we are going to look at anger in the Bible ...” with
“What makes you really angry? What makes your blood really boil?
How many times have you lost your temper this week?”

Which opening do you think will make the bigger impact?

ANALOGY

This is what induction is all about. Take an illustration and then draw a general conclusion.

‘It’s a bit like this, a bit like that’ or It’s not at all like this, it’s not at all like that’

Analogies have the ability to enable folk to make connection with the truth very quickly. If you combine stories with questions and analogies you end up with a very interesting combination.

The story in St Matthew’s gospel (25:14-30) combines analogies with story with questions. The story of the three servants who are each given gold coins and told to go and make money, two do and the third is afraid and hides the money. Jesus asks the third man why he hid the money – use of question – and finally there is the teaching about those who have will be given more and those who do not use what they are given will have it taken away.

Inductive preaching is not about clever tricks – instead it is a well thought through constructed story which by using questions both positive and negative engages with the hearers to make them feel included. It’s about engaging the folk who are on the listening end and drawing them in so that they are with you all of the way. Inductive preaching is preaching like Jesus. He considered his audience and drew them in. We could easily do the same.

Alastair J Cherry





SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Time taken to teach: 18 – 20 minutes

No of words used: 2,320

Images, pictures, examples, illustrations: 348

Comparisons: 142

Questions: 19

Verbs for energy or action: 404

Second person pronoun for directness: 221

Present tense – relevance, realism: 65%

Future tense: 30%

Past tense: 5%

Varied Viewpoints: 42 different aspects of happiness.

Based on an article by Philip Jinadu in the College of Preachers Magazine for April 2012
Details of the College of Preachers can be found here www.collegeofpreachers.co.uk
Details of the magazine can be found here www.collegeofpreachers.co.uk/preacher.html

This resource is an initiative of the Church of Scotland, Mission and Discipleship Council, Resourcing Worship Team. Any queries or suggestions should be directed to the Resourcing Worship Team via email: mandd@cofscotland.org.uk

