

A fourfold foundation

for effective preaching and teaching

Good communication is a central part of a pastor's role as a preacher and Bible teacher. It's also an important skill in the ministry of deacons and other leaders, who may teach Sunday School, small groups, or training classes. In our Bible-centered churches, these roles are critical. And those of us who preach or teach regularly should seek to continually sharpen our communication skills.

Toward that goal, consider these four foundational commitments related to our responsibilities as proclaimers of Bible truth.

1 Know your God

None of us can effectively communicate God's Word in a spiritual vacuum. A genuine relationship with God and personal time in His Word are a necessary foundation for public communication. In fact, I have found that only when the truths of Scripture have touched my own life, can I powerfully share God's message with others.

We need to constantly monitor our personal walk with God by asking ourselves challenging questions: Am I sure of my salvation? Am I growing in my knowledge of God? Am I regularly spending time with God in His Word and prayer? Am I a humble listener to Him as He reveals His will to me from Scripture? Am I committed to practice in my personal life what I preach and teach?

Know your people

Good communicators are aware of their audiences. They seek to understand their listeners' spiritual needs as well as their struggles and burdens. Such knowledge gives the Biblical preacher or teacher a foundation from which to share Scriptural truth with specific application to his listeners' needs.

I've discovered that the best way to learn these things about our listeners is to spend time with them outside of teaching times, such as in social settings, home contacts, and workplace visits. Weekday personal contact and relationship building enhance our communication and give relevance and power to our message.

Know your Bible

Successful Biblical communicators are immersed in Scripture in at least two ways: first, in pursuing a growing general understanding of Bible truth and, second, in thoroughly studying a specific portion of Scripture. A reservoir of knowledge about the panorama of Scriptural revelation, basic Biblical doctrine, Biblical literary genres, and the themes of individual Bible books forms an important source of effective teaching and preaching. Likewise, a thorough personal study of the portion of Scripture to be shared in a sermon or Bible class is crucial. Lesson helps are valuable, and Bible commentaries give us helpful information; but these must not be a substitute for the foundation of our personal study of Scripture. Let's commit to spending time to fully understand the passage we desire to communicate.

Know your task

A basic knowledge of the teaching or preaching task is foundational to our success as Biblical communicators. We need to take the time to learn, and continue learning, how to be a good teacher or preacher. Let's welcome constructive input, read helpful literature, and take advantage of training workshops and seminars (the GARBC Resource Center provides such training opportunities).

Although I have been preaching and teaching for many years now, I continually seek to sharpen my skills as a Biblical communicator through available resources. I think there's plenty of room for improvement. **B**