

Things NOT to Say While Preaching

I've noticed that preachers (myself included) sometimes say things they shouldn't. Some of it is habit, some of it reflects misunderstandings about the hearers and some of it is just self-righteousness camouflaged as folksiness. Let's be aware of these tendencies and correct them. Here are some examples of things not to say when preaching, teaching or leading in the church.

1. "I'm sure you're all familiar with this passage" or a similar statement that assumes Bible knowledge. Many of them aren't, even the long-time church members. The hearers who are not familiar with the passage now feel like outsiders or dummies. It's better not to make such assumptions.
2. "Welcome back to those of you who are only here at Christmas and Easter." I actually heard a worship leader say this at an Easter service. He thought he was being welcoming. What it felt like from the hearer's perspective was a combination of insult to the guests and self-congratulation to the "regulars" like the worship leader. Let's make sure our welcomes are truly welcoming.
3. "I have a lot to cover today, but don't worry! We'll be out in time to catch the second half of the Cowboys game" or a similar tired trope about long-winded preachers. You may get some laughs, but trust me on this: You just made a lot of people anxious about how long you actually will preach. Their nervous ears are now mostly closed to the content of the message. They're reaching for their phones to keep an eye on the time.
4. "You may not like what I'm about to say." Again, this reflects an assumption that may or may not be true. Even worse, you've simultaneously congratulated yourself for being courageous on a touchy subject while raising defensiveness in the hearers. Just preach the word with clarity and humility and let the chips fall where they may.
5. "A real Christian would never (insert the particular behavior you're bashing here)." First of all, there are likely many who have since real Christians still struggle with sin. Second, it sounds like you're covering for something ("Methinks he protesteth too much."). Again, just preach the Scripture with clarity and humility, mindful of how much – and how often – you've been forgiven.

Have you noted some things NOT to say while preaching or leading? If so, please share them with me at robby@bluebonnetbaptist.org.

In the meantime, may the Lord use your words to edify the hearers!

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