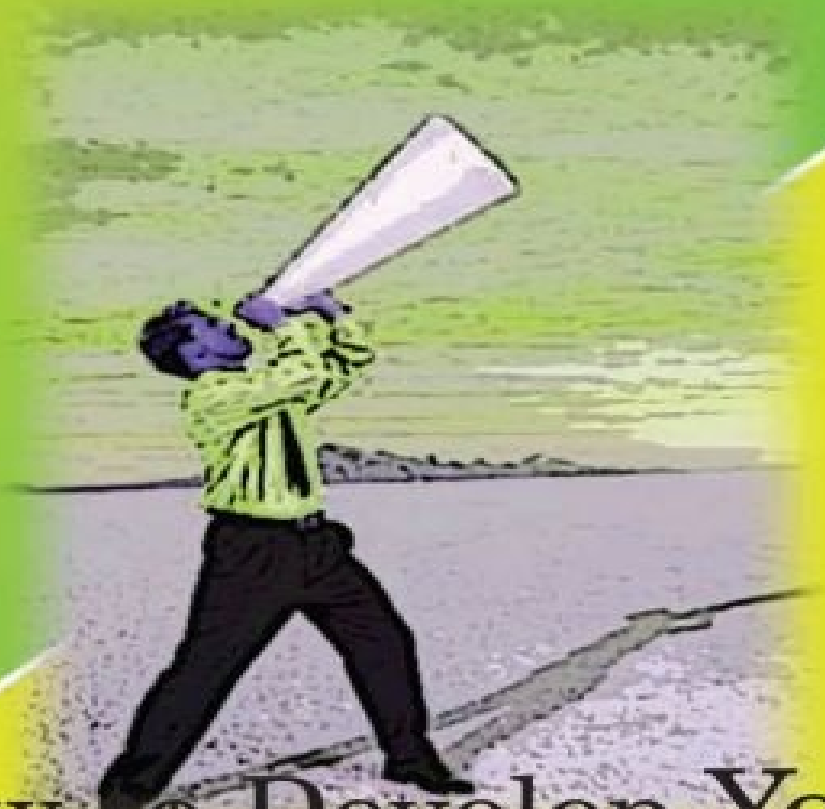
Dag Heward-Mills



How to Develop Your Preaching Skills

How To Develop Your Preaching Skills

by Dag Heward-Mills

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible

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Chapter 1 - How to Develop Your Ability to Preach and Teach

A pastor's greatest asset is his ability to preach and teach. Pastors of large churches are usually good preachers. The sheep know where the grass is green so they go there to be fed. *Sometimes* pastors who have

had a small congregation for a long time have not developed the art of preaching and teaching.

The following are strategic thoughts on how to improve your feeding ministry.

1. Preach out of your heart.

Every good pastor and shepherd must be able to preach from his heart. Thank God for notes. I believe in notes, but they are just a guide. I preach from my heart all the time.

Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.

Psalm 130:1

If the thing is not in your heart, don't bother to say it. People notice when what you are saying does not come from your heart. *The best* preachers are "heart preachers" and not "note preachers".

2. Preach extemporaneously.

Extemporaneous means informal, unrehearsed, impromptu and off the cuff. If you want your preaching to be powerful, and if you want people to listen to you, then learn to preach off the cuff.

The powerful sermons recorded in the book of Acts were unrehearsed and from the heart of Peter and Paul. When Peter stood to preach for three thousand to be saved, do you think he was preaching from his notes? He stood up and addressed the crowd from his heart without any preparation per se.

I believe that preparation takes place over a long time. It takes a long time for a message to go deep down into your heart. Do you want to preach for three thousand to be saved? Do you want to preach to five thousand? Then learn how to preach extemporaneously. Even when you have prepared notes, let the preparation be so deep that you hardly have to refer to these notes.

When you were proposing to your fiancée, did you read from notes? Of course not! You spoke from your heart! You were able to capture one woman! Capture many souls for Christ using the same strategy. Many women have used their charm to win the hearts of their husbands. Use the same charm to turn people to Christ.

3. Preach in a charismatic style.

To be charismatic means to be Holy Spirit inspired. Let your preaching be anointed! Learn to trust the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “I will teach you what to say in that very hour.” What Jesus said is true. I have experienced it very many times. Shepherds, never turn down a preaching appointment because of a short notice.

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season…

2 Timothy 4:2

When you start preaching the anointing will flow. Learn to trust the Holy Spirit even if it is contrary to your wonderfully prepared sermon notes.

4. Preach in an orderly fashion.

Orderly preaching means there is a pattern that your listeners can follow. When they can follow the train of thought, the congregation usually remembers the message. To do this you often have to write down a few points.

Let all things be done decently and in order.

1 Corinthians 14:40

Even when you are preaching under inspiration, there are usually two or three points that you are trying to stress. Learn to preach in a charismatic style even whilst using prepared notes! Let there be some order to what you are saying.

I believe in writing notes and preaching with points. It helps to establish otherwise vague ideas.

5. Preach with emotion.

I believe that every shepherd must preach using his or her emotions as well. If your teaching is bland and emotionless, it will not appeal to anyone. Let your sheep feel your happiness, laughter, righteous anger and your excitement.

Your excitement is contagious and will pass **on to the congregation.** Your expressionless and lifeless sermon is also contagious and will minister death.

6. Vary the tone of your voice.

Vary the tone of your voice. Anyone who is serious about what he is saying would naturally bring some variation in the tone of voice. Anything that is monotonous (one tone) is boring.

Learn to imitate other people's voices as you preach! Your congregation will love it! People want to have something that is real. They want to hear something that is funny. They also want something that they can relate to. Do not say, "I am not that type of person." Paul said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

7. Learn to preach by closely following a good preacher.

In the natural, many women learnt how to cook by doing exactly what their mothers did in the kitchen. Their food tastes exactly like their mothers' food. Initially, they just copied their mothers' recipes word for word. However, with time they may have developed their own variations to the recipe. Nevertheless, they essentially learnt how to cook by copying someone who already knew how to cook. It is that simple in the natural. When it comes to preaching, many ministers have all sorts of psychological difficulties with accepting this reality.

I have never attended a Bible school. I have never studied homiletics. In fact, I didn't even know what that word meant until recently. **I learnt how to preach by watching and listening to good preachers, and I am not ashamed to say so. I think it is a proven method of acquiring a skill.**

Even in medicine, you learn surgery by watching, assisting and then doing it under supervision. That is how I train my pastors in Lighthouse Chapel. I teach them to listen to tapes and soak them in! This method has worked and is still working very well for me. "...Wisdom is justified of her children" (Matthew 11:19)!!

First, you must choose someone who preaches well and who can be your mentor. **Then consciously soak in the tapes until you unconsciously flow in his style and message.** Choose a style that works and a message that has worked.

I learnt to preach by sitting at the feet of Kenneth E. Hagin and Fred Price for hours. I had watched and listened to Fred Price so much that without knowing it I began to preach like him. I did not do this consciously. I just loved his messages so much that I soaked them in hundreds of times. *I*

now know that I was learning by observing.

The disciples, Peter, James and John didn't even know that they had learned to preach, and heal the sick until after Jesus had left. Suddenly, Peter was thrown into a situation where he had to preach a biting and heart-rending sermon. He spoke to the Pharisees in the same biting way as Jesus did. Without realizing it, Peter had learnt how to preach by being with Jesus.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS.

Acts 4:13

8. Preach about what people are thinking.

Many times Jesus knew what the people were thinking. He often preached against what they were thinking. A good preacher can sense what the people are thinking about as he is preaching.

…**the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus KNEW THEIR THOUGHTS, and said [preached] unto them…**

Matthew 12:24,25

Do not close your eyes when you are preaching. Look at them eyeball to eyeball! Preach against any negative thoughts that they may have! Do not preach about anything that is irrelevant. People must comment that your preaching is biting.

9. Dress nicely and appropriately.

Always dress decently and properly. Every pastor should endeavour to look decent and business-like when ministering. If you are a young preacher, it is important that you dress appropriately. Otherwise, you may be mistaken for a worthless young man. **Your dressing can upgrade your youthful appearance and make you acceptable before an elderly crowd**.

Female pastors must be extra careful! Women have been designed to be attractive to men. Men are also attracted to women. Therefore, lady pastors or female shepherds must ensure that they do not put on any clothing that is risqué or revealing.

10. Shave and trim your beard neatly.

Decide whether to be clean-shaven or to keep a beard. If you shave you must do it regularly. If you decide to keep a beard, you must keep it trim and neat. Some people's beards have spittle all over them. Others have unidentified objects hanging in there!

At times, you may have to instruct a shepherd to shave off his beard because it looks too scruffy.

Some Bible schools do not even allow students to keep a beard. The truth is that your beard changes your appearance completely.

11. Hair should be well kept.

The maintenance of your hair sends messages to everyone.

The lady pastors in particular must maintain their hair in good condition. Otherwise, people will feel, "If she can't even take care of her hair, can she take care of me?" Get a wig if you need one. A wig will always come in handy when you don't have time to do your hair.

12. Develop appropriate gestures and posture.

Your gestures refer to your body movements during preaching. Observe any good preacher and you will notice that his preaching style includes many interesting gestures and postures. Your body movements add a lot to the message you are preaching. It keeps the congregation attentive. If you do not already use gestures, decide to consciously learn and add some to your preaching.

Chapter 2 -Ten Strategies for Developing Preaching and Teaching Skills

Let's consider a few more strategies for developing excellent preaching and teaching skills.

1. Vary the volume.

When preaching, there are times when you must speak loudly. At other times, the preacher must shout! There are also moments when whispering is very effective.

Female ministers must be conscious of not shouting and screaming. This can be quite offensive. The shrill voice of a lady who is shrieking is not inspiring.

It may turn the attention of the congregation away from their ministration.

2. Move around freely.

At times you must stay behind the pulpit and preach. However, you must learn to move about when you are preaching. Sometimes it is good to walk into the crowd to get a feel of the atmosphere.

3. Congregational interaction.

I always involve the congregation when I preach. You must learn to involve your congregation by asking them questions. Occasionally call out some familiar names. It helps to keep everybody alert.

4. Eye contact.

When ministering, look into the eyes of the people. Jesus said that we should feed His sheep, not his giraffes! Do not look above their heads, look into their eyes. See whether they are dead or alive!

As a preacher, you must discern what they are thinking. Watch their facial expressions to know whether they understand what you are saying. Surprisingly, there are messages written all over their faces. You may even notice that people are asleep. This should prompt you to make your sermon less boring.

I once heard a true story about a church member who died sitting in his seat during a service. They called an ambulance to come and collect the body.

Upon the arrival of the ambulance, they found several congregation members asleep whilst the pastor was preaching. It was impossible for them to know who was asleep and who was dead. So they carried out several people only to find them waking up in the ambulance. The attendants weren’t sure who was dead or not! Neither did the pastor know.

How does a pastor continue to preach to a congregation that is asleep or dead? If he was looking at their faces during his ministration he would have known when they died!

5. Your preaching must be relevant.

Your preaching must be relevant. It must be related to what is going on in the world around you. People must be able to say that your preaching is

down-to-earth and easy to understand. Once the message loses its relevance, it loses its power. Jesus was very relevant.

Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

Luke 13:4

When people were killed in an accident at the tower in Siloam He immediately spoke about it. He used it as an illustration for them to repent or likewise perish. That is what I call relevance. Some people feel they must preach about complex things in order to impress people. Don't you know that the greatest people are simple people?

Why are you preaching about Aaron's beard? How is the colour of Aaron's garments going to help the sheep? Please be relevant and practical!

6. You must have a command of current events.

Relate your preaching to current events that may be affecting the members in anyway. It helps them to relate to your preaching. Unemployment figures in Western Europe are of no interest to the average Ghanaian.

However, who the next ruler of the country may be is of the utmost importance and interest to the average Ghanaian.

7. Use "windows" in your preaching.

Windows are illustrations, amusing stories and personal life testimonies that allow people to "see" into your sermon.

A pastor who just reads out Scripture after Scripture without any real life explanation is just ministering death and not life. A pastor who is not prepared to "open up" and tell people about himself and about his life will never be a good preacher.

Ensure that you preach with windows. As soon as you begin to give them a story that explains the message, they will begin to understand. People especially love to hear things about your personal life. It is a window into your private life and everyone loves to peep.

Church members cannot understand your sermon without the use of

windows. Jesus preached with windows all the time. He continually used real life stories, parables and illustrations. I insist that all my pastors preach with windows! I insist on it because I believe it is one of the most important aspects of good preaching!

8. Encourage laughter.

Develop the art of making people laugh. People want to be happy. There is so much sadness in the world that everyone looks forward to hope and happiness. People want to laugh, so make them laugh whilst you are preaching.

9. Soak in preaching tapes.

You must invest in preaching tapes. Soak them in. Play them over and over again until you preach the message exactly as it is, using your own illustrations and personal life stories. Soaking in the words of a man of God through audio tapes, CDs and DVDs imparts the anointing or spirit of that person into you.

And the spirit entered into me when HE SPAKE unto me…

Ezekiel 2:2

In John 6:63 Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” This means that the more of Jesus’ words you hear, the more “spirit” (anointing) comes into you.

The Bible says in Acts 10:44, that “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost (the anointing) fell on all them which heard the word.”

There is something within the word of the king called anointing. As you speak, the Holy Spirit will enter the spirit of the people.

10. Catch the anointing to teach.

As you soak in the tapes of a man of God, you will catch an anointing to minister. Your teaching and preaching ministry will improve.

It is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6). The anointing makes the difference in ministry, not strategies and cunning ideas. Don’t be too big to learn from someone else. We all learn from others. Ninety per cent of what we know is learnt from somebody.

Chapter 3 - Seven Methods for Developing Your Preaching and Teaching Skills

Finally, here are seven means by which you will improve your preaching and teaching skills.

1. Title your sermon.

Titling your message gives you clarity of thought. The congregation will know that they are taking “something” home.

Your message titles should usually stay within a range of one word to five words. Use catchy sentences. For example, Abrahamic Success, Divine Provision, Frugality, Can-Do Man, How to Develop Your Potential. Occasionally you may have a long sentence topic, for instance:

Twenty-five Reasons Why You Must Be a Permanent Member, Forty Reasons Why Some Christians Don’t Pay Tithes. Titling your message helps to establish order.

2. Preach with authority and confidence.

People must feel that you know what you are preaching about. When people feel that you are not sure of what you are saying they will no longer receive your preaching. The thing that struck the Pharisees about Jesus’ teaching was his authority.

…**By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?**

Matthew 21:23

For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Matthew 7:29

3. Prepare extensively to preach.

Preparation to minister does not take place a few minutes before a sermon is delivered. It takes place all the time. My preparation to minister is constant and ongoing. Without long- term preparation, you can never really preach from your heart. Prayer is a vital part of your preparation. A pastor must spend Saturday evening to Sunday morning in prayer.

Specifically pray for the following:

- That everyone who came the week before will attend again.

- That new people will attend church and be born again. wThat there will be church growth.

- That the flock will understand the Word and their lives will be affected.

- That every need be met: healing, peace of mind, salvation, and deliverance.

- That God would give you a spirit of revelation in the Word.

4. Introduce the message well.

You must let your congregation know and feel that the message is important. If you tell them that you have a very important message to give to them, they will sit up and listen. Even before you begin ministering, you should inform them that this message is vital for their Christian life.

5. Learn to preach in series.

One of the challenges of pastoral preaching and teaching is the challenge of having to preach to the same crowd of people each week. Church members expect the pastor to have a fresh and new revelation every week. Thank God for the Holy Spirit. Even if we are not capable, He is able.

I have discovered that pastoral preaching is best done in series. If part one is good, many people will come back to hear part two and part three. However, if every week you preach a different sermon, then there will be no motivation to continue receiving the lesson.

6. End the message well.

Learn to conclude your messages well. End on a happy note. End when people are laughing. They will look forward to hearing more next time.

7. Do altar calls for salvation and healing.

I believe every minister must consistently make altar calls for salvation. This gives ordinary members the opportunity to practically give their lives to Christ. Pastors and shepherds should not be afraid that no one will come to the altar. After all you are not trying to impress anyone; you are trying to please God. He wants all of His people to be saved.

I make altar calls at weddings, receptions, parties and anywhere else I find myself ministering. I will use every opportunity I get. Every pastor

must learn to use strong persuasive and evangelistic language to draw out any sinner that might be present in the congregation.

Dear friend, use the strategies presented in this book to enhance your preaching. You will become a better preacher as you apply them!

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