

# **How to be a better preacher through a preaching group ::**

Preachers can tend become stale in their craft which is week by week a demanding feature of parish ministry. Here are some thoughts on one strategy to stimulate thinking about preaching.

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Every year I get together with six mates of mine and we experience agony. What do we do? Bungy jumping? No! Have a retreat where we can “get in touch with your manly emotions” weekend? No. We have a preaching group.

## **Why do we have a preaching group?**

First of all, we not only know that there is a lot of room for improvement but we want to be committed to the task of improvement. We want our pals of the pulpit, our helpers of the homily, to critique our own preaching. This is not always pleasant but it is always necessary if our job is not to feel good about ourselves but to proclaim God’s Word accurately and well.

## **What do we do?**

Well, for about two days we sit down, drink coffee and tea, listen, and talk. Each person is to present a series he has preached in the previous year with outlines and then we all listen to a tape from that series.

We then ask the preacher where he thought there could be improvements (we prefer voluntary euthanasia rather than outright murder) and then we all chip in and comment about content, style, and structure.

We also ask everyone to present a year in review – a page long story of what has happened in the last 12 months. Finally, we then pray for our brother.

## **What does this achieve?**

Most importantly, we are accountable. In the business of parish it is easy at times to no longer be as concerned about quality control as we might be. If it does nothing else, our preaching group means a reality check once a year of what we are doing and thinking at the heart of ministry:

- It builds a sense of being part of a bigger team working toward the same purpose and committed to improving our task of proclaiming the gospel.
- It also reminds us that God works through the gospel and our ministries must reflect that emphasis if they are to be blessed by God.
- It gives us insights into new ideas and resources that by ourselves we would be unaware of.

## **So what about you?**

It doesn’t matter where you are – in the city or the country – the question is, “is there a group of brothers you know who would be interested in meeting regularly to talk and pray and encourage you in the task of feeding the people of God?”

Here’s a suggestion. Write down the names of three other people who you think would be committed to the improvement and development of their preaching. Contact them and have this as a proposed format.

- Meet once a month
- Talk about books you've read.
- Ask one person to present their sermon series and a taped sermon from that series.
- Critique the series and the tape.
- Share any things that you have done recently in your church that have worked well
- Pray for each other.

Obviously this will take some time – at least two hours – but two hours investment in making God's Word clearer to his people is time well invested.

Here are some guidelines for Sermon evaluation:

#### Sermon Evaluation

- Title:
- Passage:
- What was the Structure?

\*Did points flow naturally from one to the other?

\*What was the central idea?

\*Did this reflect the central idea of the text?

- How was Scripture handled?
- Did the Introduction engage attention?
- Did the conclusion draw the ideas to a satisfactory climax?

\*Did the illustrations work?

- Is the whole range of the preachers voice used?
- Are there quirks of pronunciation or bad speech pattern that need correcting?

These are just some of the questions that need to be asked.

A fuller guide to questions can be found in "Biblical Preaching" by Haddon Robinson pages 217-220.