

Organization

The point here is to organize for the purpose of presentation. It is **not** true that an unorganized presentation is **useless**...the Holy Spirit can make something of even the worst presentations; however, remember that the responsibility for learning is equally distributed between teacher and pupil. A class in which your students never seem to learn...is probably not entirely the fault of those “rotten students!”

Just as an unorganized presentation is never useless, neither is it a total waste of time. At the very least, hopefully you, as the teacher, have learned, grown and will continue to grow through it. Plus, truly good students can get a bunch out of even the worse lessons, and even mediocre ones will learn.

But, we’re not looking to just do an alright job! We want to be effective! I believe that when we are called to be good stewards of our time (“redeem the time”, Eph 5:16), this includes every aspect of our life. Certainly, then we want to make the most use of the 45 minutes we have to teach the Word of God. Whether your audience is 3 or 33 years old, effectiveness is measured in the say way:

“An effective lesson is one which says that people need to hear in a way that they want to hear it.”

There are three parts to the above statement: an effective lesson 1) says something as opposed to some things, 2) says something that people need to hear, 3) something people need to hear in a way they want to hear it. We’ll talk more next week about the “something” of number 1 above. Let’s talk about the last two points.

An effective lessons says something...

people need to hear

This topic really falls somewhere between our previous section of “Gathering” and this “Organizing” section. But, in a way, this is a good place to highlight this concept because in gathering information, you were the student. Now you’re beginning to think as the teacher, and its at this point that you can begin to weed out some of the fruits of your labor into a presentable, understandable, effective lesson. In doing this, you take several features of your audience into account, so that your material is well-suited for your listeners.

Portions of this section borrowed from class notes issued by Roger B. Petersen, Professor at Philadelphia College of Bible.

An effective lessons says something...

that people need to hear

(con't)

It is more effective to teach something people need to hear than to teach something they do not need to hear. You ask, "Is there anything in the Bible that people do not need to hear?" Remember, though, my point is effectiveness. In other words, there may be something more people need to hear, or something people need to hear more than another subject.

Generally, what do people need to hear?

1. Something to help them **cope** _____
Cope with the complexities, struggles and trials of life.
Cope with the responsibilities and relationships of daily Christian living.
2. Something that helps them **change** _____
Change wrong beliefs.
Change improper attitudes.
Change inappropriate or inadequate actions.
3. Something that helps them **continue on** _____
Carry on with their correct beliefs.
Carry on with their proper attitudes.
Carry on with their positive conduct.

What do people need to hear from the Bible?

1. Eph. 2:8, Rom. 10:17 _____
2. Eph. 2:10, 2 Tim. 3:16-17 _____
3. Eph. 4:15, 1 Peter 2:2 _____

No passage of scripture is irrelevant to any audience (2 Tim. 3:16-17), but some passages may be more relevant at any given time, to any given audience, and especially to any given message.

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Specifically, what do *my* people need to hear?

Analyze your audience according to the 3D's: Demographics, Data and Disposition.

1. Demographics of your audience:

(Many of these points apply more broadly to general speeches, not Bible lessons. But a few of them are helpful in deciding both the content and the presentation of your material.

Density (rural, urban, suburban).

Education.

Marital status.

Occupation.

Gender.

Rapport/ relationship (you to them) and reflection / representation / resemblance of Christ (i.e. maturity)

Age

Preoccupation (major events / issues that need to be addressed to avoid preoccupation)

Hobbies and interests (useful in picking illustrations / stories, etc...)

Involvement with other things

Cultural, ethnic and racial background

Size

2. Data of your audience:

- **How much do they know about you?**

- **How much do they know about the purpose of the meeting?**

(Let's say, for example, you're giving a short devotion at your kids soccer practice, as opposed to a council time message at Awana).

In teaching the Bible, these last two points have very little bearing as compared to the final point:

- **How much do they know about your subject?**

Remember, you can only teach from the known to the unknown. If your subjects know nothing about your subject you're going to have to subject them to a different batch of material than if they do.

3. Disposition of your audience:

- Toward you.
- Toward your subject.
- Toward the purpose of the meeting.

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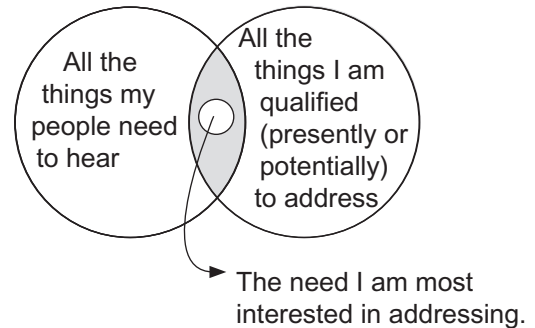
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Specifically, what do my people need to hear from *me*?

Of all the things my people need to hear, what is it they need to hear from me? Answer these three questions:

1. What need **am I most qualified** to address?
2. What need can I **become most qualified** to address?
3. What need am I **most interested** in addressing?



Determine your purpose.

You need to determine what you want to accomplish with your lesson, and express it in a statement of purpose. This applies to all types of lessons, all types of teachers and certainly, all types of students. Whether you are using pre-planned Sunday School curriculum, teaching an Awana lesson, or the Adults Sunday School, you need to have a purpose. Without a purpose, you cannot have a well-organized plan.

Your statement of purpose should be:

- In terms of the listeners, not the speaker.
- Long enough to be complete, but short enough to be remembered.
- Specific enough to be accomplished, but flexible enough to be personalized.

“My specific purpose is for my students to... _____”

...understand the love of God (good)

...love others as God loves them (better)

— or —

...better appreciate the holiness of God (good)

...live more holy lives because God is holy (better)

Be deliberate in stating your purpose. You'll use this purpose to gauge the inclusion or exclusion of material for your lessons. If it fits your purpose, include it, if it doesn't, then exclude it ...if you're dumping too much stuff, then re-define your purpose. But you've got to have a purpose.

It's just as necessary to have a purpose when you're teaching from pre-printed stuff. At the very least, get a good grasp of the material's stated, or implied, purpose and make it your own. If you can keep this in the forefront of your mind, then you are better able to steer the class in the direction you intend...leaving off parts of the lesson you do not feel best support this purpose, or adding other pieces of your own.

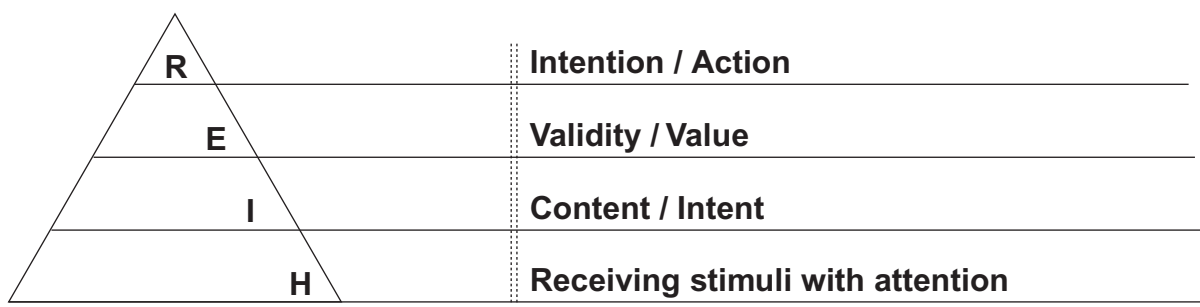
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As deceiving as this topic may sound, keep in mind that we're not talking about the presentation of the material as much as the organization of it. In other words, I'm **not** talking (yet) about the diction or intonation of your voice, word choice, rate of speech, use of hand gestures, posture, or any other such things associated with the presentation of your material. I am talking about how to organize it in such a way that people can more naturally follow you.

There are two psychological aspects to keep in mind in the organization of your material. First, the Hierarchy of Listening, and then the Psychology of Learning.

The Hierarchy of Listening



Your goal is to help your listeners, i.e., your students, to progress up this hierarchy to the point of action. Remember, we're trying to be effective. Certainly, much of this is the Holy Spirit's work. But, I'm not talking about how to better listen, I'm talking about how to better facilitate this listening. If we can minimize distractions, and make for smoother transitions from one step to the next, then we have done our job.

To accomplish this progression, we have to think in terms of our audience. All sorts of tests have been conducted wherein presentations were judged on the basis of how easy they were to follow. Invariably they found that every lesson—no matter what topic or concept was presented, no matter what age group they were presenting to, and no matter how deep or shallow the material—if that lesson was considered easy to follow, i.e. understandable, would, more or less, follow the same basic outline. This is the psychological outline.

The Psychological Outline

- I. Ho-Hum
- II. Why Should I Listen
- III. The Big Idea
 - A. Point 1 Answers one of three functional questions
 - B. Point 2, Answers one of three functional questions
 - C. Point 3, etc...
- IV. Are you through? What should I do?

<p>The 3 Functional Questions</p> <p>1. What do you Mean?</p> <p>2. Is it True?</p> <p>3. So What?</p>

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OK, now you know everything you ever wanted to know about how to organize a lesson, right? Well, maybe a little explanation of the above outline will help. Remember, this is a psychological outline, its not a content outline. Or, put it this way, this is a way to organize your content so that you can best facilitate learning by lining up your content with what goes through ever persons mind as they listen to you.

In other words, there's a progression of thought, a processing of the mind, that takes place within every student as they go from HEARING to RESPONSE in our hierarchy of listening model. Each person naturally goes through this process, what varies is the degree of tendency each person has to get stuck at a certain point along the way.

Remember, this is a plan. Its a very rough, general plan. Its not the only plan out there, but generally speaking, you'll find that every good presentation will incorporate this progression of thought. Whether it be a sermon by Billy Graham, a presentation on astrophysics by Mr. Science, an infomercial with Suzy Q selling the latest diet fad, or the best council time message you've heard by Mr. Awana...if you're following along, you can bet its roughly progressing through the psychological outline. If you were to ask these presenters what "Ho-Hum" means, they'd be at as much of a loss as you are right now, so its not that they always purpose to follow this outline, but good speakers intuitively do what you're about to learn to do manually. With enough practice you too could soon be a Clyde White, naturally and easily pumping out volumes of "followable" information.

I. HO HUM

The next time a Sunday School lesson is about to begin, see if you don't say to yourself, "Ho Hum another lesson." Don't give me that spiritual look! We've all been there...no matter how enthralled you are with the Bible you've, at-least once in your life, thought to yourself, "ho hum, I'd rather be in... [bed, a restaurant, a rest room, Timbuktu, etc...] right now than here about to hear this lesson." Well, if you've never thought it, then I can promise you, people have thought it about your lesson.

Now, you may not always do this. In fact, with some people, you just about nearly always go, "wow, I can't wait to hear what ... has to say." Sometimes too, you'll go "I can't wait to here what ... has to say about ..." (with emphasis on the content). But there's two times when the likelihood of this thought appearing is at its greatest potential: with a new speaker, and with a "familiar" material.

With a new, unfamiliar speaker, people say, "Ho Hum, this guy looks as boring as he does ugly," or "Ho Hum, I can tell what kind of speaker this girl is by looking at her." Also, people gravitate toward this thought when their speaker is constantly funny or outrageous: "Ho-Hum, I wonder what this clown's going to do this week to try to get my attention."

With familiar content, people say, "Ho Hum, another lesson on ... [King David, Jesus' birth,

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nearly any subject in the Bible people have heard once, etc...]”.

Does that mean you should altar your content because people have heard it, or altar who you are because people think you look boring? Of-course not. Nor does it mean that people think this intentionally. People are still responsible for their thoughts, and they can be suppressed, with practice, but they still come, and many times quite subconsciously. What it does mean is that we have to help them over this hump.

“They” say that the first 25 words of your talk are the most important, because you’re audience is already lost...minds in neutral, waiting to go home, and if you don’t grab their attention in the first 25 words, you’ll never get it. You may have the most important lesson they’ve ever heard, but if they aren’t listening, they will never hear it!

Now, you can say, “Too bad for them, because I’ve got very important information to give and if they’re going to grow, then they’re going to pay attention!” You may be right in saying this. But, if you can do something to greatly help them, and it takes 1 to 2 minutes of your time, then its probably a well-spent 1 to 2 minutes.

Bottom Line question in Ho-Hum:
“What makes me think you’re worth listening to?”

Ways to grab their attention:

1) Ask a Question

- The response to your question may be mental or overt (raising a hand, saying “yeah”, etc...)
- It’s easy to come up with a question, very much more difficult to come up with an effective question.

Questions to avoid:

Questions that _____

Ex. _____

Questions that _____

Ex. _____

Questions that _____

Ex. _____

Questions that _____

Ex. _____

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Examples of effective questions:

- 2) A Startling Statement
- 3) A Quotation
- 4) A Story (real or hypothetical)
- 5) Humor
- 6) Novelty

Do you need to always overcome the Ho-Hum Problem?

In a word yes. Do you always need to have some clever, catchy opening? In a word, no. You'll find that once a speaker is established, there's less of a need to do this...we're more anxious to hear the next lesson from someone we've heard good lessons from before. Plus, in a series, of connected lessons, to some degree this hurdle was already leaped in the first lesson. We're anxious to hear the continuation, the "rest of the story" as Paul Harvey says.

And, of-course, the danger is that if you entertain them once, they'll expect it every time. So, you're intro doesn't need to be flashy and cool, but thought provoking is good. What you don't want to do is find yourself spending more time each week finding something cool, funny, entertaining, etc... to say than you do preparing your lesson. Balance Please!