

Tips on Preaching to the Unchurched

By Rick Warren, Rich Warren's Ministry Toolbox

In terms of seeing radical life changes in individuals, nothing can take the place of Spirit-anointed preaching. The message is still the most important element of a worship service for the unchurched (*and the churched*). Saddleback's growth - in spite of hot gymnasiums, cold tents, and crowded parking - has shown that people will put up with a lot of inconveniences and limitations if the messages are genuinely meeting their needs.

Here are a few tips I tend to share with pastors when they ask. **You should provide an outline with the scriptures written out.** There are a number of reasons that I do this:

- The unchurched (and some churched) don't own Bibles.
- It relieves embarrassment in finding texts.
- You can cover more material in less time. I once counted the number of times a well-known pastor said, "Now turn to this" in his message, and I timed how long he took. Seven minutes of his message was spent just turning pages!
- You can have everyone read a verse aloud together because everyone has the same translation.
- You can use and compare multiple translations.
- The audience can circle and underline words for emphasis and take notes in the margins.
- It helps people remember the message. We forget 90 to 95 percent of what we hear within 72 hours. That means by Wednesday your congregation has forgotten all but about 5 percent of what you said Sunday if they didn't take notes.
- People can review the verses later. They can tape the notes to their refrigerators for review. It can become the basis for small group discussion.
- Members can teach the outline to others. We have a number of businessmen at Saddleback who lead office Bible studies using the previous Sunday's outline.

The long-lasting value of a message outline with scriptures written out continues to amaze me. Recently a high school biology teacher told me about how God used an outline in his life. He got a call from his teenage daughter, who had been in a car accident. She was fine but the car was totaled - and to make matters worse - it was her fault. He went to pick up his daughter, and, while they were waiting for a tow truck, he sat down on the curb and began to think about how irritated he was at his daughter for being reckless.

As he was getting angrier and angrier, he noticed a piece of paper in the gutter. Recognizing it as one of my sermon outlines, he picked it up. The message and Bible verses were on the topic of "Defusing Your Anger!" He now keeps that outline folded in his wallet.

There are so many positive benefits to this method I never speak without using a handout now.

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