

# **PREACH AND DELIVER**



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**CAPTIVATE YOUR AUDIENCE,  
KILL BAD HABITS, AND MASTER  
THE ART OF SERMON DELIVERY**

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**BRANDON HILGEMANN**

# PREACH AND DELIVER

*Captivate Your Audience,  
Kill Bad Habits, and Master  
the Art of Sermon Delivery*

by Brandon Hilgemann

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Bad Habits, and Master the Art of Sermon Delivery /  
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# INTRODUCTION: The What and the How



*The general history of the world surely demonstrates quite plainly that the men who truly made history have been men who could speak, who could deliver a message, and who could get people to act as the result of the effect they produced upon them.*

— *Martyn Lloyd-Jones*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 20.

I stood in terror in a musty youth room of an old church. Seventeen teenagers stared at me with blank expressions.

It was Wednesday night. I was a freshman in Bible college, invited to preach for a local youth pastor who was out of town. I wouldn't doubt it if I was his last option after asking everyone else he could.

There I stood. All eyes on me. Sweat pouring from my forehead. My hands shook. My knees knocked. And my voice trembled as I read my sermon word-for-word from my notes.

My eyes never left the page. With white knuckles, my right hand gripped the microphone. My left hand held my manuscript as if it were my only hope of survival. My feet might as well have been cemented to the floor because they never moved.

Those poor teenagers. How they did not fall asleep or walk out I will never know.

I could not have preached worse. The message was OK, but the delivery was painful.

Preaching has a dual nature. It rests on two pillars: the *what* and the *how*. The *what* is the content—the words you say. The *how* is the delivery—the way you communicate the words.

Preaching is both *what* you say, and *how* you say it. We often know the *what* but neglect the *how*. My first sermon sure did.

If you are like most pastors, you've spent years of your life learning the content for your sermon. We go to Bible College and Seminary to learn the Bible. We take classes on theology, Biblical interpretation, church history, and maybe even Greek or Hebrew. We know our Bibles. We know the *what*.

But here's the problem: **Most preaching fails not for lack of content, but for deficient delivery.** If you preach biblically-based sermons, you have the content. We graduate with diplomas about the *what* but haven't mastered the *how*.

No matter how good your message, if your delivery is poor, your audience won't receive the message. Even a great message with poor delivery will result in a bored, distracted, or even annoyed audience.

Famed playwright George Bernard Shaw once said, "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." That's what happens when we give a message with poor delivery. We think we communicated because we said the words, but it's an illusion. We had a good *what* and a bad *how*.

Communication is a two-way street. You must do everything in your power to remove potential road-blocks. To do that, we need to go back to the basics of sermon delivery.

## **Back to the Basics**

In 1959, Vince Lombardi was hired to be the head football coach of the Green Bay Packers. He took the difficult task of turning around a losing franchise.

After a miserable game, the players gathered in the locker room in silence. They braced themselves for Lombardi to enter and erupt in a verbal assault.

After a few moments, Lombardi entered the room with a football in his hands. He stood in silence, searching for words. The players prepared for the worst.

Lombardi lifted the football and broke the silence with one of the greatest quotes in NFL history: “Gentlemen, this is a football!”

He proceeded to explain the boundaries of a football field, the length of the goal line, and how moving the ball across the goal line scores six points. Lombardi brought a room full of pros back to the most basic elements of the game.



Those five, legendary words defined Lombardi's legacy as a coach. He never stopped focusing his team on the basics. He demanded perfection in the smallest fundamentals of the game—like the proper form for blocking and tackling.

After years of losing, Lombardi took the Packers to win five championships in seven years—including Super Bowl I and II.

In fact, the Packers never had a losing season under Lombardi. He is regarded as one of the greatest coaches of all time. He left such a legacy that the NFL named the Super Bowl trophy in his honor, the Lombardi Trophy. All this resulted because Lombardi took his struggling team back to the basics.

I tell you this not only because my family brainwashed me at a young age to be a diehard Packers fan, but also because we could learn from Lombardi. We need to get back to the basics of preaching. We need to refocus on the fundamentals of sermon delivery.

What are the essential components of good sermon delivery? The rest of this book will attempt to answer this question.

In my years of education on a bachelors and masters level from great Christian institutions, I learned

the message of the Bible. But I didn't learn how to deliver that message.

My prayer is that this book helps you to think through the way you deliver a sermon—the nuances of body language, eye contact, gestures, and more—so that you can preach the gospel in a powerful way that grips the hearts and minds of your audience.

In my first book, *Preaching Nuts & Bolts: Conquer Sermon Prep, Save Time, and Write Better Messages*, I wrote about the art of sermon preparation. It teaches the fundamentals of the what. This book is about the how. Once you have the message written, how can you deliver it in the most effective way?

If you need help writing the sermon, you may want to start with my first book. For this book, I will assume that you already wrote a good message, and we will focus on how to deliver it.

## The Commitment

I want to be honest with you upfront. I hesitated writing this book. Writing about sermon delivery seems a bit odd. Doesn't it?

You cannot see my eye contact or body language as I type at my desk. I can teach you through these

words, but there is only so much you can improve by learning about sermon delivery if you don't practice what you learn.

Preaching is like playing a sport; you have to practice the fundamentals and review the game film to identify areas that need more practice.

You will never be done. Every week you need to practice, evaluate, and practice again. Michael Jordan, Wayne Gretzky, Peyton Manning, and Tiger Woods never graduated from practice. Even at the top of their game, they all had coaches to help them refine their fundamentals.

This book will help you learn about the basics of sermon delivery, but reading alone will not make you better. That's why at the end of every section, I have included an action step. Think of it as a challenge to apply what you learned in the chapter.

Also, you need to understand that this book assumes that you realize that God is ultimately in control. Preaching is an awesome partnership between the preacher and God. If God is not involved in your preaching, little will get done. This book is full of practical advice to help you do everything in your power to improve. But without God, you can be the

most polished speaker in the world and completely miss the mark.

So stop right now and pray. Ask God to guide you through this process as you work to become a more clear and effective communicator for Him.

Go on. Do it.

If you truly want to improve your sermon delivery, reading this book is not enough. It's a start, but first, you need God. Second, you must practice what you learn. And third, you need to evaluate every sermon you preach.

As Charles Spurgeon, the "Prince of Preachers," taught his students:

Get a friend to tell you your faults, or better still, welcome an enemy who will watch you keenly and sting you savagely. What a blessing such an irritating critic will be to a wise man, what an intolerable nuisance to a fool! Correct yourself diligently and frequently, or you will fall into errors unawares, false tones will grow, and slovenly habits will form insensibly; therefore criticize yourself with unceasing care.<sup>2</sup>

You can and should evaluate your sermons on your own. But, I highly suggest recruiting people to

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<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students* (Fig, 2012), 123.

help you evaluate your preaching. It will be one of the most painful things you ever do, but you will grow faster than you could ever do alone. Other people will see things you can't.

In summary, I am asking you to commit to three things if you want to grow as a preacher. First, commit this next season of your life to a healthy relationship with Christ. Second, commit to taking action on what you learn in this little book. And third, commit to evaluating your sermons.

If you do, I guarantee that your sermon delivery will improve.

Are you in? If so, here's your first step.

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## ***ACTION STEP: Download Your Free Sermon Evaluation Guide***

In my desire to help you practice and evaluate your preaching, I have created a free sermon evaluation guide based on the content of this book.

Go to [www.████████████████████](http://www.████████████████████) to download your free guide.

This evaluation guide is a summary of what you will learn in this book. In nearly every chapter, I will ask you to work on a specific aspect of your preaching

and evaluate it in your next sermon. Use this evaluation form after every sermon to help identify the areas you need to improve the most.

And if you really want to get better, give copies to a few people you trust and ask them to evaluate your sermon too. Community is a powerful motivator. So find people that will encourage you about your strengths and hold you accountable to improve your weaknesses.

# 1. AUTHENTICITY: Be The Same on Stage and Off



*The man, the whole man, lies behind the sermon. Preaching is not the performance of an hour. It is the outflow of a life. It takes twenty years to make a sermon, because it takes twenty years to make the man.*

— E. M. Bounds<sup>3</sup>

It's rare these days to find a pastor who has devoted a lifetime of faithful service to a single church. But I have had the pleasure of knowing two different

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<sup>3</sup> E.M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1912), 11.

pastors who faithfully ministered to their churches for over 30 years.

In the last year, I watched both of these men retire from their position as senior pastor. As I attended the services to honor these men and all that they have accomplished, a similar phrase caught my ear: “He was the same person off the stage as he was on it.”

They served in different cities, had different personalities, and weren’t perfect. But both of these men were authentic. What you saw was what you got. They faithfully served God in every area of their life.

Is there anything better we could ask for in a preacher? There may be no greater quality in preaching than authenticity.

Nobody wants to listen to a preacher who feels like a used car salesperson, trying to push them to do or buy something. People are longing for a leader who is authentic—someone who lives, sleeps, and breathes what they preach.

Authenticity is not something that you can teach. It’s not a tactic. It’s not a trick. Authenticity is not something you do; it’s who you are.

If you perfect all the other elements of this book but are not authentic, you will fail to connect with your audience. You will be no more than an actor on a



stage, pretending to be something you are not. And people will see through your charade.

You have probably run into these types of preachers before. They may be a charismatic speaker. They may look the part and have a smooth presentation. But inside, they are an empty shell. The sermon is just polished words in a slick suit, but there is something about it that doesn't feel right.

You don't get the sense that the person is practicing what they preach. You don't get the feeling that they buy what they're selling. Although you may not be able to put your finger on exactly what it is, there is a disconnect somewhere. It doesn't feel authentic.

In the book *The Challenge of Preaching*, John Stott writes, "People expect high standards of honesty from preachers and sniff around like dogs after a rat to see if they can discover any contradictions in us."<sup>4</sup> As a preacher, your life is in the public eye. People will judge you on everything you say and do.

In the introduction, I said that preaching rests on two pillars: the what and the how. The what is the content—the words you say. The how is the delivery—the way you communicate the words. But there is also

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<sup>4</sup> John Stott, *The Challenge of Preaching*, Kindle ed. (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013), Location 1298.

a third, almost hidden pillar that stands behind the other two. The third pillar is the who. The who is the preacher—the type of person you are.

Who delivers the message is as important as what is said and how you say it. Just as you wouldn't listen to Hitler give a lecture on loving your neighbor, people won't listen to a preacher who doesn't live what they teach. If a person's life contradicts their message, nobody listens.

The most important thing you can do for your preaching is to be the same person on stage that you are off of it. Far too many pastors fall because their private life doesn't line up with their preaching life.

Authentic preachers live their sermons. They stand on the stage, rip open their chest, and reveal their heart to the congregation. Everything they say and do comes from deep within them. It's not an act. It's not a show. It's not a presentation. Authentic preachers bleed their soul.

## **Six Elements of Authentic Preaching**

Although you cannot force authenticity, there are some elements that contribute to authentic preaching:

passion, transparency, compassion, conviction, urgency, and confidence.

## **1. Passion**

The best preachers are passionate. They preach with a sense of anticipation of the amazing work God might do in His people through His Word.

If you are not excited about what you are saying, how can you expect anyone else to be? It's tragic to make the most amazing story ever told boring.

Get fired up about the message. Bottle it up. Let it stir within you all week so that by Sunday (or whenever you preach), you can't contain it anymore. The message explodes out of you.

Nobody wants to listen to a passionless preacher. You must believe in what you are saying so strongly that you cannot help but get excited when talking about it. Your true personality shines through.

Your passion will be visible in your body language. When you are passionate about something, you move. Think about your body language the last time you had a heated argument, comforted a crying child, or watched your team win in the final seconds of the game. You were so moved that you moved. (*We will talk more about body language in the next chapter.*)

In the book *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell says that “no set of delivery dos and don’ts supersedes the power of caring deeply about what you say... Showing genuine enthusiasm for what you deeply believe is the only unbreakable rule of great delivery.”<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Transparency

If you want to be authentic, you have to be real with people. Let people know that you are not perfect. Share stories of how you have failed. Talk about how you’ve been personally convicted of something recently. Let people know that following Jesus is not easy, even for the preacher.

When you are transparent, your humanity shows. You are a regular person like everyone else with quirks, flaws, and struggles. So don't take yourself too seriously.

Be vulnerable about shortcomings in your life. Don't pretend like you have it all together. Tell us where you struggle. Tell us that you aren't perfect. Let us know how you are wrestling with your sermon's topic.

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<sup>5</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), Location 7584.

Like Tim Keller says, “You should be something like a clear glass through which people can see a gospel-changed soul in such a way that they want it too, and so that they get a sense of God’s presence as well.”<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Compassion

Loving to preach and loving those we preach are two very different things. You need to know your audience. What are their greatest pains, fears, failures, and struggles? When you know your audience, your preaching will naturally flow out of your compassion for them.

It doesn’t matter how well you preach, without love you are just making a noise (1 Corinthians 13:1). But when you preach with love for your people, people can feel it. And like a father who warns his child not to play in the street, you can warn your people of the dangerous things they are messing around with, and they will know that you are only saying it out of love.

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<sup>6</sup> Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, Kindle ed. (New York: Penguin, 2015), Location 317.

Do you care about the people in your audience? Do you want nothing more than to help them? Is it obvious in the way you speak?

I've known pastors who love preaching, but not people. The best pastors preach with heartfelt compassion for their people.

## 4. Conviction

The best preachers have been personally convicted by the message God has given them long before they ever preach it.

As the Puritan theologian John Owen said, "No man preaches his sermon well to others if he doth not first preach it to his own heart."<sup>7</sup>

If the message has not changed you, it will not change your listeners. Let it challenge your life first. You can only lead your people as far as you have gone yourself.

Conviction is vital for authenticity. Your sermon won't just be theoretical talk. You will be preaching from experience. People will be able to feel that you actually practice what you preach. There is no greater example of a preacher who believed and followed his teachings than Jesus.

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<sup>7</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students* (Fig, 2012), 15.

Jesus didn't just teach on prayer; he often withdrew to pray (Luke 5:16). Jesus didn't just teach on loving sinners; he had dinner with them (Matthew 9:10-12). Jesus lived what he said. He didn't just talk a good talk, he walked the walk all the way through death on a cross.

You must believe what you are saying. With every fiber of your being, you have to know it is true. The greatest lessons we teach come from our lives, not our mouths.

## **5. Urgency**

The best preachers have a sense of urgency. They feel the urgency of the gospel. They know that time is short and eternity is long.

We have a message that is the difference between life or death. The implications are Heaven or Hell. Our time is short. Life is a vapor. We never know if this will be our last message or theirs.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his book *Preaching and Preachers*, writes, “You are not simply imparting information, you are dealing with souls, you are dealing with pilgrims on the way to eternity, you are dealing with matters not only of life and death in this world,

but with eternal destiny. Nothing can be so terribly urgent.”<sup>8</sup>

Authentic preachers know the urgency of the gospel. They don't pretend like the people listening have forever to make a decision. We are never guaranteed another moment. The time to act is now. If you believe the gospel, you will preach like there is no tomorrow, because one day you will be right.

## 6. Confidence

Authentic preachers are confident. They believe that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will speak through the proclamation of His Word.

Authentic preachers also know what they are talking about. They have studied the Bible. Its words are engrained on their hearts. They know the text they are preaching so well that they could preach without notes if needed. So their eyes are engaged and fully present in the moment.

If you struggle with confidence, remember, you can be confident because you are not preaching from your authority, but God's. You don't preach out of self-confidence, but confidence in the almighty, all-knowing, unchanging God.

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<sup>8</sup> D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 104.



We are an ambassador of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are representing Him. So place your confidence in Christ. Anything you say is just an opinion. Anything he says is law. Deliver his message with complete confidence.

## Be Yourself

Authenticity means that you simply be yourself. People have built-in imposter detectors. They can spot a fake a mile away.

People want to know: Do you really care about them? Do you really have an authentic relationship with Jesus? Do you really practice what you preach? Are you the same person on stage that you are off stage?

Charles Spurgeon said, "The life of the preacher should be a magnet to draw men to Christ, and it is sad indeed when it keeps them from him."<sup>9</sup> If you are not authentic in your faith and preaching, you will repel people from Christ like the same sides of a magnet.

So if your preaching is not an authentic expression of your walk with God, then please stop preaching. Like I said at the beginning of this book, you have

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<sup>9</sup> Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 18.

to work out of an authentic relationship with God first.

Authenticity is one of the foundational pillars of preaching. It doesn't matter how polished your speaking ability is; if you aren't authentic, people won't listen. *Who* you are is as important as *what* you say and *how* you say it. And in today's culture of many fakes, there is little more attractive than real authenticity.

Listen to how Paul describes his preaching: "When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power." (1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NIV).

What could be more authentic than that? The power of Paul's preaching was not in his words. Paul preached in weakness, fear, and trembling. The power was in his authentic love for Christ and the power of God working through him. May your preaching be the same.

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**Thank you for reading this free sample. To read the rest (200 more pages loaded with practical tips and preaching wisdom), please get your copy today at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Your church will be glad that you did!**

**– Brandon**

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