

TTT 401. "Your Voice Matters" Tips for new and inexperienced speakers. Part 6. 11 February 2025

Teaching Tip 401 | "Your Voice Matters". Part 6 - Dynamic titles. Tips for new and inexperienced speakers | Malcolm Cox

Introduction

Last week, we explored the importance of the one-sentence summary. This week, we explore the significance of titles.

Today's Tip

Today's tip comes from my friend Ben Dannatt. Ben says:

"Thank you for putting this together. Be sure to put in what you taught me about having dynamic titles for the sermons and the points within the sermon. It has really helped me."

Thanks, Ben. Your point is vitally important. Why does spending time on titles matter? How do we get there?

Let's talk about verbs and names. By the way, it's important to state that in no way am I suggesting this is the only way to come up with titles. Nor am I saying it's the best way. However, my reading and experience have demonstrated the value of what I'm about to explain.

Verbs

Verbs are helpful in titles. They indicate direction, action and consequences. They prevent titles from becoming static and conceptual. For example, what kind of title could we create from a sermon based on the following verse?

Matthew 5.7

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

How about "The mercy cycle"? There's nothing wrong with that. However, consider options containing verbs:

"Show Mercy, Receive Mercy"

"Giving Mercy, Gaining Mercy"

"Practice Mercy, Reap Mercy"

"Live Mercy, Love Mercy"

"Show Compassion, See Compassion"

"Pour Out Mercy, Be Filled with Mercy"

Do you see the difference? "The mercy cycle" seems like a 'thing', whereas "Show mercy, receive mercy" strikes me as something I can do and experience.

Names

Note that I'm using the word 'names' in a broad sense here.

I forget where I originally read this, and it might have been from Rick Warren, but for a long time, I've tried to incorporate the 'names' God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Christ, the Father, LORD, etc., into my sermon titles and points. I'm not talking about forcing the names in for the sake of it but discovering them. Let's face it: If you can't find a connection with God in your title, perhaps you've missed something important!

For example, consider the story often called the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. A perfectly reasonable title might be:

"Wasting, Wanting, Returning: The Prodigal's Journey"

However, what if it was the following?

"Running to Redemption: The Father's Love in Motion"

The second version is explicitly about God. The point of the parable is not the prodigal but the heart of Father God.

Or, as another example, consider the restoration of Peter and Jesus' relationship in John 21.

1. **Peter-Focused:** *"From Failure to Faith: Peter's Restoration"*

2. **Jesus-Focused:** *"The Good Shepherd Restores: Jesus Reinstates Peter"*

It is not that one is right and the other is wrong. However, asking yourself whether you can find God, Jesus, or Spirit in your title is a good discipline. Is your sermon *really* about God or something else?

Conclusion

If this process feels overwhelming, do yourself a favour and create a sermon preparation template. At the top, write two questions:

1. Where is God in this lesson?
2. Where is/are the action/s in this lesson?

Your answers to these two questions will help shape your sermon title and the titles of your points.

Question

Can you try this in your next lesson? Send me the fruit of your labours. I'd love to see how you got on. Was it hard or easy? Did it make sense, or did it make things more complicated?

Please add your comments on this week's topic. We learn best when we learn in community.

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<https://aim.moodlecloud.com/>.

Do you have a question about teaching the Bible? Is it theological, technical, or practical? Please send me your questions or suggestions. Here's the email: malcolm@malcolmcox.org.

If you'd like a copy of my free eBook on spiritual disciplines, "How God grows His people", sign up at my website: <http://www.malcolmcox.org>.

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Keep calm and carry on teaching.

God bless, Malcolm
