

TTT 407. "Your Voice Matters" Tips for new and inexperienced speakers. Part 12 - Feedback in advance. 25 March 2025

Teaching Tip 407 | "Your Voice Matters". Part 12 - Feedback in advance. Tips for new and inexperienced speakers | Malcolm Cox

Today's Tip

Today we conclude exploring a second tip from my friend Rob Payne. Rob says:

"Pray and practise - preferably with people who can give you constructive feedback."

We've covered the prayer point elsewhere, but today, I'd like to discuss engaging with people who can give you "constructive feedback." Specifically, I'm talking about looking for feedback *before* we speak, not just afterwards.

Introduction

If you are an inexperienced or new speaker, the chances are you could make huge improvements to your lesson with small tweaks that other people would see as obvious but you would understandably miss. Why not make the most of other people's experience and wisdom in advance so that you don't have to put things right afterwards?

My first sermon

My first sermon was shared with my friend Steve Allen 37 years ago. We did half the lesson each. Neither of us was ready for a full sermon. Before we spoke, we went to see George, who was training us in Christian ministry. We preached our lessons to him in his lounge. It felt very strange. Preaching to him as if talking to hundreds of people was weird.

However, as weird as it was, it was nothing compared to the actual event. I was part inspired, part terrified. I remember getting lost in my notes at one point and tongue-tied at another. I also recall specifically doing something in the lesson that George told me not to do. The lesson was not impressive, but without the pre-feedback session, it would've been a *lot* worse.

Feedback Channels

Let me offer you a few suggestions as to how to conduct your pre-lesson feedback. Whatever works for you will depend on your circumstances.

1. **Record a condensed version and send it to a friend.** I was preparing a talk for an AIM UK and Ireland New Testament Survey session recently. I made a screen recording of myself doing a draft abbreviated version of the lesson and sent it to my colleague Andy Boakye for his feedback. The final class was 20 minutes, but my draft class in this format was about six minutes long. It gave Andy the gist of what I was talking about and showed him my slides. As requested, he gave me feedback that significantly improved the lesson when I delivered it a few days later.
2. **Send your notes and slides to someone.** Make a draft outline of your notes and slides if you have them, and send them to an experienced speaker in advance via email. If your files are too large you could upload them to Google Drive or Dropbox and pass on the link. How full your notes are or not is up to you. You might want to send a full text of what you want to say or just bullet points. It doesn't matter, really. It's what will help you.
3. **Practice in person.** There is nothing quite like practising in front of someone. Arrange to visit a friend and teach your lesson to them like I did to George. Ask them for two kinds of feedback. Firstly, what struck them on the day you practised with them? First impressions are helpful. Secondly, ask them for feedback a day or two later, after they have had time to digest what you said and how you said it.
4. **Video yourself.** Why not conduct a feedback session with yourself? Preach your lesson to the camera on your phone, laptop or any other device. Then watch it back on the largest screen you have available. What do you notice? Pay special attention to the following: Parts where one point does not flow naturally from another; any points that come across as vague; illustrations that do not enhance the point; any physical movement or ticks that distract; the frequency of disfluencies ("Umm", "er...", "you know", etc.). Make notes and make adjustments as necessary.

By the way, I am recording these videos for new and inexperienced speakers, but these tips apply to people like myself who have been speaking for many decades.

Questions

How do you feel about getting feedback in advance? Perhaps you are nervous? That's understandable. However, trust that God will give you the strength you need to handle the feedback and that he will use it to ensure that his Scriptures are presented even more powerfully to the people who need them.

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>.

Please pass the link on, subscribe, and leave a review.

Keep calm and carry on teaching.

God bless, Malcolm
