

However, having said this, I hasten to mention a great horror -- that of the unwitting repetition of a message before the same group. This horror engulfs all preachers from time to time, but it can be avoided almost completely by a well-kept file of speaking experiences. Such a file can be kept on cards, arranged in alphabetical order. Each card should contain at least the following three categories of information:

- (1) Place of speaking (i.e., name and location of church or school)
- (2) Dates and times of speaking, arranged in chronological order.
- (3) Titles, subjects, and/or texts of the messages.

When one card is full, another should be begun, numbered, and clipped to the first, then another. It is usually a good idea to do this as soon as you arrive home, lest you forget and then wonder later what you spoke about at that church or school!

- C. One positive proposal which can be made is this: Begin with an enlightening or challenging or inspiring or comforting message generally applicable to all believers.

Use as a text a passage on which you have done some exegetical work, and concerning which you believe you have some expository insight or approach which will inform and edify your potential hearers.

Don't make the message too simple (i.e., a rehash, in simplistic statements and worn cliches and repeated-to-death illustration, of such basic ideas that everyone knows what you are going to say before you say it).

On the other hand, don't make the message too complicated (i.e., a treatise, using a complicated outline, technical terminology, quotations of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin words and phrases, and no illustrations, on some esoteric theological topic or abstruse exegetical point).

The object is to hit a mark somewhere between these extremes, the meanwhile realizing that everyone misses now and then. Remember: THE MAN WHO SHOOTS ABOVE THE TARGET DOES NOT PROVE THAT HIS AMMUNITION IS SUPERIOR; HE JUST SHOWS THAT HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO SHOOT!

- D. At this point a word is in order regarding the place of the Holy Spirit in preaching.

Some have felt that the Holy Spirit is operative only during the actual preaching.

Some feel that the Holy Spirit's presence should be invoked just before the meeting begins, perhaps during the prayer time.

I personally commend to you the idea that the Holy Spirit should be invoked at the very beginning of our preparation for preaching and at each subsequent phase up to and including the actual preaching; and then following the preaching for His continued working through the Word.