

Lesson 5

Public Speaking Techniques

Did you know that there are certain basic principles about public speaking that will help you become a great speaker if you follow them? Some people say they wouldn't mind standing up in public if they didn't have to speak or use gestures. However, there is no way to get around using the voice or body when you have a message to present to a group.

Making Your Voice and Body Work For You

Speak loudly enough.

- A common criticism of public speaking is that a speech, prayer, announcement or Bible reading was so soft that it couldn't be heard.
- Even a microphone cannot replace the need for a speaker to open his or her mouth, articulate carefully and supply a minimum amount of volume.
- The majority of people can speak loudly enough to be heard, but until one is accustomed to speaking, a good listener may need to give feedback on when the volume is sufficient.

Use the proper speed.

- Speak fast enough to show your own interest and enthusiasm, but not so fast that people cannot comprehend what you are saying. You want to be clearly understood.
- Pause before and after important ideas to give a point time to sink in with your audience.
- Change the rate by speeding up to a climax at various important or critical points in the speech or reading.
- Since we think in word groups, run several words together; breathe or pause only at logical places. Read a sentence out loud one word at a time to illustrate.

Learn to emphasize important words and points.

- Make the **KEY WORDS** in a sentence **STAND OUT** by stressing them while de-emphasizing less important words (*see speaking drills).
- Do with your voice what capital letters, italics, bold face and paragraph spaces do on the printed page.
- Let your main idea in speech or reading become the peaks around which all the rest of

the speech revolves.

Look at the audience!

- When someone avoids us with their eyes, we question their sincerity.
- Nothing keeps the audience watching you any better than for you to watch them—and look straight at each person, not just above their heads or in their general area.
- As in comic strips, there should be dotted lines from your eyes to the eyes of your audience.
- Avoid using notes to such an extent that they keep you from looking at the audience; and even when you read the Bible, a song or poem, look at the audience before you start, when you finish, and occasionally during the reading if it is more than two or three verses.

Be Active!

- Movement attracts attention.
- A speaker who moves the hands, changes facial expression and, in a longer speech, walks a little, will keep attention better than one who does not. However, don't move too much. You are not a heavy weight boxer intent on avoiding your opponent's fists! Too much movement will completely captivate the audience's attention on your movement and NOT on what you have to say!
- Most of us will be a little excited about appearing before a group, but this excitement can be put to good use. Being put "on the spot" excites everyone from an opera star on opening night to a golfer about to tee off in front of his friends.
- This excitement causes our bodies to prepare for activity and if we try to suppress it, the body will force us to move by making us tremble and shake.
- Movement of the hands, arms, legs and face will both help maintain the attention of the audience and also help us to work off our excitement.
- When put into proper channels, the excitement that comes with a public appearance can help us by leading us into more effective action.

Appear Natural!

- We are not necessarily to BE natural, but we should APPEAR so.
- It may be natural for us to speak softly and stand in an unattractive position, but neither of these is advisable when speaking in public.
- At the same time, while speaking in public, our actions and speech should NOT appear to be affected and unnatural. This immediately casts a doubt on our sincerity and can distract the audience.
- Standing up straight with the weight properly distributed on the feet may not seem natural, but it looks more natural to the audience than for you to squirm from standing on one leg to standing on the other.
- Standing with your hands hanging to the sides may not feel natural, but it will look far more natural than for you to pull at your coat, jam your hands into and out of your pockets or put your hands on your hips.

Avoid Distractions!

- Even seemingly insignificant matters may be important if they keep the audience from listening to you.
- There is no scripture that discusses exactly what we are to wear in church services, but distractive clothing will keep the audience from learning from the songs and lessons, as well as distract them from worshipping God! Remember the God you serve and be respectful in regards to your church attire.
- A word can sometimes be mispronounced and still be recognized, but the best way to handle this is to move on. The more attention you call to it, the more you will pull the minds of your audience away from your message.
- It may not be inappropriate to rock back and forth while you speak, but to do so is likely to draw attention away from your message and is therefore not a good idea.

Microphone Guidelines

Mechanical Requirements

- Turn the public address system on.
- Adjust the volume as needed. Different rooms need different volumes.
- Be sure the microphone is turned on and then adjust it to your lip level.
- Some microphones are directional, meaning that you must speak directly into them for them to function properly. Make sure to find out before you start using it. If at all possible, arrive early enough to test the sound system before the audience arrives.
- A microphone should do two things for a speaker: provide adequate volume and provide good voice quality.

Wireless Microphones

- If a lapel or wireless microphone is used, make

sure that someone gives you a brief explanation of where the best place on your clothing would be to attach the microphone.

- Make sure that you know how to adjust the volume on the lapel microphone and how to turn it off and on.
- Some lapel microphones are sensitive to the podium system, so make sure that you understand the relationship between the two. For instance, at some congregations, there will be a hesitation between the lapel microphones and the podium system when you get close to the podium. If the podium system cannot be turned off, in this instance, it would be better to just use the podium system. You do not want a great point you make to go unheard because it occurred during that hesitation period.

Practice Procedures

- Each student should listen to other students. If the speaker's volume is too low, listeners should hold a hand up to an ear to indicate more volume. Other nonverbal signals may be used.
- Each speaker should learn to fill the room with voice sound. A little too loud is better than too low. BE HEARD!

Conclusion

Since you have a message to deliver, you should use all the means at your disposal to achieve your aim. Avoid any distracting mannerisms or actions which will call attention away from what you are saying or reading. Learning the right and wrong ways to speak will determine whether you are a great speaker. Put these tips into practice, develop your skills and you will be a great speaker for the Lord!