



advertisement

FEB 9-12 2010

RADICALS

• FOR RADICALS ONLY •

SADDLEBACK CHURCH LAKE FOREST, CALIFORNIA

[Articles](#) | [Resources](#) | [Events](#) | [Magazine](#) | [REV Team](#) | [Contact Us](#)



[features](#)
[shop for pastor resources podcasts](#)
[events index](#)
[current issue back issues web extras](#)
[meet the rev! team](#)
[general info e-mail the editor e-mail the online editor subscription services](#)

search



[◀ back to search](#) | [rev.org home](#) | [rev! magazine home](#)



BACK ISSUE LIBRARY

Sticky Sermons

AUTHOR(S): CHARLES M STONE
 september/october 02 - a time to retreat



One of the greatest discoveries I've made that improved my preaching came from the experience of treating my daughter, Tiffany's, brain tumor, which doctors discovered when she was just 1 year old. My preaching got better through that experience, but not because I had a touching story to tell. Rather, it helped me rethink what makes a sermon more effective. Most of us want to improve our preaching. We hope the hours we spend each week on our sermons will make a difference to someone on Sunday. Stereotactic preaching can help that investment pay off. When Jesus says, "he who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9), he challenges us to engage spiritual truth at a deeper level than merely hearing. James reinforces that principle in James 1:22, when he says that to engage God's Word only at an intellectual level leads to self-deception. Therefore, we must try to craft messages most conducive for the Holy Spirit to change lives. We want to keep our people from "ever hearing but never understanding" (Matthew 13:14). Stereotactic preaching results in sermons that help our listeners avoid this experience.

What is stereotactic preaching?

Radiologists use the term "stereotactic" to describe a certain technique of radiation therapy. After three brain surgeries over five years, the surgeons reduced Tiffany's tumor to a size that would make radiation effective. Since traditional radiation therapy leaves serious side effects on young children, Tiffany became a candidate for a specialized treatment, stereotactic radiation. This kind of radiation fires many less-powerful, pencil-thin beams from multiple angles at the tumor, rather than radiating it with a few powerful blasts aimed from only one angle. At the point where the beams intersect in the tumor, the radiation delivers maximum power while minimizing damage to healthy tissue. This results in a stereotactic effect that hopefully kills the tumor, as it did in Tiffany's case.

The effect of the intersection of radiation beams illustrates the power of stereotactic preaching. This preaching style balances three communication tools, rather than relying on just one, for the greatest impact. The three main tools are stimulating the intellect, connecting with the emotions, and appealing to a person's will to respond to the sermon. This approach avoids overloading our messages with heart-wrenching stories, massive amounts of intellectual minutia, or laundry lists of to-dos. Although some might argue that preaching the Word of God is sufficient, the Apostle Paul makes it clear that the pastor becomes an important part of that transformation process when he said, "And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Romans 10:14). Even Jesus challenged the mind, connected with the emotions, and motivated the will when he taught. He wanted people to love him with their heart, soul, strength, and mind, so we must use every tool available to make the message of Christ life-transforming.

Why should we preach this way?

The lives we want to change are multidimensional. God fashioned each of us with different personalities and motivations. He designed us with various spiritual gifts, and provided many pathways for us to intimately connect with Christ. Stereotactic preaching helps our sermons connect with a broader base of personalities. Each week we face huge odds—we only have about 30 minutes to make an eternal impact on those who hear our sermons. During the week, they've already been bombarded with thousands of media messages targeting their intellect, emotions, and will. If we factor out sleep time, our 30-minute message totals less than half of one percent of a person's waking time. Our challenge then becomes to deliver a sermon, in a short time, that will counter these largely unbiblical messages. We need every bit of help we can get.

ADVERTISE ON THIS SITE

THE STUDY BIBLE FOR GROWING DISCIPLES

the Transformation Study Bible

NLT

INCLUDES COMPLETE COMMENTARY FROM DR. WARREN WIERSBE

be transformed

LEARN MORE

David Cook

ADVERTISE ON THIS SITE

Marketing experts use this principle masterfully. Seldom will you find a car manufacturer's commercial detailing 10 intellectual reasons why we should buy their car. Rather, they appeal to the mind (seven-year powertrain warranty, best in its class), the emotions (buy this car and all the good-looking babes will want a ride), and the will (easy to purchase with no money down, no payments until 2003).

So we must maximize our impact in the minimum amount of time. Stereotactic preaching helps us do that. We have to use our full arsenal of tools to give our messages "spiritual Velcro."

Jesus described how Satan prefers nonstick, Teflon-like hearts to sticky, Velcro-like hearts in his parable of the sower and the seed. When we preach, Satan does everything he can to "take(s) away the word" (Mark 4:15). He does this by twisting truth, manipulating emotions, and tempting the will. With that in mind, we must intentionally preach in ways that help the truth take root. Stereotactic preaching gives Velcro-like spiritual hooks by softening the heart to the truth of God's Word.

How do we preach this way?

Preaching stereotactically involves asking three simple questions as we prepare our sermons—questions that touch the knowing, feeling, and choosing part of our listeners.

Question 1: Does this message enlighten the mind?

Without stretching the truth, we must bring interesting and fresh insight to the passages we choose for our messages. Can you include information about the culture, the people, or a word meaning that could stimulate the mind?

In one sermon I contrasted two different words for "time" in the Bible, *chronos* and *kairos*, and their implications for life. After the message, one of our staff members said, "I enjoyed learning something new today." A simple contrast of two words connected with her and stimulated her mind. Throughout our messages, we must seek to bring out an applicable point of intellectual interest to capture the mind.

Question 2: Does this message touch the emotions?

Connecting emotionally doesn't imply packing our messages with emotion-laden illustrations. However, we must not fear engaging the emotions by preaching with passion. We can use stories, music, or humor to connect. Other excellent tools include drama, art, live interviews, and video. (Rev. note: see www.preachingplus.com and www.ministryandmedia.com for ideas.) In a message I preached on fear, I explained that we overcome our fears when we face them. I used a clip from *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, a movie set in the early 20th century. The storyline told of a great golfer who had to face the ghosts from his past war experience to regain his former golfing form. I picked a short clip of a shadowy forest scene when the lead character's caddie helped the golfer face his fears by talking him through a crucial shot. The combination of the surreal scenery and the melancholy music brought an emotional crescendo to what the caddie told the golfer to do: "It's time for you to come on out of the shadows." I followed this touching clip with a challenge to the congregation to step out of the shadow of their fears. Be creative when you touch the emotions. Don't fear them.

Question 3: Does this message challenge the will?

This question deals with the So what? issue in our listeners' minds. Every message should include some tangible action step related to the message. Rick Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Church, teaches in his preaching seminars that we must clarify the behavioral change we want from our listeners. We mustn't leave them wondering what we want them to do in response to the message. You'll clarify the action step of your sermon when you ask yourself this question.

If possible, use some tool to capture people's commitment. I use a feedback card that doubles as a registration card. At the end of a message on tithing, I offered five possible responses. They ranged from "I'll begin tithing" to "I'm not ready yet, but I'll think about it." I then asked them to write the number corresponding to their commitment on their cards.

When you get a tangible response during a service, you'll increase the chances that your listeners will apply the message to their lives.

How does it all come together?

One final suggestion for stereotactic preaching: Avoid rushing the end of your message. Give sufficient time for the listener to reflect on what you've said. I've passionately preached messages only to end with just three minutes left in the service. In those three minutes, I still wanted to lead people to a life-changing decision, make the final three announcements, sing one last chorus, and close in a meaningful prayer. As a result, I rushed through the crucial time they needed for quiet reflection, and the message lost much of its impact. We must give sufficient time to communicate what we want our listeners to do in response to a sermon, as well as time for them to think about it. The Spirit can do its most important work during this time. We can avoid that end-of-the-message rush by trimming our messages before we preach them. Only then can we give our listeners adequate time to reflect. Our experience with Tiffany's brain tumor taught me much about life and about preaching. Before I practiced stereotactic preaching, my heart sank following a painful conversation with a friend one day after church. He described how his adult sister enjoyed my sermon a few weeks prior during her visit from out of town. The compliment encouraged me. But his comments that followed quickly dashed my good mood. He described a later conversation with his sister in which he challenged her to become a Christian. Her response was a firm no. But then she added, "I was ready to become a Christian that day I visited your church, but the pastor never asked me to become one."

My message had touched her emotions and her mind. But I left out a crucial third part of stereotactic preaching. I didn't address her will. For some reason, perhaps because of time, I failed to challenge her to take a concrete step. I blew it that day.

Preaching alone doesn't bring spiritual transformation. But it can create a spiritual climate most conducive for the Holy Spirit to change a life. Stereotactic preaching can help you create that climate.

Try it this week and see what God will do with your sermon.

Charles Stone serves as the teaching pastor and pastor of spiritual formation at Crossroads Grace Community Church in Manteca, California. (ChuckS9886@aol.com)

News You Need to Know About Showing Videos

You can now purchase an inexpensive license to show portions or full-length features of movies without violating copyright law and risking a penalty. Christian Video Licensing International, (a cooperative venture of CCLI and the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation) offers an Umbrella License available to nonprofit organizations, including churches. This license allows churches to use a portion of a movie for a sermon illustration, play a video or animated feature in Sunday School classes, view the latest videos, or use videos to train students. Annual fees range from \$45-\$200, depending on the desired package and church size. For more information, see www.mplc.com/index2.htm or call 888-771-2854.

© rev.org and rev! magazine; all rights reserved

© 2009 rev.org, and group | 1-800-447-1070 | [contact us](#)
[articles](#) | [resources](#) | [message board](#) | [about us](#)



Jump to another site in the group ministry network...