



Sermon

It is not common to deliver a sermon outside church. When somebody does, we tend to say: 'Don't preach to us!'. Nevertheless, the sermon is an attractive way of addressing an important issue. It has the format of a monologue – one speaks, the others listen – but if done well it manages to create a dialogue. A good sermon is a dialogue in itself, as it reflects on common thoughts about a common theme and tries to blow off the dust and present a new approach which will inspire the audience.

Approach

1. Choose a theme or a common question. It helps if you can present the theme in one word (integrity, diversity, solidarity) or the question in just a few words that can be easily understood (Do people need governance? Is there a virtue in egoism? What price do we pay for progress?).
2. Give the theme a specific focus. In church usually a passage from the Bible is used to do so. It is read and then explained. In the same style one can choose a common saying or familiar thought that pops up in people's mind, when the theme or question is mentioned.
3. Focus upon what is common: how is this saying or thought usually understood? In what situations is it used? Then, try to look under the surface and draw attention to a deeper, underlying truth: a general principle or rule of life.
4. So far the sermon is a monologue: one person speaks about one issue from one perspective. Now you bring in the dialogue. You can do that by stepping outside the approach you have followed so far and bring in a new perspective, for example, by presenting people, authors, authorities or experiences that point into a different direction. You do not have to agree with them, but bring them into the dialogue. Point at relevant aspects of their views, aspects that should be taken into consideration. Then mention what can be said against them.
5. The dialogue works best if you manage to create two poles of thinking, that both have their attractiveness. Present them in such a way that the audience starts thinking that indeed all of this should be taken into consideration.
6. Come to a conclusion. Point at what – from your perspective – needs to weigh most or what should be the leading thought. Try to capture this in an image, a metaphor or analogy that the audience can easily remember.
7. Your final sentence calls up the audience to think about this issue some more, together and each on his own.





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You can follow these steps on your own, but it also works well to write such a sermon with one or two others, who can be very helpful in bringing the dialogue into your sermon. Or each can work at his own sermon and ask for suggestions from the others.

Deliver the sermons. Reflecting on them you can determine what the question, perspective or rule is which needs to be inquired into a bit more, and what would be a suitable format for such an inquiry.

