

Garlock, JohnKeys To Better Preaching

11. How Do I Sound? (Sermon Delivery and the Voice)

Once a sermon is written and structured, it still has to reach the listeners. This chapter turns to delivery, focusing on the preacher's most important and most neglected tool: the voice. It breaks voice down into five controllable elements a preacher can train.

Key takeaways

- Amplification does not fix bad speech; it just makes it loud bad speech. A trained voice can fill a room and shouldn't lean on equipment.
- Your voice is largely trainable. Voice production is muscular activity, so practice improves it even though you inherit your basic vocal traits.
- Pitch: preach mostly in the lower half of your range. Low pitch is pleasant; high pitch subconsciously signals stress and pain (screams, brakes, crashes). Use high notes only for occasional contrast.
- Loudness: speak a bit louder than necessary (but not three times louder) to reach the hard-of-hearing and overcome noise. Aim at the back rows.

- **Rate:** the larger the audience, the slower you speak, because coughs and movement wipe out more words. Cut filler like 'uh,' 'you know,' and 'I mean.'
- **Tone quality** is mostly inherited; just aim for a smooth, pleasant sound and avoid harshness and nasality.
- **Articulation and enunciation** matter most: open your mouth and speak clearly. A voice coach and phonetics can fix real speech defects.

Passages worth keeping

"Your voice is the final link between your message and the congregation."

Sums up the chapter: clear speech is what carries good content to the listener.