

Garlock, JohnKeys To Better Preaching

12. How Do I Look? — Non-Vocal Tools of Delivery

After voice, a preacher's physical presence carries the message. This chapter covers the visual tools of delivery—eyes, posture, movement, hands, and gestures—and gives practical do's and don'ts for using each one to hold attention and reinforce meaning.

Key takeaways

- Eyes are your second most important tool after voice. Preach without glasses if you can; never wear sunglasses.
- Look at the whole audience, especially the back row, so those in front feel included. Don't fix on friends, VIPs, the floor, or the source of a disturbance.
- When reading, keep a finger on your place, read a verse silently, then look up and speak it to the people.
- Stand alert with weight forward on your toes, feet about a shoe's width apart—not together, not planted wide.
- Movement should mark a new idea, illustration, or emphasis—never aimless 'caged animal' pacing. It renews attention every few minutes.

- Keep hands in front, elbows slightly bent, relaxed as if holding an invisible pen. Never clasp them behind your back—it hurts breath control—or near your face.
- Gestures are a language and vary by culture. Match the gesture to the thought; bigger audience, bigger gesture. Watch for meaningless habits.
- The test for any gesture or movement: Does it help? If not, drop it.

Passages worth keeping

“Suit the action to the word, the word to the action.”

Shakespeare's rule for coordinating gesture with meaning—the chapter's guiding principle for movement.