

Garlock, JohnKeys To Better Preaching

14. Chapter 11 — Wrapping Things Up: The Clock, Visual Aids, and Microphones

The closing chapter of a preaching manual. It gathers practical, easily-overlooked tips that separate polished preachers from beginners: managing time, using visuals, ending a meeting well, dressing and grooming, using the pulpit and microphone, and finding sermon ideas. The theme throughout is that small disciplines, practiced faithfully, make a message land better.

Key takeaways

- Respect the clock. Preaching too long is the most common preacher fault. Keep a timepiece in view without the audience noticing, and honor the audience's expected ending time (buses, ovens, childcare, follow-up ministries all depend on it).
- As a visiting speaker, don't ask how long to speak—ask what time the service ends and what must happen after your message, then stick to it.

- Use visual aids. People remember what they see.
Chalkboards work for simple, symbolic words drawn while you talk; overhead projectors for prepared material; three-dimensional objects (an egg, a clock, a candle) are best. Visuals are for adults too—adults just hide boredom better than children.
- Plan how the meeting ends. Options include prayer, an invitation with clear steps and available counselors/literature, and music. Unplanned closings drag on. Always ask the pastor what your role in closing is.
- Dress and groom just a bit more formally and more conservatively than the audience—perception is what matters. Dark blue reads as most sincere; be scrupulously clean; avoid distracting clothing, jewelry, gum, and bad breath.
- Use the pulpit lightly—get out from behind it when you can, don't lean on it, and prefer a small, unobtrusive one. Communication improves with fewer barriers.
- Handle microphones with care: keep it a uniform distance from your mouth, test by voice (never tap it), avoid feedback from loudspeakers, and don't lead with anything vital in your first sentence in case the volume isn't set.

- Find sermon ideas from your people's real needs: regular devotional Bible reading, the conditions among your congregation, current events, the Spirit's leading, doctrinal balance, other preachers (improve, don't copy), and your own life experiences.

Passages worth keeping

“An anointed and well-prepared sermon can say more in ten minutes than an undisciplined stem-winder can say in two torturous hours.”

The case for discipline over length—the chapter's central practical warning.

“Now, go and preach—not because you must say something, but because you have something to say.”

The manual's closing charge, summing up its whole purpose.

How it connects

The chapter treats the mechanics of preaching as a form of respect—for the listener's time, attention, and the Gospel itself. Its recurring lesson is that faithfulness in small, unseen details serves the message rather than the messenger.