

CD601 Proclamation and Communication
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Reflection and Growth Plan

This course taught me essential lessons that provided great insights into how to preach and communicate well. I started preaching in children's ministry several years ago. By then, I already had years of experience in teaching kids. However, preaching seemed to be much more difficult than teaching. Capturing the attention of toddlers, kindergarteners and elementary school kids was extremely challenging at first. I used puppets, power points, pictures, or any objects related to the stories in the Bible. Later, I began to preach to the elderly women in my church once a month during the intercessory prayer meeting. They had no problem paying attention to the sermon. However, I felt great pressure knowing that they always listened to the sermons by well-known preachers even during the weekdays. I became very anxious during the week that I prepared the sermon. I soon realized that I was afraid of speaking in front of others no matter who they were.

As I caught myself trying to avoid preaching whenever possible, I recognized my desperate need to learn about preaching and to overcome my fear. Therefore, this course has been truly helpful for me. I came to discover the areas I need to grow and the strengths that can be utilized more. Overall, I learned the importance of having the right mindset, perspective and attitude of the preacher. I will reflect on the key learnings that I gleaned from the weekly lessons, books, assignments and the feedback received which will be incorporated in my growth plan.

Key Learnings and Growth Plan

As I mentioned above, I tend to become extremely nervous when I visualize myself giving talks to others. *Ted Talks* written by Chris Anderson specifically addresses this issue by

looking at Monica Lewinsky's case. Monica had a great fear of public speaking, especially since she had been publicly humiliated due to the scandal in the past. Yet, surprisingly, she used her fear as the motivation to speak to the public. What this means is that, because she was nervous, she committed herself to practicing her talk as many times as it took. Such practices equipped her to be prepared well. As I was reading this, I felt relieved because I had thought great speakers rarely get nervous. I assumed that they do not need to practice their speech as much simply because they are naturally charismatic or talented. Therefore, seeing Monica using her own fear to make herself prepared for the talk changed my perspective. In the future, instead of avoiding the opportunity to preach, I will accept my tendency to get nervous and start preparing earlier for the sermon. This is one of the areas where I would like to grow.

Moreover, during the talk, she focused on the message to deliver, not on herself, the messenger. This is a very important reminder as I have experiences of getting even more nervous when I was worried how I would be seen to the audience during preaching. Focusing on the message itself should shift my attention away from the distracting thoughts and more fully pay attention to what I am saying. Then, how can I focus more on the message? It seems having a main idea is the first step to be able to focus on the message. The lesson on the passage analysis taught me the importance of having one main idea that is clear to the speaker and the audience. Lacking the clear idea ensures that the speaker will not deliver the message with clarity and the audience will not understand the talk. As Haddon W. Robinson argues in *Biblical Preaching*, three or four unrelated ideas do not make a message; listeners hardly remember a single message if the ideas are scattered. I never knew how it is crucial to have one big idea especially for the audience to process.

The assignment to find the main ideas of the given passages was a helpful exercise that can be utilized in my daily reading of the Bible. Therefore, I will continue to do the passage analysis every Wednesday in the morning to develop the skills and insights needed for finding the main idea. Moreover, Dr. Reimer emphasized in his lecture how understanding the context of the passage is essential to find the main idea and *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* gives an excellent explanation for how to interpret each book of the Bible through studying the context. When I do the passage analysis, I will study the historical and literary background of the passage using the commentaries or background study Bible. Knowing the situations of the first hearers can lead to a better understanding of the meaning of the passage which then can be more properly applied to the audience in the current situation.

This reminds me of the lecture that focused on who we are becoming as a preacher. Dr. Reimer said that the preacher is someone who abides in Christ and, as a result, bears fruit. It cannot be emphasized more that I should be the first person to apply the message that I intend to communicate to my own life. At the end of the day, the audience follows the action and life of the spiritual leaders, not necessarily what they say. The gap between what they say and their life may reveal the hypocrisy within them. Therefore, living out what I preach is what I should aim for even as I prepare the sermon and communicate it. Yet, it is very difficult to hold myself accountable as I am aware that I can easily deceive myself. To be able to continuously respond to the Word and apply it to my life, I will have a regular meeting once a month with one of my friends who is faithful to share my reflection, prayer request and ask for her perspective and feedback. I will record the progress of my application of the Word along with the prayers requested and answered to evaluate and measure how I am responding to God's Word more concretely and honestly.

One of the topics that I deeply appreciated is vision casting. Prior to this course, I did not know what vision casting is and how it is done. Even as I was listening to the lecture, I was not fully understanding what exactly it is. However, as I was preparing for the assignment on vision casting, I finally grasped the concept and realized how essential vision casting is in doing the ministry. In fact, I was already doing parts of it constantly. I often analyzed and evaluated the situations in the ministry to find out what is needed the most, tried to come up with possible solutions and planned to achieve the solution. What I had not done as much as needed was to cast the vision to the leaders or the members involved in the ministry. As I was doing the assignment, it struck me that what I struggled with was mostly related to how I communicated the ideas to the leaders. Instead of vision casting, I would meet up with the leaders individually to talk about the ideas. Being a person who feels more comfortable meeting people in small groups and talking to one or two people at a time, I felt such an approach worked well for me. However, I gradually noticed how much time and energy it took. Vision casting seems to solve that problem. Through vision casting, more people are motivated and inspired as they are listening together, and I can use the time and energy more effectively and efficiently.

One of the comments that I received on the vision casting assignment was how I should emphasize my message more clearly. This is related to improving my communication style. How can I do this? I will utilize the main idea of the passage that I reflect upon every Wednesday. I will record myself communicating the main idea. I aim to develop skills to make my sentences shorter or make a memorable phrase to emphasize the point about to be made. I also seek to become more comfortable with more facial expressions and body movements to emphasize the main ideas.

This exercise seems challenging since monitoring oneself is not an easy thing to do. Yet, I am determined to do it and I believe the more I do it, the more comfortable I will become to see myself speaking. I hope and trust that the training on Wednesdays I am planning will help me improve both the content and the style of my communication.

So far, I have discussed my plans for the area of growth and for future improvement. Through the course, I came to realize my weaknesses, but I also discovered what I do well in communicating that can be developed more. My strength in communication is that I'd like to sincerely listen. I am genuinely interested in others, and I enjoy asking open ended questions that help others explore themselves and share their thoughts. I will integrate this strength to preparing and delivering the sermon. As I continue to meet with the people I serve, I will actively listen to them. As I prepare the sermon, I will remember them, pray for them and ask for God's help to speak to them through the sermon. As I preach, I will preach with deeper understanding and compassion for the audience and speak to them with sincere heart. I will not only focus on the message, but also on those who might be going through a challenging season due to the issues in their health, relationships, financial situation, or career. I will continue to be connected and communicate with the audience through listening, understanding and sharing lives. I desire to become myself when I preach the message, always speaking the truth with love and living out the message I preach.