

7 WAYS TO TEACH FOR TRANSFORMATION

By Kurt Bubna

Years ago, I heard Rick Warren say, “The *deepest* teaching is teaching that makes a difference in people’s day-to-day lives.” That simple statement challenged and encouraged me more than anything else I’ve ever read or learned about communication from the pulpit. From that moment on, I have worked hard to focus on life-application teaching in my weekly sermons. Jesus didn’t teach just to inform; He taught to transform.

I’ve also learned to evaluate my messages by asking these seven simple questions:

1. **Is it *prophetic*?**

In other words, is it what God has said to His people? I take seriously the call I have to speak on His behalf. My words alone are empty. His Word is eternal. So I always ask: Is this what God has said and is saying to His Church?

2. **It is *palatable*?**

I used to give people way more than they could chew on in one sitting. My mistake was thinking that many words make a better sermon. My goal now is to have them walk away with one or two important truths. Typically, the last step in my message writing process is to intentionally cut the message down by about 25% or more. For the record, no one has ever complained about my messages being too short!

3. **Is it *precise*?**

We can’t cover everything about everything in every message. What we can do is make sure that what we say is clear, easy to follow, accurate and true. I wouldn’t want a doctor to get it *mostly* right when treating me—I want him to get it *all* right! As preachers, we need to endeavor to get it right.

4. **Is it *presentable*?**

Whether your favorite approach is expository, topical, or narrative is not nearly as important as whether people can connect the dots in your message. Presentable doesn’t just mean neat and tidy; it means that people are able to understand what you’re saying in a way that doesn’t lose them in the process.

5. **Is it *penetrating*?**

It is never my goal to tick people off, but the message should touch them at some deeper level and challenge them to grow. I don’t have to be controversial or harsh. I should, however, be bold enough to say something that cuts to the heart.

6. **Is it *passionate*?**

If I don’t care, why should they? Passion can be expressed in many ways. I can demonstrate how I feel about the topic through my loud or quiet volume, through my

pace and inflection, and even through laughter and tears. By the way, it's okay to be passionate! Jesus was.

7. Is it *practical*?

Have I answered the "So what?" question? What do they need to do or not do in practical response to this message? How can they apply this teaching in a way that will make a difference in their lives or the lives of others?

These seven questions are posted on a bulletin board in my office. On a weekly basis, I evaluate before and after my message how I did with each of these things. Trust me, it's worth the time, and it's worth the effort.

I started with a great quote by Warren; let me finish with one by D.L. Moody, "The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives."

As preachers, we have the incredible privilege of showing people how the Word of God can change their lives, their homes, their jobs, their neighborhoods and their world. So in Him, through Him, and for Him, go change lives this weekend!