

# Sermon Delivery

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of authenticity, naturalness, and personal testimony in effective sermon delivery.*

**Duration:** 26:46

**Scripture:** Acts 9:1

**Topics:** "Sermon Preparation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching from the heart and being natural in delivering the word of God. He encourages the audience to be earnest and sincere in their preaching, as it is crucial for the listeners to feel the preacher's excitement and passion. The preacher also advises against imitating or copying others in their preaching style, as it hinders the Holy Spirit's work. He highlights the need for personal application of the scripture in the preacher's life, allowing it to deeply impact and change them before delivering the message to others.

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## Transcript

I'd like to just close the day by giving a few tips if I could on what I think are important principles in terms of the delivery of sermons, the style of speaking that you have. Everyone has their own personality, and if I could just say this first off, if you want the Lord to use you in speaking, you must never copy anyone. The moment you copy someone, the moment you imitate and mimic someone, church is out.

It's over. The Holy Spirit has never used one imitation in the history of the Christian church. I'm talking about really use us.

You have to get faith in God that he can use you in your own personality. Any putting a tear in your voice, any changing your body posture to look like a minister, any affectation at all, and it's over. Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and if you and I are acting any way that's unnatural, it's not good.

And there's many different things. There's putting a ministerial voice on and changing your personality. This is a hard thing I had to deal with growing up because my best friend was Carol's older brother.

Carol's four and a half years younger than me. So when I started to go over to his house to play basketball and play sports, Carol was just a younger kind of sister hanging around, and this was the pastor of the church's home. So I would see these visiting ministers come, and my little Brooklyn mind growing up in

Brooklyn, I had a hard time trying to understand, wait a minute, I was in the house, we had breakfast together, and that visiting minister was staying there, and he talked at breakfast, and I talked to him, and I heard him joke around and talk, and now on Sunday in church, he took the microphone, and he turned into a different person.

From whence cometh this? In other words, he got all up. Well, he grew up under that culture that you had to play the preacher. And whether it's black preacher style or white preacher style, any style that brings us into unnaturalness is going to grieve the Holy Spirit.

If you want acting, go to Broadway. We should never have acting in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. How many say amen to that? Never acting.

You notice Karen, why she's so effective. She just sings natural. If she feels something, that's true emotion.

She's not going to act. If you were here Sunday, you heard the choir singer, the singers, they're not putting on anything. Carol doesn't train them to do anything.

They feel like lifting their hands, they're going to lift their hands. No one has to do anything. There's no compulsion to do that, because that's affectation.

That's something. Can you imagine Jesus putting on, like talking one way, Peter, James, John, after I talk to the multitude, we're going to town, and you know, we'll do all of that. Okay, and I'll see you guys later, okay? Well, praise God, everybody.

Can you imagine Jesus or the Apostle Paul doing that? Or a soft voice, anything affected, anything affected. You have to be natural. Now, I fought this battle.

Maybe I can help somebody. I don't have a good speaking voice. I'm not a Polish speaker.

I never went to seminary. So I had a great battle when I first went into ministry. I could not believe that God could use me speaking the way I'm speaking now, which is conversationally.

I don't know how to speak any other way. And I could not believe that I could just be myself. So I tried to act like a preacher, and it was painful.

Some of my sermons were so bad, I fell asleep while I was preaching them, and that's not a good sign, right? And my wife had to tell me early on, that's not good. You're not being yourself. You're acting.

The way you, I cry often when I worship God. Anybody here cry when they get in the presence of God? I cry. That's just the way it is.

Well, I shut off those tear ducts because I said, you can't, being as young as I was, inexperienced as I was, you can't cry in front of the congregation. People are going to think like Harold said, you're going to have some kind of emotional breakdown here. And so I was stiff, I was unnatural, and it was horrible, because God can only use you as you.

Can you believe that? Can you believe that? In other words, it has to be who you are. The Franklin Graham that was talking to me in my office, that's the same guy that took the microphone, I can promise you. There was no different guy up there.

So that's, of course, the first rule in speaking. And because of insecurity and fear, it's very easy to protect ourselves and not be vulnerable by putting on some mask. A ministerial mask, assembly of God mask, a Southern Baptist mask, whatever, you know, Church of God in Christ mask, where the organ is tuning you up.

But that's not the way you talk when you have dinner, right? So why would you talk differently to people? So that's a threshold. I know I'm not getting many amens here, but I'm going to keep going. I don't care if you don't say amen.

Franklin charged me, just keep going, right? That's what he said, don't back down. But that's the truth. It is the truth.

And I want the best for you. I want to see your churches explode. I want to see the blessing of God on all you men and women.

Amen? But if God made me unique and made you unique, should we stop being unique, even though God made us unique? But the key is this, when preaching is, as someone said, truth coming through personality. The definition of preaching is truth coming through personality. Now, truth is supposed to hit the mind.

You don't, you want to grab people's attention. They're listening and they're analyzing what you're saying. And then as God's truth, the gospel, whatever you're preaching on, hits their mind, the Holy Spirit then will take it and apply it to the hearts of the people.

Because unless the heart is one, no one's going to make a decision. The Bible says, the Lord says, give me your heart. Our minds have to be renewed.

Minds are very important. But when Dr. Billy Graham is asking people to come to Christ, he said, he's speaking to their hearts. Will you give your life, your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ? Now, I would think to go along with the preaching that we were talking about earlier today, the law, the gospel, rightly dividing.

One of the really missing elements in preaching today is preaching that penetrates the heart, burning words that go into the heart. Mrs. Booth, the general's wife, the first general, General William Booth, Catherine Booth was her name. She was very sickly and she was a better preacher than her husband was, oddly.

He was the great organizer and she died decades before he died. And toward the end of her life in the 1890s, she had this passion for holiness and to be more like Christ. And she knew her Bible.

I have a six set volume of little tiny volumes of the preaching of Catherine Booth. It'll put you on the floor calling on God quick. And she said somewhere in there, I travel around as she was going to visit churches, not to speak, but to attend.

She said, I travel everywhere and I hear oratory and I hear cleverness and I see Bible expertise. But what my heart longs for is burning words that will do a work inside of me. You remember when the Lord was walking on the road to Emmaus with those two men? After he disappeared, do you remember what they said? Did not our hearts burn within us as he spoke to us on the way? What made his words burning? Well, that's the blessing of God, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, truth coming through, in this case, a perfect personality.

And if we're going to win people's hearts, we're going to have to speak from our hearts. And that's a huge step. I can protect myself if I just speak from my mind.

But if I speak from my mind, I will only reach your mind. But if I speak from my mind and my heart, do you notice on the day of Pentecost when Peter gave that basic sermon, no special oratory, was it? I think a second year Bible school student could do better than what Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, quoted some verses, explained some things. And yet the Bible says, and they were pricked in there.

The Holy Spirit works on men's hearts. But for us to reach people's hearts, we have to preach from our hearts. Now, that's not emotional fanaticism.

It's not talking about things privately in your life that are not edifying. That's a terrible thing to do. Because by sharing certain sins or failures or whatever battles you're going through, which are not wise, you distract people away from the truth.

And they're wondering what in the world is going on with him. So there's a fine art of using your personality. But I would like to suggest to you all today, Evelyn Sanchez is here.

That's you, Evelyn, right? Director of our women's ministry. She brought a woman into my office last week. And this woman has got some real problems.

And we were trying to minister to her. And Evelyn said something very interesting that I thought was the real word of the Lord for this woman. This woman was ready to give up on life and all of this.

And Evelyn said, do you know, when I was such and such an age, I was living in, I think it was Hell's Kitchen in Manhattan, and I wanted to commit suicide. That's how lost I was. And when she said that, I saw the woman's face jump over to her face like, what? You're the one helping me and you want to try to commit suicide or you were suicidal? And that was the use of personality and the things God has brought us through to speak to other people's hearts.

Now, don't mistake me. We preach the word of God. But I have found that God permits every single servant of the Lord to go through certain things in life that we can use them.

We can use them to bring that truth and apply it to people's hearts. We're preaching the word of God. But remember, you can't escape your personality.

And I've gone through things. My dad was an alcoholic. This happened to me.

That happened to me. And you have your things. And you have to be open and ask God to lead you where you can use your personal experiences to enforce your message from your heart to another person's heart.

Because there's something about when you share what God has brought you through that will touch other people like nothing else. Did you ever notice this? Some people say, no, just preach the word. We don't want to hear testimony.

Just preach the word. Testimony is almost like illegal. Do you ever notice? Study the book of Acts.

Every time Paul, almost every time he spoke, you know how he started his message? Well, you see, I was a Jew. I was raised as a Pharisee and I was persecuting these Christians. I thought they were a bunch of

crazy people.

And then on the road to Damascus, I had an experience with the Lord. And then he goes in to explain all that. He uses testimony and personality.

How many since you've been a Christian and since you've been in the ministry, you have been through some experiences that were painful, but God brought you through. Could I just see your hand? Why do you think he permitted that? As I close with this, why do you think he permitted that? Very good. Very good.

Whoever gave that verse, the God of all comfort who comforts us in all of our trouble, why? So that we'll be comforted? No, that we might comfort others with the same comfort that we've been comforted with. So without overdoing that, you have to be open and spontaneous to, you know what, I can share that. You know, to preach to people's hearts, to be a good minister, you have to understand the human heart.

Just like a doctor has to study, a cardiologist has to study the human heart, a doctor has to know the human body, and all of that. Preachers have to understand the human heart. Like I told you, talking to these people, it's so helpful to me, counseling people.

The minute you get removed from the people, you're not going to be able to preach where they really live. Otherwise, you're just talking in the air and you're making points that don't matter to anyone. Like my friend Warren Wiersbe says, you know, when someone's hanging by a thread in their life, and you're going to take five minutes to discuss the history of the Philistine people, nobody cares.

No one cares about the Philistines. They had a giant once, and David killed them, but nobody cares about that other than that. But it might be interesting to us, but it doesn't meet people where they live.

There's a very famous preacher, very famous expositor, whose works I cut my teeth on when I first, from Britain, who ministered predominantly in the 19th century, but fell well into the 20th. And one day I was talking with Warren Wiersbe about it, and I said, did you ever notice this about this well-known Bible expositor whose books are myriad? Did you ever notice at the end, when he closes the message, that's like the weakest part of the message. When he's breaking down the Scripture, he's the best.

But when it comes to application, what should people do with this truth? I said, did you ever notice that? And he said, you know, Jim, that's so funny that you should say that. He said, you know, the problem, why that was, was all he ever did was speak at Bible conferences and study the Bible all day long. He rarely, never visited anyone, never prayed with anyone, hardly.

And then you can get removed and not know where people are really living. You know, people have broken hearts. I was praying for this woman some months ago.

She breaks down here while I'm just talking to her about her son, who's serving 20 to 25 years in a prison, and now the Muslims have made a move on him, and they're trying to convert him. But she's been praying for him to get out of prison and to be a Christian, and she's falling apart here. And she's out there listening while I'm preaching.

Yesterday, she was there while I'm preaching. So if I can't help her and encourage her, shame on me. But unless we know where people are living, we're just preaching sermons that, that who likes? I don't know who likes them.

We just think they're right, but we gotta touch people's hearts. So what do you know about, Jason, if you play, what do you know about temptation? Share it in a proper way. Get that feeling of the battles that people are going through.

Former crack addicts here, former, um, whatever. You name it, we have somebody who did it here. That's why I love going to that prison, because every time I go there when I leave, it's like I'm back in the real world.

These are the battles people are facing. Unless you just want to preach to the choir and preach to the church and argue about what 666 means and all that other stuff. But that's not what most people are battling with.

God has to make us experts of the heart, and we have to preach from our hearts. Now, let's close with just these three things. Earnestness, naturalness, we already covered naturalness, earnestness, and sincerity.

If you and I are not excited over a passage of scripture or a subject, do you think there's a chance that the people who are listening to us are going to be excited? I don't think so. You can tell when someone's just preaching a sermon and when someone's delivering their heart. Can't you tell that? You can tell when someone's singing.

I can, I think I can discern traveling around with Carol and being in enough meetings. When someone's singing to show off their voice and when someone just closes their eyes and says, I am now going to give you my song like Karen just did. I think that's as good as a gospel singer can get that thing on there, on that film, her singing, he's God.

Because you can tell it's coming right from her heart. How does earnestness come? It's well said. If we're not excited about something, the people who listen to us are not going to be excited.

But you say this is biblically true. I know it's biblically true, but where we get moral authority and where we get spiritual power is the thing has to grip us and then it grips the person who listens to us. You know, once a week I pray or I talk with Warren Wiersbe on the phone about the Bible.

You're not going to talk about anything else with Warren Wiersbe. Do you all know who Warren Wiersbe is? A well-known author and expositor. All Warren Wiersbe is going to talk about is the work of the Lord and the Bible.

That's it. You're not going to talk about sports. You're not going to talk about politics.

You're not going to talk about anything else. What'd you preach on, Jim? I'm almost embarrassed to tell him here he's Warren Wiersbe and all that. So I tell him and he goes, oh, that's good.

Did you ever think of this on that verse? And then he'll mention three things and I'll go, how could you think of that? I never thought of that. And Jim, did you ever preach on every time the Bible says, but she said, I said, no, I've never heard of such a crazy thing. He said, look it up.

It's good. Did you know what, when he gets through talking about the word of God with me and when we hang up, I invariably, it happened just the other day, I reach for my Bible. He never told me to reach for my Bible.

He never told me once, Jim, by the way, read the Bible. Never told me that once, but he so loves the word of God that when I hang up the phone with him, I grabbed the Bible. You'd be with someone who has a ministry of prayer.

You want to pray. Things are communicated more here than just this. There's an aroma in people's life.

So for us to get people to be energized by what we're talking about, God's truth, it has to energize us. We have to become earnest. Now that's not fake earnestness.

That's not yelling in the mic. I would yell on the mic now, but it's inappropriate. It's not yelling in the mic.

And it's not, it's not saying, Ooh, this thing is good. You don't have to say this is good. The people will know if it's good.

No, this is really blessing me. Whoa, watch this here now. Just preach it.

They'll know. Will they know? Come on. Do I get an amen for that? They'll know.

So how do we become earnest? Is that your Bible, ma'am? How do we become earnest? This is the hardest part of preaching brothers and sisters. Come on, let's be honest. Let's man up woman up.

The hardest part of preaching is when God gives you the passage or you're doing a series or however you're, you're, you're led to do it. Is that God has to make that verse pass through your life and apply it to you in a new way so that it goes to the bottom of your soul and changes you. Because then when you get up to preach, people are going to know that brother believes that that's real.

That's the hardest part of preaching. In fact, if you repeat a message, what's hard about repeating a message is sometimes you can live off of what it was that first time you preached it. But the second time you preach it, it can just be a bunch of notes, right? So what does that mean? It means we got to wait before God in prayer and we got to meditate on this word and say, God, how am I going to preach about forgiveness unless you deal with me? Is there anyone I haven't forgiven? Can you remind me of all the junk you've forgiven in my life? Unless you do some new work in me about forgiveness, how am I going to preach it? You say, yeah, but it's in the word, just preach the truth.

I know, but there, there has to be that stirring in our heart that people know that thing is alive in him. That thing is real in him. Now, no wonder Paul says, I travail like a mother giving birth till Christ be formed in you.

Ministry to him wasn't something you just did intellectually. It was something you felt in your heart. So let's, let's ask God today as we close, God help me to be natural.

Give me the wisdom to understand human hearts so I can stay near people and God make me an earnest preacher without being a faker. Faking earnestness is really years ago in the other building. I had a guy from down in Louisiana come and preach for me.

What a mistake. Oh, what a mistake. He was one of these guys, you put a hundred dollars in his head and you get a sermon, you know, he was like a preaching machine.

They're the most dangerous of all people. Preaching machines, not a man of God, not a woman of God, a preaching machine with the clever and the everything. And, and he was using all these tricks on our

congregation.

Now I want to tell you about the congregation you're going to sit with tomorrow night. Of all the congregations with all due respect, you will not find nicer, more God-loving people. We have our, our problems and our people, like every church has.

How many of you have some winners there that just challenge your patience, right? We just had a woman come in a few weeks ago to the prayer meeting with a birdcage, with a parakeet that she wanted to have in the prayer meeting with her on a seat next to her. And when, you know, they questioned her, she probably would have said, but God cares for the birds of the air, but we weren't going to let her in with a parakeet. So we have all kinds of things happen here.

But see the people that you're going to sit among Tuesday night, and if you were here yesterday, they're the sharpest people in the world. They're New Yorkers. They've been, they watch con artists all day long.

And when a preacher tries to con them, this is the worst place to try to be a con artist. This building, this congregation right here. Well, this guy was trying to do that with the congregation.

And the minute he started doing these things, all their eyes went over to me at the other building where I was sitting. Like, where did you find this guy? Where in the world did you find this guy? And he was doing every trick, every gimmick. And at one point, because they weren't reacting, he said, somebody better say, bless God, or I'm going to take this microphone and throw it at you.

And the people looked at me like, yeah, you throw that microphone at me, brother. I'll be up in your grill within 10 seconds. We'll see what microphone you're going to throw at me.

Oh my goodness. So you know what he said at lunch? We went to lunch. We only had two services.

Oh, that was a long time ago. I had two services morning and night. He said, he's one of those guys, he didn't call you gym or pastor or anything.

He called you doctor. I'm not a doctor. I kept telling him, I'm not a doctor.

He said, that's okay, doc. Don't worry about it. I felt like doing surgery on him halfway through the meal.

Or he would call me preacher. He said, preacher, I was struggling a little bit there this morning. You notice it? So I didn't know what to say.

I was so young then. He wasn't struggling. He was dying, really, was what he was doing.

And he said, you know what? I don't understand what, I used that stuff just two weeks ago in a camp meeting and it went over like dynamite. I just used that stuff two weeks ago. I said, if I were you, sir, when you preach in that, I would just open my heart and talk about Jesus and preach the word of God.

Anything affected fervency, any fake tears, any fake anything, oh my goodness. God, make us earnest, but make us real. Make us sincere.

For my parting words here today about that, here's what I've learned. I tell young ministers or people that I have some influence over. If you are humble and if you are natural and sincere, you got 90% of the battle won.

Listen, if you're humble, if you're sincere, and if you're natural, and you just speak from your heart, you got 90% of the battle won. Now, you do need a verse. You do need the truth of God.

You do need the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit will not anoint anyone who's not natural and not who's sincere. No, we got to talk from our hearts. Don't you want to have more power in your preaching? How many are like me? You want to do more power in your preaching? Lift your hand high and wave it at me.

If you're like that, you speak. I don't listen to any tapes of any message I've ever preached because I don't like any of them. The minute I preach them, I get along with God.

God knows this, and I say, that was dreadful. Oh God, help me to do better next time. I've never watched the video series on prayer.

I've never watched the My House Shall Be Called to Prayer, House of Prayer video from the Bill Gates thing. I never watched it once in my life. Don't want to see it, that it blesses people.

Praise God, but I want to do better. Come on, do we want to do better? Do we want to do better? Do we want to preach more from our heart? And for some of us here to just relax and be natural. You can't work up anything.

God is going to do it for us.

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