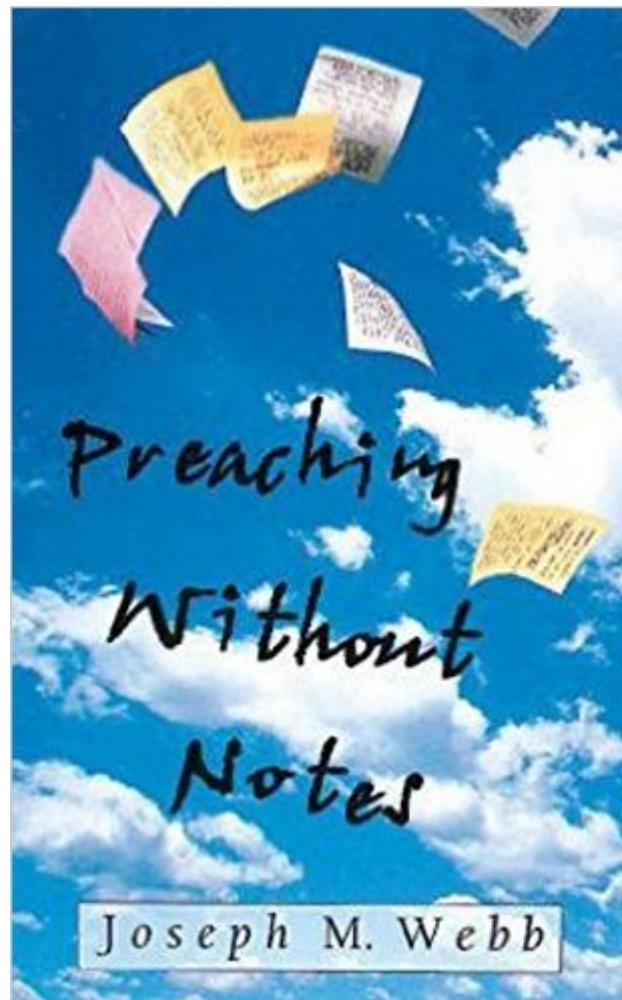


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Preaching Without Notes



Synopsis

In this important book, Webb makes two central claims. First, that effective preaching without a manuscript is not a matter of talent as much as it is a matter of preparation. Preachers can learn the practices and disciplines that make it possible to deliver articulate, thoughtfully crafted sermons, not from a written page, but as a natural, spontaneous act of oral communication. Throughout the book, the author offers specific examples including a transcript of a sermon preached without manuscript or notes. Second, that the payoff of learning to preach without a manuscript is nothing less than sermons that more effectively and engagingly give witness to the good news.

Book Information

Paperback: 134 pages

Publisher: Abingdon Press (January 1, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0687090881

ISBN-13: 978-0687090884

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.3 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (34 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #45,103 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Ministry & Evangelism > Preaching #10505 inÂ Books > Religion & Spirituality

Customer Reviews

Webb's basic thesis is that the best preaching is done without notes. He then precedes to give an example of how he puts his sermons together week after week. Webb attempts to prove that preaching without notes is more valuable in general because it allows a greater connection to the audience and it frees the preacher to be passionate. Then after defending the approach, Webb describes the approach in a day by day approach. Monday-Tuesday - Planning. During this time the preacher should determine what the text says and take extensive notes. He suggests a kind of extensive outlining. This is solely to determine what the text says. This is a pretty traditional component, and I would suggest other resources to fill in this component. For example, Paul Scott Wilson in "The Practice of Preaching" provides a much more detailed approach to determine what the text says. Another approach is Brad Braxton in "Preaching Paul." Braxton handles in outline form the steps to take in exegeting the passage. Both of these approaches do more than tell you to look at the passage, but tell you what you are looking for in the text. Webb believes that the

difference between preaching without notes and with notes is that this component should be more detailed. I think that Wilson or Braxton can help the preacher ask questions of the text which is an important component of preaching. Wednesday: Create Outline: Here the preacher creates an initial outline and evaluates the outline. Also, the preacher gives a preliminary title to the message and creates a controlling metaphor. During this step, the preacher determines what the sermon is about and splits it up into what he calls "sequences" and others call "moves."

Joseph Webb, a Professor of Speech and Homiletics, has written a very practical book for preachers seeking to free themselves from the manuscript. In Seminary, one of my homiletics professors would have us preach in front of the class without any notes and I've preached in front of congregations without a manuscript, so I come to this book with a little--very little--experience in preparing and delivering a note-less sermon. I found this book very helpful because Webb kept the routine of the parish preacher in mind throughout the book. As an example, his chapters are subdivided into days of the week (Chapter 1 is subtitled "Monday and Tuesday"). I also appreciated the encouraging tone of the book. It always had the underlying message, "you can do it! I know you can!" However, while Webb strives to encourage the reader/preacher throughout the book, he also is realistic in pointing out common mistakes, pitfalls, or new skills to be learned. A secondary message is that preaching without notes will be difficult at first, but will be easier as time goes on and new skills are acquired. The parts of the book I found most helpful are the sections on "outlining" a sermon and actual sermon delivery. The special attention to "chunks" of memorized information and natural transitions between "chunks" is helping me to write more natural sounding sermons. The chapter on delivering sermons without notes provides a helpful list of do's and don'ts. Happily, Webb also covers pre-delivery jitters and post-delivery blues, which some preachers may still imagine are unnatural for veterans of the pulpit. I normally try to list a couple aspects of the book that I dislike about the book, but it was pretty difficult with "Preaching Without Notes."

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