

Chapter 5

What to Preach

The preaching is the most important part of the bus meeting. In II Timothy 4:2 we read, "***Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.***" In this passage of Scripture, Paul tells us that our preaching must satisfy three goals:

- ◆ The goal to reprove
- ◆ The goal to rebuke
- ◆ The goal to exhort

To ***reprove*** means *to confute* or *to admonish*. It is proving that something is wrong by making an argument against it, thus bringing conviction upon the hearers to change their ways. It is to inform by way of warning. Preaching is meant to show, by using Scripture, that something is wrong or harmful.

To ***rebuke*** means *to sharply reprimand*. After Scriptural disapproval has gone unheeded, there is only one thing to do and that is to sharply reprimand. Preaching is meant to repress wrongdoing.

Jump Starting Your Bus Ministry

To *exhort* means to encourage or to urge. Preaching was meant to encourage or urge people to do a certain thing, or to live a certain way, or to be a certain kind of person.

There are times when reproofing your workers might help, but I believe that I would do that in a private meeting with them. The bus meeting is a small group and it may be very embarrassing to a worker. Now I know that they should not have so much pride, but your workers are not always what you wish that they were. If you do it in the bus meeting, you might want to do it in a general way. For example, if I had a worker that was not as faithful as he or she should be, I would preach on faithfulness. I wouldn't say, "There's one of you in here who is not faithful and we all know who it is!" I believe that it is better to warn your workers than it is to be silent about something that will hurt them or God's work. Many a good bus worker would be serving God today if someone had cared enough to warn them about something that was spiritually dangerous.

Then there are times when a sharp reprimand would be in order. But again, it might be wise to do this in private on a one-to-one basis. People don't take too kindly to public chastening and since the bus meeting may be smaller than the church services, rebuking should be done in a general way.

Most of the time you should exhort your workers. They need encouragement. They need to be urged to do right and to be productive for Christ. They need their souls stirred by red-hot, compassionate preaching; preaching that moves them and shows them that they can get the job done for Christ, and how they can do it. Exhorting should be the greater part of the preaching in the bus meeting. I find that it is much easier to lead than it is to push. If you preach the right messages, they will charge Hell with a

What to Preach

squirt gun. Remember the principle in chapter one. It was to exhort one another. Be a builder in the bus meeting. Be a leader, leading those in your ministry to victory.

Paul said that this reproving, rebuking and exhorting should be done with all longsuffering and doctrine. That means that we ought to reprove, rebuke and exhort as long as it takes and do it by using the Scripture. We are to suffer long in our preaching. And we are to use doctrine. Bible preaching is the only preaching that is effective. It is the Word of God that is ". . . *quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" (Hebrews 4:12) It is the Word of God that can break the hardest hearts and start fires burning inside men's souls. That is why Paul said in II Timothy 4:2, "***Preach the word. . .***" Preaching will help your bus workers stay focused on keeping people out of Hell.

When you are preaching to the bus workers it is important to be careful that you do not fall into some of the "traps" that preachers sometimes fall into. I call them traps because we preachers don't intend to get into them, and when we do, they are difficult to get out of, and if we do, we often cause so much damage that it is nearly irreparable. Let me give you two "traps" that you need to avoid:

1. The Trap of "*Perfectionism*"

When you work with people every week for a long period of time, their imperfections will surface. And when you have preached and preached to them but they do not seem to be responding, it will be easy for you to become intolerant of their imperfections.

Jump Starting Your Bus Ministry

You must remember that the Bible says to preach with "long-suffering." That means you are to keep preaching and preaching and preaching even if it seems that your dear workers will never get it.

It is a mistake to allow your sermons to end up exposing your workers' imperfections. We know that they aren't perfect, they know that they aren't perfect, but I will tell you one thing. They care enough about the souls of men to be out to bus meeting. Growth takes time and since people are individuals, it will take longer for some than it will for others. Keep in mind that your workers have the world, the Devil, and their flesh to contend with all the time. And they are going to need you to help them when they come to the bus meeting. Don't think that God cannot use them because they are not perfect. God used some of the most imperfect people that I have ever read about or have ever known. The truth is, there are no perfect people for God to use.

If we are not careful, we preachers, because we preach a perfect Book, will start to think that we are perfect. We become perfectionists! But beware, dear friend. A perfectionist is not a person who is perfect; a perfectionist is a person who thinks everyone else should be perfect.

Don't let yourself fall into this trap. The Devil has used it to destroy many ministries, and even churches. I have known men who have run off many workers just because they did not come up to their own standards. Remember, our preaching is to help these dear people come up to God's standards and accomplish His will. And it may take some more time than it does others. Your low toleration for the imperfections of your workers could result in hundreds going to Hell. I have seen many pitiful specimens of Christianity become giants for God in the bus ministry. It just

took a little bit of time and patience, but it was worth it.

2. The Trap of "Policism"

This trap will destroy a bus ministry in no time, in no time at all. Bus directors, especially be careful of this trap. You must keep in mind that you are working for a pastor, and the bus ministry is his ministry. He has entrusted it to you. He expects you to build it, not tear it down.

When men fall into this trap, they usually take matters into their own hands and set out to clean up the ministry. Workers will sometimes be excused from duties who simply needed just a little more time to grow.

Men who fall into this trap become critical of everything that doesn't suit their fancy and they think that they are doing God a service. But they will someday find themselves with a bunch of buses and no one to drive them or fill them up with kids. Let the pastor do the policing. Inform him of problems and let him counsel you on the matter. The pastor will know what to do and what is best.

We must keep in mind that the bus ministry is a place where new converts can serve the Lord. And by serving Him, they will grow. As they grow, a lot of the dross will be removed from them and they will shine a bit more. Don't give up on them! Be long-suffering with them. Help them fulfill their duty to God by patiently leading them.

I can remember several times in my ministry when I had to pull a bus worker aside and say to him, "Listen, you should not be

Jump Starting Your Bus Ministry

smoking on the bus route. In fact, you should not be smoking at all." Now I know that there are some who will say, "I can't believe that Brother Fox would allow someone who smoked to work on a bus route." But let me ask you a question. Do you let smokers tithe? Do you let them give in special offerings? I thought so! Then why not let them win souls, too? I can't find anywhere in the Scriptures that excuses them from the fulfilling of the Great Commission because they have bad habits in their lives that they need to stop.

I am just saying that we need to allow people time to grow. If it is your pastor's conviction that they cannot work in the bus ministry if they have a bad habit, then you obey your pastor. But don't get caught in the trap of "*policism*." You know that there is more than one way to skin a cat. You can find a way to help them without running them off. I have found that if I want to get people to do what is right, I must get them to fall in love with Jesus. It was He that said, "*If a man love me, he will keep my words; . . .*" (John 14:23)

So for the purpose of the bus meeting, most of the preaching ought to be motivational or exhortational. You need to urge your workers to be dedicated, productive servants of the Lord. Encourage them to be faithful and to walk holy. Stir their souls about the souls of lost men who are going to burn in Hell forever if someone doesn't reach them. Remind them of what Jesus has done for them. Keep them at the foot of the cross and, brother, they will stay so excited about the Lord, you won't be able to hold them down.

Preaching in the bus ministry should be predominantly motivational. Encouraging, urging, and focusing your workers to "*. . . Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to*

What to Preach

come in, that my house may be filled." (Luke 14:23)

One of the things that you can do to help yourself preach the right kind of sermons in your bus meeting is to make a list of the goals that you want to accomplish in your bus ministry. Then you make a list of the subjects that will help accomplish your goals. Your list may look like this:

- A. Dedication to the Lord
- B. The terrible effects of sin on our youth
- C. God's love for the sinner
- D. Investing in future generations
- E. The privilege of serving in the bus ministry
- F. Duty
- G. Hell
- H. Heaven

If I can help someone become dedicated to the Lord, then I have helped build His kingdom. If I can exhort someone to help our youth steer clear of sin, then I have helped some young person. If I can exhort someone to share God's love with sinners, then I have helped keep a person from destruction. If I can exhort someone to invest his time in future generations, then I have helped the next generation. If I exhort someone to realize the privilege of serving our Lord, then I have brought joy to the life of some dear saint of God. And if I can exhort someone to do what he can to keep people out of Hell, then I have robbed Hell of her bounty and increased Heaven's wonderful prize.

Now that I have a list made of the subjects on which I want to preach, I then start looking for material everywhere. I am always on the lookout for statistics. Always gathering, always looking, always keeping in mind what I am going to be preaching in the

Jump Starting Your Bus Ministry

bus meeting on Saturday. Remember, success comes not just from doing things right, it also comes from doing the right things. The right message at the right time will keep your workers spiritually healthy and on fire for God.

Following are a few of the sermon outlines that I have used in the bus meeting:

Why Be in the Bus Ministry

Text: Matthew 18:3; 19:13-15

- I. Children are people, too.
- II. Children have souls, too.
- III. Children are born sinners, too.
- IV. Children need a Saviour, too.
- V. Children need someone to help them to find the Saviour, too.

If the Foundations Be Destroyed

Text: Psalm 11:3

- I. Men have given their lives to lay the foundation.
 - A. Tell how the apostles died.
 - B. Walk through church history telling the story of the martyrs.
- II. You and I are to strengthen that foundation:
 - A. By winning bus families to Christ.
 - B. By teaching them to observe all things that we have been commanded.

What to Preach

- III. We must be committed to this task.
 - A. Set goals for your bus.
 - B. Pray thirty minutes each week just for your bus route.

How to Have a Successful Bus Route

Text: Psalm 11:3

- I. Care more than others think is wise.
- II. Risk more than others think is safe.
- III. Dream more than others think is practical.
- IV. Expect more than others think is possible.

Staying Productive Through Life's Problems

Text: Ecclesiastes 2:20-24

- I. Those who accomplish great things for God must often go against the grain.
 - A. Worldly philosophy
 - B. The flesh
- II. Opposition can be your closest friend or your worst enemy.
 - A. It can cause you to go one of two ways.
 - B. It can enable you to soar high or it can bury you.

Jump Starting Your Bus Ministry

- III. What to do when opposition comes:
 - A. Do nothing immediately.
(Let the dust settle.)
 - B. Size up your opposition.
 - C. Make a list of principles that apply to your problem.
 - D. Act only upon those principles.

What the Bus Ministry Accomplishes

Text: Psalm 103:1,2

- I. The peace and satisfaction of keeping some poor soul out of Hell - Psalm 126:5,6
- II. It strengthens the love relationship between God and ourselves. - John 14:21
- III. It fortifies our faith. - I Thessalonians 5:21
- IV. It ensures eternal glory. - Daniel 12:3

No One Cared for My Soul

Text: Psalm 142:4

- I. A perplexing thought - "If we don't notice, who will?"

What to Preach

- II. A saddening thought - "If we don't care, who will?"
- III. A convicting thought - "If we don't go, who will?"

Is There Not a Cause?

Text: I Samuel 17:29

- I. A cause to pray - *"Ask, and it shall be given you; . . ."* (Matthew 7:7)
- II. A cause to weep - (Psalm 126:5,6)
- III. A cause to give - *"Cast thy bread upon the waters: . . ."* (Ecclesiastes 11:1)
- IV. A cause to go - *" . . . save that which was lost."* (Matthew 18:11)

The Making of Fishermen

Text: Matthew 4:19

- I. *"Follow me . . ."* - We learn to win souls by going.
- II. *" . . . I will make you . . ."* - Soulwinners are not born; they are made.
- III. *" . . . fishers of men."* - The worth of a soul

Jump Starting Your Bus Ministry

Chained to the Dead

Text: Romans 7:24

Roman soldiers would sometimes torture a criminal by chaining him face-to-face with a dead body and then let that dead body rot and kill the living person.

- I. Our bus routes are filled with people who are chained to sinful flesh.
- II. The sins of the flesh are destroying them.
- III. Their only hope to be freed is Jesus.

Hell

Text: Luke 16:19-31

- I. Hell is a place of torment.
- II. Hell is a place of loneliness.
- III. Hell is a place of consciousness.
- IV. Hell's only escape is faith in Christ.

Why Serve the Lord?

Text: John 9:4

- I. It is profitable - (Matthew 16:26,27)
- II. It is not in vain - (I Corinthians 15:58)
- III. It is honorable - (I Corinthians 16:10;
Philippians 2:29,30)
- IV. It glorifies God - (John 17:4)

As you read your Bible look for self-made outlines. As you read the newspaper look for stories that your workers can relate to and build a sermon around that story. If you only preach for fifteen or twenty minutes, which I recommend, you are going to have to get their hearts quickly.

Concentrate on having only one thought per sermon. If you have multiple thoughts you may teach them a lot of good things, but it will be harder to focus them on the main thing, and that is filling up those buses.

Follow the acrostic K.I.S.S. when preparing your bus sermon:

K Keep
I It
S Simple
S Stupid

It is not the time to impress them with your vast Bible knowledge. You want to motivate them to hit the streets.

Jump Starting Your Bus Ministry

Always follow an outline. If there is anywhere on earth that you do not want to chase rabbits, it is in the bus meeting. Your workers will feel as though you are wasting their time, and you probably will be. An outline will help you say a lot of good things in a short amount of time. An outline is your road map to lead you to the accomplishment of your goals.

Preaching will help your workers focus on their bus routes that day. It will bring together all of the loose ends of the bus meeting and will also let your workers see into your heart.