

Subject: Rhetorical Outline

From: Charles C Moody <ccmoody@juno.com>

Date: Tue, 6 Mar 2007 16:39:06 -0700

To: scribe@crosswire.org

Troy,

Thanks for getting this to me, even though late. While there is no time to meet that will help with your sermon deadline, I can quickly give you some feedback that may help you refine some things here at the last minute, while not requiring you to do any huge revamping of what you have.

First off, your "attempt at a sermon" definitely does NOT suck. This is what I have hoped for from you! It may *feel* fake to you, but that does not mean it is not the most effective means of communicating Jesus' teaching. It probably felt fake to Jesus to tell oversimplified stories about talents and servants, or old ladies and copper coins, or stuff about pearls and swine, but he did it because it was how people hear best.

Let me say this to you, although it sounds really strident in print (I don't mean it to be): Preaching is not about you and how comfortable you are with the format. It is about your hearers encountering God's truth. These seemingly sterile structures we learn in order to do this are designed to get us, the preachers, out of the way, so that God can speak to the listeners.

Troy, this rhetorical outline is good! In fact, to use your own sword against you here, for the sake of the kingdom we must *deny ourselves* doing things the way we *feel* works best, and instead adopt methods we know for a fact work best.

Here are a few things that jump out at me on a first reading of your outline.

1. This is a good intro. You might make it more powerful by adding to it something about our temptations toward mere personal peace and affluence.
2. Your transition to point one is solid. I can hear a *prophetic* voice in your quiet soul, brother! And who needs to hear this more than consumption-driven Americans? But add a little to the transition so we know where you are going. Transitions help the listener stay on the road you want them on. You know where you are going, but they don't. Help them out. Try adding something like this to the transition you have now (your own style of wording of course): "*But Jesus is not satisfied with such meaningless sacrifice, nor should we be. He calls us to a self-denial that is as big as his own. Holy cow! How can Jesus ask that of us? How can he ask of us such an all-consuming commitment? Here's how.*"

Then on to point one: "Jesus had a purpose in life big enough for his sacrifice."

3. Transition to point two is perfect. (Although rather than have them turn to the passage, which takes lots of time you don't have, why not just read it to them?)

4. Point two is a question, not a point. How can you phrase it to build on what you've already said? How about, "So our self-denial passage, along with the one I just read helps us see my second point. Remember the first one was that Jesus had a purpose in life big enough for his sacrifice. This second one is about us and our purpose in life. It just may be that *we don't have the sacrificial heart of Christ because we don't really have the love of Christ.*"

5. The Core Proposition (CP) is accurate, but it doesn't help me know what I need to do. It may be better used as a tag line, or an informal CP or some such. Perhaps a CP like "Jesus calls me to sacrifice, but for a eternal purpose." Or perhaps, "Only God's *heavenly* purpose can inspire me to sacrifice my *earthly* comforts." (I can hear in my head E. V. Hill shouting this from his pulpit.)

6. Transition to application is great. Me, I would restate this about two more times in different words so that the question becomes like a toothache to hear for which the hearer needs relief.

7. Your applications are dynamite. You might want to mention how *agape* means being able to DO love TO our neighbor even if we don't FEEL love FOR our neighbor (sort of like *doing* sermons a certain way even if it doesn't *feel* natural. Sorry--couldn;t help myself.)

8. Your conclusion is a solid concept, well stated. But to bring it all home, is there a way to reprise within it some of the questions you ask in the introduction? You know, as a way of showing how Jesus answers some of those questions.

Man, this will preach. Flesh out the bare spots, adapt the above ideas if it makes sense to do so, and take this rhetorical outline into the pulpit and just plain READ IT if you must. (No, I am not kidding. *You* need notes this structured for you to succeed in being a good preacher/teacher.) It will stand as solidly as any sermon in class, better than some. You have a real connection with lost people and the compassion of Christ for them, and it shows in your demeanor and your material.

The only thing that sucks in this sermon is that I have to dock points for being late.

So make me proud tomorrow, Troy. This message spoke to me on paper. Now let the Spirit speak through you through the foolishness, no wait, the fakey-ness, of preaching. (1 Co. 1.21-24).

Baaaaa,

Chip

PS: All typos in this email are due to haste plus post-operative pharmaceuticals I'm still taking. Your patience is appreciated.

Dear Dr. Moody,

I am sorry to hear that you were not feeling well last week. I hope things have changed for the better by now.

Attached is my [attempt at a sermon](#) for Luke 9:22-27. It sucks. It feels so fake to do this. I realize you offered to help me, and I know this is such a late date. I understand if you do not have time before Wednesday. You have given me every opportunity to take earlier advantage of your help.

Per your advice, I did do a word study on 'deny' $\alpha\rho\alpha\gamma\epsilon\iota\sigma\alpha\iota$ (Mat 16:24; Luke is the synoptic exception in the NU, but the TR has all 3 using