

MEN'S TRAINING CAMP 2021

Blowing Rock, NC

June 11-13

The Bedrock of a Solid Sermonette - The Mind of God or the Mind of "Me"?

In Mathew 12:34, Christ said, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks". Yet, we're reminded by Jeremiah that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..." (Jer 17:9). This leaves us in a bit of a conundrum when we're asked to stand up in front of our brethren and give them something profitable to think about. How can we give a profitable, educational, and even inspiring message to our brethren, and have confidence that what we're saying is pleasing to God?

The answer is simple. In fact, the answer is a question.

Is what we are saying the mind of God or the "mind of me"?

As the weight of the impending sermonette begins to bear on us, the struggle to come up with a sermonette topic will prompt us to start collecting ideas. We might hear something said in conversation, or on the radio or TV that will prompt us to have a profound thought (at least it might seem profound at the time!). We finally breathe a sigh of relief that we've found something to speak about...except that we've just created two problems.

First, since we know the heart is desperately wicked, and that we speak (and think) from the abundance of our heart, how do we know that our precious new idea is something that really should be part of the teaching coming from the pulpit of God's church?

Second, the idea, "about" which we'd like to speak, is still nebulous and hazy. That's why we used the phrase "speak about". Any time or Specific Purpose Statement includes the phrase "speak about", we don't know what we're talking about. Literally. We may talk "about" many different things, but we'll be beating "about" the bush, going "about" in circles, and may be "about" to finish any time we finally finish talking "about" whatever it is we wanted to talk "about".

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So, what's the solution?

Should we stop thinking "about" sermonette ideas?

Not at all!

In fact, many times our idea is an excellent thought, worthy of sharing with our brethren. The challenge for us is to ensure that it is not just "our thought", but that it is God's thought also. The goal is to ensure that we're not just speaking out of the abundance of our heart, but out of the abundance of God's Word. God's Word is good. God's Word is powerful, and it cuts right to the core of the problems of humanity, the problems of nations, and problems of our neighborhoods. In Hebrews 4:12, it is described as sharp, dividing even soul and spirit. In other words, God's Word is "The Source" for understanding human nature. It also explains human history, and it explains true reality.

When we have an idea, the first stop we should make in our sermonette preparation is our Bible. Does God's Word say what we were thinking? Use a concordance if necessary and find a scripture that says what we were thinking. That thought may be expressed with more clarity and impact than the way we might have said it. And the thought is often accompanied by an example of how the principle played out in real life. Our next challenge is then to find two or three other scriptures that illustrate or shed more light on the verse or passage that we have discovered. If we can bring an interesting introduction to the sermonette, and a clarifying conclusion, we've provided the congregation with a nugget of understanding that is worthy of the pulpit of God's church. We've also narrowed down our SPS, focusing on explaining the scripture that we've discovered.

As you prepare for your next sermonette, meditate on what ideas and understanding would be useful and profitable to your brethren. Provide "seed" for that meditation from the reading of the Bible. **Use the precious time that is given for the sermonette to explain the scriptures - not support our own ideas.**

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And finally, take the time to see if and how God's Word says what we are thinking. If we do, we can have confidence that we are not "leaning on our own understanding". The abundance of our heart will be filled and guided by the understanding that comes from God. (Colosions 1:9)