

THE ACT OF DIALOGICAL PREACHING

BY
DAN WHITE JR.

THE CONVERGENCE OF CONVERSATION &
PROCLAMATION IN PUBLIC SPACE

"Well-crafted words are powerful and can overwhelm us, but only heart-searing questions can unravel us." ~ Soren Kirkigaard

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AUTHOR, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AIMS



Author /// Dan White Jr.

Dan has been a pastor and planter in rural, urban, and suburban churches for the last 20+ years. He is now a full-time consultant and coach with the V3 Movement, V3 has coached 250 faith communities in the last 7 years. Dan co-founded The Praxis Gathering (Philadelphia), a conference devoted to the renewal and re-imagination of the Church. Dan has written three books *Love Over Fear* (Moody 2019), *Church as Movement* (InterVarsity 2017) and *Subterranean* (Cascade 2015). Dan is married to Tonya (22 yrs), dad to Daniel and Ari, and can be found enjoying conversations at his local coffee shop.

Acknowledgements

There is so little that originates completely from our own work. I find myself standing on the shoulders of others that built a foundation for me. I'd like to thank Dr. Snyder (the Rabbi), who first exposed me to Jesus Rabbinic Style over 20 years ago. I'd also like to thank Rev. Charles Ware who taught me "call and response" within the Black Church experience. I am also indebted to Axiom Church over the last 10 years that gave me space to experiment with conversation in preaching..



Aims

This is a resource to help local churches practically reconstruct a more conversational approach to preaching. In no way is this a theological or historical academic work. This short eBook is an attempt to record my discoveries, pass them on to those who care about dialogue in community for the sake of mission.



INFECTED WITH SPECTATORITIS

The Sit-Watch-Listen Format

In 1932 Jay Nash invented the word spectatoritis. In his book by the same title he warned that America was becoming a nation of onlookers: "The average person turns out to be a spectator, a watcher of somebody else, merely because that is the easiest thing to do..."[1] But unlike those inflammatory-itis conditions like conjunctivitis or appendicitis that ache and throb, sermon-spectatoritis leaves its victims pain free, even feeling comfortable.

Decades ago, a few church leaders began using the term spectatoritis to call attention to the sit-watch-listen format of most Sunday morning sermons. Even if there is an occasional "amen" or "preach it" shouted out from the pews, spectatoritis has seeped into many areas of our church life. To be a spectator allows us to assemble in a room with others while keeping our individualism unchallenged. Is there another way? Sermons, in too many contexts have become yet another thing to be passively consumed, as opposed to actively participated in.

Consumer Habits

Part of the felt reality is that we inhabit a consumeristic culture. So much of our weekly rhythms shape us for furiously eating information, even spiritual information. Americans consume 100,000 words of information each week, this is the equivalent of two books via snacking on social media, blogs, cable news, memes, etc.[2] Additionally it has become fully acceptable to separate our consumptive habits from any deeper introspection. It's OK to completely and ravenously consume. Begin to ponder how this impacts the way people listen to sermons. It provides a perfect setup to be "hearers" and not "doers". This spectator approach unintentionally perpetuates hypocrisy. We can be proclaimed experts without any interactive process of dialogue, reflection, and application. The technical term for this is called Expert-Delusion.

Sermons in many contexts has become yet another thing to be passively consumed, as opposed to actively participated in.

[1] Blouin RA, Riffie WH, Robinson ET, et al. Roles of innovation in education delivery. Am J Pharm Educ. 2009;73(8) Article 154.

[2] American Information Consumption. <https://www.zdnet.com/article/americans-consume-100000-words-of-information-each-day-study-says/>

Peter Senge in his book *The Fifth Discipline* unpacks our fixation on becoming informed experts -- "Being an expert gives us power and prosperity over our peers." [3] We secure a sort of social strength over others as more intelligence is acquired from the fire hose of information we consume. This is creating a phenomenon called expert-delusion. We feel like experts because of what we've consumed. The spectator approach to information-intake always has a victim; one of those victims is self-awareness. [4] When information consumption happens in these ways we become convinced we are who we imagine we are. Spectator learning reinforces the delusional self.

A few years back my wife and I had launched into our first back yard garden. I was a rookie in the domain of soil and seed. I was attending a friends party and while in a conversation shared with a guest about the agricultural craziness we were attempting. The well-meaning gentleman began to unload his expertise about what to do and what not to do. He passionately lectured me on how to garden. Suddenly his wife walked up with a smirk on her face and said "honey, are you preaching about gardening again?" I eventually found out that he didn't have a garden at all but had an ongoing subscription to *Fine Gardening Magazine* that he veraciously read. I am not anti information but the way we ingest information has subtle but serious consequences on our lack of development and depth of character. I contend that our modern approach to preaching, the monologue sermon, has this same affect on ordinary Christians.

Asymptomatic Information Carriers

The field of Neuroscience has gathered some interesting research related to the consumption of information. Brain imaging techniques have revealed that a specific area of the brain "lights up" when new information arrives, according to cognitive neuroscientist Mark Jung-Beeman of Northwestern University. [5] Our pleasure sensors feel a surge of satisfaction not too unlike sexual arousal. We can become hooked on devouring spiritual or theological information. Addiction may be a strong word, but there is dependence created in the one-way transfer of information. I can't tell you how many times I've listened to a sermon, took furious notes, walked away feeling wowed by the communicator, never to assimilate what I heard into practice. The gap between information-consumption and interactive-introspection is wide and has debilitating consequences on discipleship.

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We don't often see the need to evaluate our information delivery though sermons because we believe the message is so good, so true. Yet, our weekly methods are generating legions of people stuffed to the gills with information that are ironically not much affected by the information they carry. In the world of viruses this is called an asymptomatic carrier. An asymptomatic carrier is one who carries an infectious disease but displays no symptoms and is unaffected by the disease themselves. [6] We have become asymptomatic information carriers unaffected by the sermons we gobble up. The late Dallas Willard has bluntly called this having "fat heads with skinny bodies". We need to inspect how we preach if we really care about transformation.

[3] Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of Learning*. New York: Random House, 1999.

[4] White, Dan Jr. *Subterranean: Why the Future of the Church is Rootedness*. Portland, OR: Cascade Pub, 2014.

[5] Northwestern School of Medicine. "Cognitive Neuroscientists Reveal Creative Brain Processes." (April 26, 2004). www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/News_Center, 2004

[6] Medical Dictionary. "Asymptomatic Carrier." Medical Dictionary, 2001. www.medicaldictionary.thefreedictionary.com/asymptomatic+carrier.



HOW THE DIVINE TALKS

God Likes to Ask Questions

There is a lot of sociological research available on why dialogue is more fruitful than pure monologue (we'll get to that in a bit). But ultimately, we have lost sight of Jesus' Rabbinic teaching methods. Many of Jesus' teaching techniques were a form of Jewish Midrash. Jewish Midrash is a search for truth through story-telling and dialogue. It is a creative exegesis that includes the holy text, parables, and questions in an attempt to discover the various meanings hiding among us. It is estimated that a vast majority of the messages we have captured in the Gospels, even the Sermon on the Mount, come by way of the method of Midrash. What we call Jesus' Sermon on the Mount only came to be named "a sermon" until hundreds of years later.

This technique is controversial today since it is viewed as subjective. The Age of Enlightenment has formed our taste buds against Midrash, which is birthed in middle eastern culture. The Enlightenment was a philosophical movement that dominated the world in Europe during the 18th century and has highly influenced our framework for communication. The Enlightenment placed values on efficiency, calculability, logic, and control-ability. This has influenced our resolute passion for monologue. But rabbinical schools of teaching value the process more than the outcome, they value interaction, not just ingestion.

Rabbinical schools of teaching value the process more than the outcome. Rabbis desired interaction, not just ingestion.

Performative vs. Interactive

Jesus was a Rabbi. We naturally project our Enlightenment lens onto Jesus' teaching style and turn him into a platform orator who could hold thousands of people's attention with his hour-long sermons. Instead, Jesus used many rabbinic teaching methods that were less performative and more interactive and disruptive. Honestly, I would have been frustrated with Jesus' preaching style just as the disciples were at times.

In Mark 4:10–20 it says, “When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about why he spoke in parables. He told them, “The secret of the kingdom has been given to you. But everything is said in parables to those on the outside...” I’d probably have been with the disciples on this one. “Jesus, why are you doing this? You’re telling stories but nobody is getting your point.” The disciples are frustrated by his subjective methods. Why not just make it plain-speak? It has always puzzled me. Why does Jesus seemingly indicate he doesn’t want to be clear?

Jesus’ teaching methods were a kind of “curiosity creating event” — tucking the treasure beneath the surface, out of the reach of those who are focused on knowledge, not transformation. Some people will listen, and it sparks questions.[7] If Jesus told it straight, with no conversation, there is no exploration required. The subterranean meaning of the Kingdom of God is found through the gateway of being inquisitive. Could this be where it starts? Those who engage Jesus for further explanation are the ones to whom the deeper meaning is revealed.

The Curious God

Jesus, all-knowing God, Creator of the cosmos, who has numbered every hair on our heads—asks questions, lots of them. More questions proceed from Jesus mouth than answers. Jesus asks 307 questions to be exact.[8] Asking questions was central to Jesus ministry both in public and in private. It should unsettle us that a God who knows everything uses questions as His main mode of being present with others. Jesus consistently used questions to open new possibilities. Jesus was not just looking for the swapping of information; He was seeking to disrupt our un-thought ways.

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Our society doesn’t like questions because we are into control—questions are not safe. Watch cable news for a few minutes, and you see pundits shouting down each other, talking over one another, arguing point for point. Our culture has heat-seeking missiles for the mic-drop. It is seen as a sign of strength. Jesus seems to lack any agenda of gaining control in conversation. He’s genuinely okay asking “Who do people say I am?” and waiting for the interesting answers. Ask a question in a sermon, and you have no idea what kind of answer you might get. Jesus doesn’t need to prove He is right, to be right. Curiosity gives away a portion of power to another. This assumes the work of humility in a preacher,

[7] White, Dan Jr. Love Over Fear: Facing Monsters, Befriending Enemies, and Healing Our Polarized World. Chicago: Moody Pub, 2019.

[8] Packer, William. Narratives of a Vulnerable God. London, (England: John Knox, 1994) 64–66..



INTERACTIVE SPACE

Declaring and Discussing

To achieve dialogical preaching, there needs to be a fundamental conviction that the quality of interaction is important for a community's Christ-like development. There are very few exceptions where a one-way monologue was used in the ministry of Jesus. The preaching that Jesus and his followers primarily used was dialogic. It consisted of interactions between Jesus and crowds of various sizes. This sort of approach extended all the way into the Early Church gatherings.

The Word Sermon

Look through the New Testament record and you will search in vain for the word sermon (except for our paraphrased versions). Does Peter's message in Acts 2 correspond to today's Sunday monologue sermon? Hardly. He preached dialogically. He proclaimed the message of Jesus, people could ask questions and hear him answer them.

In one fantastic example of Dialogical Preaching, Paul preached all night— apparently preaching one young man to death as he fell out a window.... “Paul preached (greek word **dialegomai**) to the people and kept on talking until midnight. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul preached (**dialegomai**) on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!” Then he went upstairs again, broke bread and ate. After preaching (greek word **homileo**) until daylight, he left.” (Acts 20:7-12)

**The Apostle Paul
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The word “spoke” in verse 7 is translated from the word **dialogomai** = to ponder, to converse, dispute, discuss, to reason with, to discourse in a more conversational character, mingling thought with thought.

The word “preached” in verse 9 is translated from the **homileo** = to be in company with, to associate with, to converse with.

Both of these words tell us much about Paul’s expectation of communication among churches, that it would not be carried out primarily through a one-way monologue but through discursive dialogue with those around, developing a rounded version of understanding, rooting the truth of Jesus’s work in the lives of the Christian community.[9] Paul certainly used monologue preaching (greek word kerygma), a heralding of sorts. But the few times he does this it is in the public square outside, not among the gathered Christian Community. In the Corinthian Church, for example, Paul expects that the community should have the opportunity to share (1 Cor.14:26). Spectatoritis must have been difficult in those meetings.

Reflecting the Trinity

The early preaching in both Jesus’ ministry and in the life of the N.T. Church reflected the Triune nature of God. The members of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit are in a continuous and love-giving dialogue with each other. Peter Holmes in his book 'Trinity in Human Community' explains how understanding God as “social Trinity” translates into church life: “Having the idea of the person of the Trinity pouring their life into one another in divine harmony is extremely helpful when trying to imagine how a faith community can seek, by the way it worships, to mirror the divine nature.”[10] Now it is up to us to preserve this pattern in our gatherings here on earth, by the way we participate in preaching together.

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Dialogue in Church History

Throughout Church history we have remnants of dialogue in the Sermon. In the Quakers, a time was marked out in the midst of the gatherings called—Quaker Dialogue. Named for the Quaker traditions of equality, listening and allowing time for silence, the discussion promoted equal participation and careful listening. We then have the witness of the Black Church, the “call-and-response” pattern of the sermon creates a partnership between preacher and congregation that inspires and engages. We also have the faithfulness of the Anabaptists in the 16th century who practiced a “hermeneutic of community”. Discussion was incorporated into the preaching time as a type of “sermon evaluation” known as *zuegnis*. One of the main reasons the early Anabaptists did not attend the state churches was because they did not allow interaction and response to the preaching within the church service.

[9] Craig, Kevin, “Is the ‘Sermon’ Concept Biblical? A Study of Its Greek Origins,” [ed. Jon Zens] *Searching Together* (Spring/Summer— 1986, Vol.15:1-2) pp.22-29.

[10] Holmes, Peter. *Trinity in Human Community*. Bletchley, UK: Paternoster Press, 2006



REMEMBER & RETAIN

Respecting The Way We're Wired

In 2009 I was desperate to explore how people retained and felt responsible to the information they heard in a monological style sermon vs. dialogical style sermon. I needed a laboratory to experiment. Instead of practicing at my own church, which already had dialogical elements, I needed a cleaner palate to paint on. I convinced my friend who was a Pastor at a local church to allow me to use his congregation as a laboratory.

A Case Study

His church had three services on Sunday morning. The experiment went like this. I would preach a sermon at the 9am first Service on 'caring for the poor' from the book of Matthew using a monological approach. I exegeted the text. I preached hard and fiery. I told a tear-jerker story. I proclaimed the Gospel. While the service was underway, we strategically placed two actors, who posed as homeless folks, on the sidewalk. They were positioned on the ground laying between his building's sanctuary and the parking lot. In the distance, we placed staff with clickers who would record every time someone stopped and interacted with the faux homeless folks. As people let out after my sermon, one person, I repeat one person stopped to engage the homeless folks.

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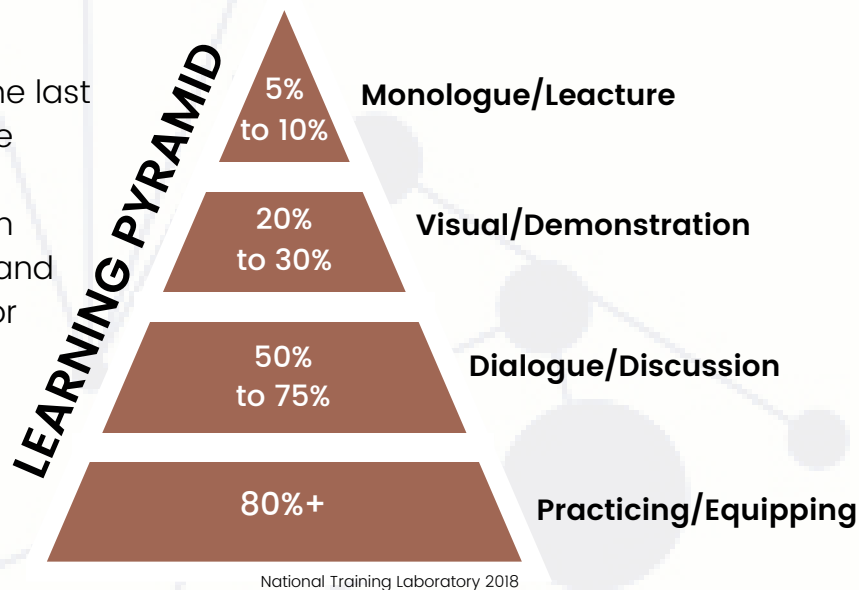
For the 11am service I preached the exact same message but this time included dialogical elements (which I will detail later). As you can guess, the response was radically different. We counted 46 people (about 30%) of those that attended that service that offered some kind of connection to these homeless folks. Certainly this is an anecdotal study but I think it offers us hints about kinesthetic learning – it feels tangible, it gets into us. Could it be that dialogical preaching opens up something for the Spirit to inhabit? Maybe our minds and bodies are more available to change when some level of interaction occurs.

How We Remember

Modern computers encode memory as bits of random digital information that are accessible upon pushing a button or clicking a mouse. But humans remember by way of relational connections. When we experience an event, our brains tie the sights, smells, sounds, and sensations together into a tangled relationship. The relationship of those things become the memory. Whether we 'remember and retain' something has a lot to do with how we learned it to begin with. Communication that includes dialogue exponentially increases the spark of our neurotransmitters that stimulate bodily reactions.

At the most basic level, we remember because neurons in our brains have permanently formed a new pathway. This is significant. We remember something because there has been a real physiological change.[11] When we experience a diatribe vs. a dialogue our body's chemistry is impacted in drastically different ways. This is more than science, it is the way God has wired us. Fundamentally, 'remembering' represents a change in who we are and reflects a change in who we are becoming. Remembering and retaining should be a high commitment for the act of preaching.

Most would agree that the church is one of the last places around to still be using the monologue (lecture-style) as its primary mode of communication. Folks in education have been experimenting with different forms for years, and have moved past the "talking head" format for quite a while now. The "learning pyramid", sometimes referred to as the "cone of learning", developed by the National Training Laboratory, suggests that most people only remember about 5% to 10% of from a lecture or monologue and the retention rate plummets down to 1% when tested a week later.[12] But nearly 50% to 75% is retained if dialogue is included simultaneously.



North American and European studies have produced similar results: somewhere between 75% and 90% of those interviewed directly after a worship service could not say what the main point of the sermon was or what issue it was addressing.[13] We need to take the work of 'remembering' seriously

Even the best of us will tune in and out while listening to a monological message. But, when someone asks us a question – even if we don't speak our answer out loud – there is a level of saturation that goes deeper than listening to a lecture. Is retention important to us?

[11] Ranpura, Ashish. <https://brainconnection.brainhq.com/2013/03/12/how-we-remember-and-why-we-forget/>

[12] Neil A. Bradbury. Retention of Lectures. American Physiological Society <https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00109.2016>, 12 July 2016

[13] Thomson, Jeremy. Preaching as Dialogue: Is the Sermon a Sacred Cow? London: Grove Books, 1996.

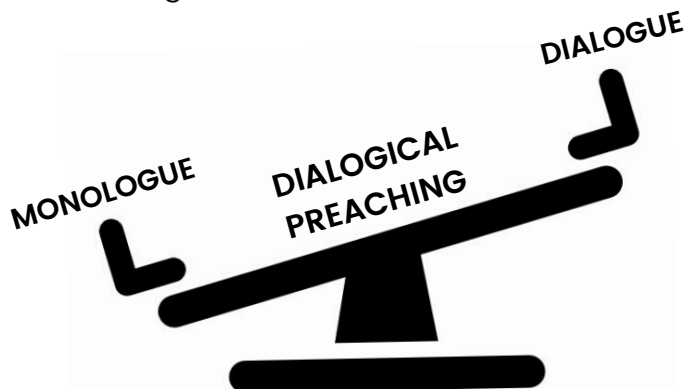
MYTHS & MISNOMERS

Both/And In An Either/Or World

We are given false choices all the time, in which something is forcefully claimed to be an “either/or” situation, when in fact there is another, more creative option. Certainly, seeing the world through only two choices is convenient and makes life easier. But life is more of a spectrum of possible alternatives rather than an option between two extremes. The very nature of Christ Himself is beyond either/or. God is a paradox. Is Jesus of Nazareth human or divine? He’s both. To discern Dialogical Preaching we should not be locked inside an either/or cage, This tends to happen when we categorize either extreme – “if you’re for dialogue, you have no respect for declaring truth.” or “if you’re for preaching, you have no respect for community.” This type of speech offers us no room for the spectrum of possibilities.

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Dialogical Preaching is not all dialogue, nor is it all monologue, it is both, This is truer to the way preaching was understood and actualized in the life of the early church, it was a both/and. Dialogical Preaching sits on the spectrum, or the seesaw if you will, between Monologue and Dialogue.



It's Gotta Be Chaos, Right?

Most trained preachers would feel like any interruption to the pre-planned message is a faux pas—akin to having your cell phone go off in a crowded theater during a movie.[14] This is how many subconsciously feel about dialogue during a sermon. Some would contend that introducing dialogue into the sermon could create a subjective atmosphere—one that fosters "truth by democracy".[15] Are these concerns valid? We've all sat in on a small group where ignorance was being passed around the room. That is not Dialogical Preaching.

The argument that Dialogical Preaching is bad for theological formation is like believing that driving cars is bad for people because sometimes they get in accidents. Driving can be dangerous but we must learn how to drive so that it is not. Dialogical Preaching can be precarious if you are unprepared and do not prepare your congregation for the experience. (I suggest creating a one-page framework document of the 4 Moves to help orient people) Just as conventional monological preaching requires skill, so does preaching with dialogue. As with any art form it takes practice to make it feel dependable and meaningful.

Be prepared for mornings where it falls flat. Over the last 10 years I've had at least 10 doozies that I'd like to take back. Still, I have found the environment of Dialogical Preaching to be rich with the Spirit and often devoid of chaos.

What About Small Groups?

There could be some that potentially argue that churches have already created settings for dialogue within small groups in their churches as they walk through discussion questions. While this is true, it should be noted that there seems to be a chasm between the time a message is heard and when engagement occurs. Our small group environments are rarely done during, or immediately after a message, but done most often at another time and setting. It still reinforces spectatoritis or the "sage on a stage" approach to preaching. All of the examples of Dialogical Preaching in the New Testament record occur within the moment, which provides a unique phenomenon for the Spirit to inhabit and for our neurons to experience a memory.

**Authority in the sermon
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The Role of the Preacher

Authority in the sermon is located in the Spirit, the Community, and the text of Scripture. The sermon belongs to the people who serve as priests under the High Priest, Jesus Christ.[16] The place of the preacher is not as the authoritative orator but as a guide, counselor, illuminator. The spotlight is no longer on the preachers communication skills or dynamic personality. The spotlight is on the people, the process, and the potential for breakthroughs. OK, let's get going!

[14] Peabody, Larry. Curing Sunday Spectatoritis: From Passivity to Participation in Church. Skyforest, CA: Urban Loft Publishers, 2016)

[15] Thompson, William D. and Gordon C. Bennett. Dialogue Preaching: The Shared Sermon. Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1969

[16] Norrington, David C. To Preach or Not to Preach? (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1996).

FOUR

DIALOGICAL MOVES



Tools and Tactics

There are various ways to employ dialogue in preaching, this is one way. For more ideas, I suggest the helpful book *Curing Sunday Spectatoritis* by Larry Peabody.

I've practiced Dialogical Preaching in groups of 30 all the way up to audiences of 500. I've practiced this numerous times in digital space as well. It is scalable. Obviously, in completely new settings the congregation feels this as unusual and unfamiliar. Most everything feels this way the first time we attempt it. I've found that it takes 4 to 5 times to reshape a gathering of people for dialogical preaching, so that it feels right in a particular culture. From my years as a classic preacher I know it is much easier to do all the communication myself than to shape an environment in which participants can share publicly. I also know that my ego enjoys monologue more than dialogue. There is a learning curve for that inner issue as well.

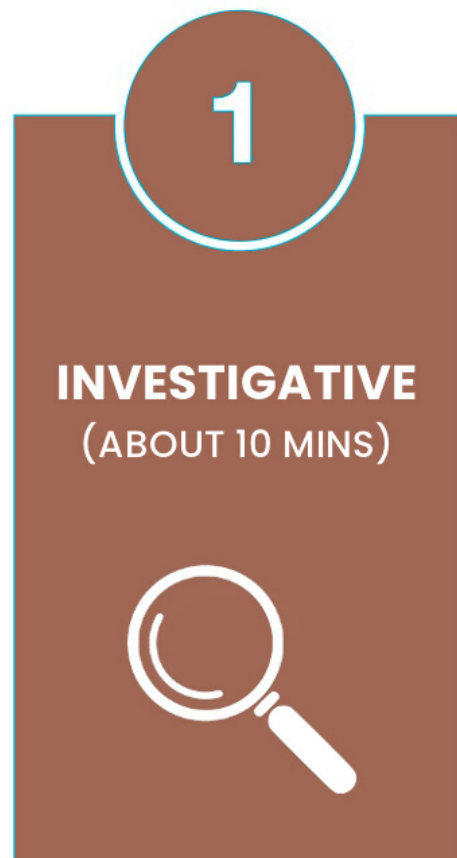


INVESTIGATIVE

Dialogical preaching values investigating the truths of God with confidence. So, in this segment, the preacher speaks and investigates a passage, without interruption, for 10 mins. The text is explained in its historical and sociological context. The preacher is setting up the main point, or the potent possibilities without giving any easy answers. Create a bit of tension around the story that God is telling. Near the end of this segment it is wise to connect God's story to your story, with honesty, appropriate vulnerability, and with relatability.

Occasionally at this point, I've asked someone from our church to take this 'story-piece' if it fits. I'm always thinking of how to bring the larger stories within our Christian community into the orbit of the sermon. I don't set this up with fanfare, I just organically say "Lisa, can you share your story related to this passage?". This helps people see how their stories overlap with the story God is writing in the world. This moment of contact with your story is really important because the dialogue that will follow should start from the place of personal reflection rather than theological pontification. Essentially, in this instructive move you are bringing together two things, God's Story and Your Story.

- Uninterrupted exposition
- Grounded in a personal story
- Creating a point of tension
- Preacher is standing
- Don't ask rhetorical questions
- Do not use the white board yet



HELPFUL HINTS

Wait Time (Silence - 3 MINS)

This is best placed immediately after the investigative move. This is an offering of silence to slow down our impulses, to sit with God, our thoughts, and seek a more careful response. For some, this is uncomfortable but it will become a normal part of the rhythm if you stick to it. For some it may be the only time they sit in silent reflection the whole week without looking at their smartphone. This also helps level the playing field for different types of thinkers. After silence there will be a bit of time to share what comes to the surface for us. Leave them with 2 questions to ponder in this silence (put them on whiteboard or screen):

- Where is there some conflict for you in this passage (what is the Spirit disrupting?)
- Where is there some clarity for you in this passage? (what is the Spirit confirming?)

EXPRESSIVE

Dialogical preaching includes not only the declarative but the discursive. In this move, the audience is invited to respond to the two questions given during the wait time. Every time you enter into this expressive time it is important to repeat (no matter how awkward it feels) the boundaries for expressing personal reflections. This is what I say – “Now we will have a short time to share what God’s spirit may be sparking among us. Please do not share longer than a full minute. This gives room for others. Please remember we each are different humans with different opinions. It’s okay to hear something you don’t agree with. This is a space for us to be nourished by what God’s spirit is doing in each other.”



2

EXPRESSIVE
(ABOUT 10 MINS)



HELPFUL HINTS

Dialogue Dynamics

Redirection/Shifts

At this point sit down on a stool. A shift in body language is important. Make good eye contact with anyone that shares. Affirm what they are saying, acknowledge how you appreciate their input. If someone starts to rant and go long, feel confident to interrupt and reflect back to them what they have said “Thanks for sharing, I hear you saying X, Y, and Z. Thank you. And now who else?” This will feel awkward but it’s okay. I found that this will only happen a few times and then folks will learn the boundaries.

Whiteboard/Projection

Most often people will share meaningful things. Occasionally people will share cringe-worthy things. It’s okay. Train your leaders that this will not do damage. The only damage that can be done is if someone indicts, accuses, or corrects another person in the congregation. This makes the space unsafe. This is not a Q & A time. This is only a space to hear from each other. The hardest thing for the preacher is to refrain from giving answers or feeling defensive. If someone does ask a question say, “I really appreciate your question, let me write it on the board”. As people are sharing, I like to have a whiteboard or big sticky pads, or even an ipod that projects onto a screen – write words, truths, ideas that people share. You will see common themes assemble there.

Guests/Prompts

A common assumption about the dialogue in the Sunday meeting is a concern for visitors. Will they be afraid to speak up? Will they be put off? I have found just the opposite to be true. If anything, it is the missional edge that visitors appreciate deeply. Sometimes they are the first to comment because they have less church background and very honest, comments. On occasion there might be no one offering a response. This is unusual but come prepared with a few scripted questions or prompts to ask at that precise moment.

COLLECTIVE

I like to make a physical transition at this point to signal a shift. I stand up from the stool and say “I’d like to collect our clarities and conflicts.” Highlight what you see on the board, make ties between different people’s statements.

- What are some themes we see on the board?
- What are our feelings? What is intriguing?
- What might God’s spirit be saying?



HELPFUL HINTS

Divine Interruptions

Sometimes someone shares something really painful, really raw, deeply vulnerable. You may sense that God’s spirit wants you to explore and verbally extend wisdom, healing, compassion or empathy on the spot. I hate to use him as an example but Tony Robbins has become popular for this in the middle of his talks—Jesus does it better, Occasionally in the middle of his teaching He is interrupted – the woman who pours perfume on his feet, or when the paraplegic is lowered through the ceiling. We don’t know what Jesus was teaching on those days but we do know the good news of forgiveness and healing was spoken over both of their lives.

In my own experience, I’ve watched people break down in tears, confess sins, and share deep brokenness out of the blue. It takes emotional intelligence, tenderness, and a shepherd’s heart to know how to address this in front of a crowd. As people watch this, they are vicariously experiencing the Spirit’s work. As this interruption occurs, I walk towards the person and stand a few feet away and make direct eye contact. I then ask a compassionate and curious question – “Why is this so painful for you?”

Without giving an exhaustive speech, you can speak truth over someone in this setting “You are loved by God.” “You are not abandoned.” You are _ _ _ _ _.” What is really encouraging is when someone else in the room, stands up, and ministers to them by extending grace to them. Be prepared for this. At the same time, the public space is not the best space for this kind of deeper work but sometimes it will happen. So, follow the Spirit.

3

COLLECTIVE
(ABOUT 10 MINS)



DECLARATIVE

This is where you have to proclaim the Good News of the in-breaking Kingdom—using material prepared beforehand while also making a couple connections to what was already shared publicly. There is a sense that you're pulling together both what God has revealed to you and some of what has been revealed in the sharing. This is where the material that you've prayed over, studied, and prepared comes to light. You will find most often that someone already poked at the Good News earlier, saying something fairly similar but with different words. Proclaim God's Story over lives and invite people into it.



HELPFUL HINTS

Inviting Response

Create space for a bodily response. Such a response should be here and now, after the hearing, that requires – a commitment to obedience, a confession of sin, an affirmation of God's truth, a profound act of gratitude, a reconciliation with another.

This breaks open space for response amidst the community.
This can happen through:

- Gathering Around the Communion Table
- By receiving prayer from someone
- By writing down a step you want to take, placing it in a jar at the front.

4

DECLARATIVE
(ABOUT 10 MINS)



..... THE END

COACHING



The deeper work of discipleship and development is what brings Dan his greatest joys. He has coached over 400 church planters and ministry leaders in the last 10 years. He uses an original Meta (mind), Reflective (soul), Experiential (body) method in coaching to create a holistic transformational pathway. Where are you seeking growth? Where are you searching for transformation?

danwhitejr.com/coaching

CONTENT



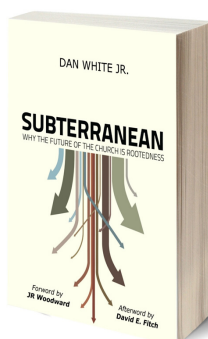
LOVE OVER FEAR:

Facing Monsters, Befriending Enemies, and Healing Our Polarized World
(Moody Publishing 2019)



THE CHURCH AS MOVEMENT:

Starting and Sustaining Missional-Incarnational Communities
(InterVarsity Press 2017)



SUBTERRANEAN:

Why the Future of the Church is Rootedness
(Cascade 2015)