

Breakout Session Description

In the book, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art*, Henry Mitchell writes about “personal style in black preaching” and the black context in which it takes place. This breakout session explores these chapters and addresses the use of mannerisms, tone, rhythm, call and response, and other styles relative to many (but not all) African American preachers. Additionally, attention will be given to examining aspects of sermon delivery that Akin, Curtis and Rummage address in their book *Engaging Exposition*. Exploring these dynamic features will be examined for the purpose of highlighting the rich variety and commonality that exist within the community of preachers.

**Mannerisms**

**PART I**

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- **Mannerisms add interest**

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**Tone**

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- Moaning
  - Whooping

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**Rhythm**

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- The use of rhythm in preaching is closely associated with the stereotypical use of intonation by Black preachers.
    - Lengthy intonation

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**Call, Response & Repetition**

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- Many preachers who pause momentarily to breathe or for other reasons receive a response from the audience.

## The Use of Role Playing and Storytelling

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## The Use of Slow Delivery

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## The Black Context for Preaching

## PART II

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- Of great significance to the character of Black preaching is the setting in which Black preaching takes place.
  - The Black style, which includes the call and response, is part of a larger dialogical pattern traceable to West African culture.
  - The response requires a participating audience, and Black preaching has had such an audience from its beginning.
  - The uniqueness of Black preaching depends significantly upon the uniqueness of the Black congregation, which talks back to the preacher as a normal part of the pattern of worship.

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## Black Dialogue: A Description

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- Black dialogue between congregation and preacher consists of the well-known cries:
  - “Amen!”
  - “Praise the Lord!”
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  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

- There are hundreds of other spontaneous audible responses. It also includes:
  - Facial expressions
  - Swaying bodies
  - Nodding heads
  - Raised hands
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Whatever the form, ***the communication is real.***
  
- Black dialogue may even include coaching. Examples include:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Indeed, there will be disappointment and even criticism if the preacher fails to let the hearers have their part. The words truly and surely have the same value and role.
  - For example: If one quotes the 23rd Psalm in the celebration, saying “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,” one does well to leave a pause after “Surely.”
- There is a strong correlation between real dialogue and the spiritual depth at which the sermon is pitched.
  - There is a difference between ***an Amen from the heart***, which registers the considered approval of the worshiper, and the automatic, non-thinking response, which may punctuate the sermon, no matter what the preacher says.
    - The non-thinking responder is simply, ***reacting without hearing*** assuming a customary role in the worship without bothering to know what has been said.
    - At other times, such a person wants the preacher to sound impressive and therefore is rooting for the preacher as a kind of one-person cheering squad, no matter what is said.
  - Real dialogue, on the other hand, is more ***easily discernable.***

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### Dialogue and Felt Need

- Black preaching ***at its best*** has remained focused on problems that people confront daily and feel real needs in meeting. People who are oppressed are often preoccupied with problems. The Black preacher has had to give strength for the current day’s journey, the guidance and vision for extended survival in an absurdly trying existence.

- What the Black audience requires for the dialogue is both gut-survival themes and nourishing certainty. This is what they live by.
- The dialogue is lively when ***needs are met*** and the concepts used are within reach of the hearers.

## Engaging Exposition

### Methods of Sermon Delivery

### PART III

- Four major methods are available for delivering a sermon.

- *Impromptu Delivery*

- *Memorized Delivery*

- Using this method, the preacher commits a word-for-word manuscript to memory and then recites the sermon in the pulpit.
- Memorization and recitation has been used by a number of very successful preachers in the past; however, this method ***is not advisable*** for most preachers.
- The obvious danger with memorization is that you are likely to forget what you have memorized.

- *Delivery from a Manuscript or Full Notes*

- This method involves writing a manuscript or extensive notes, and then reading the manuscript or notes expressively from the pulpit.
- Using full notes or a manuscript provides you ***close control and planning of the words you will say during the message.***
- For every preacher who can read a sermon well, \_\_\_\_\_

- *Extemporaneous Delivery*

- While extemporaneous can be a synonym for impromptu, in the jargon of preaching and public speaking, extemporaneous speech refers to delivery in which the basic flow, structure, and content of the message are carefully planned, while the precise wording of the message is composed during the delivery of the speech itself.

## Choosing Your System

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- Which is best—preaching with lots of notes, with a few notes, or with no notes at all?
  - Since we can rule out impromptu preaching or memorization, we are left with two live options: using full notes and preaching extemporaneously.
  - Based on the advantages we have discussed earlier, we advocate ***extemporaneous delivery*** as the best method to use for most.

## Style Can Make a Difference

## PART IV

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### Elements of Effective Style

- In *Communication in Pulpit and Parish*, Merrill Abbey describes the six qualities that work together to form a desirable communication style. They are:

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- By examining each of these qualities, we can gain a fuller understanding of what an effective preaching style includes.

### Purity

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Preachers should aim for language that conforms to the basics of proper grammar. When we fail to speak properly, many in our audience will question our education . . .”

### Precision

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- Our preaching style should demonstrate ***detail and accuracy*** so that the words we are using are communicating exactly what we intend our listeners to hear and understand.

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- Precise language ***engages the imagination***.
- Precision also requires ***getting our facts straight***.
- With search engines, Bible software programs, and other research tools at our disposal, there is no reason for preachers not to find ***the precise details and to get them right***.
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### Clarity

Speaking with clarity involves "speaking in such a way that no reader or hearer can misunderstand."

## Energy

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- Effective preachers learn to *speak with force*.
  - Forcefulness does not simply mean speaking loudly or being dictatorial in the pulpit.
  - Instead, it means using personal, direct, and sensible language to communicate with your listeners.
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## Beauty

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- Beauty is the element of style that makes the message *pleasing to the ear*.
  - Figurative language can be a powerful tool to *enhance the beauty* and artfulness of your sermon.
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## Naturalness

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- A natural preaching style is one that sounds like normal speech rather than sounding stiff, contrived, or artificial.
  - Although there is a performance aspect to preaching, delivering a sermon is not a mere performance, and the preacher is not playing a part.
  - Instead, what we say from the pulpit and the way we say it should *flow naturally from our personality*.
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