

BIBLE LIFE SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC LECTURE ON LITERARY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR PASTORS

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Introduction

For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle (1 Cor.14:8)

The ability to communicate using a language is one of the defining characteristics of humans which stand them out from other creatures of lower intelligence. From the scriptural point of view, it could be argued that God endowed man with the ability to communicate in order to establish a medium through which He would convey His mind to man and have the latter convey same, in exactitude, to His fellow man in a manner that the latter will understand. The increasing complexity of the modern man coupled with the heterogeneous composition of the average Pentecostal congregation makes apparent the urgency for God's man to acquire effective communication skills.

1. Conceptualizing Communication
2. A Theory of Communication in Christian Pulpit Discourse
3. Essentials of Communication in Christian Pulpit Discourse Pulpit Discourse

CONCEPTUALIZING COMMUNICATION

Conrad and Poole (1998) define communication as *the process by which people interactively create, sustain and manage meaning*. The key tenets of this view of communication are as follows:

- a. Communication is an interaction, a *dialogue*, involving people (it is not a monologue).
- b. The objective of communication is the *creation, sustenance and management* of meaning by those involved in the interaction.
- c. The *meaning* created in a communication transaction has both immediate and wider contexts, the immediate context being the geographical location of the communication, the wider context the social world created by reason of the interaction. Thus, the meaning has to be *sustained*.

Okpeh (2007) considers communication to be a process of deliberate exchange of spoken or unspoken or unspoken meaning between an encoder and a decoder using symbols of mutual interpretation to the parties involved. Central to this view of communication is the fact that:

- a. Communication is a *process*; it has stages.
- d. Communication can be either be spoken or unspoken.
- e. The *meaning* exchanged (the idea represented in the symbols used for communication) and the *symbols* used for the exchanged must be of mutual interpretation to parties involved in the communication.

The foregoing views on communication are summed up in the following variables;

- a. **The Encoder:** The Sender of the message
- b. **The Message:** The meaning intended by the encoder
- c. **The Decoder:** The Receiver of the message
- d. **The Channel:** The means by which the message is sent
- e. **Noise:** Whatever negatively affects the interpretation of the message
- f. **Feedback;** The response given by the encoder.

When all these variables are deployed into a communication transaction in such a manner that the decoder gets the exact meaning intended by the encoder, the exchange is *effective*.

A THEORY OF COMMUNICATION IN CHRISTIAN PULPIT DISCOURSE

That which we seen and heard declared we on to you (1Joh 1:3)

Within the context of Christianity we can theorize a form of communication in which meaning exchange flows along two axis: the vertical and the horizontal axis. The vertical axis is first, and serves as a means through which man is able to receive messages from God in form of revelations, dreams and intuitions and send back a response in form of prayer. Through The horizontal axis comes next and establishes a channel through which man, the man of God, is able to communicate with his fellow man the message he has received from God, and expect a feedback. In Christian theology no man qualifies to undertake the second who has not partaken in the first. The vertical must precede the horizontal.

See the diagram below:

ESSENTIALS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN CHRISTIAN PULPIT DISCOURSE

A communication exchange is said to be effective if the meaning interpreted by the decoder is the same as that intended by the encoder. For this to happen in Christian Pulpit Discourse, consideration should be given to the following:

- a. **The Profile of the Encoder:** The encoder (the Pastor) should be more be more knowledgeable about the subject of the discussion than the encoder(s).
- b. **The Message:** This in terms of precision; *what exactly* do you want to convey?
- c. **Appropriacy of Medium:** Between the spoken medium and the written medium.
- d. **Appropriacy of Language Variety vis-a – vis the Composition of the Congregation :** The encoder should consider the age, social and education backgrounds, sex, culture, etc of members and decide whether to use the vernacular, pidgin English or the Standard Nigerian English.
- e. **Audience Analysis and Participation:** The preacher should analyse the participation of congregation as the communication and engage them in the communication.
- f. **The Use of Paralinguistic features:** Eye contact, body language, facial expressions, tone and pitch of voice, etc
- g. **Insistence on Feedback:** The preacher should insist a response

Other considerations include the need to

- a. ensure grammatical correctness
- b. ensure clarity
- a. avoid vagueness
- b. avoid ambiguity
- c. circumlocution