

Flavoring your sermons for impact

by Rick Warren

The Bible says in Colossians 4:6 (RSV), "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt." When you cook a meal, the flavoring is not the meat, but it sure makes the meat taste better. The same is true for your sermons.

Chuck Swindoll says: "If you think that the gathering of biblical facts and standing up with a Bible in your hand will automatically equip you to communicate well, you are deeply mistaken. You must work at being interesting. Boredom is a gross violation. Being dull is a grave offense. Irrelevance is a disgrace to the Gospel. Too often these three crimes go unpunished and we preachers are the criminals."

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After I have the basic sermon down, I try to flavor it with three things:

1. Illustrations: Jesus was the master of this. Matthew 13:34 tells us, "Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when he was speaking to the crowd. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables." Never make a point without a picture.

Throw away your old illustration books. They are filled with stories by guys you’ve never heard of who died 100 years ago. The best sources for illustrations are television, magazines, newspapers, the Internet and, of course, everyday life experiences.

2. Humor: One of my favorite verses is Luke 7:34 (Phillips), "The Son of Man came enjoying life." Humor really is the spice of life.

3. Special features: There are many different "special features" you can insert into your message to add just a little bit more and capture the attention of the people. I have learned you can preach much longer when you use features interlaced in your messages. These features can include:

- **Testimonies:** When I get up to teach, people look at me as the paid salesman, the paid professional, but when we have a testimony, they are the satisfied customers. Personal testimony is still the most powerful form of persuasion, and it’s why advertisers still use it.
- **Skits or dramas:** Just make sure the skit theme connects with your message. There are a lot of good resources out there to find scripts.
- **Interviews:** You can interview people live, by telephone, or on video to connect with your messages. A "man on the street" interview on video can be a good addition to your message as well.
- **Film clips:** Movies are so much a part of today’s culture that they make terrific illustrations. Why? Because they represent a common language of the unchurched visiting your services each weekend. There is a site on the Internet (<http://teachwithmovies.org/>) that even categorizes the films by different character qualities that they portray.
- **Intersperse songs between your points:** At Saddleback we call this "the point and play" service. We’ve had an incredible response when we do this. We typically use this feature on Christmas and Easter. It breaks the service into modules, while maintaining high interest. Sometimes we perform songs by a soloist or a choir, and other times we sing

congregational songs. Putting a song at the end of each point often adds an emotional, powerful punch that allows people to express what they feel as a result of what they've heard.

- **Tag-team preaching:** Sometimes we will actually have pastors share points. Another associate pastor and I will take turns during points of the message. I've done messages with my wife on marriage where she would do a point and I would do a point. I've brought in guest speakers and alternated points with them. Just having a different voice can shake things up just a little bit. It's also very helpful when you have multiple services to do!

So add some flavor into your sermon this Sunday and help your listeners digest some of the biblical meat you're dishing out to them.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rick".