

## Preparing the Talk

The speaker should:

1. Ask the Lord to give wisdom and guidance (James 1:5-6).
2. Review the outline several times with other literature relating to the topic.
3. Prepare an outline covering the major points of the talk. If possible consult others who have given the talk. They can give useful ideas as to organization and other details.
4. Consider what witness can be given, if appropriate, to the talk. The use of personal testimony in a talk is important, almost as important as the ideas presented. The points in the outline present the ideas, but it is the witnessing that does the convincing. Personal witness creates a bond between the speaker and the audience. If personal witness cannot be given to show the candidates that what they are being told is more than a lot of philosophy or theory, they may then say, "So what? What difference does this make to us as Christians?" Personal witness makes the Word flesh for them, shows unmistakably God's love and power active in the lives of others.
5. Request Palanca from your group as you prepare your talk.

The speaker is witnessing to two basic things: his or her Christian life and the value of the Cursillo method of perseverance. It should be his or her aim to present Christ in such a clear, attractive, yet simple way, that those who hear will not only want to know Him too, but will also know how to come to know Him in a personal way.

In planning out a witness, it is not necessary to list a long string of successes. Failures can be relevant. The one who gives the talk should not want to present himself or herself as one who has attained perfections, but as a Christian who is trying.

Whatever the witness is, it should be relevant to the outline and reinforce the point being made. A speaker can seek to make one point with the ideas he presents but have a different one come across to those listening because the witness was not well chosen. If speakers wish to share things that do not fit into their talks, they can share them at the table discussion or at a meal.

Paul's personal testimony (Acts 26:1-23) is perhaps the most exciting witnessing passage of the Good News and provides excellent guidance on how to prepare personal testimony. This does not mean personal testimonies must necessarily include sensational events. A simple, honest witness is much better than a dishonest, sensational one. It does mean, however, that those who give the talks must apply their talents (Ephesians 4:7) to prepare their personal testimonies well so they can share Christ effectively with others.

Here are some practical suggestions on preparing witness talks:

1. The speaker should:
  - a. Include relevant, thought-provoking facts and experiences.
  - b. Witness in such a way that others will be able to identify with the experiences recounted.
  - c. Give enough details to arouse interest, but don't get bogged down in details or get off on a tangent.

- d. Use at least one Scripture verse.
  - e. Be honest. Admit to failures. Do not understate or over state. If the speaker has done things that have made a real difference, he or she should not be afraid to admit it. On the other hand, they should not take simple experiences and try to make them into earth-shaking events.
  - f. Use as much personal and recent testimony as possible. However, third party witness (i.e. "I have a friend who...") is permissible if it helps to make a point the speaker cannot personally witness to. Such witness, however, should not violate the trust of the individual involved.
2. The speaker should not:
- a. Emphasize how bad he or she used to be.
  - b. Speak in glittering generalities. In other words, avoid words like "wonderful", "glorious", etc.
  - c. Mention other denominations, especially in a derogatory way.
  - d. Speak critically or negatively about any other individual or group.
  - e. Give the impression that the Christian life is a bed of roses.
  - f. Preach.
  - g. Argue or use other high pressure methods of getting a "decision" for Christ. The speaker should remember that people are born of the Spirit, not through mere human persuasion or logic, though God may use both.
  - h. Reveal the identity of people in the witness talk, as in, "My son Tom is on drugs".

When familiar with the outline and having thought out the witness to be used, the speaker should write the speech out. The following hints may be useful. He or she should:

1. Work on the talk early in the team formation and not wait until the week before the talk is to be given. A good talk is not just prepared: it is lived. It is very hard to live a talk at the last minute.
2. Be clear. There is no "instant replay" for the candidates. They will only get from the talk what they understand and remember the first time around. The talk should be clearly organized to let the listeners know when the speaker is moving from one idea or section to the next.
3. Use repetition, remembering the old rule of public speaking: "Tell your audience what you are going to say, say it, and then tell them what you have said." The speaker should not be afraid to repeat key points or to summarize.
4. Use transitional words and phrases to connect different parts of the talk and show how the ideas are interrelated.
5. Choose only words normally heard in conversation. The speaker should not try to impress the candidates with terms which are rarely used or unnecessarily technical.
6. Use relatively short, simple sentences. Written sentences tend to be longer and more complicated than spoken ones. The talk should be specific. Don't beat around the bush.
7. Don't use lengthy quotations. Some speakers use so many quotes it's difficult to tell where the quotes end and the speaker begins. It is generally better to paraphrase than to quote. And even with a paraphrase, cut the information to the bare essentials.
8. Try to phrase key points in memorable, snappy ways that will stick in the listeners' minds. The talk should begin with an interesting, attention-getting sentence and end with a good conclusion.

9. Follow the outline, and be sure the talk has the intellectual content it is supposed to have.
10. Avoid Cursillo jargon, especially “de colores” and even Christian jargon, such as “born-again” (unless referring to Jesus’ use of the term in scripture.)
11. Limit the talk to a little less than the allotted time.
12. Edit carefully and rewrite as necessary before a final draft.

The speaker should make the talk precise. The primary question should always be, “Will it be clear to the listener?” It is often wise to complete a speech several days or weeks in advance, put it aside to cool and pick it up again after a week or so. In many cases, it will look very different on reexamination. Some passages will appear quite unclear, others unwieldy or too long. Rarely does a piece of writing suffer from judicious editing. In fact, most writing benefits from being tightened up and condensed.

In summary, then, keep it brief, simple and precise.

#### PRACTICE

After the talk has been written, it should be shared with someone else who can comment on it. Using a tape recorder during this practice session, the speaker can critique his presentation himself and time the talk. Aside from this informal sharing, the talk should be formally delivered before the weekend with the group that critiques the talk, because they know it and the kind of witness it should present.

By giving the talk several times, the speaker should become comfortable and more familiar with it. Also, it provides him or her with feedback and criticism to help revise and improve the talk. This criticism should be positive and Christ-filled, not negative or derogatory. As such it should be accepted in a spirit of humility as part of a loving community effort.

During the weekend, the speaker should be especially attentive to the talks that come before and try to tie in references to them (i.e. “As Jim said yesterday in his talk on piety....”)

#### DELIVER

The most important thing for the speakers is to be themselves. They should write and give the talks according to their own personalities and should not try to sound different than they are. They should use language that is comfortable for them. They should project themselves as they are – confident, cared to death or whatever. The speaker should talk loudly and clearly in order to be heard – and smile often.

It is not essential to the weekend that those who give the talks be polished public speakers. It is important that the candidates relate and identify with them as Christians and that they recognize the sincere conviction of their Christian witness.