

Delivering an Effective Talk

By Marcus Sheridan

Being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints means more than sitting in church, listening to others speak. The Savior has organized His Church to give all of us opportunities to grow spiritually. One of those opportunities is speaking in church, which can be an exhilarating and spiritually satisfying experience.

To make the most of their talks, effective speakers show enthusiasm, share stories and personal experiences, use quotes and scriptures, and speak through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Show Enthusiasm

The more enthusiastic we are about the gospel, the more others will see our fire and have a desire to experience the same feelings. On the

other hand, if our talks—especially at the outset—are filled with apologies or negative statements, we may discredit ourselves, lessen our message, and offend the Spirit. By being excited and eager to share their message—the Lord’s message—confident speakers bless others.

Share Stories and Personal Experiences

When we share a powerful story or personal experience, our message can have a lasting impact on our listeners. People love to hear stories. That’s why heads pop up and attention increases when we share them.

All of us have experienced memorable events. It just takes creativity and energy to make the telling of a story interesting. If we can’t think of

an appropriate personal story, we can always share a story from the Church magazines.

When sharing personal experiences, effective speakers:

- Practice telling their stories beforehand so they don’t have to read them and can maintain eye contact with the congregation.
- Keep their stories short and interesting.
- Fluctuate their tone of voice and convey feeling.
- Relate descriptive details when appropriate.
- Occasionally show a sense of humor but understand that not all talks require a joke.
- Make their point at the end of each story.



To enhance the delivery of your talk, show enthusiasm, make eye contact, and smile.

Use Quotes and Scriptures

The words of the Lord and His servants teach, inspire, guide, and motivate. If we can bring their words to life in our talks, we can affect others in a positive and profound way.

When citing scriptures and quotes, good speakers:

- Share the background and history of scriptures and quotes to help listeners understand their significance.
- Focus on only a few scriptures and quotes.
- Emphasize important parts.

Speak through the Power of the Holy Spirit

Speaking through the power of the Holy Ghost is the most important way we can communicate. As Nephi observed, “When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1).

We qualify for that influence as we fast, pray, and prepare diligently for our talks. If we are properly prepared, we have no need to fear (see D&C 38:30).

By combining the companionship of the Holy Ghost with enthusiasm, storytelling, scriptures and quotes, and then by adding our testimony of the truths we share, we will uplift and inspire. ■



THE EXAMPLE OF PRESIDENT MONSON

President Thomas S. Monson is a powerful and moving speaker. An examination of his speaking style and some of his recent general conference talks reveals the abilities of a good speaker.¹

President Monson often stresses that it is his privilege to speak to Church members, and he expresses gratitude for the opportunity. In addition, he regularly shows that gratitude by demonstrating enthusiasm at the outset of his talks.

After his opening statements, President Monson quotes scriptures to give his talk direction and tell his listeners what his topic is. He also quotes General Authorities and others to add further light to his topic.

President Monson is well-known for sharing personal experiences from his life. He knows that his audience will take interest in and relate to personal stories. He also knows that one of the best ways to teach is by sharing what life has taught him.

In relating stories, President Monson uses powerful details to generate interest. Often, he also uses poetry to punctuate his message.

Finally, President Monson understands the importance of bearing testimony, which he does frequently and powerfully.

NOTE

1. See, for example, Thomas S. Monson, “Be Your Best Self,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 67; “Be of Good Cheer,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 89; “May You Have Courage,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 123.

