

## Does Your Teaching Make People Sleepy?

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Glazed over eyes. Wide, tear-producing yawns. Bobbing heads. If you are a pastor, Sunday school teacher, or Bible study leader, you've seen them all *while* you were speaking, and you may be to blame.



Is there anything we can do to help people stay connected while we teach? Perhaps you would immediately respond, “We should work on our presentation skills.” That is true, we *should* become better presenters. For example, nobody likes a monotone voice. And by learning how to use and implement colorful language and vivid illustrations, we teach like Jesus who was not a boring teacher.

The development of speaking skills *is* necessary.

However, you may be one of the most dynamic, engaging teachers in your state, and yet the crickets seem to be more alert when you teach than the people. At least they respond with a chirp or two!

What else can you do? What else *should* you do? Consider these two even more important actions you can take in order to arouse your drowsy listeners:

### 1. Pray More.

And I don't just mean right at the beginning of the lesson or sermon! God uses communicators who depend on Him. Only He can make the teaching effective and create a hunger for the truth. Make it a priority to pray by name for all who come. Also, like the apostle Paul, enlist others to pray for your ministry (Colossians 4:2-4).

In addition, ask the Lord to affect *your* soul with the truth so that your congregation or class will sense that you personally have been impacted by God's word. Although J.W. Alexander was writing to preachers, his words apply to any man or woman entrusted with the responsibility to teach the Bible: “Let every preacher despair of delivering that discourse with true, natural, and effective warmth, which he has prepared with leisurely coldness.”<sup>1</sup> God does not require you to be a phenomenal teacher. But if you will pray more, He might take even below average instruction and make it more

precious than fine gold and sweeter than honey to all who hear (Psalm 19:10). I speak from experience. I was converted under an “average” teacher who prayed for me often before I ever came to Christ.

Jesus, the greatest preacher and teacher ever, was a man of prayer (Luke 5:16). If we are anything less, we will be ineffective communicators.

### 2. Love More.

I once attended a Sunday morning service at a church in Michigan. After hearing the sermon, I remember thinking, “That was okay.” As I was walking out, I met a few people and was struck by some of the comments about the sermon. Not only did the people say the message was helpful, but almost everybody mentioned how much their pastor loved them. He was not a dynamic preacher, but that didn't matter. He was known for his extravagant love for the church and his genuine care, which caused the people to listen eagerly and gain far more from the message than a first-time visitor would.

I learned a valuable lesson that day in Michigan: Average preachers and teachers become powerful instruments in God's hands when they are known for their love.

If those who have heard you preach or teach over the past several months were asked to name a few characteristics about you, would “love” be on their lists? Would they mention what a good listener you are? Would they have any stories to tell about your hospitality or sacrificial spirit? Could anybody retrieve at least one email you sent in which you encouraged that individual about something she said at a particular meeting?

We should all strive to be like that “average” pastor in Michigan. We should be able to say with the Apostle Paul, “Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us” (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

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<sup>1</sup> J.W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Preaching* (1865; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1988), 32.