

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the Official Rulebook and Evaluation Criteria, and not as a substitute for either. Download the Official Fine Arts Rulebook and the Evaluation Criteria at www.faf.ag.org/rules.cfm.

SHORT SERMON

1. YOU DO NOT NEED TO INTERPRET A THEME.

However, avoid obvious passages and applications. Be creative.

2. A STRONG OPENING IS VITAL.

You need an attention grabber in the first 15-20 seconds. Either open with a story (or the first part of a story), an illustration (personal example is best), or answer the question: "Why should we listen to you?" Oh, and don't tell us you're going to tell us a story – just tell us the story!

3. YOUR SHORT SERMON NEEDS STRUCTURE.

You don't have to use a standard structure (Intro, 3 points, conclusion) but you do need some sort of structure so there is forward moving momentum in your message and so the audience has a sense of where you're taking them. One important part of structure is the application of seamless transitions.

4. A STRONG CLOSING IS MEMORABLE.

You should have your beginning and your ending memorized. Some people have a hard time 'landing the plane' at the end of their message. Know exactly how you're going to end. Maybe end by completing the story you began in the intro. Maybe end with a final and brief recap of your main points. Maybe end with a key challenge to the listener. However it's done, be sure it is clear and strong.

5. USE THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF SCRIPTURE.

When it comes to preaching you should always start with the Scripture and let the text be your guide. In Fine Arts, you only have 5 minutes. You can't read all of Psalm 119. You should probably use 3-5 verses. Be sure to study the entire chapter and know the context of those verses but don't read it all to the audience. If you're using a familiar story, don't read the entire passage straight from the Bible. Tell most of the story in your own words and only read the key verses.

6. TELL STORIES AND BE PRACTICAL.

Everyone loves stories. You should have one or two good personal stories in your message. Be transparent and share your own struggles, thoughts, or insights with the sermon topic. Memorize your stories. Stories that have to be read may come across as insincere. Stories with practical applications in the lives of the listeners are best.

7. YOUR DELIVERY STYLE MATTERS.

Vary the pacing of your speaking. Vary the volume of your speaking. Watch your hand motions. Avoid aimless wandering/pacing on the stage. Record yourself preaching and watch it in fast-forward. You'll see your repetitive motions very easily. You don't need to wear a 3-piece suit but dress appropriately for the category in something nice, clean, and comfortable.

8. BE YOURSELF.

Don't try to preach like your pastor, youth pastor, or the kid who preached right before you. Find your voice and be yourself. The way you have normal conversations with other people shouldn't differ that much from the way you preach.

9. PRACTICE A LOT.

Practice out loud. You need to get used to how the words come out of your mouth. Practice in front of a mirror. Practice in front of people. Time your practices. You should time out around 4:45 in case something happens and you blank out for a second or the crowd is more responsive than you expect. Practice!

10. PREACH JESUS.

Don't just tell us to be better, do better, try harder, etc. Preach Jesus in a way that makes us see Him more and love him more! Make Jesus the center!