

LECTURE BUILDING

BUILDING A LECTURE THROUGH ORDERING YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCE

The process of building a lecture and the process of giving a lecture are very related polarities. You might say they are one thing, because it is the demand to give a lecture that feeds back into the process of building one, and vice versa. But it is a different dynamic to look at the problem of preparing the construct for what needs to be put on in the lecture.

There are three critical stages in building a lecture, whether it is a brand new lecture or whether it is reconstructing or reintensifying an old one. The first is recalling life experiences, your life experiences. Your concern is to get out all that you know. It is existential knowing, a memory of the deeps of life and how that deeps of life is experienced and can be communicated, using your own life.

When you are brainstorming for experiences that will be helpful in giving a lecture, you want to get out as many experiences as possible. You don't really care what type they are. It can be an episodic snatch out of your life or the structure of a whole lecture. It can be stories, sequences of events, or anything that you can remember. One way to push yourself to recall experiences is to get a big piece of paper with lots of boxes on it. Then you push yourself to fill up all the boxes with everything you have ever known that relates to "Freedom" or "Holy Spirit" or "Style" or whatever. If you don't have a big piece of paper, get two or three sheets of paper and fill them all up with helpful things. The ordering is not really important. If you try to get order as you recall, you destroy the process of recall.

I find I can always think of more illustrations. I am constantly coming upon new illustrations in real conversations, in reading, and in reflections on my past. Sometimes experiences from my distant past can be as helpful as more recent events.

Classical stories will also be there until the lectures have collapsed. They will be there because the ones from the scripture, for instance, were invented to illustrate exactly that point. Using these is fantastic because you are rooting people in their heritage as well as illustrating a point in their contemporary life. So the Biblical illustrations will have power, as well as the stories out of our community which can be recovered and looked at afresh.

General insights also need to be listed. For example, "Intentionality is a gift," is a general insight about humanness that takes on new meaning in light of the tactical models we are building continually. We probably have a whole list of new general insights, that we can say to ourselves in prose, that will condition our transitions and probably the illustrations we use. All these general insights as well as personal experiences need to be put in the boxes as raw data for the lecture.

The second step is creating the rational order out of all the data. If you are building a new lecture you have to go to the paper that

is filled with your raw experience and begin to pull out the rational order that is in it. In pulling together data that fills the whole field, you need to find what has consistency so that the 4 X 4 X 4 makes sense. If there are four parts, they must be four parts of the whole, all the way down, so that you know what you are putting in the various squares. This is critical, because the only reason you build a 4 X 4 X 4 is to put on a drama that grasps hold of the roots of someone's existence.

In the RS-I course this job has been done over against just exactly such racks of data and theological insights that have been gathered for twenty years, so there is no need to try to change the four exterior categories of the lectures. Those categories are there and so are the next four. This speeds you up because the data is immediately ordered by this. Your problem is how to select the experiences which most pointedly illustrate each of the sixteen boxes that you already have. There may be new kinds of subordering that begin to crop up.

You do not really have the rational order of the Freedom lecture, for example, unless it is your rational order, unless you are able to take these four points of the Freedom lecture and make a sentence out of it, such as: "The Holy Spirit may be described as freedom: the freedom to be lucid about the way life is, the freedom to be sensitive to life in all of its ramifications, the freedom to be exposed and put yourself out in the participation of life, and the freedom to be radically consecrated or be a disciplined person in the midst of life." You have to have a sentence like that, and that sentence has to make sense to you before you can go on. And then you have to have a sentence for each one of these rows. "Lucidity about life is ordered in four ways: the world, the self, the others, and the lucidity about the Word that illuminates it all." You have to have your sentence going across.

Another part of building up material for the lecture or stacking your paint palette is spinning out the key illustrations in order to make them speak. In spinning out the key illustrations, you take the incident of the illustration and write down everything about that incident that you remember—details about the people involved, your emotions, people's reactions, the context—all the details you can recall. Then you chop away at that information. You decide on the crux of the illustration for the point that it needs to make in the lecture, and select the key information out of all the information you have recalled about the incident that crux depends on. When you have that down, spin it out so the illustration will have the greatest impact.

Then the question comes, "What do you take with you into the classroom?" If you take your 4 X 4 X 4 X 4 into the classroom with you, it's obvious that you are in the wrong, unless you are a carefully wonderful magician of being able to pull out just exactly what you need from all of the rack of paints that you have. You have to have decided what paint you are going to use before you enter the classroom and very likely, you take in some kind of notes—not a 4 X 4 X 4 X 4. I am a tremendous forgetful person and, if I have written out a lecture in manuscript form, I have it down and can quickly recoup it, so to speak. But that manuscript is not really a manuscript because you never do it the same way. It is a flexible series of routines that you build each time into a fresh lecture. Most people probably don't work from manuscript pieces but go into the classroom with a little sheet of paper with a freshly established list of what they are going to do this particular time. Maybe you can move into the room with simply your memory. There are lecturers who don't take any notes at all with them into the room. They memorize the illustrations and patterns they are going to use, and then throw their notes away. They give the lecture on the run, in the back of the classroom, all kinds of wierd things. Most of us find it necessary to have some of our poems accompany us into the classroom already written out.

GIVING A DRAMATIC LECTURE

Now we want to move from the illustration rack or paint tray or paint palette, to the lecture itself. Our task is how to take all of the preparatory work and actually turn it into the lecture that has to be given to this group, this afternoon, for this particular reason at this particular time—an occasion in history.

The first thing you have to get straight is that the drama is not the paint tray. You have experienced lectures in which the lecturer was a little confused on that. It seemed as if he brought his whole 4x4x4 into the room and just sort of dumped it on the class. There was a lot of paint there, but it didn't make a drama. It didn't make a painting. The task of building what goes on in the classroom is the task of taking this complex paint tray and painting—for just that particular class at that particular moment in history. So your crucial question is, “What do you want to happen this afternoon?” You are serving mankind, that particular group of people. What do they need? They don't need everything you have in your paint rack. Your job is not to get across everything in the whole history of the movement in this area. Your job is just simply to be a happening, and to be the kind of happening in that area of that course with that group on that afternoon in the context that you are in.

Another way of talking about it is to see the list of what you have to have thought out before you enter the classroom in addition to the building of your 4x4x4. One thing is the emphasis. A 4x4x4 does not always tell you what the emphasis is. Maybe a point on the fourth level takes fifteen minutes to get across. Other times perhaps a whole row all the way across only takes three minutes. This is the kind of decision you have to make, what the emphasis is going to be for this particular drama.

Another thing is your time plan. Sometimes you have to give a lecture in thirty minutes because you decided you had to spend the first thirty minutes mopping up other problems, or getting ready to give the lecture, or whatever. So you have to prepare a thirty-minute lecture. Maybe you decide that you are going to go ahead and take an hour and fifteen minutes for this particular lecture for some particular purpose. But generally speaking there is a limit of fifty minutes or so on your time, and one must always respect that limit with great seriousness. The happening should not be much more than the seat can take. There is a limit to what one can listen to in a lecture. Castro apparently could hold people spellbound for three hours and that probably is possible, but I've often wondered if it was necessary. After an hour it becomes more of a worship service than it does a lecture. It is not necessary usually for the content. We have to really bring down the hatchet hard on our colleagues across the movement to plan their time very carefully in a lecture. Sometimes Parts I and II of a lecture are very unimportant and can be done in just a sweep of the hand, Part III may take forty-five minutes, and then Part IV is done also with a sweep of the hand.

A third thing that has to be thought through is the dramatic movement. People who have the most trouble with time are those who think that giving a lecture is taking this whole paint tray and plastering it on everybody's life, tube by tube, until they run out of paint. If there is any illustration they know or anything they have left out, or the previous lecture has left out, they get it in. This is not not

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considering creatively the step of dramatic movement. You have to decide the intensification and the ordering of what you do and how to get on and off stage. Since I am going to come back to this later, I won't go into it now. But the dramatic movement of the lecture has to be thought through. That's not the same as the 4x4x4.

A fourth thing is the selection of particular illustrations. You may use an entirely different set of illustrations with one particular group than with another particular group. We work in exurban areas, inner city areas, suburban areas, with youth, elders, and adults, and so on, and you have to know what is going to be helpful in that situation and do what is helpful for that class.

To summarize this whole point, the 4 x 4 is the place where the movement maintains its corporateness in terms of the RS-I lectures. As a methodology a 4x4 is very crucial. But the actual material used is flexible, flexible in relationship to the pedagogue and flexible in relationship to the occasion. Let's not be mechanical where we stand up and read a standardized 4x4, with feeling. The 4x4x4 is a methodology that we are always working on, but today we are looking at the 4x4x4 as a paint palette out of which we give a particular lecture.

Now let's take this business of the drama and look at it step by step. The first thing you must do is to get on stage. That is very important. Some of our colleagues spend quite a bit of time getting on stage, because it requires two things. It requires the teacher putting on the overcoat of being a teacher. It also requires the group putting on the overcoat of being the student in that particular situation. That is, there has to become established a relationship between the teacher and those who are playing the role of the class at that particular point. A decision has to be made on the part of the class to be the class and allow that teacher to be their teacher. That's what the on-stage has to do. It has to give an opportunity for that decision to be made. I've seen great teachers, who if the group had not made that decision in the first foray, try another foray. They would not give a lecture until they had the decision of the group--its permission to give it. It's hard to underestimate that. Sometimes you see in pedagogy guilds where a person is halfway through teaching before the class gets their eyes focused on the blackboard. You have to do something to call to their attention that something is going to happen here, and that a decision is to be made ahead of time. For the teacher himself, this may be something like getting on top of himself and getting a feel of the group he is going to talk to by sensing their response. There is a conversation going on in a lecture. The one giving a lecture is always listening to the response, listening to the eyes of the people to whom he is talking. Sometimes getting on stage might be a matter of doing something funny. In the old Toastmasters Club they used to say that you had to tell a joke to get started. That's pretty crass and not what I'm pointing to, but they were clear that you had to get on stage. There is something settling about humor. If a whole group of people have laughed about a common issue, they have ritualized a decision that they have started to listen to a particular lecture.

The on-stage drama, besides enabling this putting on the decision to be teacher and class, has to hold their interest in that particular issue. This is one of the reasons you lay out a broad context as well as focus on where you are. It is as if you don't dare start talking about something until everybody is clear what you have entered. So you relate what you are doing to yesterday's work and to tomorrow's work, and in the process, you elicit concern for this subject. This is a part of

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your getting on stage. Sometimes it can be done very quickly. Sometimes you have an extended job to do to get it started. Another way of saying it is that you need to hook people's longings, fears and hostilities in this particular area to let something begin to happen. Sometimes the reading of a piece of poetry is a helpful way to do that. It is an oblique attack, and if it is a well chosen piece, it is on the subject. In fact, a very well chosen piece of poetry in one sense says everything that you have to say in your lecture. Someone could come here, hear the poem, go home and they would have it. But then they need to hear it again. That is the way life always is. You tell them--says the old preacher--what you are going to tell them, then you tell them, then you tell them what you have told them. Then you say the benediction. That's the way it has to be. In the very beginning you have to tell them the whole story and then come back on it in several ways.

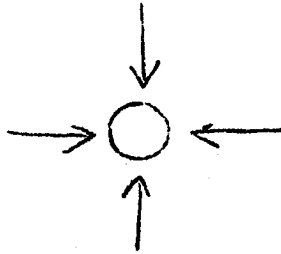
Let's now look at the overall rhythm that has to be thought through to put on a lecture. The easiest way to succeed in the overall drama is to begin with the intellectually comprehensive, that is, you just shock them with the rational thought-through-ness of what you have to say. Then you move on to the histrionics, the dramatics. Unless you are able to sweepingly interest the intellectual, you don't have quite the permission of being histrionic. Once people have said, "Yes, I see what you are talking about," then you can tell them what you are talking about. I mean by histrionic that there is drama pulled through your own being. In the kind of work we are doing, this is the crucial thing. You are not out just to talk to the top of the head. You are out to talk to people's decision-making faculty, their illusion-spinning faculty. The only reason you are in there is to drive to the center of the earth relative to a possible breakloose in thinking and understanding and struggling with life. So a certain kind of histrionics are crucial.

Another way of talking about this is that your drama has to have its highest level of existential intensification at the end and not the beginning. If you give them a knock-out blow in Act I, they don't even listen to Acts II, III, and IV, and they really may have needed Acts II, III, and IV to figure out what knocked them out.

Maybe something like this is your picture. You have one thing to say in a lecture. The first probe gives them the idea and relates that idea to their whole life, so they are located as to where you are working. Then you come in with a probe from the left. Then you come in on the same subject with another probe from the right, and save your knock-out blow for the end. That follows the dramatic order of most good lectures--the last section of your 4X4 is the one with the wallop in it. That certainly is true in the Church lecture. Another good way to go is to get out the idea, do your probe, and do the knock-out blow third. Then the fourth is sort of a clean-up or a clarification of the decision that has to be made when you are knocked out. You give them the idea, you hit them once, and then you level them on the floor. Then you go over on the floor and talk to them about the complexities they are now in. Probably the Freedom lecture is like that. The last row of the Freedom lecture, the decision row, is like talking to somebody on the floor. "By the way, having to make all your own decisions and accept the consequences doesn't mean you are not a disciplined person." The Christ lecture is this way also. When you get through with row three of the Christ lecture, you've done the job, but then it is necessary to go back and clarify what this has to do with reinterpreting the symbols of the whole Christian faith. So you are talking to them on the floor about Jesus and lambs and other mysterious things like that.

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I would suggest that any other order besides those two is probably poor. If you do the knock-out blow in the second row, you are in serious trouble, and I've already mentioned the problems with doing it first. Also, if you try to give them the idea of the whole thing any other place but first, you may be in trouble. You may have to make a little probe first and then give them the idea, maybe attack from the left and then say, "By the way, what I'm attacking is...." Then you come back from the right. That might work. But while you are doing it, you have to know what it is you are doing and why you are doing it. That is the whole point of this diagram. You keep the class's eye focused on one thing. That one thing may be the whole lecture, or it may be one probe.



For example, when you are over here dealing with one probe, you have the same kind of dramatic problem. You have your 4X4 to guide you and wham, wham, wham, wham. When you are doing probe 2 you have your four whams too and you have to order those. You don't have to do things in the order they are on the usual 4X4X4. They have to be in the order that gets the job done. For example, in the Freedom lecture under lucidity, it is pretty good to do the world first and the self second, then to do others third, and the Word last. That last is obviously the knock-out blow because that is the lucidity in the midst of lucidity itself. That is really a good order, but you can see how it would be possible to do the world, then the other, and then the self, without violating all of history. Another example is in the Christ lecture within the dynamics row on the issue of the "offense." First you say it is an intellectual offense, then it is a volitional offense, then it is an emotional offense, and finally, it is an offense that has to do with dying. Do you see the drama that goes on that level as well? The drama affects your time allocations also. You may go "blip, blip, blip," through the first three points and then, "bam, bam, bam, bam," on the last one. You have to decide what your drama is before you give the lecture.

In the area of illustrations, you have to have flexibility. You have to choose ones that enhance your dramatic movement. When you are first lecturing it doesn't seem to you a matter of what illustration you are going to use, it is a matter of getting enough illustrations to fill up the fifty minutes. Then when you have done as many lectures as Shinn has, that is definitely not your problem, the problem is what to throw out, of all the vast notes you have taken over the last four quarters. You will very quickly, if you teach RS-I a few times, find yourself in that position. All of us have had to finally come to the stage where you make the decision, "I have to give this lecture, without that favorite illustration." You have to choose what you need.

And all the illustrations you do use need to be pulled through your life. Stealing is more than permissible in relation to lecture illustrations, it is utterly necessary. But you can spot a phony thief a mile away. What I mean by a non-phony thief is one who has pulled this theft through his own experience so that he has almost forgotten that he got it from somebody else, it is so much himself. There are

certain kinds of illustrations people tell that you just couldn't steal in eleven years. Like somebody's illustration about their great height and you are four feet tall. You can't steal it without making some radical changes in it. Or like someone's illustrations about his war experiences and you are a fifteen year old boy. And yet, if you can pull it off, pull it off. You don't need to have ever been in the army to tell about war experiences that you have had. Stealing is fantastic, but it has to be pulled through your existence. It has to be you who are talking even though everything you are telling is lies. The people who are listening to it could not possibly guess it is a lie, because it so obviously applies to the human being they see standing before them. It is that kind of authenticity that you are after, not some kind of phony honesty. After all, everything you have learned in your life is, in one form or another, stolen.

Finally, you choose these illustrations relative to the quality of the happening that you are out to perform. That is probably obvious, you don't need quantity, you need quality. Sometimes, one complete illustration is so good that you can pull a whole section of the lecture through it, and you don't need other illustrations, just for the sake of other illustrations. It is quality of clarity that you are out for. In other situations you may have a whole battery of illustrations coming down in one minor little row here and just barrage them with a battery of illustrations that is really one illustration. I heard a God lecture when the pedagogue was talking about being overwhelmed and he just literally overwhelmed us with this battery of things. It was like you were getting a hundred illustrations, but you were really just getting one: that is, that the world is just coming concretely at you from every angle.

Now, how do you get offstage? Each has to have his own particular style for doing that but the main thing is to put the decision in the laps of the class as you leave and be sure that the decision that you put there is an authentic one for them. I like the way the Gospel of Mark ends. It ends abruptly. You run right into crucifixion and on the other side of crucifixion you run right into the tomb. When you come up to the tomb, the angel speaks about the resurrection and the women leave without telling any one about it. The curtain just comes down and leaves the audience with the sheer mystery of the thing. Sometimes a very abrupt ending is a way to indicate that the decision is on you. At any rate, you have to get off stage.

Now, I want to mention some very practical things that have to do with putting on any lecture. The first is use of the chalk board. Normally speaking, a class of RS-I people will only write down on their paper what you have on the board. It is very frequently true that if you don't put it on the board, they won't put it on their paper. They think that if it is important enough to put it on the board, it is important to write down on paper. Now, you can't put everything on the board, and you are really not interested that they write down everything you say on the paper. That is not what you are out for. But the board is another medium in and through which you allow the whole lecture to be held together. One of the things about the board is it stays put. Words and time move by, but the board stays put. You can draw on the board an art form and relate people back to it. You have a system of thought on the left represented by one picture, and another system of thought represented by a picture on the right and you can say, "And this is related to that in the following manner." Without the board you can't do that sort of thing.

Some of you have listened to great lectures on tape and you have noticed how highly frustrating that is, when you are listening to somebody using the board well, because you are lost when he starts relating things on the board. But it was perfectly clear in the midst of the classroom. He was using this device to intensify his communication. I think that is crucial. I don't think it is necessary to leave a grandiose art form on the board after every lecture, although I think it is necessary to think through before you begin any lecture, what kind of pictures are going to be up there when you get through. We always razz Vance Englemann about having to photograph his board in technicolor when he finishes because he always uses four different colors of chalk. I don't think that is necessary, but at least he takes the issue of board work seriously.

The second thing is your voice. What can you do about the use of your voice? That is another very practical thing. Lecturing is something more than just talking loudly enough that every human being does not have to strain to hear--unless you want them to strain to hear, so that you can then pound back at them something that you have to say. You don't give them a choice about hearing--they only have a choice of leaving the room. This is your show. You can do with your voice a lot more than you think you can do. You can bounce your voice off the table, you can make it sound like it is down underneath the table, you can ricochet it off the back end of the room, or bounce it from the ceiling. It can go where you want it to go. If you want to say something to a particular person, your voice will go right back to where you want it to go. I'm not really good at this but it is not difficult to learn to make your voice go where you want it to go. When you decide to have the other person hear, you are always able to do so but it is critical to make the decision that Jonathan back there is going to hear that particular lecture.

Then you have to make hay out of the voice that you have. Some of us have magnolia blossom voices, but, oh, what a magnolia blossom voice can do. If you have a raspy old voice, a raspy old voice can do things that a magnolia blossom can't do. I have seen teachers with a gosh-awful voice do a fantastically effective job, by deciding that that is what they are going to use and use it. If you have a Polish accent, or something exciting like that, just decide that you are going to use a Polish accent to get your job done. And there are advantages if you are a Southerner in the North or a New Englander in the South, or a Canadian (they can get by with anything in the United States just by talking Canadian). If you have a voice that really needs to have something done about it, you can do it. For example, I know a character who was a grown man but his voice sounded like a sixth grade girl. It really was a limiting factor, so he decided to do something about it. I don't know how he did it but he lowered his voice. It still sounds a little odd but it doesn't sound like it did and he gets the job done.

You also need to use your body. You communicate with your body as well as with your voice. And everyone is not alike, therefore everyone has to use their body differently. There is a skill to using gestures. I think a lot of gestures should be very subtle, where you underplay--just a shrug or a look can be very powerful gestures. Or there may be some very exuberant gestures. They say when Reinhold Niebuhr, who has a long arm and big hand, preached, he reached down to the bottom of the floor, and swept the clouds of heaven. And you could see how that might be done, sweeping the clouds of heaven with your gestures. If you want to talk about transcendence, he called transcendence down into the situation some way or another. You have to realize that your body, the use of it, shows the way you deal with life. Affirming your body affirms your relationship bodily with the class and speaks a word in that area.

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Then I want to say a word about the differences in having a different kind of body and things you might do. We had a small woman about 4 feet 10, who was sitting up here with her notes, just rattling on. Then somebody said if you are going to get people's attention you have got to move. When she started to move around and talk to people, her vivaciousness, her enthusiasm, and her spryness was expressed and she was able to command attention in a way that made her look three times her size. She looked like something that ought to have your attention. But then there is someone like Frank Hillard who looks like somebody from a football team. He is six something and probably weighs 230 or so. If he did what the short woman was asked to do, it would have such an impact that no one would hear what he had to say. He has to be a little more subtle in the way that he is going to use his body. Or if you have a bald head, that is a great weapon to use, or intense eyes, and so on. You have to find your own characteristics that are going to do the job. I'm thinking of Joe Slicker with those eyes--if he wants to look at you you know you have been looked at. That is a gift.

Now, personal contact is the last category here. You have to make personal contact and there are a lot of ways to do that. Some can be done very dramatically, like picking on one person particularly. In a seminar that seems a little more appropriate than in a lecture, but some of our more bold people don't mind picking on somebody. There are subtle ways and there are more complicated ways of taking on somebody. You can call somebody by name and ask them what they think of that. When you do something like that everybody thinks. It dramatizes a personal relationship with the group. I remember a lecture on the Church one time to a group of ministers and their wives including one minister and his wife, who must have been 80. When he got to that point in the Church lecture where we talk about being the Church until you are 92 unless you live to 93, he called this old lady by name and asked her if that wasn't true, that she had to decide what she was going to do with what years she had left. You could have heard a pin drop in Alaska. She had to decide what she was going to do with her remaining years.

Or the stunt that one of my colleagues often does in the Christ lecture, of picking out one of the most stable self-deprecating people in the room (you probably have to make this choice carefully). He picks out this self-deprecating person, then goes over and lays his hand on their head and says, "Sharon, you are the greatest! Do you believe that?" And she says, "I don't think so," or "I don't know." He says, "Well, cast those demons out. Sharon, you are the greatest! Do you believe that, now?" When she says, "Yes," that is a powerful decision. Everybody in the room is clear that they are being dramatized, not just Sharon. It is personal contact with everyone there. You can do that in much more subtle fashion, by picking out somebody to look at. The quality of how you do personal contact communicates that you are not talking to a stone wall, or the black board, or your lecture notes, you are talking to people who are listening to what you are talking to. You are communicating, it is dialogue.

This kind of thing goes on in the little rituals that are performed. This is why it is so important that we often use as the opening of the God lecture, "Grace and peace is yours, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen." Nobody says anything, so you say, "And all the people said, 'Amen.'," Then they say, "Amen." And you say "We have lost the depths of the symbolic life today, haven't we?" And then you go on to talk about the role that symbols are going to play this weekend.

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There are all kinds of ways, complex and subtle, but the point is that personal contact needs to be there. This means brooding on the group and brooding on yourself a good bit before hand, because if you misfire when you pick out Sharon, you are in trouble. If you are going to communicate intentionally and personally with the group, you had better be sure what it is that you mean to intentionally communicate so it is not just doing some kind of exciting stunt.

I want to end up with a section on what I call refinement. The first one is not so important but has to be on the list, vulgarity. We have had some necessity as a movement to make a strong attack against piosity. The occasional effective and symbolic use of some of the great four-letter Anglo-Saxon words to cut through the shallowness and to have a secular word to say about life has been effective. I don't call that vulgarity. But what I call vulgarity, is when one is just being cute, or using a coarse, vulgar type word for the sake of calling attention to himself, or for some other reason than getting a job done. On the other side of that, there is power in words like Kazantzakis uses, "the dung hill of our flesh and minds." If you need to intensify it a bit further, you can use those Anglo-Saxon words, but know the context of your audience and what is appropriate.

In addition, there are ways in which we all have little ticks that we are almost unconscious of, like blowing our nose and scratching and things like this. One needs to remember that we are dealing with the dignified public of the world, in the kind of ministry that we are called to. We must not allow ourselves to be dismissed because of vulgarity. If you can't defend it before God himself, don't use it.

A second area is tak

A second area is taking off the role of teacher after you leave the session. I am talking about the refinement of how you participate in your role of teacher. You must be very careful not to violate the role that you have had to play. You have put on an art form and you let that art form stand there, doing the job that you have put it into history to do, however well it does it, or however poorly. It takes a certain kind of discipline to respect the sacredness of what you were trying to do—the discipline of not reaching out for approval, the discipline of not being overwhelmed by any criticism that comes back. What is going on is you have delivered the deed of being a pedagogue up to God. To the degree that you gave yourself to it, and received from the class their participation, you may have some sense after the presence of the Holy Spirit itself. That needs to be respected and honored and not disgraced with your need for approval, or not disgraced with your vulnerability to criticism. The only thing you have when you get off to the side is that your name is written in the word of forgiveness. It is not that you did a powerful deed or you didn't do a powerful deed. The only status you have before God is that you are forgiven.

Another way to put that is, you don't care whether they agree with you or not, and you don't care whether they make a decision to be saved or not. That is not your affair. That is a problem between that student out there and God. You never take seriously any criticism, or any approval. You do your job. You may very well critically evaluate yourself, but in terms of that concrete situation, it is their solitary decision that is the problem. Whatever it was that you did stands there and helps in calling them forth as human beings. That may mean that you just have to escape the situation entirely in order to do the best job of honoring them, but that is wise because often what people want to do more than anything else

is to get off the hook of what has been said and therefore their coming up to talk to you is simply to get you to say, "Well, it was just an act. It wasn't real," or "I didn't really mean it," or "Yes, you are right, there is another side to the story." There is never any other side to the story. It is only that they don't want the story that they have on their hands.

A third thing has to do with honoring people. It is very closely related to the other two. It is a terrible thing to misuse an audience by saying things that you are not certain of, that you have not yourself thought through. If you have not thought things through in such a way that your own conviction is in them, don't play like you have some convictions in them. That is to misuse an audience. There has to be life in what you are saying. It is a misuse of the audience to say more than you have your life in, or to say less than you have your life in. I can think of many experiences where I got up there and, in one sense, misused the audience by being abstract with them instead of pointing them to reality. But probably the worst way to misuse an audience is to use something that has nothing whatsoever to do with your lecture, but has only to do with dramatizing yourself into greatness, or has only to do with some need you have for being acknowledged. Honoring people and enabling their lives is the core of all our teaching. It is so easy, and so subtle how, for our own sake, we go into teaching and do dishonor to people.

The last thing I want to say about refinement has to do with our looks. I saved it until last because it was so powerful. We are in such chaos today relative to our hair and our clothes that probably none of us really feel any kind of certainty as to what we need to look like to go out on the stage of history as a teacher. I always think surely nobody is going to talk about the way I comb my hair. Yet clothes and hair are very much a part of your style. You are just telling a story about who you are, and what you are out to say. Probably the key criteria for making decisions about how you look in a teaching situation, or how you look generally, has to do with telling God's story and not your own. If the Lord of history created you to look like an Iowa farmer because you are an Iowa farmer, and there is nothing wrong with Iowa farmers, then you ought to tell the story the way God wrote it. You ought to tell it the way it is. You ought to find a way of embroidering and giving authentic presentation to Iowa farm heritage, rather than pretending that you are a Yale man, or something like that.

You can always see through a certain kind of weird pretension, where somebody is a Tennessee hillbilly but he is hating being the Tennessee hillbilly that he is. Or he is a Yale man and hates being the Yale man that he is and is trying to become down to earth or something like that. You have to decide what is the Lord's story about your life and then find a way to look that, to put on that story. If you are short you have to know you are short, if you are tall you have to know you are tall, if you are young you have to know you are young. Some of our teachers just don't want to be young. If you are 18 years old, you have to be clear that you are 18 years old and be an unusual 18 year old. If you are 90 then you have to be clear that you are just not 65, or whatever age you might want to be.

If you are unusually plain, you have to operate with that kind of a situation. Abraham Lincoln, they said, was an ugly man. I think from the pictures I have seen that there would be grounds for substantiating that. He was a very ugly man but he knew how to use his ugliness and breathe life through it. That may be an illustration of how you tell your own story. You are to be the presence in the room that is obedient

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to the Creator that created you in that situation. If I have a pimply face and I have decided to be the be I have to be, there is a radiance that flows through even pimples. So the best you can do with what you have is to affirm it and then something happens to it. The deep interior refinement that we are pointing to here and at other places has to do with the notion that suffering is common to all men and the way you bear your suffering communicates very deeply to others.

If you are a very prosperous person in terms of the gifts of the world, such as a sound mind and body, emotional health, and education, you have to find your way of communicating that all that is nothing. You have to avoid at all costs pretentiousness. You must be very clear that every single human being is in radical dependence upon God, that every gift is limited, that every situation in life is headed for the equality of the grave. The more gifts that the Lord has given you to be responsible for, the more gifts you have to die to, the more gifts you have to give up on behalf of all, the more temptations you have to suffer to vain glory. On the other hand, the less you have, the more temptations you suffer to self-belittlement. Oh, "tragedy of tragedies," you are limited in some area, and you allow that to tell you that you can belittle yourself further, which provokes disaster, or a temptation to bitterness.

The man who rests in the being that the Lord gave him to be with, cuts through the vain glory, cuts through the self-belittling, cuts through the bitterness, and therefore is able to give to his neighbor what the Lord gave to him. This is the kind of "refinement" that you are pointing to here. Every human being has to find his own way to do it, but whatever else we are out to communicate in being a teacher, it is to communicate that deep and wondrous and overwhelming spirit that the revelation in Christ has led us to. One way of talking about that spirit is that in all of your looks, and in all of your manner, and in all of your use of yourself to get a particular job done, you communicate obedience to God. Another way to put that is: You communicate the way it is, you communicate authenticity.