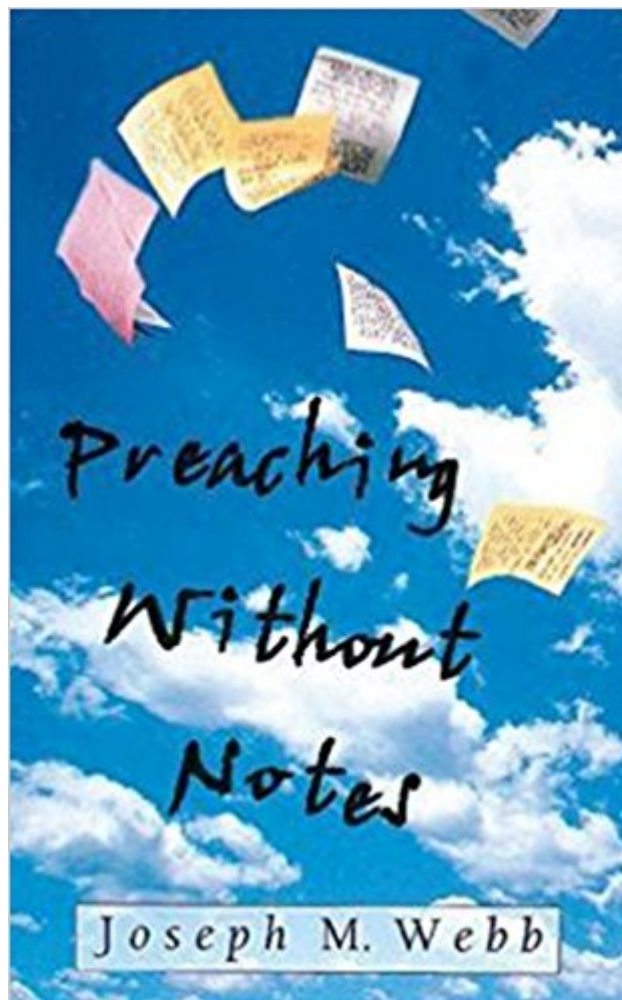


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# Preaching Without Notes



## Synopsis

In this important book, Webb makes two central claims. First, that effective preaching without a manuscript is not a matter of talent as much as it is a matter of preparation. Preachers can learn the practices and disciplines that make it possible to deliver articulate, thoughtfully crafted sermons, not from a written page, but as a natural, spontaneous act of oral communication. Throughout the book, the author offers specific examples including a transcript of a sermon preached without manuscript or notes. Second, that the payoff of learning to preach without a manuscript is nothing less than sermons that more effectively and engagingly give witness to the good news.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Professor of Communication Studies, Gardner-Webb University

I preach weekly and have long endeavored to preach without notes. I've pared down the notes that I do use to just a couple of pages, mostly an outline, and some quotes and possible illustrations to use in the sermon. However I've wondered if there might be another step to be taken in freeing myself from notes. This book definitely took me to a deeper level of conviction of the value of preaching without notes. The author presents a powerful argument for the supremacy of speaking extemporaneously--he argues from the point of view of the preacher and the listener and makes a compelling case. He proceeds to give excellent instruction in how exactly a preacher can move from note-preaching to note-less preaching, outlines a study/preparation strategy that covers the process on a daily basis, from Tuesday all the way to the pulpit on Sunday. He offers great pastoral advice, too, such as suggesting that the preaching NOT work on the sermon the day before he preaches,

but instead devote the bulk of his preparation time to prayer, and, after the sermon, to avoid becoming entangled in introspection and assessment of the sermon, but to simply relax, "forget" the sermon, and begin to think through the next week's sermon. He even prepares the preacher for the weekly "blues" encountered immediately after the sermon. Every preacher will relate to that! I rated this work at a "4" instead of "5" for the following reasons: 1. I believe the sermon preparation should arise out of the text being preached BEFORE the sermon's ideas are developed. The author gives too much room for private rumination and imagination to be the basis of the sermon's thrust, instead of the intended purpose of the author. The original authors did have overriding purposes in the writing of their portions of Scripture. I did not sense that the author gave much care to the discovery of those purposes. Therefore, there is little/no attention given to the value of the original languages being studied along with the sermon. If a preacher is blessed to have studied biblical Greek and Hebrew, he/she should regularly put that investment to work in his/her sermon preparation. 2. The author's final sermon does not seem to bring the listener to the Word of God, or to God Himself, but seems to leave the listener with a sort of pep-talk, encouraging the listener to "write their own gospel", as did Mark (in this example-sermon). I believe a sermon faithfully preached should always leave the listener assured of his/her own inability to accomplish anything, really, but also of the supreme grace of God that is ever-present on behalf of, and within, the life of the believer--and therefore the only satisfying source of power and accomplishment in life. In short, the author does not seem to preach as biblicentric a sermon as I think is proper and most effective. HOWEVER, despite the above observations, for the nuts and bolts of preaching without notes, this book is better than any I have read, from any tradition of Christian preaching. Though I found the author's apparent diminished emphasis on the text itself in sermon preparation and delivery, his principles and instruction for simply preaching without the use of notes is invaluable and useful to all preachers who desire to do the same. He writes in an engaging, clear style. I highly recommend the book.

OK, I confess, I keep an outline handy, but at my age, memorizing things word for word is out of my reach. And having an outline keeps my level of stress lower .... I doubt I will be giving up this crutch anytime soon. Actually, today I keep that outline on my iPad, so I don't even print it out. However, by handling the "manuscript" the way the author suggests, breaking it into blocks of information, I can normally go through my sermons without a lot of looking at my outline. I was fortunate to have a pastor who did preach without notes during my internship, so this book supplemented my experiences under his guidance. A key point emphasized by the author isn't

simply just preaching "off the cuff," he advocates spending even more time in preparation. Sermons preached using his method will be both interesting and well thought out. At the same time, it allows your listeners to spend more time interacting with you visually and emotionally. This book could easily be titled "speaking without notes." It is well written.

This was a really good read. After reading *Preaching by Keller*, and communicating for a change by Andy Stanley, it was good to see a method for preaching without notes at all and thinking of ways to incorporate both other methods into my own.

I have been preaching without notes for 15 years, but this helped me figure out some other ways to approach it. But more to the point, I urged my co-pastor to read the book and to start preaching without notes. It has changed her preaching from good to fabulous, much more engaging. Since she has eye-contact with us all the time, people get very caught up in what she is saying and she tells stories, etc. much more naturally than when she read her sermons.

Easy to follow as it was colloquial. I read this for a two-week class so unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to follow all the steps as they described them. It's a Monday through Sunday program he suggests, and we had about five days to prep our sermons. The only criticism I have was most sermons I've heard use one scripture passage. The book's example sermon at the end was a thematic sermon using many passages. In the course, however, we were required to use a single scripture so the book didn't translate as well as it could have.

I like the thesis of this book. It gets a little tedious in the middle part, where explaining the point takes more time and effort than doing it. But I'll use this for one of my texts in preaching class. Good stuff, well conceived and faithfully rendered.

I read this book as required reading in a homiletics course. However, it was quite a read! Offering a good, concise methodology of constructing a sermon that can be used with good results even with written or note-based sermons, it still managed both to be able to help you make the seemingly impossible possible, as well as to provide you with the necessary inspiration to change preaching style. It has the rare quality of making you believe that you actually can do what it says as well as making you do what it says. It was a paradigm change for me, at least, and I recommend it to all preachers.

Great book! The premise is obvious from the title, and it becomes exhaustive at some points, but definitely worth the effort to either reduce your note drastically, or eliminate them altogether

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