



Transcriptions

Using Human Learning Principles in Preaching & Teaching Ted Ward

Annotation: *Fuller Theological Seminary, Extension Conference for preachers and Christian education workers at Christ Church, Oakbrook, IL, October 22, 1980.* Identifying himself as a developmentalist (as opposed to a behaviorist), Ted Ward describes three basic principles in human learning: motivation, the organization of meaning, and praxis. He then illustrates how to use these principles in communication, specifically preaching and teaching.



I've pulled out a clipping that I want to share with you because it has to do with matters of life and death, and human welfare, and the nature of our world; all of which sounds like ministerial people ought to be tuned. It's a Dateline Chicago, Associated Press item and I'll read it verbatim and resist, if I possibly can, the temptation to editorialize. Quote: "If you are kidnapped, ask for fried chicken to eat.' This was among the tips from FBI agents at a businessman's law seminar last week." Quote, "'Get greasy fried chicken and don't wash your hands,' they said, 'then you'll leave fingerprints everywhere.' The agents said, 'Kidnapping, hostage situations, and extortion have replaced skyjacking as today's fad crimes'".

I didn't know there was fad crime, but you learn a lot of things in newspaper. "'One business executive who was kidnapped and later escaped actually left greasy fingerprints behind,' said Thomas H. Green, Special Agent from the Rapid City, South Dakota, FBI Bureau. 'He was what we call *an ideal victim*'". I find that reassuring that our FBI, faithful in peace and war, sees the difference

between ideal and non-ideal victims. And, of course, we, as upstanding citizens, would always want to be seen in the newspaper, especially, as *ideal victims* so the fried chicken—it's really very concrete and very practical. "Leaving fingerprints," he said, "will immeasurably aid a successful prosecution and conviction. Now, would you let me off the hook?"

I'm going to talk about some principles of human learning as they relate to preaching and teaching, and that can get theoretical in a hurry. So I thought maybe it might be a little more substantive if I give the session a sub-title and, although it has some very, very queasy theology in it, I suggest that the sub-title is, Two Magic Questions and Two Card Tricks. I figured that would be helpful if you went home and people say what did you learn at the workshop? You could say well, I learned two magic questions and two card tricks, and see how long you last.

Quite often I'm asked to talk about what we know about human learning. What's the frontier in human learning research? What sorts of things does it mean to practitioners, to persons who are trying to work effectively with people who are in the development process? A fair question, and yet one that quite often is very, very difficult to deal with in any kind of $1 + 2 = 4$ sort of a formula.

Many of the things that are dealt with in research on human learning tend to be very abstract. They tend to deal with questions that are rather far removed from the practical arena. And, as a matter of fact, whenever we try to make principles in learning concrete, we tend to talk about communication and we tend to talk about effective relating to people because, really, that's where the action is. You could be the most learned person in the world with reference to what are the learning processes? How does the mind work? All the rest of this, and still be a very, very ineffective teacher. In fact, universities are made up of quite a number of such persons. Very learned and yet not readily able to apply in any practical way the things that they are aware of, the things that they know about, the things that they can explain scientifically. There's a great deal of difference between knowing how something works and being able to help other people use it. So, therefore, I have a reputation among people, especially in the theological circles, as being a person concerned as much with communication as anything else. In fact, a lot of the mail comes to my attention at the University, Department of Communication. And my friends over in the College of Communication usually scrawl obscene gestures across the covers as they send things on to my office because, as a matter of fact, I'm not in communication in the academic world. I'm in education and human development in the academic world. And yet at the applied level as I work with people who such as yourselves, must confront day-by-day human beings with whom you're trying to communicate effectively; whose learning processes you are deeply involved in; whose welfare is a burden and concern to you. Such people quite often are less concerned about the esoterics of the latest research than they are about the practices of the so what do we do?

There are some principles that we can extrapolate from the research on learning and the understandings of learning processes. However, the way you extrapolate them, the way you draw out meaning depends an awful lot of what kind of presuppositions you bring in the first place. In fact, two different people in the academic world looking at exactly the same data, if they come from two different schools of thought, will see different meanings in the data. So whenever I'm in a situation like this, I'm always hard-pressed to decide exactly how best to relate: one, to the practical; two, be faithful as I possibly can to the concrete of research realities. And I must confess to you some of my biases in order to be faithful to those two purposes:

First, I am a developmentalist; I'm not a behaviorist. That may be meaningless to you, but to anyone else listening over your shoulder or someone else in your situation who is a behaviorist versus a developmentalist, may look at the very same phenomena that I look at and see some very different things about what they mean. So I warn you, I'm a developmentalist. I think, for a Christian, this is a rather appropriate posture. I would not say it's the only Christian posture in reference to development and learning, but I think it is an eminently Christian posture because it acknowledges that what is in person is in process. And a person is not a thing to which you add other kinds of learnings. So, as I see it, whenever we're communicating, we are not necessarily adding to person; we are providing circumstances in which person can develop.

All right, enough of that as really basic abstraction. Let me get on with a few practicalities that leads me to. First of all, I think in view of how to make the best of an hour, I'm going to reduce this very global area to just three basic principles or three elemental propositions: first one dealing with Motivation, second one dealing with Motives, and the third one dealing with Praxis—Motivation, Meanings, and Praxis.

It is very difficult to talk for very long about learning and even about communication without getting into the question of motivation. What causes people to want to do? What causes people to want to be? What causes people to want to learn? I think Art set us off on the right foot this morning when he pointed out that there are two realms of motivation: there's an internal realm and there's an external realm. And, as a matter of fact, the external realm really is a system of pressures that can be brought to bear to tap whatever is incipient internal. I cannot give you motivation, but I can put you under enough pressure where your motivation will become strong enough that you'll act on it. And many times when we say we've got to motivate people we're really talking about setting up the pressure situation in which what we control as influences will tap on, turn on, connect with, what is in person. Now that's partly a developmentalist point of view, but it's also a very practical kind of thing. To assume that motivation exists in persons is a far better place to begin than to assume that motivation exists in leadership and must be given to, communicated to, persons.

As a matter of fact, we can account for virtually everything that a human being does in terms of internal motives being played out one way or another. And we can account for virtually everything that's done when people are allegedly motivating people in terms of what they are doing to the contingency system around that person that makes better connection with what kinds of drives, forces, and needs are in that person and are thus being released, called for, were given an opportunity or, as some cases, being given them simply as a matter of survival. For example, lots of people have a strong internal motive to be done with a speech somewhere in the order of 30 to 45 minutes. And that motivation becomes very, very strong and there's not an awful lot you can do about it to the contrary. Motivations, then, exists within persons. As a matter of fact, they can't be given to people and they arise out of needs. That is really the first great principle that we can learn and there's virtually nothing in the learning research to the contrary.

The second area of principle is in Meanings. The great Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, who died just about a month ago (a great loss to the world, but a very old and very fruitful man in his life), Jean Piaget was the most influential organizer of what we know about how meanings are organized in a person's life. And one of his basic axioms, through a lifetime of study of the learning processes is that people don't *get* meanings; they *form* meanings. They don't get meanings; they form meanings. Learners construct their own meanings.

Two people can be in a given experience and come away with two meanings from that experience. Can you nod your head and say yes, I've seen it? Two people can be in exactly the same experience and come away with contrasting meanings of that experience. Two people can hear the same sermon and go away with two, even contrasting, positions on what has been said. Where does that come from? The answer is it comes out of the perceptions that control the meanings that a person forms around their experience. Piaget says again, meanings are constructed in the person. And all we can do is arrange the life experience of the person so that there is increasingly a closing-in on more and more common experience so the people, in fact, can share more and more, over time, a common meaning-world. One of the biggest problems in mass communication is that people bring such widely disparate meaning-worlds to their perception that they're going to take away very different meanings. And, as a matter of fact, in many of our churches we approach preaching as a mass media kind of an event and, thus, we can have very little control over the meanings that people take away.

If I said that the bottom-line of all of this principle is that there are perceptual differences that control the understanding of people, I would be using some awfully big language. But what it really says is that all a person has to go on is his or her own previous experience and understanding; that's all we got to go on. And every new information, every new encounter, every new experience has to be interpreted through that filtering system. You say well, how do you ever get people released from the limitation of that? And the only answer is, new experience. And much new experience of value occurs as other people are increasingly in my contact zone. One of the greatest arguments for an ecumenical view of Christian theology is that we increase the frame of reference as we encounter people with a different frame of reference. We increase our frame of reference. Some people are afraid of other people whose frame of reference is different because the assumption is that all frames of reference compete and, ultimately, you can't have it both ways. Well, there's some truth in that, but that's really not the basic process that's occurring. What happens is that in the encounter with other people, one's own frame of reference becomes larger. It does not inherently demand leaving something in order to take something else. Sometimes we simply discover the gaps in our own perceptual processes.

Let me give you one concrete illustration. I believe, as an historical observer of theological development in the in the Christian era, that one of the ways you account graciously for denominations (and, by the way, there are some ungracious ways to account for denominations) but one of the gracious ways you account for denominations is to observe that no human being is as large as God's grace; and that all human beings, because of the perceptual framework of their culture, are going to see in God's grace particulars of God's grandeur. And they are going to—in their sense of worship, in their responsiveness, in their Christian experience—they're going to reflect back that which they are particularly attuned to. Some people are much more attuned to the symbol world because of the nature of their culture, and they respond back in highly liturgical kinds of ways responding to that part of God that calls up a kind of orderly worship on the, really a fixation on the grandeur of God. Others, because of experiential frames of reference, they see God working through them to other people and they interpret their Christian experience only in terms of their outreach to others, and every sermon, every word, has to be in terms of an outreach. So you hear the same sermon outreach oriented over and over and over again. To them that is just as much worship as to the liturgical person. And, as a matter of fact if you look closely at it, repetition exists in both modes. What I'm saying is that, historically, this very principle of meanings, perceptual framework accounts for what we have today in denominational difference to a great extent. Now if

we're very, very narrow in this, we say yes, but there is still a right and wrong, and we're right. Granted, and that proves my point.

The third principle is that of Praxis—a word that the leftists around the world today are using and, therefore, some of us are afraid that we might be branded as 'left' if we use the word. By the way, I've discovered that Communists in Brazil eat spinach which is one of the better arguments to give your child about why to avoid it. But you don't need that. Each culture has its own ways of arguing that you shouldn't eat spinach. We really don't need to say we can't touch something because another faction that we're afraid of uses it. What we mean by praxis goes way back behind the Communist use of the term (however, it's vague; they go to the same root) and argues that what learning is made up of is a relationship between action and reflection. And this really is a sort of frontier in the area of learning.

Much of formal education, much of the instructional purposes, and the instructional activities to teach historically (especially since the Renaissance) has been fixed on this matter of mental process. When you talk about learning, you're talking about the mind. Talking about what does the brain do. That's a very limited notion of what learning is all about because we know from principle two that all learning is encounters with new elements and new symbols which then draw on the past experiences of persons. The encounters of persons in action itself is an input and reflection is an input. It is something like the Oriental yin and the yang where the sweet and sour affect each other to make each more meaningful. Now there's a whole Oriental philosophical frame of reference here that says you would not understand pleasure if it were not for pain. You have to have the both in a cyclical complement in order really to have a meaning. Well, exactly. And some of the things we're discovering today that are very practical have to do with the fact that, if you continue to deal with people only at the intellectual level—at the verbal specificity of ideas—you're going to miss people. People have to experience things. People have to do things. They have to, then, reflect on what they're doing. As a matter of fact, I couldn't help but think as Art talked—I'm awful glad I got here this morning for Art's talk because there's an awful lot of what he's talking about in that first presentation that is an illustration of what I'm driving at with this little more theoretical frame of reference. And when he talks about the church in the world, I see that not only in terms of its being an obligation for the Christian to be salt and light and into the action realm of the world; that the church is not church when it is purely internalized and turned inward to focus on me and mine and thee and thine, but it is doing the work of Christ in community, in the environment of the world.

Now, the point that I would add to all of that is that that is really where the learning takes place, as the reflection on the truth of God finds its actions in the realm of experience in life, and that feeds back on enriched reflection. So when he says to the dear woman why not go on that board, you will have action. Why stay purely in the contemplative mode having only reflection? We need both. And it is in the enriching of that praxis cycle that learning takes place most effectively. And that, by the way, is one of the better arguments for saying to Maude—by the way, Maude is in your church; she's in mine, too—Maude is a person who won't teach a Sunday school class because she needs more Sunday school experience herself. She hasn't learned enough yet. Well, the problem is that Maude will never learn enough at the reflective intellectual level. Maude is going to have to do something with what she already knows in order that there be in her life enough action that more reflection really makes sense.

You take a look at the way Jesus dealt with his disciples across that very intensive three years. He involved them in living experiences of a variety of sorts. He never really cut them off. He did not withdraw with them. They stayed involved. He insisted on taking them along, even to dinner parties. I can't help but imagine that there were a number of times when people would come to him and say: "Well, we'd like to have you come, but I'm not sure about that bunch of fisherman," you know, "and especially that guy over there that nobody trusts." There were one or two of those, too. And Jesus says: "Uh-uh, I'm sorry, they come along, too, that's part of their experience." I wonder how many of us, as leaders in the church, are looking at our own people the way Jesus looked at his disciples? They come along too, that's part of their experience. So many times the leader in the church becomes the representative of the church insulating the rest of the people of God, supposedly, from those encounters because maybe they're not ready for them yet, etc. Well, I'm going to meddling now.

In order to make learning principles practical, you must understand the way we use those principles. It is not enough to know. There is, even in your development and in your experience, a praxis dimension. You've got to be able to see practical ways to use them. Which is one of the reasons why, when we're talking about learning, we go to those forms of oral communication that are common among pastors, ministers, teachers, leaders within the church—mostly the monologue, as a matter of fact, and I don't want to say too much nasty about the monologue, but some things might pop out.

There really is a value here in thinking about communication as the realm in which we make principles practical—principles of learning, principles of development. Or, to put it even more concretely, in order to learn, in order to make principles practical, you must decide what to do about them. How? When? and Where? And it's in that process of being able to say, what do I do about it, that principles become something more than just so much more esoteric stuff that you store away in order to, on the right occasion, appear to be a bit more learned which I define as a non-purpose of education.

Let me just chat about the monologue with you for a moment. Monologue has a kind of a bad name right now and some of us are not sure what to do about it because we know that an awful lot of what we do in preaching and in teaching, in fact, is monologue. Here I stand, you know, doing a big monologue, and I should tell you that monologues are bad? Look, I let these people talk me into doing a monologue. Now I'm trying to augment it a little bit (and it's partly their idea that we do that, too) and that is to give you something concrete so that you can do at least something with the ideas. Write them down, you know. At least try to pick out of what I'm saying things that help fulfill some of the teasers that I've got on that page. But still that's pretty low level. It's not as healthy as dialogue, but do you know what? Good communicators know how to use a monologue. Aren't you glad I said that? Because if I said anything else, you'd turn me off right now because you believe (and I think I'd go with you on this) that, as a matter of fact, there is such a thing as good oral communication on a one-to-many basis—one-to-many meaning what happens when you get behind a platform or microphone or pulpit or a radio transmission or television.

Let me divide monologues, however, into three species. And you won't find anything on the note sheet about this, this is free. The three species of monologue we ought to bear in mind because sometimes we're using one species when we really ought to be using a different. There are three. One is entertainment—entertainment monologues. How many of you ever watched Johnny Carson? Don't put your hands up. We wouldn't want your parishioners to see *that*. When you watch Johnny

Carson he invariably starts the evening with a monologue, both times I saw it. Now a monologue of an entertainment sort better be good because there's one great characteristic of the monologue in an entertainment mode and that is that people will turn it on or turn it off. They'll make categorical judgments about the person as being an entertaining speaker or not. There's what's called the Lenny Bruce phenomenon, and that is that there're an awful lot of people that are turned off by a Lenny Bruce, but there're just enough weird souls that are turned on to make it a very lucrative racket. Now I would not for a moment draw any parallels between the Lenny Bruce phenomenon and certain big-named preachers. So not doing that I'm going to try real hard to avoid suggesting, for example, that there is an audience for any kind of junk you put on late night television. The problem is that it may be a very distinct audience, a very narrow audience; but it's going to be a self-selective audience. And one of the big problems in being a monologist in the pulpit is that some people are going to come back and other people are not. And the decision is probably not going to be in terms of the quality of the meat and the substance of what's happening in that experience, but in terms of the entertainment value *per se*.

Now I don't know whether you've ever run into this or not. I'm sure it's not true of your church or my church, but I have heard that there are churches that are built around a big pulpiteer and people drive for miles to entertain themselves at such churches to be able to go home and say: "Wasn't that really thrilling?" Of course, you and I don't know anything about that and we wouldn't want to push that one too hard. But just be aware that the entertainment mode of monologue better be good, and it will only be good in terms of some narrow band of perceivers who like that particular mode of monologue. And if you're really good at it, like Johnny Carson, you can really make a mint.

But let's get on to a couple of the other modes. There's the ceremonial mode of monologue. One of the characteristics of the ceremonial mode is that it's totally predictable. Now I usually use when I'm among teachers, I use an illustration I wouldn't dare use here and that is the predictable monologue that occurs in a funeral. Or, if you please, the eulogy: the saying of good things about somebody who really doesn't deserve it again. But among preachers I wouldn't dare mention this one because it might be too sensitive and I really am not trying to be nasty about. I just simply say that whether or not it is religious ritual or some other kind of ritual, we do go into certain social situations where we expect a monologue, and it better be on target. It better be like what we expect. It doesn't have to edify us, it doesn't even have to entertain us, but it better be right.

Now, again, you might know of some situations where preaching comes off a lot like the ceremonial monologue. All the right things have been said, and if they're not, Millie (by the way, Millie may be also in your church; she's in mine). Millie is the one who ticks off whether or not all the principles of the faith have been mentioned in each sermon. Do you have one? And if you don't tick those off somewhere, you haven't done your ceremonial duty. And there are some people who get so they appreciate preaching and even teaching in the classroom in its ceremonial terms. You got to say all the right things and you got to get it all in there every time.

Now some of you are not up against that problem; you've never run it into it. So let's get on with the third one which is the instructional monologue which has to do with the audience's willingness to be led into thought. And, boy, that a toughie. Instructional monologue doesn't occur simply because someone has tried to make it instructional. It occurs because someone wants it to be instructional; that wanting has to be on the side of the learner, the audience, the congregation in the sense of preaching. Now in order to make that instructional monologue effective, you've really got

to be very, very concerned about what is the expectation of that audience, that congregation, that group of hearers, that group of learners. By the way, I'm going to use those terms kind of interchangeably and when I talk about learners or congregation, I'm assuming the church-based monologue of an instructional sort that has attempted to edify, by one way or another, addressing peoples' attention through that monologue to things that are important. At that point, the sermon of that sort shares much in common with any other teaching act of a monologue sort intended to edify, help people to better understand, better comprehend, and so forth.

And from here on today, I'm going to be talking primarily about the instructional monologue and some suggestions about how we can understand better how to make it work more effectively. By the way, on this instructional monologue, one of the key issues that sometimes we overlook is that people can hear something as instructionally valid for themselves. They hear the meaning for them. Other times, they only hear the meaning for somebody else. Do you follow what I'm saying? I will admit to being the originator of the hypothesis of the L-shaped Amen which some of you, at this point, may not have come across. This is where you're going to be a lot better off for having been here today. You're going to have heard the hypothesis of the L-shaped Amen which is one way to interpret the occasional murmured Amen that you hear from somewhere between the 2nd and the 9th row. Whenever you hear that Amen or see the nodding of the head that's, you know, in a more quiet sedate church really saying silently, "Amen, Pastor," it sometimes is an L-shaped Amen. "A-a-a-men, preacher, give it him. He needs it." The L-shaped Amen that takes one out of the situation and sees what's being said only in terms of another.

And there are a awful of things that happen that make people very, very appreciative for your ministry that, in fact, are L-shaped in their response. "We've got a lot of people here who needed to hear that, pastor." Did you ever have that happen to you going out of church on Sunday morning? Sure you have. How do you handle that? I do a bit of preaching and every now and then I know whom I'm talking to and I know what the situation is and I come right between the eyes! When a person defends himself/herself is to back off and say: "Whew, he needed that; she needed that," you know, "Go ahead, give it to them," but not me. And I think sometimes people are not even conscious in these situations of the relevancy to them because they are so fixated on the strengths, weaknesses of others. Remember what Jesus said one time about the disciples and the question of taking toothpicks out of each other's eyes? That's the biblical precedent for the L-shaped Amen.

There are three things that cause an awful lot of communication breakdown in this kind of instructional or educational monologue. One, the problem of listening. And, of course, when you put that one down you say: "Yeah, that's my problem. I can't get people to listen." I'm sorry, that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the listening of the monologist. One of the characteristics of a monologist is that he tends to talk so much that he feels that that really is where the ministry is at. I submit that a monologist has to be an awfully good listener. A teacher, a preacher has to be an awfully careful listener to other people. And if there's any one point that the social science research shows as communication breakdown, whether we're talking about in family or in congregation or even in mass media communicators, is the person who quits listening to his audience and starts flying as if on instruments in a different ethereal world out of contact with those he's trying to communicate with. Listening.

Second: perceptual differences. You know, we have expectations of people. All people have expectations of us. Sometimes those expectations are situational. Art DeKruyter,¹ this morning, talked about one of the stratagems that was characteristic of the development of this church and that was that they tried to understand the community. They tried to understand what this community was trying to be, and they tried to be a church that was appropriate to this particular set of aspirations. They weren't trying to pass judgment on what this community was trying to be; they were trying to minister to it. And, by the way, that's one of the secrets: try to minister to people, not pass judgment on people. They were taking as a given what this community wanted to see itself to be and they tried to fit into that. That's a marvelous example of fitting into the perceptual framework of a set of people in a particular place. You've got to accommodate what you can accommodate. This whole question that he raised about the difference between a specialized ministry and a general practice (a GP ministry) is very much à *propos* of what I'm talking about.

Sometimes we do, as sermonizers, the same thing only in an even more dangerous way, and that is we talk only in the frame of reference, the perceptual frame of reference, of a particular set of people. And we tend to look back time and again and again to the same people who are on our wavelength and we're on their wavelength; we take our satisfactions from them and we come away saying well, Peter was happy with it; Alice was happy with it. The people I really count on to give me feedback, they got it. Well, the problem is that Peter and Alice and some of these others may be not representative of the whole; and certainly, in no case, will they be generalizable of the whole. A good communicator has to accommodate perceptual differences of people. Jesus was pretty good at that. In fact, he was tremendous at that. And he often talked in stories and allowed people to take from the stories things that made sense in their own frame of reference. The disciples fussed at him. At least on one occasion, they say: "You've got to be more explicit about some of this generalization. You're using parables in a generalized way and people aren't getting it." And I think probably what they were really concerned about underneath was that they aren't all getting exactly the same message from it. I really have to think that's part of our anxiety in speaking in parables. And Jesus said: "They will get it; they will get it. It will make sense in terms of their understanding and their needs and I have designed what I'm saying in such a way that the several things that are heard are all similarly valid." Now some of our problem lies in when we aren't that clever about our communication and some of the things we say can be heard in a complete opposite of what we're intending to say. And if you don't care for the perceptual differences of your people, you quite often are defeating yourself because some people are hearing the very opposite of what you're trying to deal with. You've got to (a) listen to people, and (b) do that in the context of needing to tune in to their perceptual frame of reference. We're going to give you some practical illustrations on how to deal with that.

The third of the breakdowns is what in the layman's language today is called talking past one another—the tendency we have to have everybody say something; but it just goes right past as ships in the night never really making good contact. Everybody seems to be communicating in the sense of sending, but nobody seems to be doing any particular receiving. And sometimes you have good discussions that are like this. They seem to be good, they're noisy, and everybody has a chance to speak their piece, but you come away from that feeling empty. You say what did we gain? Nobody really engaged in the same sets of ideas. You've got to be very sensitive to the possibility that people will talk past each other and you may be at the crux of it.

¹ An early pastor and one of the founders of Christ Church, Oak Brook, IL. See <https://www.cc-ob.org/story.aspx?storyid=120>

Secret: When a person values answers more than he or she values the questions, you're going to talk past each other. If you value the answers, you know, I'm here to give them good answers—if you value answers more than you value clarity of questions, you are going to have a situation in which you talk past the people you're trying to communicate with. That's why I say you may have a congregation in which people are talking past each other. Maybe the discussion level is fairly high; maybe the people feel fairly open, but nothing is really happening. You've gone to workshops and learned how to get more dynamics and dialogue. You've gone to workshops and helped people learn how to speak up, assert themselves, communicate, and still they're talking past each other. It may be that you've set a model yourself of being so preoccupied with good answers that you're not really attending adequately to the necessity of clarifying questions and issues.

Well, I promised you that I would give you some magic questions and some card tricks. And you'll have to pardon me if this may seem trite, but I wanted to be as concrete as I can. Would you take the card that's on your table (and there are a number of them there) and we're going to, right now, expose ourselves to Card Trick #1. You have cards on your table, or I will give you some. Each person will need only one card, but please put a numeral one on one side and numeral two on the other because we're going to do two different card tricks. You don't need your name on this; that's not the issue. It's a way to think. I'm going to ask you a question and I'm going to give you just a couple of minutes to jot—so kind of get tuned in and get ready to go. You're not going to have to show this to anybody. You're not going to have to speak about it. You're not going to have to stand up and answer a question. It's just for you to think with. It's Card Trick #1—a card trick that I call CQI and I'll tell you later what that means.

But if you will, please, answer this question: what do you hope I'll talk about in the next few minutes as we try to get concrete about communication? What do you hope I'll talk about? Is there a theme, is there a topic is there a question that you really hope I get a chance to talk about in the next few minutes? Would you jot that down? That's all I want on that card. This little card trick I often use and, by the way, as with any card trick if you show it to the same people over and over and over again it loses its effectiveness, if you know anything about card tricks. I have a couple of friends who really do these card tricks. Make things fly in the air, things appear out of the deck, and so forth. And after I've seen a guy's card tricks about three or four times, I've kind of had it. I'm not suggesting something you do every day, but something that you do occasionally in order to really help people get in the habit of focusing.

This card trick CQI, which stands for Concerns, Questions, and Issues, has as its purpose the pre-organizing of people's expectation frame of reference so that they really have some commitment to what's going to happen next. Whether or not as in a big group (and this is a fairly big group in a small hour) whether or not they really get a chance to do much interacting and feedback on that, people are better off for having thought about where they really have needs; where they really have either a concern or a question or see an issue. They're going to hear more effectively. They're going to be tuned better. They're going to be able to say it is or isn't meeting my need. It is or isn't on my target. And you may say why I sure wouldn't want to do that! Oh, sure you do. Sure you do because then you begin to find out where it is that, in fact, you are hitting and where it is that you're missing what it is that people are really concerned about. So this business of putting a card every now and then in the bulletin on Sunday morning—and, by the way, I never put them in the rack. They sound too much like some of the other mechanical uses we make of the rack. But a little blank 3 by 5 (and, by the way, 3 by 5 cards; I wish I had stock in the factories because I keep encouraging people to use them, and I expect a royalty every now and then but it doesn't come in).

But 3 by 5 cards are really great; 3 by 5s are a lot better than slips of paper. For one thing, you can write on them on your knee or on your lap; you don't have to search around for something to lay them on, you know, like you do the slip of paper. Furthermore, they're a little more concrete. It's a little harder to throw down a card than it is a slip of paper. Slips of paper look so expendable; cards look so real. Furthermore, you can collect them and you can sort them. And that's not a bad idea either, especially on Card Trick #1. Wouldn't it be interesting, after we get done here, to have you give me all those cards so I can go away and really make a judgment as to whether or not, at this point after I've already had almost 30 minutes to tune you in: What are your concerns? What are you tuned to? What should I be trying to do right now? You see, I don't know you very well, but I would if I worked with you more than three times. Do you follow me? Because I would be getting that kind of feedback. Even if you doomed me to deal with you only in a monologue situation, I would have ways such as Card Trick #1 and Card Trick #2 to really find out what it is that you're tuned to and next time around I come closer and closer and closer. Communication is not the same thing as shooting a rifle where all you do is get better and better at aiming. Communication is more like a cyclic process like artillery on the field where you get your feedback on where the last shot hit and you re-aim and you fire again. And the observer again gives you feedback and you re-aim and every shot gets better because the aim is a controlled-loop system. That's what you ought to be doing in your congregation, not getting to be an expert rifleman but setting up, if you please, an artillery range where you have a closed-loop feedback and you get data on whether or not people are in the pattern.

Now let me jump to Magic Question #1. A magic question is something that if you use it and you ask it, certain things will happen in your communication that may even affect you like as if you had discovered a magic answer. Magic Question #1 is, what do you think of when you hear _____? and then fill in the blank. Now this magic question is a great one to use in order to discover the wavelength of learners, especially their semantics and their preoccupations. And when do you use it? You use it in situations where you're planning to speak about something; you're planning to address a sermon to something; you're planning to start a series on something such as prayer, such as faith, such as social action—I don't care what it is—to ask people, generally in conversational mode, (and this Magic Question #1 work works much better in conversational mode) ask lots of people the same question. I recommend again the 3 by 5 card that you carry around the theme that you're planning to start the next sermon series on. And that every now and then you pull that thing out as you're talking with somebody and say: "Hey, let me tell you, Bob. I'm planning to do a sermon series beginning probably next month on the theme of prayer. Here it is: "What do you think of when you hear 'prayer?'" What you're really saying is, what is your semantic framework? What are your associations with the notion of prayer? What is it that you are interested in when you hear 'prayer'? Now that's not quite the same thing as saying I want to ask you what you know about prayer. That won't work; that's too threatening. You don't give people tests in oral conversations. In conversations you can, however, say what's on your mind and let the other person tell you what is on her mind or his mind. Try that. Magic Question #1. Really spend time conversationally with your people. Work it in as a side item, hence, the reminder card. You know, you're on another subject and you've dealt with that. You pull out a—"Oh, yes. I want to be sure to ask about this matter. I'm going to get into this matter of, look at the Christian in the social world; Christian in politics," whatever the issue is, "what do you think of, Frank, when I mention this?"

Magic Question #2 is, how do *you* answer? Or looking at it a little more precisely, what is *your* conclusion about? There are lots of situations where you can use this. Generally, it occurs in

discussion groups or other kinds of multiple person interactive situations, committee meetings, but you can also use it sometimes even at the door after sermons. How do you answer that question?

Now it has a variation. Magic Question #2 has what I call the, The Doorway Variation. The doorway variation is a lot of fun, especially if you have multiple persons standing at the door and, ultimately, a person can choose which line to get in. If you are engaged in what's called, The Single Trap approach where everybody has to go past your hand, then this one is a bad one because it backs up the congregation. But if you got a multiple dump kind of church where you let them go out more than one way and they can choose to go through your line or not. Generally speaking, the people who go through your line (rather than going through the Assistant or the Choir Director or the Chairman of Deacons, whatever) the person who goes through your line is the person who wants to tell you something or assure you of something or remind you of something or get stroked. These people have a high frequency (in my observation experience and conversations with other pastors) a high frequency of compliments as their bag of tricks. That was a great sermon. Yeah. How many of you have ever heard that? Three, four, five, seven people have heard that one. Well, the rest of you have hope. Does that you make feel good? Sure, it makes you feel good. Does it make you feel too good? And the answer is probably yes. It doesn't mean anything; let me tell you that. It does not mean anything. Do not take any comfort from it. Do not take any satisfaction from it, but it's a marvelous lead for Magic Question #2. What do *you* think? What is *your* conclusion? And here's the way you ask it. You ask it by saying what did *you* hear? What did *you* make of what I said? You say, well, that would really slow down the exhaust of the congregation as they're going out. Exactly. That's why I say you must have a multiple approach to getting them out after the sermon. But occasionally you will discover if you do this every now and then that different people will get into your line. Some of the glad-handers will avoid you because they don't like the question because they really don't have an answer. And I'm not suggesting you use it simply to embarrass people. In fact, it's a good idea to have nice way to say this to Alice: "Alice, that's fine. Thank you very much," and then turn to the next person. But, the occasional person who will engage you with that will probably come back again to that line and the word will get around that every now and then the pastor really would like some feedback, which isn't a bad idea.

I find that it's very edifying to find out promptly what it is that people carried away as their conclusion after a particular communication experience; whether it's a teaching situation or this kind of an educational monologue or a sermon or whatever; getting some kind of prompt feedback that tells you how the person who is the listener has been able to think for himself/herself. The purpose of Magic Question #2 whether you use it in group meetings or whether you use it at the door of the church is the purpose of encouraging people to think for themselves.

Now I don't really believe that any of us would want our people not to be able to think for themselves. However, sometimes it's a fair accusation and sometimes I've heard parishioners make it—that the pastor really isn't interested in my thinking or myself as long as I know what he thinks and I buy it. I'm not talking about your church or my church but I'm talking to those other guys again.

The second card trick. Turn your card over, please, to #2, side two. The name of this card trick (and don't write this on the card) but the name of this card trick is 'before I say, what do you say?' And this can sometimes be an embarrassing, but very edifying way, to tie together even a sermon or some other kind of educational monologue such as this one. If I were to ask you to come down to just one word or one key phrase that puts much of what we've said in a nutshell as advice

to the communicator, what would that word or phrase be? Not a sentence. What would that word or phrase be? See on your note sheet, you probably noticed the last line says, the key word. The key word; that's what I'm asking. Before I say, what do you say? Before I say what I think the key word of all of this is, what do you say it is? On the basis of what we've said and the basis of the way you thought about it, what is the key word in this particular hour? Take a minute—a word or a phrase. The name of this card trick, before I say, what do you say. And it's the important act of letting people think and write for themselves in a non-threatening way. I think sometimes we expect that when people write things down that they're either doing it purely on their own organization of notes or because they're afraid they're going to be asked something. I believe in helping people to write because it helps people to think. And sometimes I'll go into groups of many more than this, even into sermon situations, and at this point in a sermon just have a few moments for people to write down how they would summarize all that we've emphasized. The beauty of it is that individuals are free to pretend they're writing and not be writing. Some of you were trying that little ploy because you're too busy thinking about other things. That's fine, we're all human beings; have different agendas. The important thing is not to embarrass people but to give people encouragement and an opportunity

Now let me just give you a comment or two about the card trick, itself, and then we'll see what came out of it. The purpose of the second card trick, as I said, is to help people clarify their conclusions about meanings. The method you'd use is giving people time, not necessarily very long, but to find some little way to organize emphasis and make it available as feedback for you if you really want it; if you really allow for it to come in or, at least, to let it serve as their organization and thought. I just asked you now what word or phrase do you think summarizes, encapsulates, represents the high spots of the things we're saying in the last hour. Let's hear some examples of that if you would like to share them:

Tune in to each other.

Perception.

Listening.

Sensitivity.

Listening.

Feedback.

Two-way.

Contact.

All sorts of ways to say many of the same things. Now you have a right to know what I have on my note sheet. I have on my note sheet—the key word for this hour has to do with an admonition to the communicator: if you really want to be more effective in using what we know about human learning . . . listen.

Thanks a lot.