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GEORGE W. TRUETT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A WORD FROM TRUETT

One of the greatest speeches of all times was the Gettysburg Address delivered by President Abraham Lincoln at the dedication of the newly built National Cemetery on the site of the Battle of Gettysburg, November 19, 1863.

The speech was between 270-290 words long (depending on which of the five drafts Lincoln used) and barely mentioned by newspapers of that day. It got second billing to Edward Everett's two-hour snore of an official oration.

The ultimate measure of how much this speech and its meaning have changed comes from a small Ohio newspaper. The report of the event in the *Steubenville Weekly Herald* contained the throwaway line: "President Lincoln was there, too."

That information comes from *The Gettysburg Gospel: The Lincoln Speech that Nobody Knows* by Gabor Boritt, director of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College. The book covers 415 pages.

There has to be a message in this for preachers. A speech does not have to be eternal in order to be immortal.

Remember:

- The Lord's Prayer is 66 words.
- The Ten Commandments contain 179 words.
- The Gettysburg Address is 286 words.
- The Declaration of Independence is 1,300 words.
- The U.S. regulations on cabbage contain 29,911 words.

On April 25, 1921, the great physicist Albert Einstein paid a visit to the White House to meet with President Warren G. Harding. He later attended a reception at the National Academy of Sciences, where he listened to long, boring speeches. As the evening droned on, he turned to a Dutch diplomat and said, "I've just developed a new theory of eternity."

Pastor, don't ever let that be said of you. Keep your preaching sharp, interesting and reasonable in length.

PASTORING

The late Ronald Reagan, former president of the United States, was nicknamed "The Great Communicator." While watching Reagan's entourage return to California for burial, Sparky Anderson of baseball fame said, "You could touch him. He was never above you and never below you. He was always one of us."

Describing his speaking technique, Reagan said, "My actor's instinct simply told me to speak the truth as I saw it and felt it." He believed his message, and he made us want to believe it as well. He stayed on message throughout his presidency: "You have to keep pounding away with your message, year after year, because that's the only way it will sink into the collective consciousness...if you have something you believe in deeply it's worth repeating time and again until you achieve it."

He trusted what he called the fundamental rule of public speaking: "Talk to your audience, not over their heads or through them." Reagan always envisioned a particular group of people whenever he spoke to a microphone or television camera, and he directed his words to them. He made his message simple, repetitive, and heartfelt. And many historians rank him with Franklin Delano Roosevelt as one of the greatest communicators in presidential history.

That's good advice for every preacher.

QUOTES

- “Leaders inspire. They aren’t assigned leadership. They command it.” Dr. Phil McGraw, *Reader’s Digest*, November 2004
- “May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you humble, enough hope to make you happy. The happiest people are not those who necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything that comes their way.” Anonymous

ILLUSTRATION

The movie *Fighting Temptation* presents a conversation between two church members about a fault-finding member: “Critical and condemning people are like sandpaper. If they rub on you long enough, they smooth your rough edges. And, at the same time, they wear themselves down.”

LEADERSHIP

The ability to stick with something until it is done is of paramount importance. Sheer persistence has enabled people to claim great accomplishments. Best-selling author and friend Dick Francis is a good example. Every day at the same time he sits down to write, he says, “whether I feel like it or not.” His track record speaks of itself: more than 30 best-selling books with a new book every year. He understands the power of persistence.

A SERMON

Title Five Steps to Forgiveness

Text Psalms 51

Introduction When named to be director of the U.S. information agency, Edward R. Murrow explained how he would operate. He said the agency would print all the news, “the warts and blemishes” as well as the “sunshine.”

That’s what Bible writers do. After David’s great sin, he clearly confesses and finds forgiveness. In this Psalm he gives us the steps he followed.

- I The Step of Faith (verses 1-2). He believes in the love and mercy of God.
- II The Step of Confession (verses 3-4). He comes clean with God and himself.
- III The Step of Prayer (verses 6-11). He asks for it.
- IV The Step of Repentance (verses 12-15). He turns to a life of active service for God.
- V The Step of Sorrow (Verses 16-17). He is broken-hearted over his son.

Conclusion These are the steps every sinner must take back to God.

REMEMBER

George W. Truett Seminary is a Christ-centered, Bible-based seminary committed to our historic Baptist principles. Our vision is to be the premiere Baptist theological seminary of the world. Our mission is to serve the churches by training the next generation of ministers and missionaries.



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