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PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Greetings ministers and wives!

What a marvelous Feast of Tabernacles we had!

We all need to realize the depth of what God gave us at this Feast. We must **STUDY** and **REVIEW** the messages we heard, and encourage God's people to do so.

Remember the story recorded in John 6. Five thousand people followed Christ, and He wanted to feed them. They had only five barley loaves and two small fishes—not nearly enough to feed such a crowd. But Christ had the people sit, He prayed over the food and then asked His disciples to distribute it. Miraculously, all five thousand were able to eat their fill.

Then notice what Christ said: "When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, *Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost*" (John 6:12). What was Christ really talking about spiritually?

He makes it plain later in the same chapter: "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed*" (verses 26-27).

We must all **LABOR** for the spiritual meat God gives us—even in our Bible study! The great Creator God who resides in the third heaven is providing spiritual manna! Isn't it logical we'd have to **LABOR** for it? It requires **HARD WORK** to really **GET IT!**

After the Feast I received a letter from one of our headquarters ministers. I'll share a portion of it with you.

"I hope not to take up too much of your time with this letter, but I must *thank you*," he wrote. "Thank you, first of all, for letting God use you in opening your mind on the Gospel of John—to stir this Church in unprecedented ways! Your messages were the deepest and most powerful sermons I've ever heard you give in the past 14 years or so. I was compelled to write this after returning from the Feast today and reviewing some of my notes. There were certain *key* points you made that really didn't sink in until I went back and really chewed on it. *How deep! How mind- and life-altering!*"

That is the attitude we need. If we aren't reviewing those notes, we simply will not get the depth God wants us to get. We must chew on and digest those messages if our minds and lives are to be altered by them.

"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but *my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven*. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him,

Lord, evermore give us this bread" (verses 28-34).

Christ is telling them to **LABOR** for that spiritual manna, and helping them to recognize the exalted Source of it. That is spiritual instruction for us today! God brought us to the Feast to feed us *spiritual manna*. This is what God is serving to His people! It's from another world! Bread from another world, from the true

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God! This is the Father feeding His Family. And if we take it and apply it, He is going to let us feed the world!

So *gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost!* We must get all we can out of that great spiritual Feast. That is our individual responsibility. We must not let anything be lost! Just as Christ told the disciples to labor for this bread, so must we do all we can to ensure this Feast of Tabernacles has the mind- and life-altering effect on us that God has planned!

With love, in Christ's service,



CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

REMINDER

The *Pastor General's Report* is for ordained ministers of the Philadelphia Church of God only. It should not be shared with local members, deacons or deaconesses. From time to time, this report may contain articles specifically targeted for the local leadership. Only regional directors should make the decisions as to which articles may be shared or copied for deacons, contact persons,

or leading members, unless it is specifically printed under the banner "For Wider Distribution". It is, however, appropriate for ministers to read portions of the PGR during announcements at services—or to quote from it during a sermon. But keep in mind that this publication is intended to help *you* in your ministry. Thus it should not be distributed to church members. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. *Gerald Flurry*

MINISTERIAL TRAINING SERIES

ARE YOUR SERMONS ORGANIZED?

by Joel Hilliker

At the end of the Philadelphia Singers project each year, one of the last things we do is decide the order of songs, put it all on one CD, then sit down and listen to the whole album. With last year's *Victory* album, Ryan Malone and a small group of us came up with what seemed like a very good, workable song order. But when we sat down and listened to the whole album, something was not right! The more we listened, the more agitated we became. At the end, our reaction was the same: *What a crazy hodge-podge! What have we done?* There were a couple of nice ballads, a jazz song, a salsa song, a stirring anthem, an African song—it was like the album couldn't make up its mind what it wanted to be! We reworked the order completely, created a new CD with the new order, and listened to it again. The overall effect was amazingly different! Once everything was put in its right place, each song "belonged" on the album. The same 14 tracks existed, but they all added up to something else.

This experience taught me something vital about organization.

A public speaking address must be organized. You could hear two messages with almost identical basic content and come away from one feeling overwhelmed or frustrated—and from the other feeling satisfied, with better comprehension and retention—the one difference between the two being how they were organized.

For this week's PGR, I want to share some secrets to better-organized messages. Much of this material comes from a book titled *An Introduction to Rhetorical Communication* by James C. McCroskey.

Every message we give should be a product of our thoughts, impacted by and mingled with God's thoughts. God's thoughts have infinite depth. They are perfectly organized—but sometimes they can be complex. But to the natural mind, without God's Spirit, God's thoughts are foolishness (1 Corinthians 2:14). Mr. Armstrong described the Bible as a jigsaw puzzle that needs to be put together in the right way. Our job in preaching is to help people understand God's thoughts by making them as plain and easy to understand as possible. We're *packaging* and *servicing* to God's people the deep things of God.

Obviously, to be able to do that, first you must come

to understand the thoughts of God yourself. So the first step in putting a message together is to pray and study to get God's mind. This is an incredible responsibility God puts on one who presumes to speak for Him. At this past Feast, Mr. Flurry explained how we must "labor" to receive spiritual manna (John 6:27).

If collecting and studying your material—thinking about it, praying about it and letting the subject expand in your mind—is the most important aspect of message preparation, then ORGANIZING it comes a close second. It is by *organization* that we transmit that message to God's people. It is by *organization* that we give people the greatest opportunity to understand and digest that meat in due season God wants to give them.

A poorly organized message has been proven in studies to compromise the audience's perception of a speaker's competence. It can taint your credibility, throw what you say into question and handicap people's ability to understand and remember your message. So we have a responsibility before God to put our messages together in the best possible way.

Let me define what I mean by organization: If you've done your job in investigating your subject, analyzing it, grasping it, coming to understand essentially what you want to put across to your audience, then you have a lot of material to use in your speech—probably much more than you can use.

Organization is adapting that message to your audience through three specific mental processes: *selecting*, *apportioning* and *arranging*. Obviously we want to involve God in all of these processes.

- 1) SELECTING is choosing the arguments and supporting materials for your message.
- 2) APPORTIONING is determining how much *emphasis* to give the various arguments and supportive materials.
- 3) ARRANGING is placing these elements in a way that will produce the most desirable effect.

Let's look at each of these separately.

SELECTING

Selecting the right material is critical. You want to use the material that will have the greatest impact on God's people.

First, every sermon should have an SPS—a specific purpose statement. We learned this with the #2 speech lesson in Spokesman Club. The SPS is critical not only to helping your audience understand what you are trying to achieve, but to guiding your own selection of supportive material to use in your message. In most cases, if material doesn't support your SPS, your message will be more effective without it. In selecting your material, you want to make sure people come away with ONE MAIN POINT—and perhaps a few points that support your main point. Dennis Leap told one of our Imperial College speech classes that since a 12-minute sermonette generally has one point with 2-3 subpoints, a sermon could have, under the one umbrella of your SPS, perhaps *five significant points*, each with its own supportive subpoints.

Mr. Leap also suggested that since a sermonette uses three scriptures, a sermon should use perhaps 15 scriptures. This is fantastic advice. It helps us avoid ineffective *overuse* of scriptures. Perhaps there are 10 scriptures you could use to illustrate one particular point. We may naturally think that the more scriptures we have, the stronger the point will be. But in most cases, if you choose *one or two* of those scriptures that have the greatest impact, you will get your point across much better than if you use 10 scriptures.

Selecting the right material also involves trying to anticipate the effect that your material will have on the audience. Perhaps some people would consider a certain illustration or example too personal, or too corrective, and would be uncomfortable with it. If you want a message to be more positive and uplifting, you'd want to select the more humorous example, rather than the sober one. Obviously, the better you know the people you're speaking to, the more you can address them in a way appropriate to them.

APPORTIONING

Apportioning is not totally separate from selecting—the two go somewhat hand in hand. Apportioning is determining how much of a particular argument or supporting material is needed to establish a certain claim. During this process, you might ask yourself specific questions. Do you need one, two, or 20 pieces of supporting material for a given argument? Can you assume people will understand a certain point, or do you need to go into some explanation? Do you need to spend time disproving the other side of the argument you're presenting?

PROPORTION is a critical element to consider as you're putting a message together. You don't want to short-

change your most important and beneficial material for the sake of something less important!

Let me use myself as an example. I wanted to give a Feast sermon on the mother's role. I studied all kinds of materials and came up with over 20 pages of good material. I had a lot of good scriptures and a lot of great theoretical information. I realized this was a huge subject. But I wanted to make sure I had enough time to get into some specific, practical information when talking about her role. Something that the women could really sink their teeth into—and that would even help the men understand wife's role better. I also realized this could be taken as somewhat corrective to the women, so I wanted to make sure I really emphasized *honoring* the mother's role. I wanted the whole message to come across as positive and uplifting, something that would *inspire* people about that role!

This brought me to the most important elements:

- 1) Woman was created for man as a helpmeet (Genesis 2).
- 2) This typifies the Church marrying Christ, being His helpmeet in the Family of God.
- 3) 1 Peter 3 talks about honoring the wife, and dwelling with her according to knowledge. This shows we need to study this subject, even as men.
- 4) The first element of a woman's function is *respecting* her husband—accepting him, appreciating him and admiring him.
- 5) The second aspect of the role is *helping* her husband. Seeing everything in relation to him. She builds the family in support of his goals, etc.
- 6) I wanted to conclude with an exhortation to honor the mother's role, as Christ will honor us in the Kingdom of God.

I really only used four passages of scripture in the whole sermon and referred to a few others. Even within passages, I didn't read certain verses that I would have read ordinarily because I didn't want to get distracted away from those main points. I cut and cut and cut to make sure I got the proportion right! I wanted to devote enough time to what I considered the strongest, most helpful portions of the message. Once I saw how much I had to cover, I went back and trimmed significantly the early sections that were more theoretical, so I wouldn't short-change the practical instruction.

In general, the stronger an argument is, the more emphasis it should receive.

When you're studying a subject, if you really find something dynamite—something that stirs you up—then bottom it out in your preparation, and really devote some time to it in your message. Don't allow its

significance to be diminished by something that really isn't as critical. Don't go so long in *setting up* your main point that you don't have ample time for *presenting* your main point.

Devote real thought to this issue of proportion.

Ask yourself specific questions about your content: Can I get away with a one-minute introduction—or less—if it's not critical to my point? How quickly can I get to SPS after I get their attention, so they know what they're hearing? Would it be better to go deeper into two scriptures, or one, rather than pulling in a third? You can see how selecting and apportioning must go hand in hand.

ARRANGING

You want to arrange your material in a pattern that is easy to follow and that enables people to understand your message. Arranging your message has two parts: 1) Putting the message as a whole into some pattern, and 2) structuring the various parts of the message.

At the most basic level, generally messages have three essential parts: *intro, body, conclusion*.

Don't underestimate the importance of introductions. The purpose of the introduction is to grab attention, to make your audience comfortable with you, and to set up your topic. But be careful. We can get into the danger of padding the intro with more material than necessary—then we have a proportion problem. Make sure your intro really does set up your topic—then get to your SPS and the body of your material *quickly*. Cut the fluff. I often find that, late in my preparation process, the message is improved if I simply *move my SPS closer to the beginning*, and nest some of my "introduction" material at appropriate places within the body.

Basically there are two patterns of arrangement: CHAIN ORGANIZATION and PARALLEL ORGANIZATION. The distinction between the two is a matter of *dependence or independence*.

Chain organization is used when the various parts of the message are inherently linked—or *dependent* upon one another. If you need to prove *this* before you can prove *that*, you need chain organization. And those two elements should be placed fairly close to one another so you lead people from one point to the next. Most of the time, if you're talking about a problem and its solution, you start with the problem, and then proceed to the solution. Whenever the material is interdependent, you must use chain structure. People will be able to follow as you logically lead from point to point to point.

In *parallel* structure, the elements are not dependent on one another. Perhaps you have three arguments all

leading to the same claim. Then the order of them is more discretionary.

Again, you're working on two levels. Generally the overall pattern for the body of a message will be chain structure, but within the chain there are various chain and parallel elements.

Let me make one observation on this point: It is important to put related bits *close together*. When we do this, they build upon one another, strengthening an overall point. As listeners, we perceive *several related points* as ONE POINT; our minds have an easier time processing the information. If related points aren't grouped, but haphazardly peppered throughout, the cumulative effect is that there are too many points, and it's harder to grasp the overall point.

Now let's talk a bit about even more specific patterns of organization—or arranging.

According to McCroskey, "The best organization is the one that arises from the materials. Organization is seldom good when it is selected and imposed upon the materials. Unfortunately, organization does not spontaneously jump from the materials; it must be sought within them. In order to discover the proper organizational patterns to be employed in a particular message, you must be aware of the possible patterns."

McCroskey lists 12 organizational patterns in his book. Here are just a few:

1) Problem-solution—you present a problem, suggest a solution, and show the advantages that will occur given your solution.

2) Causal patterns—going from a known cause to an effect, or from a known effect to a cause. (For example, *Here is something we see in existence today, and this is the effect we can expect it to produce*. Or, *Here is what we see in existence today—now let's consider what has produced it*.)

3) Degree of familiarity—perhaps points you want to present are parallel, and some are more familiar to people, while others are more new. This suggests beginning with what is more familiar and progressing through to what is less familiar. People have already accepted the more familiar points, and they get into a pattern of accepting what you're saying; then when you move into more unfamiliar territory, they're likelier to stay with you.

4) Climactic—as listeners we tend to remember most what comes first and last, and forget what's in the middle. In arranging your message, find the point or argument of maximum interest and strength. I'm a strong advocate of, whenever possible, saving your most powerful point for the end. When you find what you believe is your strongest point—the one you really want to stick—think

seriously about having it as close to the end as possible. Then your message becomes one giant crescendo to that point. And at the end, when you really want to hit that main point, you can bring all emotion and excitement you have for that point to bear in your delivery.

Saving the best point for last also gives you the option of building suspense leading up to it. Creating suspense means that you're arousing curiosity and interest—creating a desire early on that you purposefully do not fulfill until a later time. It's promising something that you'll save for later. If you make a promise, and you do it right, you're essentially forcing your audience to stick around and hear you out. Does this work? Consider how often on television they'll give you a teaser of something that appeals to you, and save it for the end so you watch the whole show.

If you organize your message right, it will have “directional flow”—forward thrust. You will show progression and movement.

When you are putting together your conclusion, take a look at your opening material—the questions you asked and the language you used—then follow through. Make sure you have answered all your questions. One technique that I like to use is bringing back in and reusing some of the language of my introductory material. People hear it differently the second time around, and it tends to make the message feel more complete and satisfying.

Again, these three elements of organization—selecting, apportioning, arranging—will probably never take place in a tidy *one-two-three* manner as we're putting our messages together. It is a very organic and lively process, subject to dramatic changes in direction as we seek what God wants to communicate to His people. But if we take the time to ensure that our messages are thus organized, the work can pay off substantially in how well understood and remembered they are by the people God is trying to reach.