

“7 Reasons You Should Give A Talk Without Notes”

One of the questions I get asked all the time is “how do you speak for 40 minutes without using notes?” Personally, I actually have notes, but I rarely if ever use them when I speak. I prepare them because **Better preparation makes me a better speaker.**

It clarifies my thinking. It gives me something to review the day before the talk and the day of the talk. When I give a sermon or talk, I almost always take them with me on the stage because they contain the scripture passages or teaching points that will be on the screen (so that helps me stay in sync with the computer operator who runs my slides), but other than that, I never use them during the talk. But I didn’t start that way.

I remember that moment early in my ministry when I finally freed myself of notes. It was nerve wracking. But it was so rewarding. And you can do it too. But maybe you need some motivation first.

Whether you are chained to your notes ... refer to them often ... glance frequently down for prompting ... or keep referring to them nervously trying to remember the next point using your notes almost always makes you less effective as a communicator.

So, why should you do the work and take the risk associated with freeing yourself from your notes? Let’s jump into some reasons. Because when you understand the why, you’ll be motivated to learn the what (next post).

There are at least seven good reasons to drop your notes:

1. Your favorite communicators don’t use notes.

I’m going out on a limb here to guess that your favorite communicators don’t use notes. Why? Because the best rarely, if ever, do. People connect better with speakers who speak without notes. You do. So why not become one?

2. You come across like you mean it when you don’t use notes.

This isn’t a good thing. It’s just a true thing. You might be 100% sincere when reading from your notes. But you don’t come across that way. When you read a talk, people think it’s coming from your head, not your heart. Or worse, they think it’s a series of points you’re supposed to believe but don’t. Freeing yourself up from your notes creates a much more believable message.

3. You will be far more natural.

There's a 'reading voice' and a 'speaking voice' people have. You will be far more conversational, engaging and natural when you speak without notes. And your body language will be 100% better.

4. You can make eye contact.

That's just huge. It's annoying when people don't look you in the eye when they talk to you. It's completely disengaging when a public speaker doesn't.

5. You will read the room better.

So much of communication is non-verbal. While you can't always see the audience when you talk (in the case of pre-recorded video or dark house lights), when you can, it's invaluable. You can see which part of your talks are resonating, and which aren't so you can linger longer or move on faster. You can see who's leaning forward, and who's falling asleep. It can help you track how you're connecting.

6. You'll own your material more deeply.

When you have to 'say it' without notes, you'll own it so much better. Learning your talk forces you to digest it, internalize and own it. As a result, your talk will be more compelling and authoritative. It just will.

7. You'll be more vulnerable.

Notes are safe. Speaking without them is more risky but more rewarding. Sure, you might mess up, but laugh at yourself. People will laugh with you. They'll like you because you'll seem human, which, after all, you are.

Resource: Adapted from "7 Reasons You Should Give A Talk Without Notes";
Carey Nieuwhof Blog; November 26, 2012