

Preparation

Read in advance. Check you understand what it means, look at context. Read out loud at least once at home. Prepare personally - frame of mind. Try and arrive at the church early. Pray: Just ask that the Lord make you a worthy vessel for proclaiming the Good News so people hear His voice.

Body Language

Don't rush. Walk at a reverent pace, slower than usual. "One can usually tell how a reading will go based on the lector's approach to the lectern. Those who race to the lectern will generally race through their reading." Upon reaching the lectern stand squarely behind it. Place your hands lightly on the lectionary or lectern or you may hold the book if you feel comfortable doing so. Do not put your hands anywhere other than on the lectionary or lectern or comfortably at your sides.

Announcement Line

The lead-in or announcement line tells the listeners from whom or from where the reading comes, i.e. the prophet Isaiah or the Book of Psalms. Not chapter and verse, not "good morning" Just "A reading from" And always pause for a few seconds after the line is read. This will give the assembly a chance to place the prophet, era or Biblical location in their minds and ready them to actively listen to the passage.

Eye Contact

You may be doing everything else right - proper pace, effective pausing, speaking in a clear, engaging manner and so on, but if you do not look at your listeners, you will not connect with them. Best times to look directly at congregation:

- when you first get to the lectern
- when you proclaim the announcement line
- (if very long) at the end of a section or paragraph
- just before the closing line (i.e. "The Word of the Lord")

Pronunciation

There are basic pronunciation guides available that phonetically spell out the pronunciations of the Biblical names of people and places. For instance, Barrabus may be listed as buh-RAB-us or Capernaum as kuh-PER-num. <http://www.netministries.org/resources/resource-pronunciation-guide>

But note UK/US differences - Isaiah - and sometimes nobody really knows!

Rate

What do you think are the two biggest complaints about lectors' performance? One is rate and the other is volume, i.e. "They read too fast" and "I can't hear them."

Rate refers to how quickly or slowly one speaks. The best rate for a particular passage depends on the content of the reading but as a general rule, lectors should proclaim at one-half their normal speaking voice. That's right, one-half.

Slowing down accomplishes several things. First of all, people do not listen as fast as you may speak. People need time to digest what you are saying to them. Unless you slow down, they may not be able to keep up and will simply tune out. At that point, you've lost them and all that practice and preparation would have been for naught. Secondly, slowing down helps achieve clearer

pronunciation and enunciation. Very importantly, slowing down brings an added dimension of power to the reading. In our church avoids echo.

Volume

The other of the two most common criticisms that listeners have of lectors is they cannot be heard. Sometimes, the problem is equipment-related but more often than not, it has to do with the lector's ability to project, voice quality and/or their use of the microphone.

The key to projecting effectively is

- proper breathing
- a natural gift of volume
- correct microphone usage
- confidence.

Microphone Usage

It is crucial to find just the right spot or zone that will enable you to maximize your volume without creating explosive or popping sounds. These distracting and unwelcome noises occur most often on "p" and "t" sounds and are created by speaking too closely to the head of the microphone. This can be easily avoided by positioning the microphone head a little above your mouth (nose level) or a little below (chin level) so the rush of air goes above or below the head. You can also stand just to the right or left of the head or stand a little back but not too far or your voice may fade out.

Chin level is preferred to nose level because the microphone may block the view of your face and facial expressions are an important component of proclaiming, but ultimately, you have to go with the mike position that best projects your voice.

Pausing

Silence is golden. at least in the right spots, and the proper use of pausing is essential to effective proclaiming. Some obvious places to use the pause are:

- to provide a segue when the reading is changing direction
- to allow listeners to absorb an important point
- to provide space between multiple thoughts in the same sentence
- to take a breath
- before and after quotes to offset the quote from the character or narrator
- after the announcement line "A Reading from."
- before the closing line, "The Word of the Lord"