

A ZEN MOMENT FOR YOUR SERMON

By Greg Wiens

Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery

By Garr Reynolds

New Riders Press, 240 pp. \$29.99

As leaders we are in the communication business. Our effectiveness is either hindered or helped by our ability to clearly communicate our heart to our audience. For you communication specialists, a.k.a. pastors, *Presentation Zen* by Garr Reynolds is a must read.



Disclaimer: This is not a Christian book; in fact you will find references to Zen philosophy throughout. I encourage you to keep the wheat and throw away the chaff. The forward alone, written by venture capitalist and bestselling author Guy Kawasaki, is worth the cover price. Hint: It's a slide presentation, the perfect introduction for this book.

STATUS QUO, I CHALLENGE THEE!

So, as a pastor, why on earth would you read a Zen book to help you deliver a Christian message? For starters, think about your own presentation style. Have you found a comfort zone when it comes to preaching, and stuck with it because it comes easily to you? Have you ever questioned its effectiveness on your congregation? *Presentation Zen* helps you ask that question, highlights common mistakes (ones you probably make), and illustrates better ways.

Reynolds is quick to point out that “conventional” does not equal “good”. Take this example from *Presentation Zen*, for instance: Many speakers’ slides only contain the exact words they speak, sometimes containing abbreviations (bad), fill-in-the-blanks (worse) or complete paragraphs (worst). Some even cut and paste their notes onto slides. I think every pastor has resorted to one of these sermon quick fixes at one point.

The book is full of practical, useable tips. One of my favorites is on choosing the font size for your slides. Reynolds says that the font should never be “less than the age of the oldest person in your audience divided by two.” That means if you have 70-year-olds in your audience, you’ll use a 35-point font. Just try to cut and paste your notes now!

Practicing what he preaches, Reynolds includes visual aids to illustrate what good slides look like. Real-life examples of famous leaders like Steve Jobs, and less familiar leaders like Boston Philharmonic Orchestra Conductor Ben Zander give life to Reynolds' concepts.

I think it would be easy for most pastors to blow this book off, which would be a great mistake. This book has the potential to totally change the way you preach and view communication. If more pastors applied Reynolds' principles, we'd be growing more disciples instead of putting them to sleep. This could be one of the best books on communicating the word of God, but Reynolds, from what I gather, is not a believer. That said, God can use anything he pleases to develop his followers, even a "secular" book.

PRESENTATION ZEN'S IMPACT ON ME

Presentation Zen thoroughly changed all facets of my communication style. My preparation is more purposeful; my visuals are simpler, rendering my words more powerful. Congregations are more engaged, and retain the message more vividly. My jokes are even funnier. Caveat: Such thoughtfulness takes more time and effort, but the impact is surely worth it. Would God want any less?

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARR

Garr Reynolds has established several online resources dedicated to his principles of public speaking, presentation design, and branding. He is probably the most current and most authoritative voice on these subjects today. His enthusiasm for clarity and organization is manifested in the sheer volume of tools, resources, and opinions he publishes almost daily.

Blog: www.presentationzen.com

Personal website: www.garrreynolds.com

Twitter page: www.twitter.com/presentationzen

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GREG WIENS, PLEASE VISIT WWW.LEADERSTHATLAST.ORG