Ministering to the Dying

Detailed outline
Part 4 of 4

Questions & Answers

Do you do any reruns on the message that was asked to be preached again?

Although I have used the same text, the message is always different. The essential truths are the same but I try to view the text in the light of that person. If the person or the families have requested a rerun I try to find out the reason why? It is the sense that, "Lord I need to speak to these people and I need a sense of what is to be said."

What are the circumstances when there may be those "questions" that can be used during the message?

People discount 50% what preachers say whether it be weddings or funerals. Use moments from the person's life and it will speak to the audience. For example, a photograph from a creek in the door of my grandmother reading her Bible was superimposed with "Why she believed what she believed" and projected during the funeral service. We even played a video of her reading John 14 when she was a 102. Even unbelievers in my family knew that was Grandma.

How do you deal with a suicide funeral?

I cover the three points previously discussed. Remind them that the hope that they will get to heaven must not be clouded by a lack of faith; that they can be sustained here through that circumstance. In my opinion this comfort can only come by dealing with the issue.

What ought to be the level of emotional sensitivity we are to demonstrate during a funeral service?

I try not to prolong the funeral. I talk about the person, celebrate their life and stay sensitive to the circumstance in a way that makes the gospel clear. I make certain I am not being deceptive. Achieving that balance is not always easy.

How rigid are you in your suggestions? For example, in suggesting the use of one funeral parlour over the other.

I usually go with them to the funeral parlor but avoid suggesting one over the other. I might suggest if one is cheaper than the other. I want the family to participate in the process. However sometimes they are so caught up in their grief that they just allow someone else to take care of all those things. In such cases, as part of the service we as a church provide all the help. The one place I am firm is where I insist giving the gospel as part of the message. I want the message to help them deal with the situation but I want the freedom to give the gospel.