



Sketchboard Preaching

By Andrew Garvey-Williams

THE PREACHER

The disciples' experience of the Holy Spirit could not be contained. It overflowed in signs and wonders and in joyful praise and witness onto the streets. People were amazed and looked for an explanation. An ordinary fisherman was to give it.

Peter raised his voice above the crowd. He explained what was happening and related it to Scripture. He boldly preached Jesus crucified, risen and exalted. Then he applied it personally to his hearers and, as the Holy Spirit cut people to the heart, he called for a clear response from them while holding out God's promises to them. As this went on throughout the day three thousand were added to the disciples.

Peter wasn't the first open air preacher: Jonah, Jeremiah and other prophets brought God's message to cities. Much of Jesus' preaching was out of doors. Nor was Peter the last: Paul, Philip, Francis of Assisi, Wesley, Whitfield, Arthur Blessit and many other known and unknown people have preached in the fields, cities and byways.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE PREACHER

1) A Love for God

Without a confidence in your own relationship and experience of God, you will not preach with authority or power. The gospel has to be seen in you (2 Cor. 3:18). Like Peter's in Acts 2, your preaching should be an explanation of what is already demonstrated in your life. That doesn't mean we are always in seventh heaven, but that we demonstrate an assurance and confidence in our God, despite nerves, feelings and fears. Prayer is vital to this close relationship with God – personally and as a team (see Acts 4:23-31).

2) An Anointing of the Holy Spirit

Flowing out from that relationship with God, our denial of ourselves and dependence on God's Spirit, we have God's enabling and indwelling which makes us competent to proclaim Christ (2 Cor. 3:4-6, 2 Cor 4:7). Paul didn't rely on eloquence, wisdom or skill, but the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

3) A Clear Understanding of the Gospel

Our aim is to communicate to people what they need to know in order for them to become Christians. This means to inform the mind, stir the heart and move the will. The preacher needs to have a clear scriptural understanding of the gospel and to be convinced of its relevance and power (2 Cor 5:14,15). He also has to be able to illustrate the gospel in an interesting and relevant way so that his hearers can fully grasp it. Above all the preacher must be convinced of the relationship and outworking of the gospel in their own life. The preacher should guard against cheapening or weakening the gospel.

4) A Love for People

Not only do we tell people about the love of Christ, we show them. We become "all things to all men" and "love our neighbour as ourselves". We need to be aware of people as individuals with needs. The crowd you preach to is made up of individuals. Sensitivity, care, concern and respect are essential. What interests them? Moves them? We need to speak their language. People have a destiny (2 Cor. 5:11-14). We need to be personal and to communicate through our humanity, being 'real' with people. If we love people we will know the importance of "setting forth the truth plainly" (2 Cor. 4:2). No jargon or cliches.

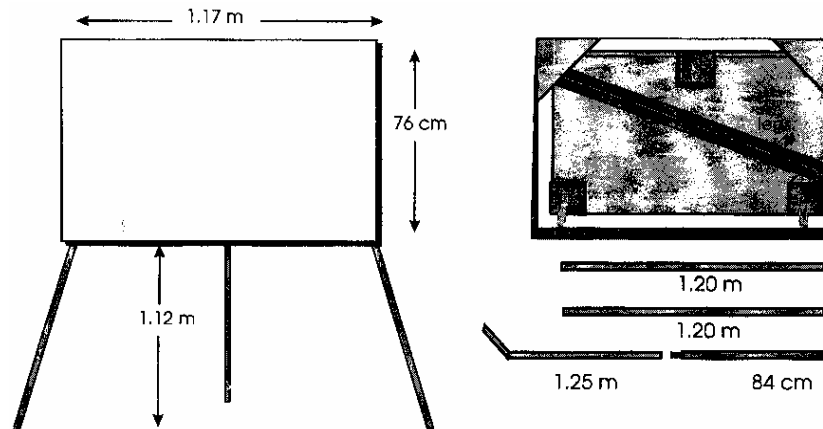
THE SKETCHBOARD

Why a Sketchboard?

The sketchboard is a means of visualising our sermons. We retain about 10% of what we hear, with visual aids this can increase to 70%. Jesus often visualised his message making it relevant and memorable. The sketchboard can be used in and out of doors.

It has three main purposes:

1. It assembles people in one place and focuses them.
2. It keeps interest if used correctly.
3. The words on the board direct the preacher's thoughts and keep the message clear and concise.



The board is usually made from hardboard glued onto a wooden frame. The legs are aluminium and can be carried on the back of the board as illustrated.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

Paper

Newsprint is ideal. It is cheap and absorbs paint well. An "end of roll" is usually available from your local newspaper printers. Make sure it fits your board size.

Fasteners

Bulldog or spring clips are best.

Paint

Powder paints are ideal, though some ready-mixed paints are O.K. You need yellow, green, blue, red and black. Mix the paints in jars or ointment pots (available from chemists). Keep the lid on, stir occasionally and they will be ready for use. The thickness of paint is a matter of personal preference.

Brushes

One for each colour and they should be about 1/2" width. "Chubby" brushes from the "Early Learning Centre" are ideal.

Box

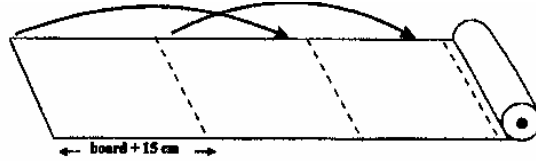
You need a good container to hold your paint, brushes, damp rag and water bottle. Plastic fishing tackle or toolboxes can be easily adapted.

Looking after your equipment.

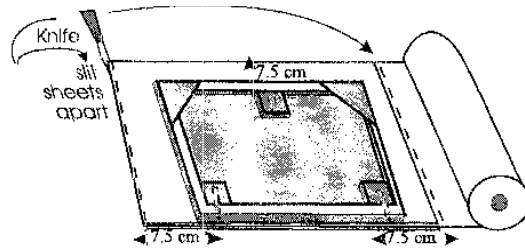
Keep paints topped up and water bottle full. Brushes don't need washing out every time. An occasional wash is all that is needed.

PAPERING YOUR BOARD

Find a flat floor space. Roll out your paper and measure out a length of your board plus 15 cm.

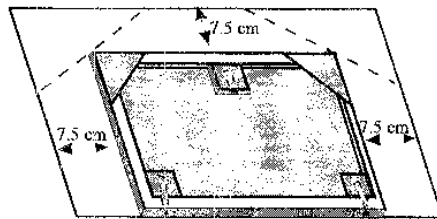


Fold paper over making sure you line up the edges. Fold again until you have the number of sheets you need (best is about 6-10). Place the board onto the stack of papers making sure that the bottom edge of the paper is lined up on the bottom edge of the paper with 7.5 cm either side. Sit on the board to hold it in place. Cut off the roll of paper. With a sharp knife slit the edges of the paper to separate the sheets.

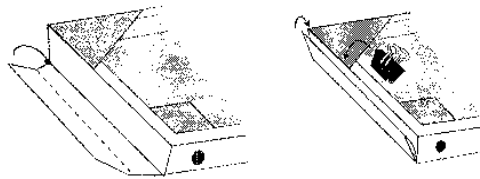


If the paper is wide you may also have to cut a strip off along the top.

Cut off the corners of the paper.



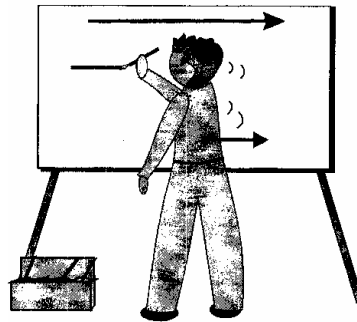
Fold the top and side edges to the board and then up the sides. Fasten with clips.



Sharpen the creases by running a finger along the board edges.

PAINTING TECHNIQUES

To paint on the board, stand in front of it with feet spaced apart. Don't stand too close. To paint longer straight lines, shift the whole weight of your body across from foot to foot.



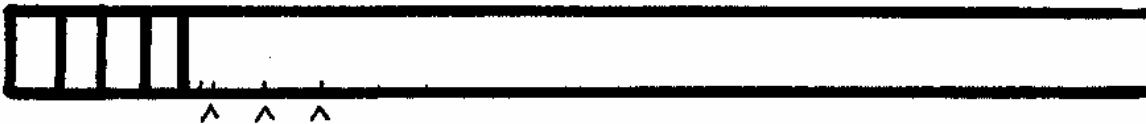
Paints should be on the left side of the board (unless left-handed) with brushes leaning back under the board so you don't knock them.

Ladder Lettering

Draw the top and bottom lines first:



Start from the left drawing in the boxes. If you are not confident of the spacing, make little marks along the bottom.



If your top and bottom lines are too long, tidy it by blocking in the last space. ✓



When doing a sentence draw the whole sentence putting a wider block in between words.



Use bright, dark colours for lettering: red, blue or black. Don't rush. Practice and build up speed with time. You might also want to lightly pencil in your letters on your first attempts.

THE ALPHABET



Partial Lettering

An alternative lettering is achieved by leaving part of the letter out and completing it as you preach. Use this where the audience may find it difficult to read ladder lettering, e.g. younger children or visually impaired.

| c | l | i | c | l | e | l | l | e | c | i | n | o
partial lettering

Colours

The use of colour is important. The painting has to be bold and bright and readable.

Colours have a psychological effect. Red is warm and positive and is good for the main title and positive words (see "message making"). Blue and black are negative and are used for 'negative' words.

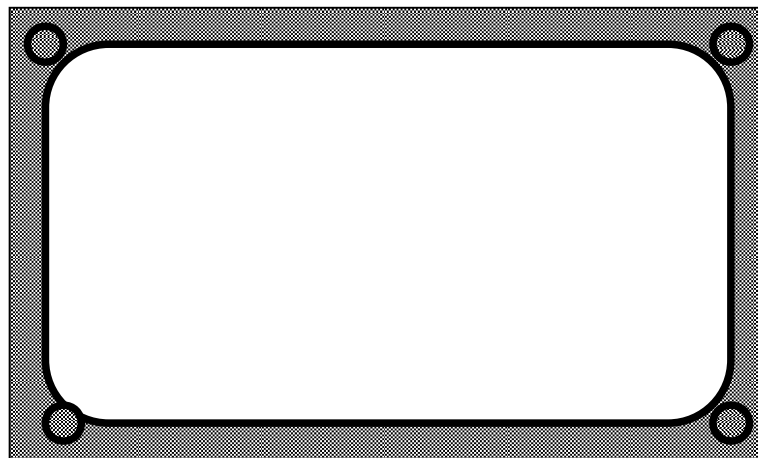
A yellow backwash can give more emphasis. Paint yellow around the border, under the main title and as a 'sunburst' behind the cross.

It is wise to use your colours from light to dark. Yellow is lightest, so paint all your yellow first; then green, red, blue, and lastly black. It is easiest to paint over a light colour if you make a mistake!

Borders

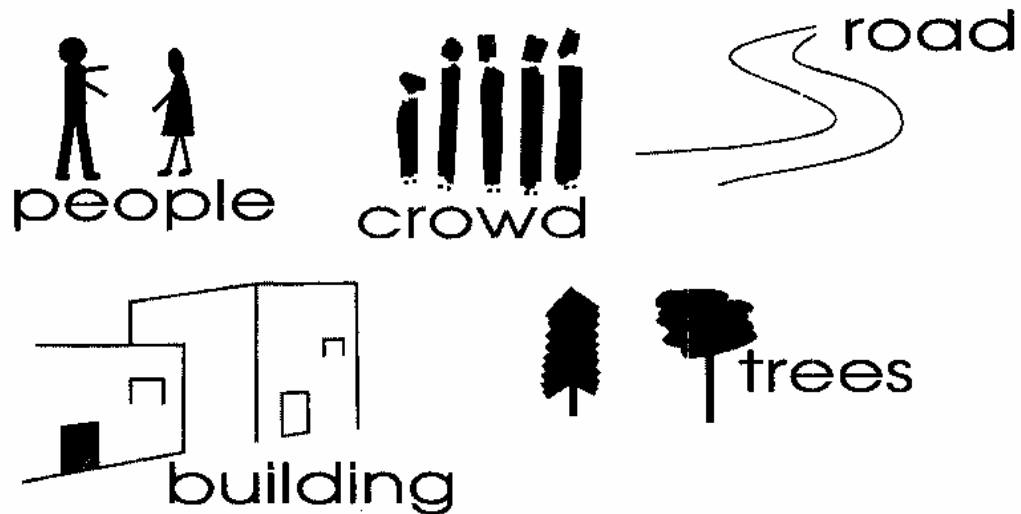
A border around your picture finishes it off and concentrates visual attention onto the board. Try painting up a board without a border and then add one and see the difference!

Usually a border is a line of yellow around the edge of the board with a line of black or red as a frame. The line can have embellishments or twirls but don't overdo it!



Pictures

Your aim on the street is not to be a Leonardo, but a quick picture can add to the sketch, especially in children's sketchboards. Keep it simple.



Other techniques

Wax Resist

Use white or clear wax crayon or candle wax to write or draw on the board. During the message when you want to reveal the drawing, paint over the wax with diluted blue or black paint.

Dry Paint

If you want a light shading or colour or wish to mix colours: Squeeze out excess paint from brush on the edge of your paint pot, until the brush is almost dry. 'Scumble' the paint onto the board leaving only a light trace of paint.

Adding sections

You can paint messages on a board and cover them with a piece of paper cut from another sheet. Fasten the paper on the board with blu-tack. When you want to reveal the message, just peel the paper back or off.

THE MESSAGE

Many people start with a message borrowed from someone else. If you do this, personalise the message and adapt it with your own illustrations to reflect your personality.

What makes a good message?

1) Gets Attention

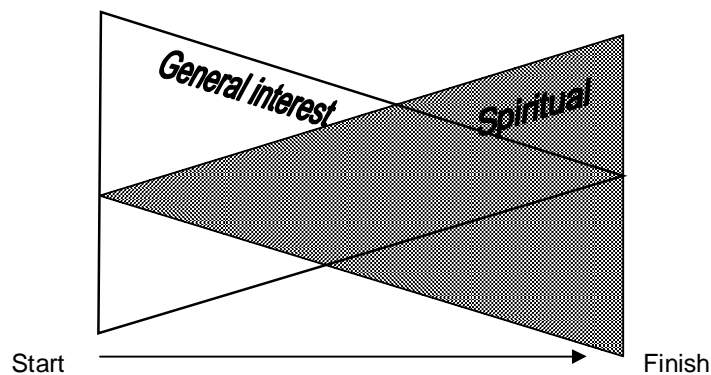
You need to get peoples' attention if they are to stop. Painting on the board is usually sufficient to attract a crowd but then the preacher then has to transfer the attention of the crowd from what he is doing to what he is saying. A good, provocative opening line or title catches interest and attention (e.g. John 7:37).

2) Keeps Interest

Jesus took interesting and relevant subjects from everyday life to explain spiritual truth: Fish and nets for fishermen; sheep to shepherds. Look for similar modern everyday illustrations. Often a starting point is an issue or problem people commonly face - divorce, unemployment. It could also be a topical issue. People are also interested in people, so an illustration from personal experience or a quote from a famous person is good for 'human interest'.

3) Spiritual Concern

Start introducing the spiritual issues early in the message. Don't tack it on to the end or your crowd will feel "tricked". When you suddenly start talking about God at the end people usually walk off. So mention God at the beginning and weave the spiritual applications through the message. Start with a good emphasis on the general interest content, but mention the spiritual. As the message goes on gradually build up the spiritual and lessen the general interest, until at the end you are applying just spiritual truth.



A bible verse directly or indirectly quoted for each point brings in the spiritual ("All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" is a direct quote; "St. Paul says that no one is good enough to reach God's standard" is an indirect quote).

4) Application

Show how your message affects those who are listening. Make it personal by using your own testimony. Specific suggestions are better than vague concepts. Perhaps start your own message using the word "I" most then "we", and finally "you".

5) Response

If we want people to respond then we have to give them an opportunity and tell them how to respond.

At the end of your message hold out a booklet or two asking those who want to turn to Christ and to repent and believe, to come and take a leaflet from your hand. Slowly pass it in front of the crowd. Give them time to think. Pass it a couple of times. If people come forward team members should move in to talk to them. Thank the crowd for listening. Don't worry if no one comes forward. Don't let your team members come and take a leaflet 'to encourage others to come forward.' This is deceit.

When making an appeal, don't water it down with 'ifs' and 'buts'. Don't say, "Come forward if you are interested". Be more positive: "I want you to come forward as a sign that you mean business with God and want to get right with Him". Don't make the appeal easy or wide. You are appealing for people to make a decision to follow Jesus there and then, not for those vaguely interested. Jesus never made it easy.

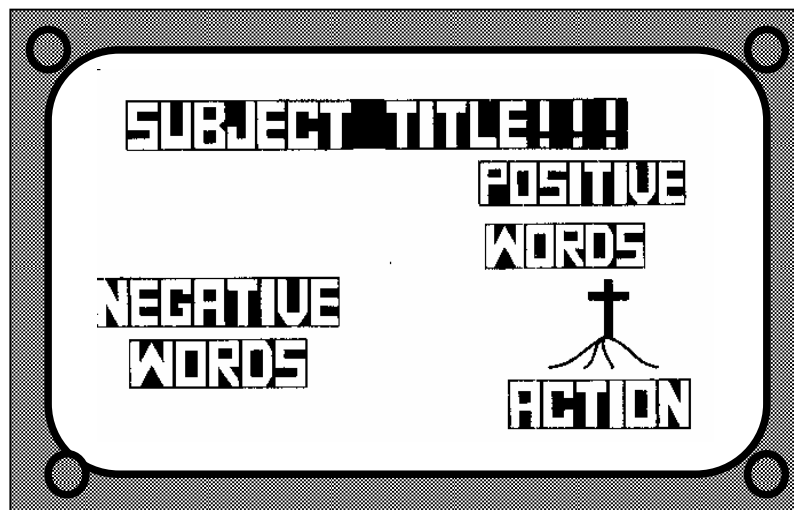
Such an appeal does several things:

- It makes people aware that a personal response is needed.
- It helps those who step forward to see that they are making a literal step in the right direction toward God.
- It identifies those who are really interested and who are the team's priority to talk to.
- For those who don't come forward or walk away, it makes it clear to them that they are making a conscious decision to reject Jesus.

The preacher should continue to be available after the appeal for those who were too shy or were not quite sure. They can then be directed to a team member or the preacher can talk to them personally.

BOARD LAYOUT

Layout of your message on the board is important. Look at adverts. The main message is usually bottom right, because the human eye reads top left to bottom right.



The Title

The title of our message should be at the top and in bright, warm colours. Red on a yellow backwash is best.

Negative Words

These need not be bad words like "sin", "lust" but may be words like "health", "wealth", which in themselves are not evil, but in the context are negative. These should be on the left and in black or blue.

Positive Words

These should be on the right and in a warm colour like red.

The Cross

A neat way to paint the cross is to paint a sunburst in yellow and then a hill in green. Outline the hill with black and draw a path in perspective on the hill. The cross is painted in red.

PREACHING THE CROSS



Don't preach the cross just at the end. Start painting up the cross through the message. There are various ways to do this:

Method 1) Preach sin a barrier

between us

and God.

Leave this until you preach the cross when you complete it





Method 2) Preach selfishness as the root of the problem of sin...

Looking out for 'number 1', the big "I", 'me'.

Selfishness divides us from other people and from God

The only solution is to destroy selfishness. Only one man did that in His life. Preach the cross. Jesus cancels all wrongs done by "I", me




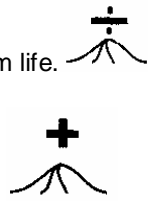

Method 3) Preach sin as all our wrong negative things...

They are a minus sign

and they divide us from one another, from God and from life.

Only one person had a life that was completely positive

He laid that life down







Method 4) Preach sin and death as a door or barrier

between us and God

Some people try to get through it by good works but can't.

Only one was good enough to go through

Or you could say God came and opened the door
Response? See Revelation 3:20!



In all methods include the resurrection



and the return of Christ



Applying the cross

A simple way to explain the response to the cross and to fix it in your own mind and your listeners' is A, B, C.

A) Admit - admit sins, your need of Jesus.

B) Believe - in Jesus' death for you in your place, and His resurrection power. Trust Him.

C) Commit - come under His control, His lordship

It means to



from your way



to His way



Action word

This is usually the last word to be put up and is a word that will indicate an active response. Paint it in red on a yellow backwash. Good words are "turn", "admit", "give". Don't use a word like "life" or "Jesus". These don't indicate any action on the hearer's part.

BUILDING A MESSAGE

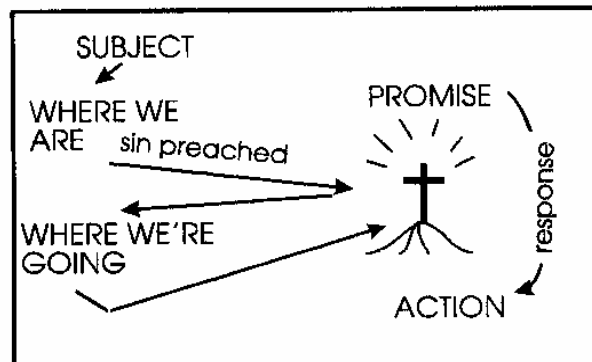
Usually you start with your title. This is your point of interest. The title should be catchy, relevant and not too religious.

Then move to your first negative word, which should indicate where we are. From there preach sin.

Then move to your next negative word, which should indicate the result of sin or where we are going (where we will end up if we continue this way).

From there, the cross needs to be preached and God's promises given in any positive words.

Application is then made and a response demanded which is indicated by the action word.



CREATING YOUR OWN MESSAGE

When you are confident of the principles of preaching in the open air and you have practiced and used a few messages, you will be able to write your own messages. A five to seven minute message requires more preparation than a thirty-minute church sermon. It has to be pared to essentials. Unlike in church, on the street your congregation walks off if you don't communicate well.

Choosing a topic

You need a topic that will appeal to your listeners and relate to their needs and situation. You will only be able to deal with one issue and then only a few points about it. Topics may be suggested by current events, concerns or issues.

Developing a theme

Write down the subject on the top of a piece of paper. Brainstorm words and ideas related to that subject. On the left of your paper list negative words to do with that subject e.g. if your subject is happiness, negative words might be depression, sorrow, loneliness, guilt, envy - words that are the opposite or hinder happiness. You could also write down where people falsely look for happiness.

Then on the right, write down positive words e.g. for happiness - love, joy, peace, etc. From the lists, underline a couple of words that you feel you can talk about. These are or might become your key words.

Think of an attractive, catchy title that will interest and relate to your listener. Don't make it very `religious` but it must indicate the subject, e.g. "What is the answer", "Life is a puzzle". You can now think about how it will appear on the board. Find ways of illustrating each of your points from your own life, quotes, statistics, news stories, etc.

Using your personal testimony

You can have a message on your own testimony. It is relevant to you and personal and you will communicate confidently. Others cannot argue with it either.

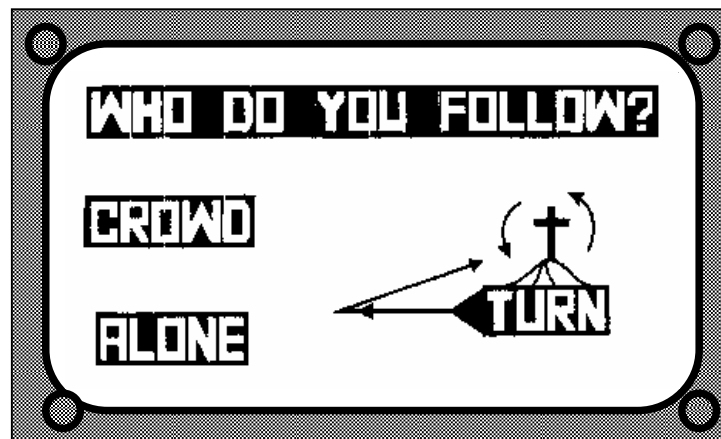
Write out your testimony including:

- BC - Before conversion
- C - Conversion
- AC - After conversion

Go over what you have written and underline key words or phrases that relate before conversion. Then do the same for after conversion. These words may become your key words. A title may be suggested by the words or after reflecting on the main characteristics and issues you faced.

Meditate on your conversion. How did you come to understand sin and the cross? What did you do? How can it apply to others? Practice it and share with others.

This is an example based on someone's testimony. They followed the crowd in life, but at the same time felt lonely and couldn't stand alone. The title is clear and provocative and its relation to the gospel is clear. The same title could be used substituting the words `success`, `fame`, `heroes`, `money` or whatever you followed before Jesus.



DELIVERY

Your manner

Be natural and relaxed. Don't be a lion nor a mouse. Be personal and yourself. If you are humorous inject it into your preaching. If you are not don't try to be funny. As you preach look at the people and speak to them and relate to them as real people. As you get more confident you can begin to engage in some banter with them and include them by asking them a question, etc.

Your voice and speech

You don't have to shout. Speak loudly and clearly, but don't rant. To be heard it is good to take a quick note of someone at the back of the crowd and consciously set your level to be heard by them. Don't speak too fast and keep your sentences short and crisp. Modulate your voice and vary your expression, so that you are not going on in a boring monotone. Always face the crowd when you speak. Don't speak while you are painting. Paint first and then turn to face the crowd to speak.

Your position

When you are not painting stand to one side of the board so that you are not blocking the crowds' view of the board. Don't move about more than is necessary, i.e. hopping about, waving your hands, etc. This is distracting to the audience.

PROBLEMS... PROBLEMS... PROBLEMS

Paint drips and runs

Sometimes paint can drip or run down the board. Stop a run by dabbing your brush at the end of the run. This makes it look like a spider on the end of a web, so why not make a quip about the spiders being so large around here or that you hope there are no arachnophobias in the audience!

Wrong spellings or mistakes in spacing

This can happen even when you concentrate. Don't panic or try to correct it by adding a box, etc. Simply cross out the word and write the correct word in normal letters in a space next to it.

Drying up

Sometimes your mind goes blank and you can't think what to say or what comes next. Hopefully the ladders on the board will minimise this, but occasionally you can't even remember what the word is meant to be! Don't freeze or apologise or walk off! Simply forget the message and tell your testimony!!

Hecklers

Generally most crowds are polite, but occasionally you have someone who seeks to interrupt the meeting. You are responsible in the first stage to handle this. Only if the objector gets physically violent should the team step in. Remember this kind of situation often works to your advantage as the majority of the others in the crowd will be sympathetic to you and on your side. The disturbance can also draw a bigger crowd!

Some points to help:

- Never be rude, insult them or put them down.
- Judge if this is a genuine objection or question. If it is, say something like, "That is a good question and I would like to give you a good answer. Would you mind if I finished what I'm saying here and then maybe we can talk afterwards?" Usually that will be enough.
- If they are disrupting by making a lot of noise, politely ask them to be quiet.
- If they are throwing things at the board (I have had children firing wet pieces of paper through a pea-shooter at the board), politely ask them to stop and just continue, but shorten the message.

OTHER USES FOR A SKETCHBOARD

Noticeboard

Use the sketchboard to advertise your impromptu kids' club or similar event. Write up when the next performance will begin.

Songs

Write up the words of the choruses for the songs you sing with kids. You can cover certain words with a slip of paper with a symbol for an action drawn on.

Children's Talks

The sketchboard is an effective aid to telling stories or giving a kids' talk as it holds their attention and is memorable. Use simple drawings that can be built up as the talk goes on. With younger kids feature more drawings and less words. Use partial lettering rather than ladder lettering for younger children.

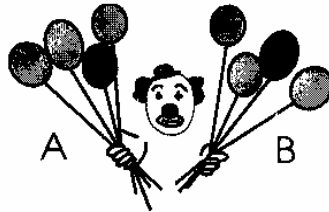
Quizzes and competitions

Use the board to keep score or as part of the game itself. Here are some ideas:

Scoring:

Balloons

Draw two sets of balloons - one for each team. As they answer correctly burst the balloon by drawing a cross through it with the children making the sound effect.



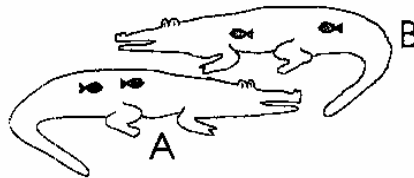
Pie

Fill in the slices



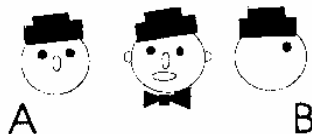
Crocodile

With each correct answer he eats a fish. Draw the fish in his stomach.



Funny Face

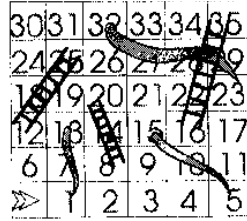
A feature is added to the team's face. This could also be a variation of the popular 'hangman' game.



Games

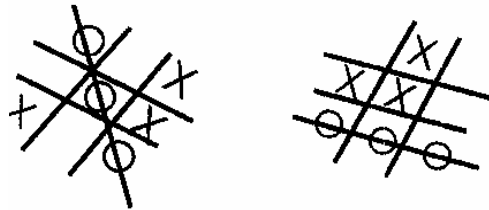
Snakes and Ladders.

A traditional game. Teams advance their counter on the throw of a dice. If they land on the head of a snake they slide down; if they land on the foot of a ladder, they go up. The counters are simple coloured card with blu-tak on the back to fix to the board. You could also adapt it for a quiz by only allowing them to move if they answer correctly.



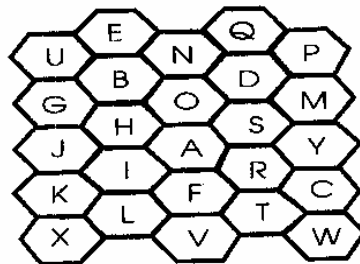
Noughts and Crosses

A well known game. Can be quick, so play it several times. Again, it can be adapted to a quiz if they only place their mark if they answer a question correctly.



Blockbusters

A variation of the British TV gameshow. The objective is to win spaces and complete a whole line of hexagons across the board. One team goes top to bottom and the other left to right. The game can be played 'fingers on the buzzers' with the question going to both teams and the first to answer wins the go. Or teams can take turns with one team starting and selecting a letter. The question is asked (if the answer can be starting with the same letter that is best) and if the team gets it wrong the play passes to the next team. If they get it correct the letter is painted in their colour and play passes to the next team.



Memory Verse

Write up memory verses on the board. This can be made into a game such as 'Funny Faces' (above). You can also paint out or cover certain words as they memorize the text.

FURTHER READING

Open Air Evangelism: Mark Howe

Preaching and Painting the Gospel (1 & 2): Graham Simms OAC Ministries

Sermons in Paint for Children: Graham Simms OAC Ministries

Fisherman's Basket: Noel Gibson

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