



PREACHING, PERSUASION, AND LEADERSHIP

ETHOS

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Greek rhetorician Isocrates:

"Who does not know that words carry greater conviction when spoken by men of good repute than when spoken by men who live under a cloud, and that the argument which is made by a man's life is more weight than that which is furnished by words?"

Antidosis, trans. George Norlin (London: William Heinemann, 1929) 2:239.

THE INESCAPABLE POWER OF ETHOS

Your listeners will be convinced by your message only if they are convinced by you as a person. There is no escaping this. People do not simply experience your words, arguments, and appeals as disembodied messages; they are always sensing and evaluating the source. If they don't know you, they are (usually unconsciously) gathering evidence to determine whether they like you, can relate to you, and respect you. They're noticing whether you're a happy or dour person, whether you are poised or nervous, whether you seem kind or hard or smug. They are looking for love, humility, conviction, joy, and power—for some integrity and congruence between what you are saying and who you are. Audiences are able to sense what kind of energy—or lack thereof—lies behind the speaking. They may see insecurity, the desire to impress, a lack of conviction, or self-righteousness—any of which closes their minds and hearts to the words.

Timothy Keller, *Preaching*, 191-192.

WHAT IS ETHOS?

Arthurs: “Persuasive appeal that comes from the receiver’s complex set of attitudes toward the source that exists in a particular situation.”

ETHOS

- Notice that ethos is always audience specific, even occasion specific. Name an example of how the same quality (e.g. being a seminary student) would work with different audiences.
- Do you agree with Aristotle that ethos “may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion”?
- Does the Bible emphasize ethos for preachers? We will return to this later in the lecture.

HOW IS ETHOS FORMED BEFORE AND AFTER THE MESSAGE?

- Before: reputation, associations, endorsements, introduction.
 - Note: audience disposition influences ethos. Some (much?) persuasion is out of our hands. E.g.—youth group which has been “force fed” the Bible.
 - Note: audience composition influences our behavior. If we ascribe high ethos to other members of the audience, we feel pressure to conform. See the “Asch Conformity Experiments.”

Asch Conformity Experiments

A Psychological Study

The Asch Conformity Experiments

A series of experiments directed by Solomon Asch in the 1950s that demonstrated the degree to which one's opinion is influenced by a majority group.

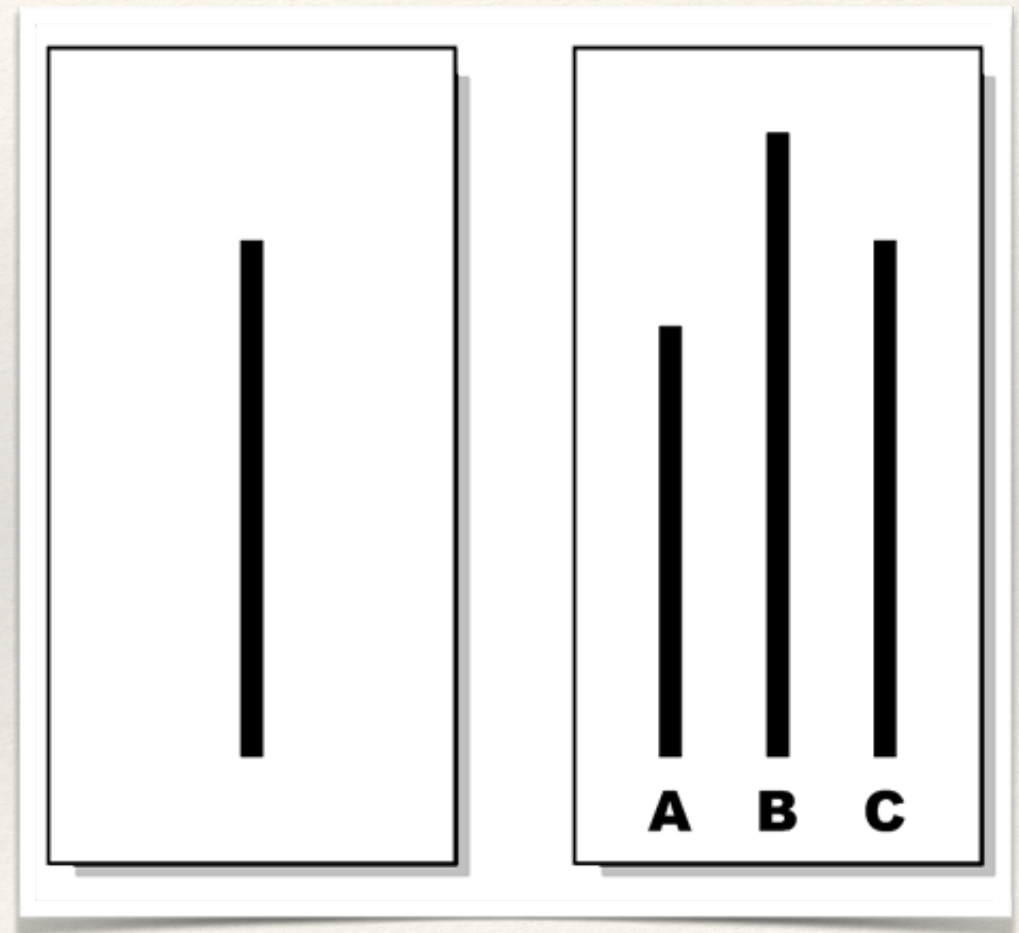
Methodology



One participant is unknowingly placed in a group of actors.

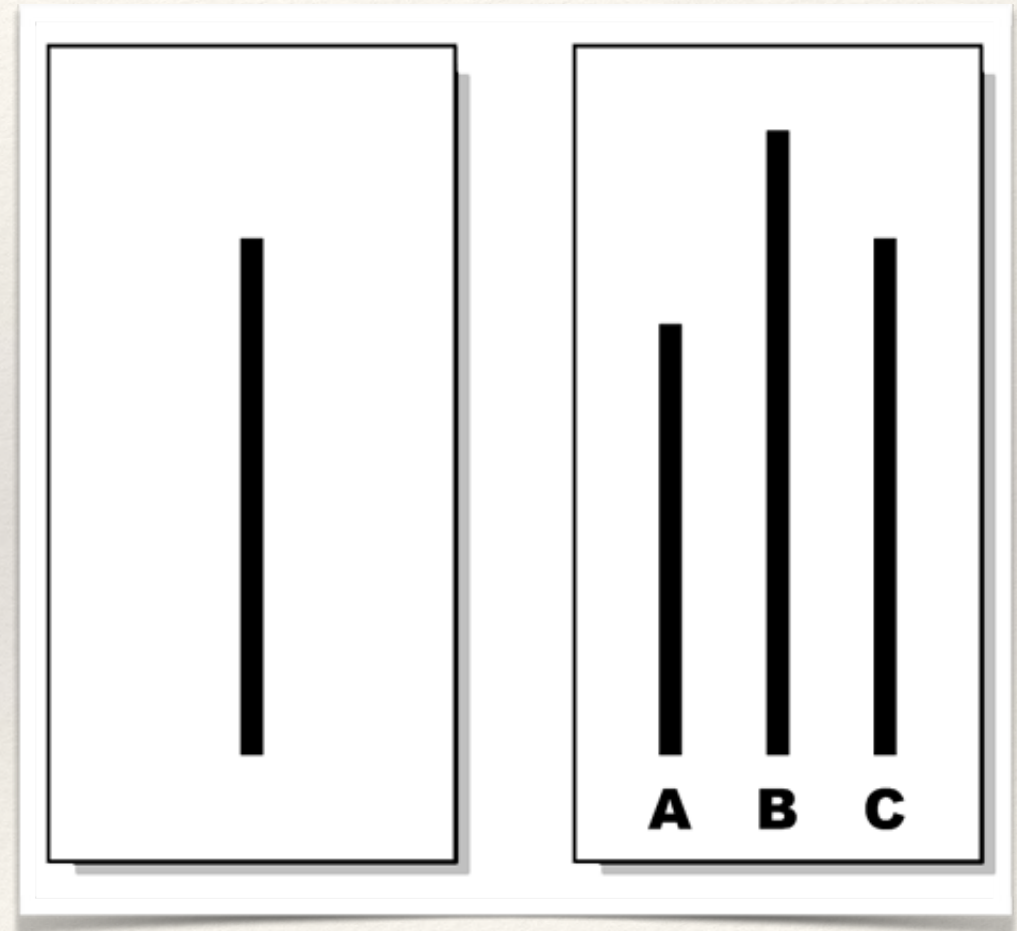
Methodology

- ❖ The participant is shown a card with a line on it, followed by a card with three lines on it.
- ❖ The participant is then asked to say aloud which line (A, B, or C) matched the line on the first card.



Methodology

- ❖ Actors were told to unanimously give the wrong response.
- ❖ When the actors gave the wrong answer, they placed the participant in a dilemma.
- ❖ The goal was to see whether the participant would respond in the same way as the actors, despite the response being obviously wrong.



Results



- ❖ The participants (not actors) gave the wrong answer 36.8% of the time.
- ❖ When there was *no* social pressure, they gave the wrong answer 0.7% of the time. In other words, when no actors were present, participants were right over 99% of the time.
- ❖ Many of the participants who had given wrong responses later admitted they gave the wrong answer because they didn't want to stand out.
- ❖ The level of conformity *decreased* when one other person gave the correct answer (another actor that was told to give the correct response to each question).

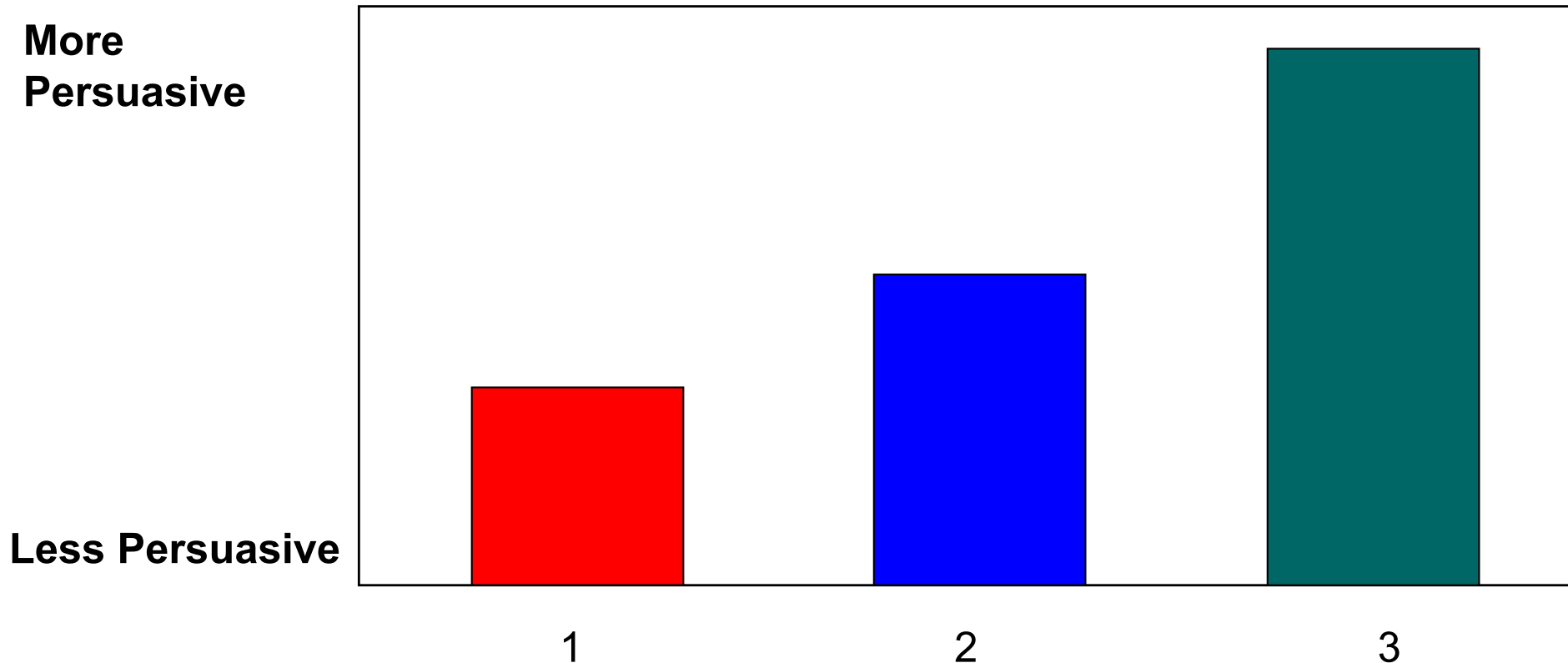
HOW IS ETHOS FORMED BEFORE AND AFTER THE MESSAGE?

- Before: reputation, associations, endorsements, introduction.
 - Note: audience disposition influences ethos. Some (much?) persuasion is out of our hands. E.g.—youth group which has been “force fed” the Bible.
- After: fulfillment of promises, endorsements, interpretation and reporting of message to others.

Discussion: knowing that audience disposition influences ethos and persuasion in general, what can a church do to create a receptive and alert disposition?

THE ELEMENTS OF ETHOS ACCORDING TO CLASSICAL RHETORIC

- *Good sense (phronesis, “practical wisdom”)*
 - Competent, intelligent, confident, knowledgeable, wise, qualified, expert.
 - Note: Audiences today (in North America) respond best to *experiential* authority rather than positional or even expert authority.



Method 1: Assertion plus evidence plus source (if the audience does not know the source).

Method 2: Assertion plus evidence.

Method 3: Assertion plus firsthand experience.

Source: Hamilton, Parker, Smith, *Communicating for Results*, (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982).

HOW TO DEMONSTRATE GOOD SENSE

A man in a dark suit is seen from the back, standing at a podium. He is gesturing with his right hand towards the audience. The podium has a computer monitor on it. The background is a blurred audience in a dimly lit room.

1. Know what you're talking about.
2. Document your ideas. Cite sources.
3. Reveal personal involvement and experience.
4. Be organized and fluent.

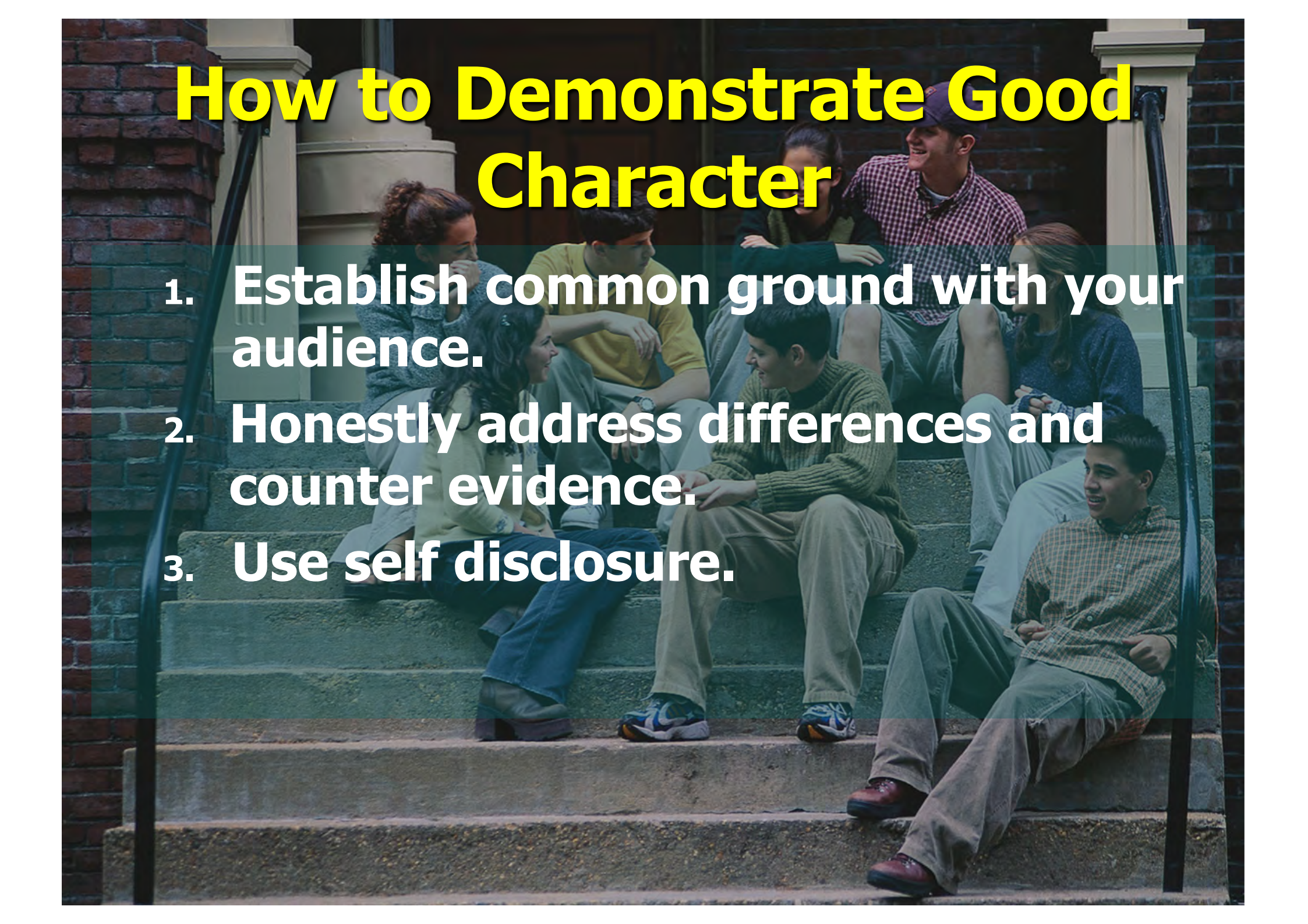
THE ELEMENTS OF ETHOS ACCORDING TO CLASSICAL RHETORIC

- *Good sense*
- *Good character (arête, “virtue”)*
Moral, honest, trustworthy, sincere.

Note: Identification. Credibility is enhanced when the persuader appears to be *similar* to us, but a bit wiser, braver, and/or more knowledgeable.

Note: Mudslinging. Lowers ethos. Mudslingers are seen as dirty, insecure, desperate, childish, etc.

How to Demonstrate Good Character

A group of seven young adults, four men and three women, are sitting on a set of stone steps outside a brick building. They are dressed in casual attire like sweaters, button-down shirts, and jeans. They appear to be in a relaxed conversation, with some looking towards each other and others looking away. The background shows a brick wall and a doorway with a white frame.

1. Establish common ground with your audience.
2. Honestly address differences and counter evidence.
3. Use self disclosure.

THE ELEMENTS OF ETHOS ACCORDING TO CLASSICAL RHETORIC

- *Good sense*
- *Good character*
- *Good will (eunoia, “good will”)*
 - **Selfless, friendly, likeable.**

HOW TO DEMONSTRATE GOOD WILL

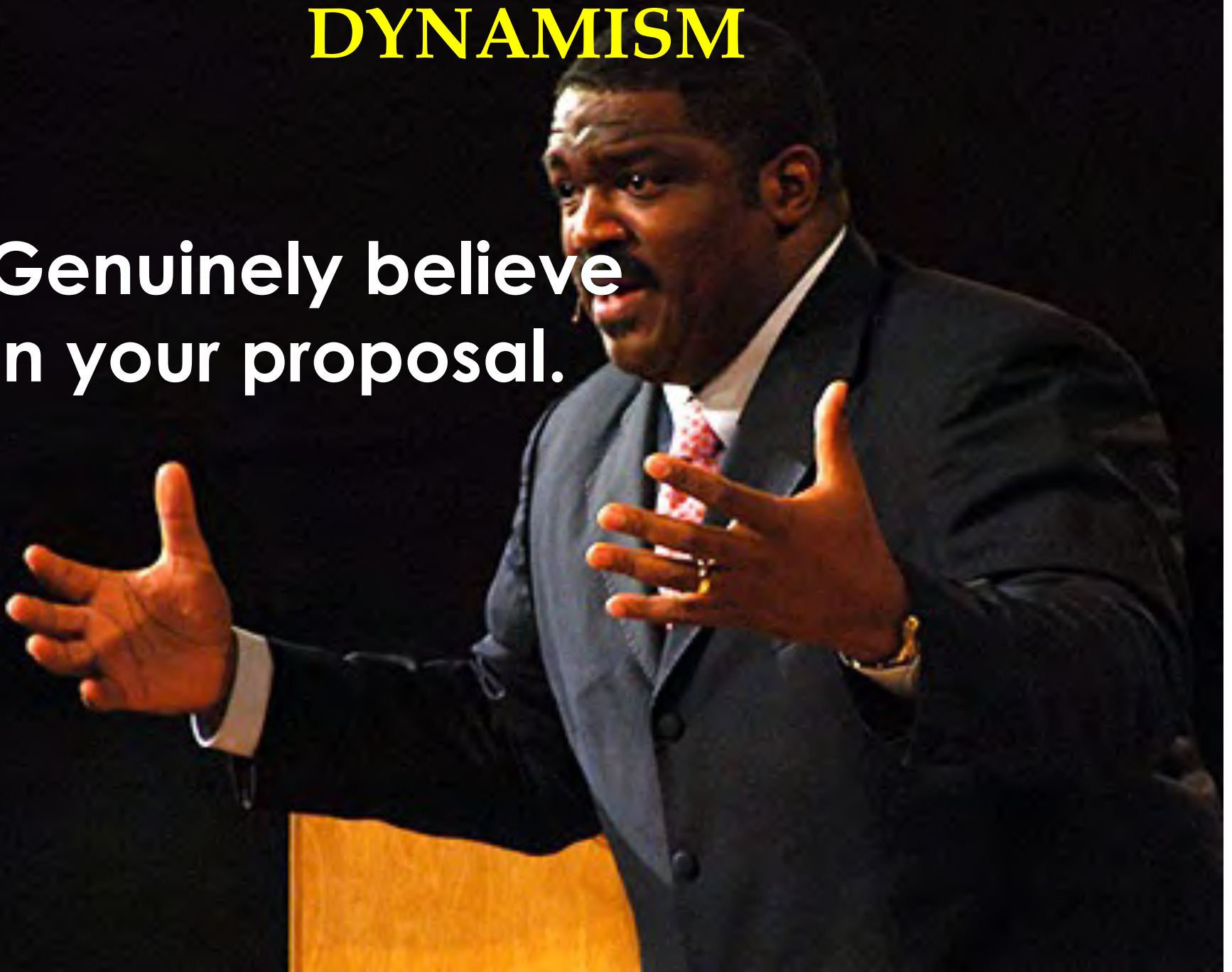
1. Smile (sincerely).
2. Express affection (sincerely) for the listeners.
3. Suggest (sincerely) how your proposal will benefit them.
4. Argue (sincerely) against your own interests.
5. Listen.
6. Spend time with the audience.

A FOURTH ELEMENT OF ETHOS ADDED BY MODERN THEORY

- Good sense
- Good character
- Good will
- Dynamism
 - Engaging, forceful, energetic, enthusiastic.

HOW TO DEMONSTRATE DYNAMISM

1. **Genuinely believe
in your proposal.**



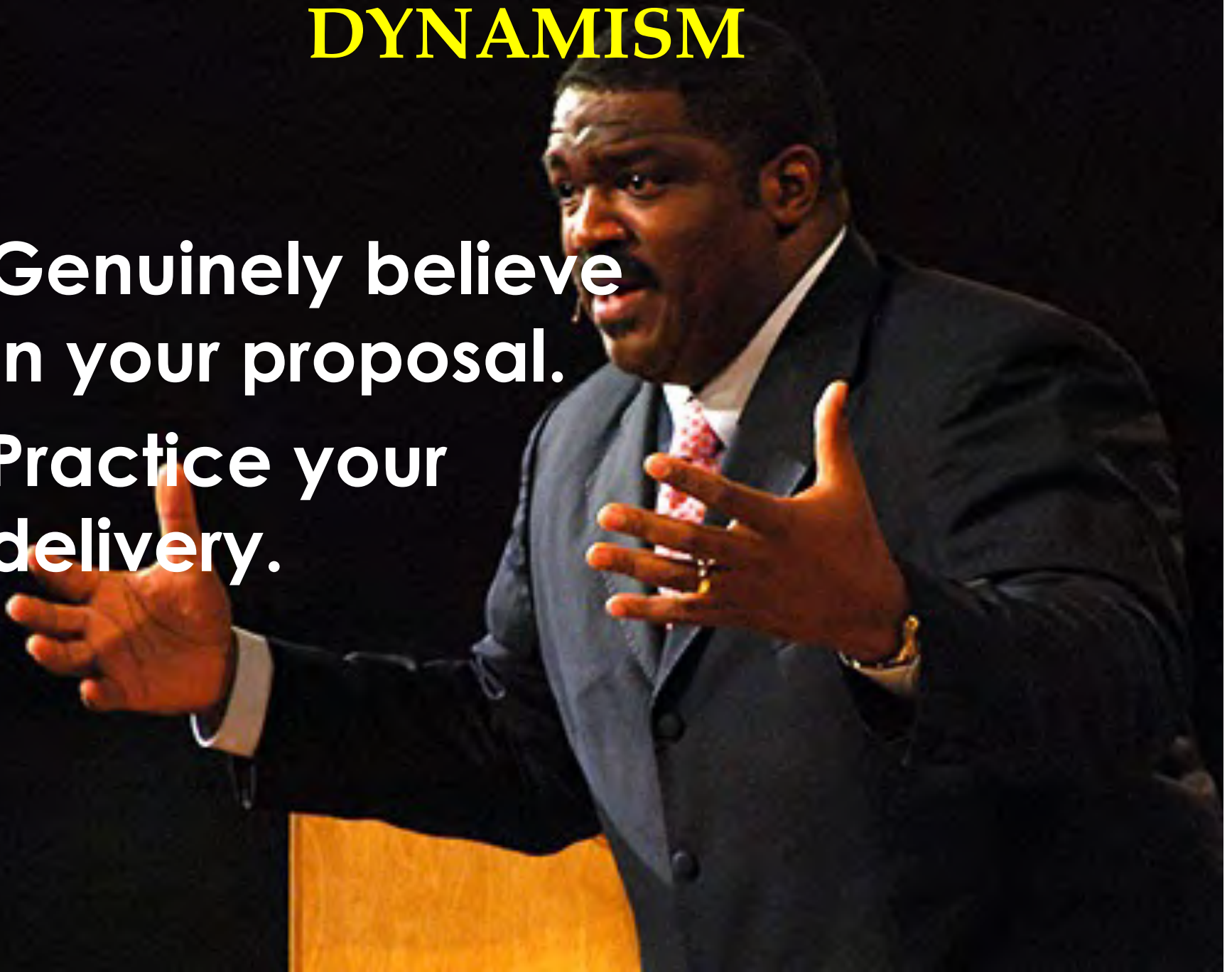
A scenic view of a traditional Japanese garden. In the center, a wooden arched bridge spans across a pond. The pond is surrounded by lush greenery, including various types of trees and shrubs. In the background, there are traditional Japanese buildings with thatched roofs. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

**A reservoir can
dispense only what it
has received.**

*W.T. Hogue, A Hand-book of Homiletical and
Pastoral Theology (Winona Lake: Free Methodist
Publishing House, 1946)*

HOW TO DEMONSTRATE DYNAMISM

1. **Genuinely believe
in your proposal.**
2. **Practice your
delivery.**



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF ETHOS

- What do these passages suggest that ministers need in terms of their personal character? Make a list . . .
 - 1 Thess. 2:1-12
 - Acts 20:17-35
 - Hebrews 13:17
 - 2 Cor. 2:17

BE AN EXAMPLE (1 TIMOTHY 4:12)

Exemplary Speech

In and out of the pulpit.

Exemplary Conduct

In every relationship.

Exemplary love

For every person we minister to.

Exemplary Faith

For every challenge of ministry.

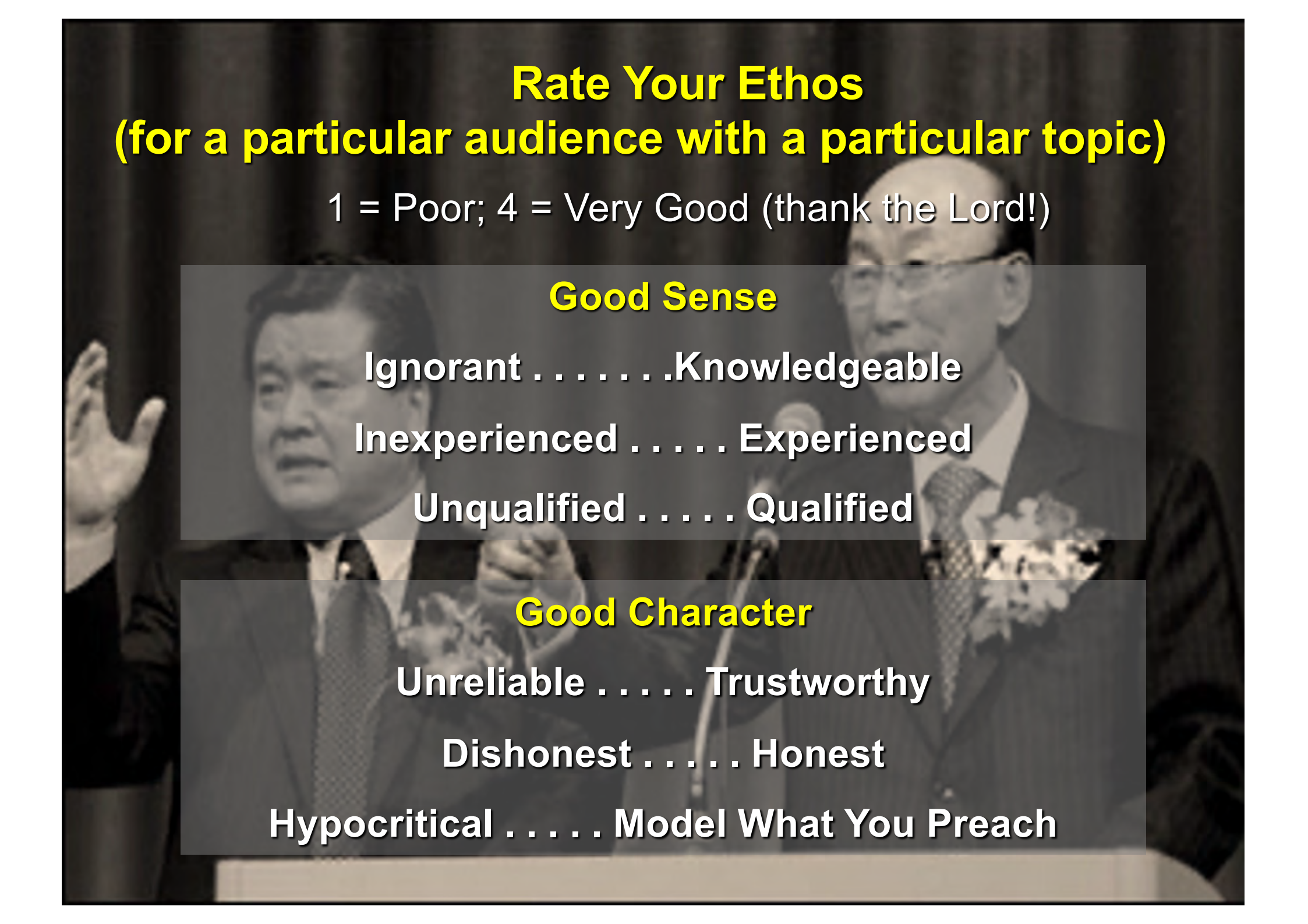
Exemplary Purity

Without a hint of sin.

1 TIMOTHY 4:16

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

- The verb “pay close attention to” includes in its range of meaning “aim at.” Preachers are to put *themselves* in the crosshairs.
- Why? Because we preachers may stop believing. We preach to ourselves as well as the congregation. We persevere in the faith by means of our own teaching.



Rate Your Ethos

(for a particular audience with a particular topic)

1 = Poor; 4 = Very Good (thank the Lord!)

Good Sense

Ignorant Knowledgeable

Inexperienced Experienced

Unqualified Qualified

Good Character

Unreliable Trustworthy

Dishonest Honest

Hypocritical Model What You Preach

Rate Your Ethos

1 = Poor; 4 = Very Good (thank the Lord!)

Good Will

Unpleasant Pleasant

Unfriendly Friendly

Selfish Selfless

Dynamism

Nervous Poised

Passive Active

Boring Engaging

Gloomy Optimistic

SPEAKING OF BEING GLOOMY OR OPTIMISTIC ... WE ARE "STEWARDS OF HOPE"

- A pastor can and should delegate many things.
- ... but one thing she/he cannot delegate is hope. "Vital optimism."
- ... but in order to steward hope, you must *be* hopeful.
- ... but this can be difficult in ministry.
- ... therefore, we must take hope.
- 1 Sam. 30:1-6

Case Study: Billy Graham “The Power of the Cross”

Boston, 1982

0:00-7:42, 16:14-22:49

- Good sense: How does Billy display knowledge, expertise, etc.?
- Good character: How is Billy’s ethos formed before, during, and after the sermon?
- Good will: How does Billy demonstrate his liking/love for the audience?
- Dynamism: What does Billy sound like and look like? What does this contribute to his persuasion?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2t7Lzs8UpfU>

HOW IMPROVE YOUR ETHOS?

- Models.
- Mentors.
- Disciplines (esp. encouraging yourself in the Lord).
- Watch yourself on video and/or seek input from folks who love you.

CASE STUDY: LEE ECLOV, “CHOOSE LIFE.”

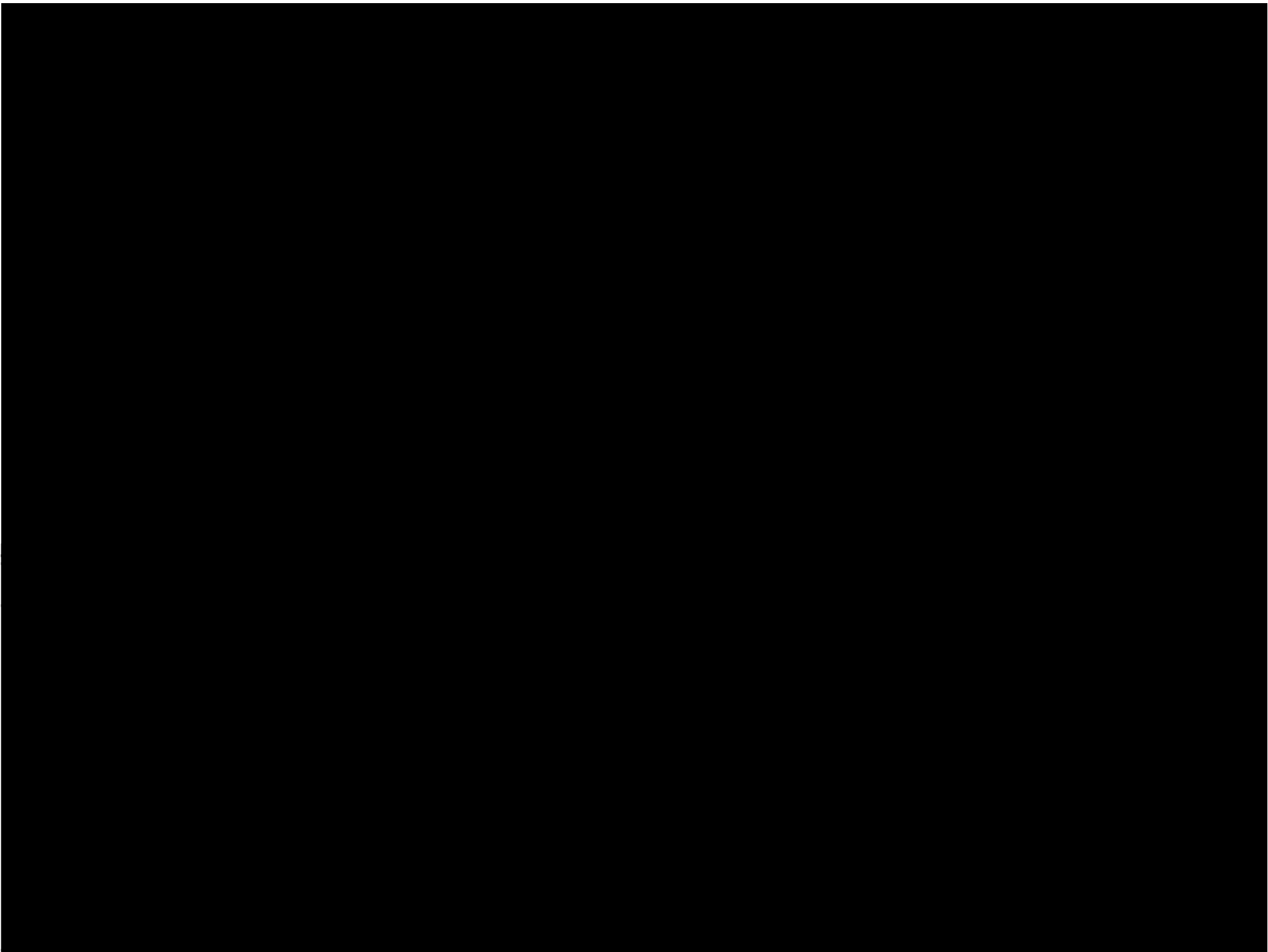


- **Rhetorical Situation:** What can you discern about Eclov's audience? Are they believers? Do they agree with his stance? What is his relationship with them?
- **Good sense:** How does Eclov build his case? Does he come across as knowledgeable? Does he make any mistakes in this regard?
- **Good character:** How does Eclov demonstrate trustworthiness? Does he make any mistakes in this regard?
- **Good will:** How does Eclov demonstrate that he cares for his listeners? Does he make any mistakes in this regard?
- **Dynamism:** What does Eclov sound like? Is he passionate and authoritative? Does he make any mistakes in this regard?

Case Study: John Ortberg

“Why Promiscuity?”

- **Rhetorical situation:** Who is Ortberg’s audience? Are they believers? Do they agree with his major claim? What is his relationship with them?
- **Good Sense:** Does Ortberg document ideas? Is the sermon well organized?
- **Good Character:** What qualities such as humility and sincerity does Ortberg project? How does he project them?
- **Good Will:** How does the preacher demonstrate love and liking for his listeners?
- **Dynamism:** What does the preacher sound like? How does this affect his ethos?



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