

Suggestions for Seeker-Friendly Sunday Feast Talks

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Table of Contents:

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Topics](#)
3. [Preparation](#)
4. [Conclusion](#)

Introduction

Prabhupada intended the Sunday Feasts for first time comers. Long talks, detailed talks, verse based talks are for during the week when devotees gather to deeply study the philosophy.

Sunday Feasts talk can be engaging, humorous, relevant, topical, etc. I feel a Sunday feast talk is successful if afterwards, attendees say, “ How did you know I was going through that very thing in my life?” or “I really needed to hear that today.” or “How did you know I would be here today?”

Those comments mean you were making KC Consciousness relevant to them in the place where they are now. Those kinds of comments mean you talked “to” them rather than ‘over” them.

Talks should be thematic, not just commenting on a verse. Start by introducing your topic, not by picking a verse.

Topics

Here are some topics indexed alphabetically:

Actions Speak Louder than Words

A Cut Above

Allow for Abundance

Amazing Grace

Answering the Call

Antidote to Death

Art of Waiting

Balancing the Books

Battlefield of the Mind

Beating the Odds

Becoming a Hero of Faith

Bent but not Broken

Being a Gatekeeper

Being a Light

Being an Example

Better Together

Be a Barrier Breaker

Be a Person of Excellence

Bloom where you are Planted

Blessing your Future

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Bounce Back Mentality

Bringing Life to Light

Bringing Dreams to Pass

Burn Brightly

Choose Faith over Fear
Calm in Crisis
Calling over Comfort
Call to Action
Cause Centered Life
Can you Trust God
Consistency is the Key
Change the Channel
Clean out your Mind
Consciousness is Contagious
Comfort vs Character
Confront & Control
Core Power
Created to Overcome
Curing Loneliness

Preparation

Preparing talks in advance does two things: a) it gives respect to your audience who took the time to come to the temple 2) sends a message to the audience that you think the subject matter is so important that you want to present it as professionally as possible

I ALWAYS accompany my talks with a power point (keynote, actually). Every learning institution commonly uses power points. It's what younger people are conditioned to, and it engages the visual sense as well as aural.

How to assemble a talk

Determine the theme and list “search” words and terms. Search both google and vedabase for: related stories, sermons, poetry, verses, philosophy, psychology. Determine words which are synonyms for your words and enter them into search as well.

Also helpful to me are sermon subscription services (\$99 per year on average) like esermons.com and sermoncentral.com. There is no database available of ISKCON talks, but it would be hugely helpful in the future.

Illustrate your theme with stories

There are four types of stories:

- a) Srimad Bhagavatam, CC, and Mahabharat
- b) Prabhupada Stories
- c) Personal Stories
- d) Contemporary stories that resonate with the audience (the above two services are good for finding lots of these)

Example 1

There was an experiment done with a high school in California. The principal told three teachers they were the most effective teachers in the district. They were chosen for a new program. Out of thousands of students, they were going to take the top 90 students, the smartest, most talented, with the highest IQ. These teachers could teach those students at a faster pace.

The teachers and the students were so excited, having been told that they were the brightest in the district. At the end of the school year these three classes had learned 30 percent more than the other students. They were 30 per cent further along in math, reading, and science. It was a huge success.

Then the principal informed the teachers that they DIDN'T have the top 90 students in the district. They had simply randomly chosen those students. The teachers felt really good, thinking they had done such an awesome job. Then the principal informed THEM that they weren't the most effective teachers. They also had been randomly chosen out of a hat.

The point is: WHEN you tell yourself a DIFFERENT STORY, WHEN you tell yourself that you're made in the image of God, smart, talented, favored, wise, anointed, creative, you're going to see NEW LEVELS of your destiny.

I like to have at least three stories in each talk. Personal stories which illustrate the workings of Krishna Consciousness in your own life are golden.

Example 2:

“Vai and I came to Utah Valley in 1981. We had no friends in the area. There were no devotees, no donors, no supporters. We'd put a down payment on a radio station, and had some capital to run it and pay the mortgage for about six months. After six months, the savings were gone. We were on the verge of panic. We thought, “We've got to get some devotees here.”

Then we remembered Prabhupada always used to say, “everybody is a devotee, they just don’t know it yet.”

We started thinking of all the local people as devotees, expecting the best of them, creating ties to the community, doing festivals, broadcasting a universal message of God Consciousness on the Radio station, and holding numerous festivals.

We didn’t feel lonely, isolated anymore. We said, “Heck, what are we worried about, “We are surrounded by devotees. We have plenty of well wishers, supporters, and potential donors right here.”

Just at what should have been our lowest moment, Krishna reminded us of our crown of favor. When we put Krishna first place, He causes us to overcome and not be overcome. He causes our light to shine. He lifts us up and gives us the victory when we could be still in the dust and dirt.”

Conclusion

Do not quote scripture in the original Sanskrit too much for a first time audience. A few times is good to show we are speaking from authority, but too many times may look like just showing off.

Talks should never be more than 30 minutes. First time comers just want to check out Krishna Consciousness and get a feel for it. They are not coming to hear our philosophy from a to z. Just pick a narrow topic, do a good job of keeping to the point, and leave them wanting more. The actual number of words in a ½ hour prepared talk would be around 3,800.

I do not take questions at the end because I want the theme to resonate afterwards. I don’t take the chance of someone asking something totally unrelated to spoil the mood. I announce that I will

circulate around the tables during prasadam to answer any questions. If a speaker wanted to take questions, I would still keep the session to within a half hour, including questions.

The whole service needs to be one hour, not including Nrsinha prayer, announcements, & prasadam. We do 15 minutes sit down kirtan to start, 1/2 hour talk, then 15 minute arti chanting Guru Pranams. Pancha Tattwa. then Hare Krishna.