

A Better Preacher in Thirty Seconds **by Lovett H. Weems, Jr.**

A few years ago, when I was a seminary president, I participated in the school’s Honors Convocation.

As one of our outstanding students received the annual preaching award, I commented quietly to the academic dean standing next to me, “That student just became a better preacher.”

Obviously, to receive such an award, the student already possessed significant preaching ability. However, there is something about having an ability affirmed, especially publicly, that tends to impact one’s identity in such a way that one becomes even better in whatever is being affirmed.

Effective leaders are constantly finding opportunities to help people see things about themselves. Such affirmations will shape not only how people come to think about themselves, but also how they actually function. Such insightful leaders find ways to say to the Sunday School teacher, “I understand that your role playing makes the Bible come alive for young children so that they go home and do the role playing for their parents.”

To a committee chair, they might say, “You are always remarkably fair in making sure that all sides of the issue are presented;” to the custodian, “No one could be more cooperative than you are when last minute changes come up because of unforeseen circumstance”; to the bishop, “You always seem to remember people’s names”; to the receptionist, “I have never known anyone who could handle difficult and unreasonable people with such unshakable courtesy and clarity at the same time.”

Everyone does something as well as or perhaps better than anyone else. If these are things you would like to see more, then naming them will provide the subtle but crucial encouragement persons need.

