

The Loom: Speech Topics

As a fun Unit 4 Celebration event, why not have students who are working on speech writing (Levels 4, 5, 7, and 9) deliver their orations in full costume from your deck while you repose on the grass below?

Below are some ideas for speech topics. They are divided into topics appropriate for Levels 4-5 and for Levels 7 and 9, the latter group growing in difficulty as the list progresses.

Of course, you may wish to choose different topics for this writing project. The choice is entirely up to you and your student. For instructions on teaching speech writing, consult *Writing Aids* and your weekly writing assignments.



Levels 4-5

Below are possible speech topics for Level 4 and 5 writers. Recommended time for these speeches is 3-5 minutes. Students may read from a text (teach them to look up and make eye contact with their audience frequently) or index cards, or speak from memory.

1. The Early Christians Were Brave—Why?

- This speech should focus on concrete facts of early martyrs and on the sustaining grace that God gave them in their trials. (Students should focus on the grace—not the gory details!)
- The students' goal should be to link the experience of members of the Early Church to our experience as American Christians, with the aim of encouraging brothers and sisters now to be strong in the grace God will give them to accomplish whatever work He has ordained for them.

2. Persecution in the Early Church—Who, What, When, Where, and Why?

- Again with this level student, focus on the facts of persecution. The student doesn't need to focus on gore as much as on types of persecution (arena, societal, governmental, religious, etc.), what types of people did the persecution (did it all come from the emperor?), and where most early persecutions occurred.
- Students should research with your help using the Internet or a resource on church history such as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, and include concrete facts, stories, and specific details in order to make a strong speech.
- Students' goals, again, include encouraging modern Christians that though the Early Church experienced difficult trials, God's grace was also present to sustain and encourage them. More importantly, His plan advanced to His glory through their sacrifices.

3. Early Missionaries: What We Can Learn from Them

- Paul, Barnabas, Epaphroditus, Timothy, and Luke—along with many others—traveled throughout the Roman Empire spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. In so doing, they faced danger, hardship, and opposition. This speech should inform the audience of the difficult conditions of travel and preaching in the ancient world.
- The speech should also tie in with the experience of Christians today, offering encouragement and hope for those in difficult missionary endeavors and exhortation to those who might be afraid to share their faith even in the tamest of circumstances.

Levels 7 and 9

Below are possible speech topics for Level 7 and 9 writers in order of increasing difficulty of either subject matter or structure. Recommended time for these is 5-7 minutes. Students may read from a text (teach them to look up and make eye contact with their audience frequently) or index cards, or speak from memory.

1. Today's Christian Church Could Learn Much from Ancient Saints!

- This is a somewhat open-ended speech: help your student select three areas where the New Testament church excelled and provided an example from which today's church could receive fresh inspiration. Some examples might include their giving (out of extreme poverty), service, hospitality, missionary zeal, love for the brethren, the martyrdom of many, and their apologetics.
- This is an exhortative/persuasive speech. In most settings, your student will be speaking to both parents and peers, and he would do well to choose examples that appeal to both.
- There is much opportunity here to "paint the picture" of the background of Roman oppression and persecution against which the new church functioned. Listeners should feel encouraged that if those early Christians could

- find grace to help in time of need, so can we.
- Encourage young speakers to take care to keep this speech positive. It is not meant as an opportunity to blast today's Christians but to call them higher by comparative example.
2. **Struggling with Peer Pressure? Have I Got a Story for You!**
 - This speech is meant to encourage peers (and parents) who struggle with man pleasing and peer pressure—and who doesn't? Early Christians faced betrayal unto death from friends, family, and enemies if they stood for their faith. What do we face in our times if we (parents/teens) stand for ours?
 - Help your student to focus on three or four stories about early saints who stood for their faith in perilous Roman times. Try to help him find some stories not commonly told, and be sure that he relates it clearly to peer pressure and the grace that God gave early saints to overcome their (very real) fears.
 - This speech requires the speaker to paint a vivid picture of the Roman world as a backdrop. There should be lots of facts expressed with vivid adjectives in short sentences.
 3. **Sharing Our Faith: What If You Had Lions to Face?**
 - Using the Roman world as a backdrop, this speech should inspire parents and peers to not grow weary in well-doing in the area of evangelism. If it's hard for *us* to feel "safe" while sharing our faith with friends and neighbors, imagine how hard it would have been for Christians of the first three centuries A.D.?
 - Here's a chance to glorify God for the grace He gave to ancient heroes of the faith and for students to draw the conclusion for their audience that He'll give us the same grace for the same calling to them today!
 - There are lots of chances here to paint dramatic pictures, but have the student take care to make the stories relevant to life today.
 4. **Missionaries of the Roman Empire: What It Cost Them and What It Costs Us**
 - This speech is a persuasive/inspirational speech that should focus on obstacles the first missionaries had to overcome when sharing their faith.
 - Many parents/peers will not be aware of the details of travel in the Roman world or the struggles/dangers that early missionaries faced.
 - Most of the examples, as far as biblical material, will come from Acts. But, encourage your student to include less well-known stories and facts about travel/culture gleaned from independent research/reading assignments.
 5. **"They have turned the world upside down, and now they have come here!"**
 - What did the people of Thessalonica mean? Is Acts 17:6 exaggerating?
 - This should be a persuasive speech, encouraging Christians that all "ordinary" men and women have a part to play in turning the world to Christ.
 - Your student should choose one well-known apostle and several lesser-known figures who illustrate that it is God who causes ordinary people to succeed in changing their world for Him.
 - Questions for the student to address include, "What were the staggering odds that some of these people faced, and how did they cope? What was their testimony as they passed through fire? What kinds of challenges do parents/peers face today, and how can the faith of previous saints encourage us?"
 6. **Paul's Defense: A Great Model for Apologetics!**
 - This speech uses Acts 26 as its basis, and it shows the audience a godly model for telling those in authority about our faith. The student will need to select three or four aspects of Paul's speech to enlarge upon. Some topics might be his lack of fear, his dependence on God, his desire for Festus' eternal good, his desire that Festus be saved, his approach to Festus, the beginning of his speech, his humility in sharing his own faults and his personal experience of the power of God, and his gracious (yet bold) answer to Festus' accusation that Paul desired to convert him. These, and more, are modeled in the speech.
 - Your student should inform his audience of the cast of characters that Paul addressed, and the way things stood, historically, in Judea and in the Roman Empire as the speech opens.
 - Your student should draw parallels and examples from modern life to make this material relevant to his audience: when might they find themselves in a position to witness their faith to an unbelieving authority, such as a boss or the head coach of a Little League team?
 7. **Defending Our Faith: What We Can Learn from Early Christians**
 - This speech, like #6, relies heavily on the biblical accounts, and your student will need to be selective. Because #6 may be given the same evening, your student should choose biblical examples from speakers other than Paul to

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make similar points. James, Stephen, Peter, and many other martyrs made moving speeches in the face of death and taught us much about sharing our faith, if we would but take the time to learn from them.

- Have your student choose three or four specific “lessons” the audience can learn from these accounts. Encourage your student to “set the stage” with historical details of the Roman world.
 - Again, make sure your student encourages and inspires your audience, avoiding accusing and condemning.
8. Laboring Under a Hostile Government: Do We Really Have It So Tough?
- This speech’s focus is on encouraging believers to approach their government with a biblical attitude. Many Christians are alarmed at our increasingly corrupt, large, and hostile American government. Early Christians had a harsh governmental authority, yet the cheerful submission, even unto death, coupled with steadfast witnessing to the gospel, eventually changed the world. Listeners can be reminded and inspired to love their “enemies” in opposing political parties and to pray for those in authority.
 - This speech depends on telling good stories about those whom God used to change officials’ minds about the gospel. Obvious biblical examples are in Acts 16 and 26. Of course, students will need to glorify God for the grace He gave these men, and encourage listeners with the observation that God can give the same measure of grace to His disciples today.
 - Your student will have to work hard to draw his audience in by relating the ancient world circumstances of these men to the modern world in which we live. When might we be called upon to defend our faith to a hostile person? What might it cost us to do so? Is that cost one we are willing to pay?
9. Being a Part of God’s Plan: Are You in His Will or Is He in Yours?
- Many men and women died for their faith; many more lived for it. Small or great, we all have a role to play in God’s work on earth. All this year, we’ve been studying the unfolding of the preparation and establishment of God’s church. Many, many men, women, and children have been a part of that plan—some consciously and some unconsciously. The challenge of this speech is to find some specific stories of individuals whom God used to play a pivotal role in His plan. Try, if possible, to focus on stories from the Roman Empire and early church.
 - Using these stories, the student should aim to develop confidence in both parents and peers that their lives matter to God. The student will challenge them to be ready to do God’s will, even when His plans don’t seem attractive to them in terms of personal goals and desires.
 - Your students’ task is to find some good stories and then relate them to choices the students and/or parents might be facing in the near future. Your students should inspire listeners to ask first, “What’s God’s plan for me?” before asking, “What do I want to do next?”
10. The “Foolishness of the Cross”: The Gospel and the Thinkers
- The Roman Empire inherited all the wisdom and science of the Greeks. Some Greek ideas made it easy to accept the idea of a universal God who was not a mere idol. Other parts of Greek science and philosophy made it hard to accept certain tenets of the faith: the incarnation (immutable God in contact with corrupt matter) or the resurrection (a miracle that defies natural laws).
 - Looking back, we see that those parts of Greek thought that were truest (pure mathematics and good governmental principles) were also the most compatible with Scripture. Today, Christians often argue with assumptions based on “scientific” reasoning and research. Christians try to accept what is true and hold fast to their faith, even when science seems to disprove it. Scientists and philosophers down through the ages have often disagreed with Scripture, and only time has proven them false and cast them into disrepute. Those Christians who change their theology to mirror scientific or philosophical thought do so to their peril.
 - This speech requires research on Greek philosophy and Aristotelian science. Both had major roles in shaping the course of Christian thinking in the early days of the church.
 - The student should seek to relate scientific and philosophical issues of the first centuries to scientific/philosophical issues of today, such as evolution, the age of the world, social Darwinism, the idea that the government is socially responsible, etc.
11. God is Never Late: Trusting His Perfect Timing
- The purpose of this speech is to encourage believers to trust God for His perfect timing in all circumstances and to see that their lives are lived primarily to glorify Him, not please themselves.
 - This year, we’ve studied a dozen ancient cultures; only during the last empire did the gospel of grace appear. What about all those people who died before the appearance of Christ? Was God’s provision too late? (No, by faith we

know that God, the just and merciful, had just the right plan for them.) How did God perfectly prepare the world to receive His gospel? Focusing on the “path of preparation,” your student should seek to encourage his audience with the fact that God is never too late or too early! We are called to walk by faith, not by sight!

- ❑ This speech sums up much of what we have learned, and your student will need lots of help keeping this speech simple and focused. He should carefully choose examples from the past and relate them to future challenges common to members of his audience.

12. Pressing on in the Faith: Lessons from the Early Church

- ❑ This speech should focus on how the early church was “just figuring it out.” In this, they had more challenges than we do today. Churches in the early centuries had great challenges in terms of physical safety, poor technology, poverty, and lack of doctrinal history. They were human, and they struggled with sin. So do we! But, how much more should we work to be humble, grateful, and submissive to our godly leaders? How much more are we without excuse when we neglect our Bibles, spurn our godly leaders, or ignore sound Bible teaching as compared with early Christians?
- ❑ Students should point out the difficulties that members of the early Church encountered, such as the fact that the New Testament was not collected and established as it is today, there were no printing presses, and there was no set of literature from “church fathers” explaining and teaching the meaning of Scripture. What tempts us today? What perplexes us? And how can we draw encouragement and insight from the ancient Christians who were before us?

13. It’s Shocking! Jews and Gentiles United in the Early Church

- ❑ Paul was shocked at God’s plan for the unity of the church. In several of his letters, he expresses his amazement and gratitude for the union of Jews and Gentiles.
- ❑ Parents and other audience members may be unaware of the size of the gulf that separated Jews and Gentiles, especially from Gentiles’ point of view. This speech should detail it for the audience, and then it should go on to relate key Scripture passages to everyday situations in the twenty-first century.
- ❑ This speech should address race relations and relations between believers and unbelievers in the ancient world and draw lessons for those of us who grapple with such issues here and now. Students should explore how lessons from Paul’s letters and events in Acts are applicable today.