How to Respond in the Most Helpful Way to Sermons

1. **Use “I” statements.** Do not speak universally: “This sermon was great,” “This sermon was bad.” Instead speak about your response to the sermon: “I found this sermon moving because . . .” “I got lost because . . .” “I” statement will leave others free to offer their response, which may be quite different from yours.
2. **Describe rather than evaluate.**  Instead of “Your preaching is bad because you speak too fast,” try “I got lost when you spoke fast.” Instead of “You were too dominating when you said . . . .” try “I did not feel invited to respond but felt forced to accept yur arguments or be damned.”
3. **Be specific.** Refer to particular phrases, images, ideas. Instead of “This sermon was completely coherent,” try “The image of the X and the way you kept returning to it held the sermon together for me.” Instead of “The sermon made no sense,” try “I could not follow your reasoning when you moved from the statement about X to your example from the Bible.”
4. **Focus comments on the sermon (content, style, use of the Bible, etc.) and person (voice, gesture, expression, etc.), not your own agenda.** However, it may be helpful to identify a need that you brought to the sermon that is shaping your response.
5. **Offer what is useable.** Instead of “If only you were taller. . . .” try “I could see you better if the lectern were lowered.”
6. **Be clear.** Try phrasing things many different ways.