

## **SECTION 24**

### **The Introduction**

## THE INTRODUCTION OF A SERMON

(When you win them or lose them)

*“The most important part of the sermon is the introduction. You have 3-5 minutes to win their attention or lose their interest More sermons fail here than probably anywhere else.”*

-Daniel L. Akin

*“The introduction is clearly the most important aspect of a sermon.”*

-James Merritt

*“Nothing is more important in sermon delivery than the introduction.”*

-Jerry Vines

*“I believe it is absolutely essential that a minister have his introduction clearly in mind when he stands to speak. While other parts of the sermon may be outlined, the introduction ought to be written out. It is in the introduction that the preacher establishes contact with the people in the pew ...  
If there is ever a time that the mind will go blank, it is in the first moment or two you get on your feet.”*

-Haddon Robinson

“‘A flawed introduction is like a scarred face’ - you will not give its bearer more than a glance.”

Quintilian 4.1.61 quote in Chapell, 229.

“It is the same with men as with donkeys: whoever would hold them fast must get a very good grip on their ears!”

Russian proverb quoted by Haddon Robinson

“Ill begun is apt to be wholly ruined.”

John Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 103.

## INTRODUCTION

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1. Pray.
  2. Remember: This is the most important part of the sermon.
  3. Get the audience's attention, grab their interest, show them why they will want to hear what you have to say.
  4. Remember the value of a great illustration, pointed and specific information, a compelling question.
  5. Keep it between 3-5 minutes.
  6. Make a smooth and logical transition to the text/sermon outline.
  7. Consider scripting your introduction word for word.
  8. Do not waste valuable time with unnecessary/useless gab.

## I. THE PURPOSE OF THE INTRODUCTION

G. Campbell Morgan said,

*“Someone has said that the introduction to a sermon may be likened to the prelude to a poem, the preface of a book, the portico to a building, or the preamble to the statement of a case in court. The prelude introduces us to a poem, suggests its method and meaning or message. The preface to a book also does that... An introduction, then, must introduce.”*

-(*Preaching*, 81)

John Stott says,

*“a good introduction serves two purposes. First, it arouses interest, stimulates curiosity, and whets the appetite for more. Second, it genuinely introduces the theme by leading the hearer's into it.”*

Joel Gregory likens the introduction and conclusion of a sermon to the “taking off” and “landing without a crash” of an airplane.

### WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO DO WITH THE INTRODUCTION? WHAT ARE ITS GOALS? ITS PURPOSES?

Several can be noted:

1. To capture the audience's interest and attention.
2. To enhance the audience's goodwill toward the preacher.
3. To create audience anticipation for the body of a message.
4. To demonstrate the importance of what the Bible says about the subject.
5. To show the Bible's relevance and answer every listener's unspoken question, “Why should I listen to this message?”
6. To make the preacher's intended course of discussion clear to his audience so that they can follow along and not get lost on the preaching journey.
7. To raise an appropriate need.
8. It moves the congregation into the body of the message.

## **II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTRODUCTION**

1. It is your first opportunity to connect with your listeners.
2. It sets the tone for your message.
3. It determines whether you gain or lose credibility for the sermon.
4. It determines whether you have the ear of your audience.
5. It guides your audience into the message.

## **III. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD INTRODUCTION**

1. It has high interaction value (it connects with the audience)
2. It is short (usually 3-5 minutes)
3. It is varied (don't get into a rut of introducing your message in the same way)
4. It turns quickly to the need(s) of the audience
5. It is appropriate both to that sermon, audience, and occasion
6. It introduces the CPS
7. It provides a clear and natural transition to the text and body of the message
8. It has a good opening and closing sentence

### **BRYAN CHAPPELL NOTES "4 LINKS":**

1. Arouse interest in the message
2. Introduce the subject of the message
3. Demonstrate concern for the hearers (make it personal)
4. Prepare for the proposition

### **RICHARD MAYHUE SAYS IT SHOULD BE CRISP AND STRIKING.**

#### **IV. SOURCES FOR A GOOD INTRODUCTION**

1. Current statistics which highlight a contemporary problem to be addressed in the message.
2. Historical illustrations that serve to acquaint listeners with the thrust of the message.
3. Humor.
4. Current events (human-interest) that relate to the message.
5. Careful reading of the biblical text from which the message comes.
6. Real-life stories.
7. Biographical illustrations.
8. Striking quotations or statements.
9. Rhetorical, thought-provoking questions directed to the audience.
10. Personal experiences of the preacher (used tactfully and honestly).
11. References to current, well-known books.
12. Life-related problems for which biblical solutions will be forthcoming.
13. Contemporary confusion over biblical teaching to which the preacher will bring correction and clarity.
14. Highly interesting personal correspondence.
15. Appropriate prayer.
16. Fictional stories (be clear that this is what it is)
17. Modern-day parables.
18. Personal testimony
19. Hymns related to the message.
20. Asking an audience for their response to a hypothetical situation
21. Drama
22. A children's sermon (adults will be listening)

## **V. NO, NOS OF INTRODUCTIONS**

1. Don't waste time and meander around with trivial drival in the pre-introduction.
2. Don't promise more than the sermon can deliver.
3. Don't apologize for anything (eg. "I'm sick", "I was busy", "I've not prepared like I want", ad nauseum).
4. Don't use humor just to try to be funny.
5. Don't be trite.
6. Don't be misleading.
7. Don't refer to the last time you preached.
8. Don't refer to the last time you preached this sermon.
9. If you have multiple worship services, don't refer to the previous service (there could be a rare exception).
10. Don't use material unrelated to the message.
11. Avoid visual distractions.
12. Don't approach the pulpit with hesitation and the appearance of unpreparedness.

## **VI. PREPARING THE INTRODUCTION**

1. Write it toward the end of sermon preparation. (The exposition should shape the introduction, not vice-versa)
2. Script it so that you have it exactly like you want to say it.
3. Memorize it.

4. Ask the question, “Would this introduction get my attention? The attention of my wife? Children?!”

*“You must remember that you come to the pulpit having spent hours in the study poring over the passage on which you are to preach. You have been thinking over your subject for days, or weeks, perhaps even for years. But your people have probably not thought about it at all. Indeed, they may not even know what it is going to be before you stand up to speak (Pray that they will know after you have finished) The chasm separating their thoughts from biblical ideas may be vast. In the introduction you must enter their world and persuade them to go with you into the world of biblical truth, and specifically the truth that is the burden of the sermon.”*

- (William L. Hogan, “It Is My Pleasure to Introduce...,”  
*The Expositor* 1,3 (August 1987):1).

*“Today’s communication researchers say that audiences generally decide within the first thirty seconds of a presentation whether they are interested in what a speaker will say. This modern reality underscores the importance of gaining attention in the opening moments of a sermon... “*

- (Chapell, 229)