

Introductions and Conclusions (Step 6c)

I. Introductions (several thoughts from Michael J. Hostetler, *Introducing the Sermon*)

A. Importance

1. “For the preacher, the two minute warning comes at the beginning of the game” (Robinson, 11).
2. “There are three types of preachers: those to whom you cannot listen; those to whom you can listen; and those to whom you must listen. During the introduction the congregation usually decides the kind of speaker addressing them that morning” (Robinson, 167).

B. Elements of a Good Introduction (Memory Acronym: “GRIP PAT”) *A good introduction will...*

1. **Get Attention on the Subject** (*secular* contact point to establish relevance)
 - a. Your first goal in the pulpit is to establish relevance to temporal matters and life experience
 - b. Bad opening sentences include those that are biblical, religious, historical (unless very recent), or about the sermon title (since no one reads it anyway).
 - c. Be specific: give names, places, times, people, details
 - d. Be relevant: make the story or humour match the subject
2. **Raise Need or Arouse Curiosity** (*personal* contact point)
 - a. Address universally felt needs of people (family, job, physical health, money, relationship with God, etc.)
 - b. Speak to the people there (preach to *your* congregation, not to someone else’s)
 - c. Recognize and include the various sub-groups in the audience (men, women, children, the old, the young, etc. if they are all there).
 - d. Use “you” statements (not “we” or “they”) to encourage the listener to say, “I better listen to this sermon because I need this.”
3. **Introduce the Subject, Main Idea, or First Point** (*structural* contact point): Here’s your key statement in the introduction, so do *not* give it just after announcing your text.
4. **Provide Background to the Text** (*biblical* contact point to establish authority)
 - a. What has happened just before this passage contextually or historically (e.g., in a narrative, state where the people are, what’s been occurring, etc.)?
 - b. Share only information that orients to the subject (i.e., give relevant background).
5. **Preview Outline** (tell how many Main Points are in the body of your message)
6. **Announce Text** (at least 2 times so the listeners won’t have to ask someone next to them which only makes *two* people miss what you are saying)
7. **Transition into First Main Point** (one sentence to tie your introduction and body together)
8. **Length:** Introductions should comprise about 20% of the sermon length (5 minutes of a 25 minute sermon). The more complicated the text or sermon, the longer the introduction. The first sermon in a series will also require more time for background information.

II. Conclusions

A. Importance

1. A general principle to heed is this:

“What people remember most are the speaker’s *first* words and *last* words.
If you are going to make a mistake, let it occur in the middle!”

2. Oftentimes we work hard at our exegesis and introduction, but the conclusion gets “tacked on” only because we feel we must “end the message.” We don’t give it any real thought.
3. We need to make sure our conclusion has real direction.

B. Elements of a Good Conclusion (Memory Acronym: “STAIN”)

A good conclusion will...

1. State (inductive) or Repeat (deductive) the Main Idea then Restate It

- a. The old adage is true for an effective message:

“Tell them what you are going to tell them,
tell them,
then tell them what you told them.”

- b. Make sure this MI is clearly stated, even if you mentioned it earlier in the message. It may sound repetitive to you, but it won’t to them.
2. Tell the Main Points
 - a. Don’t allow this to become mechanical in your delivery.
 - b. Sometimes the MPs will emerge when stating the MI, especially in a multiple complement MI.
 3. Apply and/or Exhort to Obedience
 - a. Use your best illustration at the end to drive home your MI with persuasive force.
 - b. Explore relationships where the MI makes a difference in your listeners’ lives (p. 71).
 4. Include Variety
 - a. Don’t end every sermon with a poem and/or prayer.
 - b. The worst type of ending is the one you always use.
 5. Never Announce Conclusions
 - a. When the speaker says, “And in conclusion...” the audience immediately shifts gears to thinking about what they will do after the sermon (the hymn, what’s for lunch, etc.).
 - b. Use 10-20% of your time for the conclusion. This is 3-6 minutes for a 30-minute message.