

## SERMONETTE PREPARATION

It takes years of preparation to be able to give good sermonettes. It is only by preparing constantly with study, prayer and meditation along with keeping in close contact with the congregation and their needs that we will be successful with our sermonettes. Most important of all is our contact with God -- a stream can rise no higher than its source and neither can we. The way we live will affect the credibility of our message no matter how well we may prepare. Ralph Waldo Emerson summarized it by saying: "What you are speaks so loud I can't hear what you're saying!"

### The Purpose of Sermonettes

- a. To serve as an introduction to the service -- to get their minds off the physical and onto the spiritual -- to get their minds in gear for the main course to follow.
- b. A sermonette serves to edify the congregation on a limited subject -- one particular point. It is not just an assignment or a filler -- it must be of value to them.
- c. It helps a man practice before the congregation. No one will grow to his full potential without the right sort of opportunity.

### How Long Should a Sermonette Be?

Between 10 and 12 minutes. If we shoot for 10 minutes then we'll easily get it with<sup>in</sup> the allotted 12. If you need to go beyond 12 minutes then ask for more time -- 15 minutes is the maximum. Avoid regularly asking for more time. Occasionally the minister will allow more than the maximum 15 minutes. If so, be sure to keep within the limit he sets.

### Selecting a Topic

A sermonette must have a definite theme. Some try to cover too much ground and end up with a hash containing good ideas but too many scriptures and lacking any connecting or underlying theme to make them meaningful.

Always try to expand a point or principle. Never try to condense a subject. Take a point and amplify it. Don't attempt to shrink it into the time allowed.

#### Things to Avoid in Selecting a Topic

- a. Avoid new doctrine. If in doubt, check it with the minister ahead of time.
- b. Avoid trying to save the congregation. This is completely outside the scope and purpose of a sermonette.
- c. Avoid correction. Within the short time limit you will only succeed in offending the congregation.
- d. Avoid personal pet peeves and things that you personally don't like. Never use a sermonette (or a sermon) to air personal gripes or to grind a personal axe or ride a personal hobby horse.
- e. Avoid obscure picky points that are not relevant. They never help people to grow spiritually.
- f. Don't speculate -- this is the fast way to heresy. Preach the Word as you have been taught.

#### Four Types of Subject to Follow

- a. Explain a difficult scripture. This is the best type of sermonette to start off with. Members need this type of subject more than we tend to think.
- b. Instruct them on a principle of Christian living.
  - i.e. How to teach your children about God;
  - How to use your second tithe;
  - Why go to a minister for anointing.
- c. Exhort them to do something. This could include correcting a minor problem in a positive way.
  - i.e. Get adequate prayer in during the Feast of Tabernacles;
  - Cut down on the noise during services;
  - Pray or fast for themselves or for someone else.

d. Encourage and inspire the congregation.

i.e. Examples of answered prayer;

Exceptional examples of healing or of God's intervention;

Examples from the Bible.

Always check your idea with the minister who will be in charge of the service and also with the one who is scheduled to preach the sermon -- have more than one idea if possible.

### Organizing the Sermonette

Like a speech, a sermonette has four parts:

a. The S.P.S. After deciding the topic, write down the S.P.S. which states the one point you wish to get across.

i.e. "I want to explain one reason why God has us go to a minister to be anointed when we are sick."

Or, "I want to show you why Colossians 2:16 is misunderstood by so many people and clearly explain what it does mean."

Occasionally, for the sake of suspense, you may not wish to state the S.P.S. at the beginning of the sermonette. But it is still essential to write one down before you begin to organize the material you have collected.

Lack of a clearly defined and stated S.P.S. at this stage of preparation has resulted in the launching of more lead balloons than any other thing. Never allow yourself the luxury of by-passing this first step!

b. The Body. Now begin to gather together all your material, scriptures, examples, quotations and comments. Write them down and carefully scrutinize each one in the light of the S.P.S. If it doesn't fit the S.P.S. then don't use it! Never try to squeeze an idea, statement, example or scripture that doesn't exactly fit the S.P.S. into the sermonette. Should you wish to use a particular example, and it doesn't fit, then go back to step one and rewrite the S.P.S. and start again.

Now take those that do fit the S.P.S. and begin to arrange them in logical sequence under the S.P.S. You may not be able to use all the material. The best and most effective sermonettes normally have only one or, at the most, two points and no more than three scriptures.

Be sure to fulfill your S.P.S. -- say what you said you would say -- explain what you claimed you were going to explain -- answer the question you asked or promised you were going to answer -- AND NO MORE!

- c. The Conclusion. Plan your conclusion and write it down word for word just the way you want to say it. This conclusion should be included in your final notes -- it's so easy to forget at the time.

Make sure the conclusion is logical and that it fits the S.P.S. Organize your sermonette from the S.P.S. to the concluding statement -- never the other way around. Many flops have occurred when people have tried to organize sermonettes around a unique or catchy concluding statement or idea.

Often the conclusion may be a restatement of the S.P.S. in a slightly different form.

- d. The Introduction. Now go back and plan an appropriate introduction. Relate it to your main point and be sure it leads logically into your S.P.S. It must grab the audience's attention and make them want to listen. Never start by saying, "Would you please turn to ..."

Don't make the mistake of planning your whole sermonette in order to allow you to use a certain catchy introduction. You may end up with a good introduction, but the rest is bound to be weak. The introduction is the last thing you write down in organizing a sermonette.

As with the conclusion, write out the introductory statement -- preferably word for word -- in the final notes.

## SERMONETTE DELIVERY

Pray that God will use you in your sermonettes -- we often let our vanity, inferiority complexes and other problems get in His way. God can shake a limp dish-rag pretty effectively if He wants to. Really want to give something worthwhile to your audience. Talk about it -- study about it -- pray about it ahead of time.

Most men don't put enough zeal or intensity into their sermonettes. Quit being casual and put your heart into the message. Think of how much the congregation needs to have what you're about to say. However, don't go to the extreme of being bombastic. You don't have to look angry to look sincere. Be warm and friendly, but not weak and wishy-washy. Speak to them instead of preaching at them.

Make the Bible live for them. Most members just read their Bibles. You have an opportunity to put a new dimension into their study. Bring it up to date and to life by putting real characters into their study -- help them see, feel, hear, smell what the Bible says. We can do this only if Bible study is exciting to us personally -- only if we ourselves are thinking deeply and meditating upon it.

i.e. EXODUS 12:37-38 Make this scripture come alive -- don't drop your intensity and read it in Old English. There were 600,000 men besides women and children -- a mob scene of some 3,000,000 people. Have you ever tried to drive six ducks, five geese, fifteen chickens, two goats and a cow along a dusty road? Multiply this some 400,000 times and what do you have? Ever tried to prepare in one morning for a trip -- mothers chasing children, children chasing one another -- whooping, hollering, dancing -- noise dust and babble. Eventually the whole mass, like a vibrating amoeba, moves along in the direction of Succoth, 35 miles away.

Or, EXODUS 18:13-14 Here was Moses sitting on a rock in the middle of the desert trying to solve the problems of 3,000,000 Israelites. The only tribe that had any concept of a queue was

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Ephraim -- ever see a crowd of Englishmen trying to persuade a bunch of Frenchmen to form a queue and wait their turn? Another mob scene -- people trampling on one another -- knock-down-drag-out brawls to get to Moses. Imagine standing three whole days in the burning sun to complain about your neighbour's ass having put its foot in your chicken's nest and breaking half-a-dozen eggs -- and he refuses to pay up because he claims your chicken never should have built its nest there anyway! Multiply that 100,000 times!

Think deeply, fill in the gaps, dramatize it, make the Bible live for them. Read the scriptures with intensity. Most men let their intensity drop off drastically when they begin to quote from the Bible or any other source material. Practice the scriptures you want to read ahead of time -- be able to put feeling into them. Don't wade through unnecessary verses to get to the one you want -- paraphrase -- give the background in your own words. Then hit the verse that says what you want. Avoid attempting to twist your tongue around King James' English. Modernize it for them. Remember, the only totally inspired part of your sermonette will be the scriptures you read. Make them one of the focal points of the whole sermonette instead of an appendage.

Be ready to give a sermonette anytime -- have on in the back of your Bible for emergencies.

### The Evaluation

Don't miss this vitally important step. Ask the minister for an evaluation of your sermonettes. Don't expect him to come to you. Try to apply the evaluation. It will be some of the most valuable advice you will get.