

Preaching Matters Course: What makes a great introduction and conclusion?

Introductions:

Introductions (like humour) are a good servant and a poor master. Make sure the biblical text is setting your course.

- i. Text
- ii. Main idea of text
- iii. Main aim of sermon [this combines main idea with the people I'm addressing – focus on application]

What's the aim of an introduction? [NB no intro will do ALL of these things...]

- Earn the text a hearing TODAY– why you want to pay careful attention to this bit of God's Word [if a text is controversial it might mean some apologetic thrust is needed]
- Where does the main idea interact with today's culture/context?
- Set up the main idea AND/OR main application.
- Connect the big idea with PEOPLE.
- Depending on context you may also want to be connecting yourself/earning yourself a hearing.

Pro Tips:

- Don't write your introduction before you have got the main idea of your sermon/text.
- Avoid being the hero in any story you tell.
- Use everyday language. If you introduce long words they need explaining.
- Make your intro work throughout the sermon...come back to it.
- If you are writing an intro for the sake of it, just give them the bible and stick the intro in the bin.

Conclusion

Possible structure:

- i. Intro
- ii. Main Aim
- iii. Points to support main aim from text
- iv. Application [obvs this can be liberally sprinkled around everywhere not just end]
- v. **Jesus:** John 12: *Sir we would see Jesus.* Leave them with Jesus. How does Jesus answer this problem, or provide the resources for this issue?

Spurgeon: *"No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home and never preach again until you have something worth preaching."*

Come into land quickly. You don't want them hoping for a crash landing.

Example of recent Sermon outline and the role of an introduction:

[Text: *Rev.3:14-22* – the 7th letter to the churches (Laodicea)]

Main idea: wealth can blind Christians (v.17) and lead them to live unfruitful/disobedient lives (v.15-16); Jesus loves us enough to warn us this can't continue (v.18-20).

Main aim: To call people to repentance having seen the love of Jesus for them.

Intro: Story of me breaking up with Beth (then girlfriend). Seeking to get back together, her robust communication with me. Sometimes love involves more than roses and poetry. Love can require hard words. These letters from Jesus contain hard words. It's vital we hear them.

Sub-intro: very brief summary of the 7 letters – one point = what Jesus values in churches is often very different from what we tend to value.

1. **What's the problem?** [*lukewarm = unfruitful; I know your deeds.*] v.15-16

Cause of problem = wealth and pride

Jesus doesn't beat around the bush here, he (like Beth with me!) goes straight into the problems in Laodicea.

2. **What's the solution?** [*Repentance – Jesus is knocking*] v.19-20

Repentance is more than assenting to belief in Jesus; it involves letting go of the things which keep us from depending on Him (v.18)

Perhaps I could have made a link back here also. Jesus is NOT like Beth was. He does not cut off all contact, but keeps knocking. We might make bad decisions but they are never irreparable with Jesus.

3. **What's the Motivation?** [*Love*] v.19

Future depends on this rebuke (v.21)

Beth told me it straight. It was loving because our future relationship depended on me learning those lessons. Jesus tells us straight here because our future reality depends on it: to those who are victorious...I will give.

Conclusion: So Holy Trinity Combe Down, Jesus loves you as his church. He stands among us by his Spirit even now. He wants us to be aware of the danger of wealth and to see ourselves and our church the way he does, to value what he values. He wants us to keep on keeping on even if it means life is harder. He may be calling you to repent and let go of what is blinding you at the moment. And he promises genuine friendship now, and a glorious forever future.