

More on Sermon Length

by Wayne Goff

sermon length is an interesting topic and one that has concerned me from the time I began preaching. I have heard preachers say, "A sermon should be as long as it is deep." I have heard others say, "Sermonettes make Christianettes." My father told me when I first began preaching to preach until I finished my sermon! That is a nice way of saying, "Stand up! Speak up! Shut up! Sit down!" Admittedly, not every sermon is the same, nor does every sermon require the same amount of time. But it is a given that the spiritually weak expect a much shorter sermon than those who are studying God's Word habitually. It has to do with one's appetite for spiritual food. If you're exercising your mind during the week through Bible study, meditation, prayer, etc., then your mind will be more ready and willing to absorb the sermon.

Some have such little interest in spiritual things that "listening to a sermon" amounts to the drudgery of sitting in a hard pew for however long the sermon lasts! They do not get anything out of the sermon because they didn't bring anything to get it in!

One web site I visited surveyed the question of how long a sermon should be and the responses were fairly evenly divided. 41% said the sermons should be 20-30 minutes in length. 37% said the sermons should be 35-55 minutes in length. And a mere 9% thought there should be no time constraints on the sermon. (God bless that 9%!) The other 13% had various answers. The truth is that there is no biblical time length on sermons. Preachers shouldn't abuse their audience, and listeners should come prepared to hear, take notes, contemplate, search the Scriptures, and understand.

You can read the first gospel sermon in Acts 2 in about three and one-half minutes! However, remember that Luke is probably giving us the "cliff notes" (summary), and that it goes on to say that "*with many other words he testified and exhorted them...*" (v. 40). And I guess I'll end with the advice I've been given more than once: "The mind can only absorb what the seat can endure." Believe me, *I really do* try to remember this.

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