

# **Preachers and Teachers: Tediousness; Suggestions to Consider**

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The typing out of transcripts leads to some very interesting observations sometimes that just listening or watching a discourse may not show so clearly. One thing I have noticed is that if a discourse goes on and on more than an hour and sometimes almost two, that it becomes repetitious, tedious, less focused, and not as clear cut as if it were around an hour. Often too the time after one hour ends up going off into what would much better be another discourse. I have seen that in the early days of our message the discourses were more compact and concise and have gradually grown longer in the last few years until it would try the patience of Job sometimes to sit through them even though they are interesting.

I wanted to share a couple suggestions with my brethren for consideration and I believe the Spirit of Prophecy agrees with what I wish to share. I stand to be corrected if I am wrong about this. I really do believe that these concepts are part of the Agape Love part of our message we are starting to learn about. It is a well-known fact that people do NOT retain long discourses and after a certain amount of time, usually around an hour or so, the main thought running through the minds of the hearers is, "When is he going to stop!" Physical discomfort and brain weariness often becomes a barrier to absorbing the truths being shared. After all brethren, what is the use of wearing out yourself only to be making your message to be 'a burden to the weary beast'?

So because of this I thought perhaps my association brethren might consider these ideas:

1. Plan the discourses with around an hour in mind.
2. Keep to the subject you are trying to expound about and keep side issues for another time. (I do know in saying this that the Holy Spirit can lay on the heart of a speaker to address another subject than he planned, however the Holy Spirit will not go against His own inspired counsel which we will look at below; at times it could be just our own ideas and not His.
3. Some discourses could be broken down into two or three parts. That is what I try to do when trying to type transcripts and prepare readable material for the online school. You saw this in the "Practical Gospel" transcript.
4. If a lengthy time slot must be filled, divide the discourse in two or more parts and allow a ten minute break between parts for people and speaker to attend to nature, take a drink and move around and restore circulation to the body and focus to the brain.
5. Avoid making the closing prayer another sermon—a prayer is meant to be addressing God, is it not disrespectful to sermonize Him? Also a long sermony prayer at the end of a long discourse can at times feel almost unendurable.

I am going to place some quotes here I have found intriguing.

## **Cut Down Your Lengthy Discourses.**

"Some of your lengthy discourses would have far better effect upon the people if cut up into three. The people cannot digest so much; their minds cannot even grasp it, and they become wearied and confused by having so much matter brought before them in one discourse. Two-thirds of such long discourses are lost, and the preacher is exhausted. There are many of our ministers who err in this respect. The result

upon themselves is not good; for they become brain weary and feel that they are carrying heavy loads for the Lord and having a hard time. Thus they begin to ponder over their feelings and pity themselves and remove their eyes from Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith. Jesus does not ask this sacrifice on their part; He requires obedience rather than sacrifice." {20MR 133.6}

"The truth is so different in character and work from the errors preached from popular pulpits that when it is brought before the people for the first time, it almost overwhelms them. It is strong meat and should be dealt out judiciously. While some minds are quick to catch an idea, others are slow to comprehend new and startling truths which involve great changes and present a cross at every step. Give them time to digest the wonderful truths of the message you bear them." Ev 177.

"Never weary the hearers by long discourses. This is not wise. For many years I have been laboring on this point, seeking to have our brethren sermonize less, and devote their time and strength to making important points of truth plain, for every point will be assailed by our opponents. Everyone connected with the work should keep fresh ideas; . . . and by tact and foresight bring all that is possible into your work to interest your hearers."--Letter 48, 1886. Ev 178.

"Long discourses and tedious prayers are positively injurious to a religious interest, and fail to carry conviction to the consciences of the people. This propensity for speech-making frequently dampens a religious interest that might have produced great results." GW92 71.

### **Sermons Shorter by Half**

"Ministers give too much time to preaching, and exhaust their vital forces. . . .It is the many long discourses that weary. One half of the gospel food presented would tell to much better advantage."--Ev 658.

"Let loud speaking and long discourses cease from among us." RH, June 23, 1891

"I have some things to say to you. Do not exhaust your strength by giving long discourses. Search the Scriptures. Seek God in earnest prayer, that when you stand before the people, you may realize the solemn weight of the message which you are about to bear. **Talk to the people in simplicity. Let your discourses be short. Handle only a few points,** saving your vitality for house to house work.

"Ministers too often stand before the people and deliver lengthy discourses, which in order to do good, need to be divided into three parts. **The minds of the people are wearied by such discourses, and the truth loses its effect upon them.** Keep humble. In your ministry plead for the presence of the Holy Spirit; for nothing can be done without its aid. Never forget that you are a steward of the grace of God and a servant of the church for Christ's sake. Mingle no selfishness with your work; pray that self may be covered with the garment of Christ's righteousness." 6MR 194.

"Let there be no tedious, long discourses. Just come right to the point. Pray right to the point, short and spiritual prayers. Let there be no striving to be the greatest, for if either of you do this you will be found in the lowest place, for the spirit that prompts to this will lead you away from God. You will not feel that you must be constant learners in the school of Christ, and will become dead and lifeless, not living epistles. God help you, my brethren, to strive lawfully for the crown of eternal life." 10MR 132.

"Our ministers should be guarded in regard to preaching long discourses. It is a great tax upon the speaker and a tax upon the people to digest so much matter. Sermons of one half the length would be of far more value than the long sermons usually preached, which are wearing out the strength of the ministers by exhausting efforts that are not necessary." 15MR 349.

“We should not work to the point where we exhaust our powers and cut short our days, **but work in accordance with the laws of life and health**, and do no more than we can do intelligently and with thoroughness. We have thought too much depended on what we could do, and have not depended enough on the Lord God of Israel to work for His people. God does not require any one of us to preach long discourses and offer long prayers, and raise the voice to a high pitch, and **hold so many meetings that the physical and mental powers are nearly wrecked.**” 15MR 353.

*Note: I found this above quote most interesting. I remember what happened at OK in 2010 and those of you who were there can testify to this also. There were just so many meeting and long ones also that some stopped attending and some even got ill. I was among the latter because I wanted to hear them all but it was just too much!*

“Never weary the hearers by long discourses. This is not wise. For many years I have been laboring on this point, seeking to have our brethren sermonize less and devote their time and strength to making important points of truth plain, for every point will be assailed by our opponents. Everyone connected with the work should keep fresh ideas. They should not allow themselves to become merely spectators, but interested workers watching for opportunities to speak with souls, to come close to them by personal, interested efforts. By tact and foresight bring all that is possible into your work to interest your hearers, but avoid long sermons, for they soon weary of this. They want a diversity of labor.

“The Bible readings are of great advantage, and will do more to fasten the points of truth in the minds than many discourses. But **short, plainly made points, avoiding all rambling, will be of the greatest advantage.**” {17MR 68.1}

“There is much more preaching than there should be at our camp-meetings. . . .when so many discourses are crowded in, one after another, the people have no time to appropriate what they hear. Their minds become confused, and the services seem to them tedious and wearisome.” {GW 407.2}

## **What did Christ do?**

“It has been shown me that our camp meetings are to increase in interest and success. As we approach nearer the end, I have seen that in these meetings there will be less preaching and more Bible study. There will be little groups all over the ground with their Bibles in their hands, and different ones leading out in a free, conversational study of the Scriptures.

“This was the method that Christ taught His disciples. When the great throngs gathered about the Saviour, He would give instruction to the disciples and to the multitude. Then after the discourse the disciples would mingle with the people and repeat to them what Christ had said. Often the hearers had misapplied Christ's words, and the disciples would tell them what the Scriptures said and what Christ had taught that they said.” 6T 87, 88.

May the Lord Bless and guide us all!

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