

You May Not Like This.  
And You May Decide Not to Use It.

But these insights are undoubtedly in  
play for both visiting and resident  
preachers.

## **Before you finish planning your sermon (Ask the person who invites you).**

- Know your congregational setting:
  - Who will be there?
  - What's in their heads?
  - What's on their minds?
  - What are the group customs with regard to sermons?
- Room reconnaissance.
  - Podium. From where will you approach?
  - Mics.
  - Any other technical support.

**Listeners make many judgments the minute they realize you are the speaker and before you ever speak.**

- They note your age.
- They note your clothing.
- They note your confidence level by watching your first approach.
- They try to evaluate how important you are to them.
- If you preach to them regularly they will be remarkably fine-tuned.
  - Your level of preparation.
  - Your emotional situation.
  - Your level of enthusiasm or discomfort.

**If you are a visitor, within about 30 seconds after you start speaking.**

- The congregation will have placed you socially.
  - Your income.
  - Your education.
  - Your “type” of spirituality.
  - How important the sermon will be.

If they sense you are different (not one of them), it might mean many different things.

- It might be a relief!
- It might make you suspicious!

Some things are probably just bad ideas.

- Sending under-confident or awkward body language signals as you approach the speaker's place, platform, pulpit, lectern, music stand...
- Muttering or commenting to yourself.
- "Can you hear me?" thump thump thump.
- Trivial, ad-libbed openings. Insincere perfunctory remarks. A lot of baloney.
- Self-handicapping remarks. If it starts with 'you'll have to pardon me, or I have a sore throat,' it probably won't get you sympathy.

# Some things are probably just good ideas.

- A well-planned introduction.
- Avoiding unrehearsed or flippant jokes!
- Pausing for a second, establishing eye contact.
- Getting on with it deliberately and confidently.
- It might be called “working the frame.” The listeners give you a certain frame—is it the pulpit or whole stage or a bar stool? Whatever it is your sense of comfort there, your control of that space, is vital to their perception of your confidence, not just in yourself but in your message.