

*How would he have liked it if he had been a cow?"* There was a great deal of sense in that question. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ought to have prosecuted that young sinner. How can farmers hear to profit when they have cows-on-the-brain? The mother feels morally certain during that extra ten minutes of your sermon that the baby is crying, or the fire is out, and she cannot and will not give her heart to your ministrations. You are keeping her ten minutes longer than she bargained for, and she looks upon it as a piece of injustice on your part. There is a kind of moral compact between you and your congregation that you will not weary them more than an hour-and-a-half, and if you keep them longer, it amounts to an infraction of a treaty and a piece of practical dishonesty of which you ought not to be guilty. Brevity is a virtue within the reach of all of us; do not let us lose the opportunity of gaining the credit which it brings. If you ask me how you may shorten your sermons, I should say, *study them better*. Spend more time in the study that you may need less in the pulpit. We are generally longest when we have least to say. A man with a great deal of well-prepared matter will probably not exceed forty minutes; when he has less to say he will go on for fifty minutes, and when he has absolutely nothing he will need an hour to say it in. Attend to these minor things and they will help to retain attention.

If you want to have the attention of your people—to have it thoroughly and always, *it can only be accomplished by their being led by the Spirit of God into an elevated and devout state of mind*. If your people are teachable, prayerful, active, earnest, devout, they will come up to the house of God on purpose to get a blessing. They will take their seats prayerfully, asking God to speak to them through you; they will remain on the watch for every word, and will not weary. They will have an appetite for the gospel, for they know the sweetness of the heavenly manna, and they will be eager to gather their appointed portions. No man will ever have a congregation to preach to which surpasses my own in this respect. Indeed, those with whom the preacher is most at home are usually the best hearers for him. It is comparatively easy to me to preach at the Tabernacle; my people come on purpose to hear something, and their expectation helps to fulfil itself. If they would hear another preacher with the same expectancy, I believe they would generally be satisfied; though there are exceptions.

When the preacher first settles, he cannot expect that his congregation will give him that solemn, earnest attention which those