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Power in the Pulpit, by Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix. Chicago: Moody Press, 1999. Pp. 391.
Review by James L. Smyrl.

Shaddix has presented a compilation of two previous works by Vines, namely *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation* and *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery*. Essentially all of the material in these two works has been preserved with the exception of minor editorial changes primarily related to relevant illustrative material. Additions made to the original works are awkward insertions that often break the pattern of thought for the reader. The purpose for this work is to prepare the preacher personally and to equip the preacher with the necessary practical directives needed in weekly sermon preparation. Vines states, “the material in this book specifically addresses the preparation and delivery of expository sermons” (pg. 14).

In section one, Vines and Shaddix attempt to establish a biblical foundation for their defense of expository preaching. Primarily a word study of Hebrew and Greek words related to preaching, this defense becomes more of a dictionary than an apologetic for their thesis. The authors address the history of expository preaching with the apparent intention of further establishing a defense for the art. However, only a select few expositors are listed and their style, methods, and contributions to exposition are generalized to the degree that one finds difficulty in understanding the purpose for their inclusion.

Fulfilling the goal of preparing the preacher, chapter two provides excellent insight into the personal preparation practices one must adhere to in order to preach. The preliminary approach taken in this section continues to rest heavily on word studies, but a migration away from this rhetoric saves the reader from another chapter that reads like a dictionary. Covering issues related to personal worship, mental preparation, and physical health, the authors reveal that a preacher’s preparation includes far more than exposition.

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Section two primarily addresses the issue of the mechanics required to produce an expository sermon. Answering the question, “where do I start,” the authors submit, “His personal experience, however, may serve as a springboard to discovering what God says about a particular issue” (pg. 94). This directive is dangerous advice for the expositor and seems out of place in regard to its immediate context and to the following sections which clearly establishes a polemic for a historical, contextual study of the text. Throughout the guidelines for preparation the reader is present a step by step plan for moving from text to sermon. Although examples for each step, like those in Appendix 1, would greatly enhance the preacher’s comprehension, one can easily follow the prescribe course of exposition.

Above all other benefits, the reader is immersed in every section with the goal of clarity. Although the book is weak in its guidelines of determining the central idea of the text, directives for clearly stating that idea are strong. The reader is given specific steps to take in order to articulate the purpose of the text and sermon as well as the historical and contemporary propositions of the text in a manner that the hearer can easily grasp. Chapters Nine through Twelve relate to clarity in delivery by providing a comprehensive guide for developing style, and connecting with the audience.

Although no apparent new information in the field of expository preaching is provided the book offers a helpful compilation of preaching directives for the expositor. Many references are made to some of the primary texts on expository preaching, which allow the reader to view the continuity of expositional principles held by leaders in the field. Vines also includes personal testimonies throughout each section allowing the expositor to realized that even the great preachers struggle with birthing a sermon from the text.