



Preach: Theology Meets Practice

Mark Dever , Greg Gilbert

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Mark Dever, senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, and president of 9Marks, is widely respected for his efforts to build biblically faithful churches in America that will impact the nations. In this book about one of the practical distinctives of that work, Dever and his former student Greg Gilbert offer a theological and practical guide emphasizing the centrality of expositional preaching -- sermons intentionally rooted in a specific Bible text.

Dever and Gilbert clearly explain how God exercises His divine power through the Word, making it the basis of any relationship we have with Him. Thus, preaching directly from Scripture should be at the center of church life. Toward that goal, the authors give practical advice on how pastors can decide what texts to preach on, how to prepare and outline their sermons, and how to deliver and review those presentations.

Pastors will especially appreciate the book's final section: transcripts of past sermons from Dever and Gilbert augmented by insightful conversations between them about how each sermon was planned and whether or not it was effectively implemented.

Preach: Theology Meets Practice Details

Date : Published April 1st 2012 by B Books (first published March 5th 2012)

ISBN : 9781433673177

Author : Mark Dever , Greg Gilbert

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Religion, Theology

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Andrew Smith says

I read this book to get a handle on what "expositional preaching" is. One takeaway is that people really want to understand the Bible better. I just think the difference between 45 min "messages" in the evangelical context and a 17 minute sermon in the Lutheran context is quite a large difference. It did make me reassess a little how I approach a text to get a central thought.

Peter N. says

This is more like 3.5 stars. The book was good, but not great. Basic information on why preaching is important and how to prepare and deliver sermons. Of course, both of these men are better preachers than me, but that does not make the book great. There are better preaching books to dig into.

I felt like they wrote too much to large church situations where there are dozens of visitors/non-christians each week. What if I have the same basic set up week after week with occasional visitors? A lot of their suggestions would not work in mid range or smaller churches. Also their emphasis on evangelism during the Sunday sermon is misplaced.

The best part of the book, was also the most unique. They include a section on reviewing your sermons with other staff members. I do not have a staff, but I do have elders who could help review my sermons. And they actually critique one of each other's sermons in the book. This part was most beneficial to me.

Jeff Short says

Seldom does any book stand as a definitive and exhaustive treatment of its subject. Looking for such a book is often a futile effort. Typically, the value of a book will lie in the way it fits into the gaps and contributes to a larger subject. That is why I think this book is so worthy of attention. It is certainly not an exhaustive treatment on preaching, nor a technical how-to in preparing and delivering sermons. It is a good practical discussion on preaching.

This book is particularly helpful in the realm of preaching application. Most preaching seems to be one of two extremes on application. Some preaching tries to be all application all the time and fails to preach the contextual meaning of passage. This results in very man-centered preaching, consoling and cementing people's natural tendency to think the Bible is primarily about them. Sitting under that sort of preaching over time will not mature a person in the faith, nor it will it increase their knowledge of God through what his word actually reveals about him.

The second extreme is either a sort of spiritual meditation out loud in front of people, or a mere doctrinal lecture that remains abstract and ultimately disconnected from real life. Even when true things are said with this method, it fails as any actual preaching of God's word. People are not matured in the faith, but are only entertained or intellectually stimulated.

When a preacher gets up to preach, he has two things primarily in front of him--the Bible and people. His job is to explain what the Bible says and means and then apply that to the actual lives of the actual people in front of him. This kind of preaching is founded first on an accurate explanation of the biblical passage and then a processing of its meaning to the real flesh and blood people in the seats. The preacher must first know what the passage means in its original context and then must work through what it means to unbelievers present, new believers present, mature believers present, the local church membership present, men present, women present, etc.

How many times have pastors been frustrated by poor attendance only to get up and preach against miss church and the poor attenders, true to form, are not there? Preachers have to think about who will be there and take care to preach to them. I could say more, but I highly recommend this book. Every preacher ought to read it, and he ought to start right away.

Michael Locklear says

Finished "Preach" this morning.

As a preacher and communicator, I have been enriched from reading and thinking about the various suggestions offered. And I truly believe my congregation will be blessed because I have spent time in "Preach."

I would recommend this book to any and all who stand before a congregation and proclaim God's Word.

Nat says

Technically, this book offers nothing new to conservative preachers in regards to preaching and sermon prep. However, I was greatly interested in the critical process that takes place after sermons. I see the great benefit in having your peers help you become a better communicator of the Word.

Brandon Siwula says

Great book! Dever always seems to make what he writes simple and very organized. This book will help me solidify things I already am doing in my preaching and has even given me some new things to try. This is the book I am going to have all of my students who want to learn how to preach read.

Todd Bryant says

Quite a good book. This is not an über in-depth instructional book like Haddon Robinson's "Biblical Preaching". It isn't meant to be. But it does offer many great tools and wonderful instructions for a preacher. The main point of this book is that the Holy Spirit uses His Word, not ours. So, preachers needs to preach it. I cannot imagine every elder in every church not benefiting greatly from reading this book.

C.J. Moore says

The best part about this book is getting the viewpoint of two different preachers. Each one is a great expositor, but you get to see how they each prepare in a different way. It helped me understand that I don't have to "fit the mold" of a particular preacher. I can be myself in the pulpit and in my preparation. I'm also glad they included sample sermons at the end and how they critique themselves and one another.

Calvin says

I love Mark Dever, I also love reading books on preaching, how we need help, but if you're going to add to the number of excellent volumes already available, then you really have to add something new or of significant value to the field to make it worth while. With the exception of the piece on sermon and service review carried out at Capitol Hill, I regret to say there was nothing new here. Come to think of it, that piece was covered pretty well in other 9 marks publications, so didn't even need to get into this one. Sorry guys.

Sean McGowan says

Very helpful and practical. One of the highlights was the godly criticisms that they employed on one another's sermons. Recommended!

Nate H says

Dever and Gilbert's vision of preaching

This is a helpful book of tips for improving preaching by Greg and Mark. I have a different vision of what pulpit ministry ought to be so this book wasn't to my liking, but I acknowledge it can be of help. It's a bit like what I imagine a crash course through their pastoral internship programs might be like. The easiest way to see if you'll gain from this book and listen to sermons from Greg Gilbert and Mark Dever to see if they're guys you'd want to pattern yourself after.

Josh Robinson says

Solid little book that I was able to read in just a few hours. The first section on the theology of preaching was fantastic. The second section on the practice of preaching was extremely helpful. I always enjoy learning about the methods and practices of others, especially if I'm able to make some of those methods and practices my own. Gave it four stars was because of grammatical and formatting errors.

Marc Minter says

This is in the top 2-3 books I've read related to pastoral ministry. Preaching is not the only thing pastors do, but it is the task that should take the lion's share of a pastor's time and effort. This book is biblically grounded, practical, and realistically flexible in its application to the individual pastor.

If you are a pastor, want to be a pastor, or if you ever intend to preach, then this book will be a great benefit to you.

Demetrius Rogers says

I liked it. A good solid intro to biblical exposition.

The authors introduced me to a new concept of high-altitude preaching. Most of the time expository preaching takes a relatively short text, one verse at a time, hence, low altitude. But, high-altitude sermons treat bigger swaths of Scripture at a time. For example, Greg Gilbert included one of his sermon manuscripts in the book, and his text was Genesis 37-50. This high altitude approach is to back away from the details of a text and to consider the larger thrust of a book. It allows the weight and shape of a book to be discerned more readily. There are strengths and weaknesses to both, but it served as a new preaching thought for me.

David Rathel says

This book performs double duty. First, from a theological perspective, it defends the necessity of expository preaching. Second, it gives a helpful overview of how to prepare, deliver, and review sermons.

I found it to be an encouraging and helpful read!
