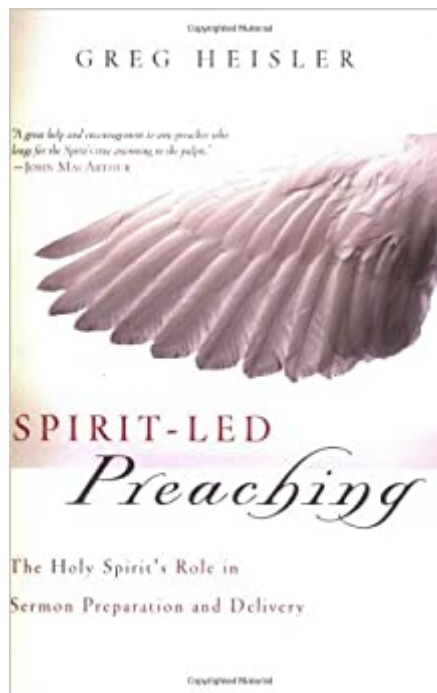




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Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role In Sermon Preparation And Delivery



Synopsis

In the words of author Greg Heisler, "Spirit-Led Preaching is a call issued to preachers, pastors, and teachers of homiletics to recover the Holy Spirit for expository preaching in the same way we have recovered the biblical text. . . . My plan for doing this is to recover the doctrine of pneumatology (the study of spiritual beings/phenomena) for our theology of preaching, resulting in a renewed emphasis on the powerful combination of Word and Spirit working together as the catalyst for powerful expository preaching." Heisler thoroughly examines how the Holy Spirit illuminates and empowers the preacher, opens the hearts of the hearers, and applies the message to their lives. Indeed, to ignore the Holy Spirit's role in sermon preparation and delivery would be a considerable oversight.

Book Information

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: B&H Academic (February 1, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0805443886

ISBN-13: 978-0805443882

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 33 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #215,963 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #207 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Ministry & Evangelism > Preaching #4408 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology #4889 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Theology

Customer Reviews

Dr. Greg Heisler serves as assistant professor of Preaching at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and was previously a senior pastor for eight years at churches in Kentucky and Florida. He holds two degrees (M.Div. and Ph.D.) from Southern Seminary. Heisler and his wife, Laura, have two sons.

As a Christian and pastor, I really enjoyed this book. This book is unique in its focus on the Holy Spirit's work in preaching. It is not merely a chapter on the Holy Spirit, but on every page and in every point the Holy Spirit is discussed with biblical care and honor. I am better off for having read this book.

Dr. Greg Heisler (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY) serves as assistant professor of preaching at the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. His passion for the nature of preaching is quite clear: Our students need to see the complementary relationship between the Word and the Spirit and to understand the proper function of sermon mechanics and sermon dynamics for preaching. They need to have as much zeal for the theological realities as they do for the dependence on the Holy Spirit (15). He states this because the previous generations of homiletics professors and their works only offer a "passing reference to the Spirit" (11). In this volume, Heisler admirably makes the case in how the Holy Spirit must not be an afterthought in sermon preparation and delivery, but he must stand in the forefront in every step of the process of constructing a sermon as well as a holy life. The preacher will appreciate Heisler's chapter on "What is Spirit-Led Preaching?" He illustrates two differing models of expository preaching: "text-driven preaching" (18) in which the focus is on presenting the biblical text correctly, with the Spirit's role seen as implicit; and "spirit-driven preaching" in which the focus is "on the dynamic of the Spirit and the Spirit's text" with the result being a "Christological witness and Spirit-filled living" (19). He uses a picturesque illustration to drive home this concept: I imagine the Holy Spirit's power touching down on the tracks of the biblical text, and suddenly the combination of Word and Spirit together ignite into sermon propulsion. The preacher's responsibility is not to push the train in his own strength; nor it is the preacher's responsibility to build new tracks to new places. The preacher's responsibility is to keep the train on the tracks (19)! Preachers would do well to internalize this concept and embrace this powerful picture. Heisler rightly reinforces the complementary relationship between the Scriptures and the Spirit in Chapter Five. Given the problematic theology of the charismatic movement who puts the Spirit and the Word against one another, Heisler gives a strong argument demonstrating the harmony between the two. Together Word and Spirit form the powerful catalyst that serves as the theological foundation for Spirit-led preaching. The Word activates the Spirit, and the Spirit authenticates the Word. The Word is the instrument of the Spirit, and the Spirit is the implement of the Word. The Word is the written witness, and the Spirit is the inward witness. In terms of preaching, the Word is the source and substance of our preaching, and the Spirit is the supernatural power of our preaching (62). He rightly notes how the three testimonies of preaching (Scripture, the Spirit, and the Preacher) come together toward a Christological witness. "The Spirit's ministry is a continuation of Jesus' ministry, as the Spirit stands in place of Jesus until Christ's triumphant return" (57). Heisler is correct when he says that preaching which claims to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led but fails to preach Christ-centered sermons

are not Spirit-led sermons. The strongest chapter in this volume is Chapter Seven where Heisler addresses "The Preacher and the Spirit." Heisler makes a stunning statement that the preacher must absorb: I believe that the passion and confidence the prophet of God experiences in his preaching ministry are directly proportional to the daily obedience and surrender to the call of God on the preacher's life. . . . It's as if God has subpoenaed us to stand before him, not in a courtroom in front of a jury but in a pulpit in front of his people. We are there by divine calling, and we are there by divine authority (72). Heisler sounds a clarion call for ministers to incorporate the Spirit into their personal lives before they attempt to incorporate him into areas of their professional lives such as preparation, presentation, and delivery. Personal obedience to Christ and preaching the Word of Christ must coincide. The only weakness found in this work is the lack of conciseness in Heisler's working definitions. For instance, when he presents his definition of expository preaching, he states: Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered proclamation of biblical truth derived from the illuminating guidance of the Holy Spirit by means of a verse-by-verse exposition of the Spirit-inspired text, with a view to applying the text by means of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, first to the preacher's heart, and then to the hearts of those who hear, culminating in an authentic and powerful witness to the living Word, Jesus Christ, and obedient, Spirit-filled living (21). While the construct of this definition reminds one of the Greek sentence construct of the Apostle Paul (see Ephesians 1:3-14), this structure does not allow for the reader to absorb the definition easily. Breaking this sentence down into two, three, even four sentences would be helpful. His vision of teaching homiletics commits the same faux pas -- to which he readily admits (75). Even so, this reviewer plans on using this book as a textbook in training expository preachers in his local church setting. The evangelical world in general and preachers specifically should be grateful to Greg Heisler for re-introducing the Spirit to expository preaching. Along with this volume, Arturo G. Azurdia's book on Spirit-Empowered Preaching serves as an excellent compliment. Praise God for raising up Spirit-led preachers in our present age.

The author successfully points us preachers back to the SOURCE of all preaching -- the Spirit himself. He is the pioneer -- provider and perfecter of our preaching. The Spirit's role throughout the WORD process -- from the birth to the presentation of the sermon -- is highly and rightly emphasized. Though most -- if not all preachers acknowledge the need of the Spirit in preaching -- few really practically exhibit such intensity in their dependence of the Spirit -- as vividly pointed out by the author. If preachers truly grasp what the author is saying -- the pulpit could regain its glory.

Assuredly, this one is the most God inspired preaching book. Don't expect quick how tos. But you will how you let the Spirit lead you. You cannot manipulate Him but the exactly the opposite: You should be controlled by Him. You will find it is hard to close the book till you finish one word by word reading "if" you are one God has called as a preacher. I did it twice. I will absolutely read it again.

Not the end-all manual for preachers, but an essential read for anyone I may disciple in preaching ability. This book and any one of those timeless manuals (Broadus, Chapell, et. al.) are the place to start for one wanting to learn of preaching. That's because this book fills in a gap that the manuals tend to pass over. A book can afford to miss this material, but your preaching practice cannot. Main idea: preach the Word that the Spirit spoke long ago through the Scriptures, and watch that Spirit work today to bear fruit in your people.

This book is a must read for anyone that desires to improve their christian life spiritually. It addresses the moment by moment need of our Comforter, teacher and friend, the Holy Spirit (Ghost). We need him, to preach, teach, witness and live.

With 37 years of pulpit ministry under my belt and with more than I can remember books about preaching read, this book is one of the best. Oh that our pulpits were filled by Spirit-led preachers!

This is a great book. After reading the book and becoming more aware of the Holy Spirit, God started using my preaching to really connect with my audience. In the book Dr. Heisler shows how the preacher needs to take the text and let the Holy Spirit speak through it as well as let the Holy Spirit reveal how he should speak to the audience. The pastor also needs to teach his audience (congreagation) how to be sensitive to the Spirit as well. Since reading the book we have had a greater response at the Invitation. The Spirit is moving the people. I highly recommend this book to all pastors.

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