

february 2010 - starting fives

One of the issues which is raised with me often has to do with books on preaching. So much is written by so many! How on earth do you reach a decision on where to start? Here would be my starting five for emerging preachers and then for experienced preachers.

I've limited myself to five books. This is so difficult but it is important to be realistic about people can afford in terms of time and money. I've also tried to keep to books which I've read and so can vouch for from first-hand experience.

I don't mind how you define emerging because whatever definition you use I have them in mind! ☺ But specifically I am thinking of people who sense some stirring in the direction of preaching and they want to explore what is involved. What would be a balanced and helpful handful of books for them?

A starting-five for the emerging preacher:

1. David Day, *A Preaching Workbook* (SPCK, 2001) 152 pages

This is where I'd start. I thought about Day's second book (*Embodying the Word* - SPCK, 2005) but maybe it jumps a little too much into the deep end for a beginner.

Then I'd move to a lesser known book that builds nicely on this foundation to give fuller, but still accessible, principles of preaching:

2. Greg Scharf, *Prepared to Preach* (Mentor, 2005) 176 pages

Now with a little pre-understanding in place, it is time to deepen the convictions and understanding about preaching . and no one does it better than (even though it is a bit dated now):

3. John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Eerdmans, 1982) 350 pages

Then it is across to this wonderful new book which I'd use as a textbook for an introductory course on preaching without any hesitation:

4. Darrell Johnson, *The Glory of Preaching* (IVP, 2009) 278 pages

Preaching comes with a long and enriching history. We are such chronological snobs today, always thinking that the most recent is always better than all that has gone before. The final book needs to reach back to somewhere. I thought of Charles Spurgeon and others, but for me the most readable connection with a previous era is:

5. James Stewart, *Heralds of God* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1946) 222 pages, but published many times since.

With the experienced I have in mind people who have been preaching for at least ten years but now feeling stale and tired. Maybe there is a sabbatical coming up and they want to freshen up their approach to preaching and think some new thoughts for a bit. What might be both inspirational and aspirational for them?

A starting-five for the experienced preacher:

1. Calvin Miller, *The Sermon Maker* (Zondervan, 2002) 156 pages

I am bit of a sucker for the way this book is formatted. On the right hand page Miller tells the story of Sam, a tired and stale preacher. On the left hand side there is a steady flow of wisdom, culled from sundry places, which provides a commentary on the story taking place on the opposite page.

Then I reckon a text-book-y sort of book that reminds us of the basic skills . but written with a bit of flair and independent thinking would be advisable. For such a purpose, I like:

2. Michael J. Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching* (Baker, 2003) 234 pages

A more provocative book which assists with developing a more accurate self-awareness of what sort of preacher we are (which *is* an issue after ten years). so that we can work at our weaknesses or draw in others to fill in those gaps is:

3. Robert Stephen Reid, *The Four Voices of Preaching* (Brazos, 2006) 232 pages

And again . as with the emerging preachers . let's have something which takes us back in history a bit. And if being tired and stale is an issue what about this fascinating discussion of anointing as illustrated in the life and preaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones?

4. Tony Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1994) 362 pages

And to round things off it would be great to have one of these encyclopaedic sort of books with article after article on our shelf, mingling a desire to deepen convictions with the ability to extend skills. Duda's *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Broadman, 1992) and Robinson & Larson's *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching* (Zondervan, 2005) are good North American examples, but on this occasion I lean towards this British one, dipping into one chapter every now and then:

5. Greg Haslam (ed), *Preach the Word!* (Sovereign World, 2006) 623 pages

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