

Book Reviews

Michael S. Lawson and Robert J. Choun, *Directing Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992, 308 pp., paper, \$17.99) reviewed by Eric W. Sawyer.

“Christian Education Specialist” (CES): This is the title developed by Lawson and Choun for what is now the Director of Christian Education after realizing that this area of ministry is becoming more specialized (from children’s church, youth groups, and adult ministries to single parent, family life, and senior adult ministries). The aim of this book is to show how the role of the Christian education specialist is changing within the local church and within three different size churches: small (under 300 in Sunday School); medium (between 300 and 1,000 in Sunday School); and large (over 1,000 in Sunday School)—around the United States. Few books like this exist on the market today.

Chapter 1, “A Biblical and Philosophical Perspective,” deals primarily with two questions: (1) What is the nature of the educational task facing the church? and (2) Does the church need specialized help to achieve the task? The authors answer these questions and conclude that the typical pastor is already too busy to handle all the responsibilities of CES and therefore needs a specially trained leader to formulate and execute educational strategies that impact people’s lives. These views are then responded to and affirmed by Warren S. Benson and Kenneth O. Gangel.

To begin each succeeding chapter, Lawson and Choun write on a particular topic and then three people involved in

local church ministries of the different sizes listed above describe their perspectives and position on that phase of their ministry. Chapter topics include: 1) Relationships with church staff in which the authors use Paul's illustration of the human body to show how the various members of the Body of Christ work together and that the members should have the same care for one another. Relationships with volunteer leaders, which deals primarily with the relationship between the church board and the Christian education committee and the coordination of their respective duties. Recruiting the teaching staff, where the authors share many good ideas to penetrate barriers to successful recruitment, motivate a team spirit, determining spiritual gifts in church members, and developing and maturing the teaching staff. Training christian leaders and teachers, devoted to teacher training strategies such as annual in-service training, published curriculum, and conventions and seminars, along with major training topics such as time management in the classroom, discipline procedures, and creative use of space. 5) Relationships with the church and the community concerning meeting the social needs of the community, e.g., alcoholism, suicide, and incest. 6) The female christian education specialist chapter, which deals with controversial issues facing the church and a woman as CES. Each chapter is masterfully written and organized.

A significant part of the book is the 78 pages of resources at the back which include a four page bibliography, a resource list of Christian education organizations and state conferences, telephone hotlines for assistance (e.g., Alcohol Abuse, Drug Abuse, Suicide), 27 pages of sample job descriptions for the CES, a sample schedule planner for the CES, a discussion of when a church should hire a CES, results of the CES survey, a sample policy and procedures for infectious diseases, and an index.

This book contains a tremendous amount of material and for the CES it is a "must have" book which is well worth its

price. This book will bridge the gap between the senior pastor, his staff and the CES.

Mark Galli and Craig Brian Larson, *Preaching that Connects: Using the Techniques of Journalists to Add Impact to Your Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 159 pp., paper, \$14.99) reviewed by Sam Harbin.

Of all the professions which may provide inspiration for preachers of God's Word, journalists may seem the least likely. Yet before this title is carelessly dismissed as fad or gimmick, pastors and other preachers of God's Word would be wise to consider its benefits. This volume will prove helpful for both developing young preachers and experienced preachers who are seeking freshness in their delivery of the sermon.

Galli and Larson maintain that preachers who craft words into sermons could learn much from those who are masters at word-craft in another discipline. They endeavor to examine the task of sermon-building in light of well-accepted maxims of good writing. Two assumptions are wisely expressed in their preface: that readers will benefit most who have some background in exegesis and traditional homiletics, and that readers will not confuse the techniques set forth in the book with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the preaching moment.

The twelve chapters are in themselves good examples of the principles and techniques they are recommending for use. Topics included will all be of special interest to the preacher who longs to improve his telling of the Good News: developing creativity; crafting introductions that "grab" listeners while avoiding sensationalism; developing incisive and effective illustrations; developing the skills of telling a good story; structuring sentences for maximum effect; crafting words that

inspire; pacing; and finishing strong through powerful conclusions.

As each principle is developed, both good and bad examples from actual sermons are multiplied that are extremely helpful to the reader. The reader will no doubt find himself relating to many of these examples of poor technique, recalling his own sermon from the previous Sunday! Thankfully, however, readers will find much positive encouragement for the lifelong task of improving their skills in the pulpit.

Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995, 432 pp., cloth, \$27.99) reviewed by Preston Mayes.

The last several decades have witnessed a great deal of scholarly activity in the area of genre studies. The goal of these studies has been to discover the conventions common to the various kinds of Biblical literature in order to facilitate our understanding of them. Old Testament Hebrew narrative has shared in the benefits of this efforts.

In certain instances, however, studies of Hebrew narrative tend to give the impression that the stories are less than completely accurate. The narratives are viewed as a type of historical fiction. They are based loosely on historical events, but many of the details are fabricated by the author to make a theological point or to make a more interesting story. For example, the books of Samuel present an extremely complex picture of David. It is proposed that the story of David is so well written that it could not possibly be accurate in every detail. Such a treatment of these texts has the effect of glorifying the talents of the human author and weakening the doctrine of inspiration.

This volume on Kings avoids that potential pitfall. The introduction plainly states that "the fact that 1, 2 Kings unfolds

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in a story-like manner in no way detracts from its claim to be 'real history.' The creative storyteller told the truth about Israel's story" (p. 56). Subsequently, comments on the text include helpful information on characterization, plot, and point of view while still maintaining a high view of inspiration.

The commentary exhibits a number of other features in keeping with the generally high quality of the entire New American Commentary series. The introduction is well written; the section dealing with the narrative characteristics of 1, 2 Kings is particularly helpful. The main commentary is written so as to be valuable for pastor, layman, and scholar alike. It is also footnoted for those wishing to do further study. At the end of each section of text the book also includes a discussion of applicational implications of the text.

This commentary deserves a high recommendation. It is a "must have" for anyone preparing to preach through 1, 2 Kings.