

In the book called “Preaching through a Storm by Beecher H. Hicks” the author emphasizes the significance of overcoming storms or obstacles in one’s spiritual life which is the purpose of the publication of this book. Hicks highlights the point that the only way to do so is by preaching powerfully and effectively, to keep one’s enemies at bay and to inspire the congregation to overcome their own storms together.¹ This can only be accomplished through a living worship context and through proper interpersonal relationships and clear communication. He develops the main argument of the main theme of the book by organizing the subpoints which are the chapter titles throughout the book. Such titles are “I have been in a storm so long,” or “predicting a storm,” or “maintaining relationships,” etc. This progression or development of his main point of preaching through hardships in one’s life will be discussed further into the paper.

I find it enlightening how Beecher H. Hicks mentions how relationships between the pastor and his or her congregates can greatly affect the reception of the hardships of the pastor by the latter party.² The author contends the point that preachers “have every right to hurt and to be given the liberty to express all the human emotions of pain, anguish, anger, love, and human need. Such expression is a right of humanity which need not be abdicated and must not be abrogated.”³ However, he warns that if the relationship between the church members and the minister is shallow, the congregates will become bewildered and will lack appropriate responses to the displayed vulnerability of the pastor. Therefore, it is pivotal for a church to cultivate a strong and intimate relationship between the two.⁴

¹ Beecher H. Hicks Jr., *Preaching Through a Storm: Confirming the Power of Preaching in the Tempest of Church Conflict* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1987), 185.

² *Ibid.*, 33.

³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

In relevance to missions, Christian believers should discover how to cultivate strong relationships through the usage of hardships and cultivate a trusting relationship between themselves and the recipients of the mission trip. In more direct terms, normal means should not be utilized to cultivate relationships between church congregates and nonbelievers. This is because that would only produce normal relationships at best, which is unfavorable especially in short term mission trips, where time is not on the side of the church. Vulnerability and trust should be implemented, as Christian believers should be the first to open up with their own private storm that had happened or is still happening in their lives. This is crucial because it shows to the listener or onlooker that we as Christians do not approach them from a place of arrogance but from a place of love and trust. Once we take the first initial step, we simply have to wait patiently for the nonbeliever to take their step if they are willing to do so.

In relevance to the subject of relationships, the author also mentions how at times the minister may face a grumbling of discontent in terms of his leadership because “the pastor has failed to communicate a vision with enough clarity to ignite the minds and the hearts of the people he seeks to lead.”⁵ Nevertheless, through such an experience, “A positive contribution of the storm is its ability to keep us humble.”⁶ In alternative terms, one must not get conceited because of his power and influence as a preacher, pastor, or minister and neglect the spiritual needs of his congregates.

Another insightful statement by Hicks is when he had asserted that “Every person is our pews is involved in his or her own season of distress and grief. There is no peace in their world, in their jobs, and in their homes. There must at least be peace in the church.”⁷ I strongly believe that this is important not only for exemplary church life but also for exemplifying Christ to the

⁵ Ibid., 57-58.

⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁷ Ibid., 61.

secular world. When Christians are venturing on mission trips locally or to different nations, we must first learn how to behave properly among ourselves before behaving properly in front of nonbelievers. While some conflicts in the church may be inevitable, others may be preventable through proper preaching, good communication, and a living worship context. In other words, “Sound preaching is never achieved in isolation. It must be understood and evaluated in the context of living worship. This means that the preacher must also be concerned about the setting in which the preaching takes place.”⁸

Another topic in the reading was the concept of predicting a storm. This is crucial for the preparation of the inevitable hardships which is to come in either the near or distant future. “Preaching through a storm requires of us vigilance in body, mind, soul, and spirit. It is in this way we love our Lord best.”⁹ For an example, Beecher H. Hicks states that the graduating seminary student cannot prepare for future hardships in his life and within the church simply with theology and biblical studies. “It is essential that they also receive training in the areas of administration and management, as well as the ill-defined and neglected area of church politics.”¹⁰ This is particularly crucial also from the concept of missions. Depending on the place where Christians will venture off to, there may be a cultural or political bias which the pastor and his congregates must be aware of to optimize their chances of evangelization or to simply prevent unnecessary storms or conflicts from occurring.

What was also interesting was how the best can happen in the eye of the storm in which the Lord gives the preacher or believer more of his power and blessing than ever before. The example of Job is highly relevant to this particular concept as he had ultimately gained more children and more wealth than before his sufferings. In the perspective of missions, sometimes

⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁹ Ibid., 54.

¹⁰ Ibid.

planned events will go astray, however, the unexpected twist in the plan of missionaries can plausibly turn out for the best with the Lord's grace and blessing.¹¹

The subtopic of the identity of evil was fascinating to learn as the author strongly implies that the forms evil can take are in the forms of arrogance, hypocrisy, self-delusion, and deceit.¹² "It is important to conclude, then, that the preacher-pastor must be extremely cautious in the identification of evil. Because evil is always dressed in disguise, one must not mistake it for honest opposition and thoughtful, constructive criticism."¹³ The apparent dilemma of this would be to not confuse constructive criticism with evil when it is not the case. Therefore, "The challenge to the preacher-pastor... is to find more creative approaches to the problem of evil, based on biblical example, which will enable him to preach directly to evil and thereby speak directly to the storm."¹⁴ The unfortunate truth is that "Evil can never be erased. It bears the seed of its own destruction. The energy which evil requires, however can be redirected and rechanneled to more productive purposes."¹⁵

Furthermore, what was enlightening was Beecher H. Hick's advice that "Unseen hands, unheard conversations, unknown kindnesses by unknown persons are often the way God does His work in His world and ours."¹⁶ Just like how the Lord uses his believers to spread the Gospel and do good in the world, in the same way, he can use others to do the same to his believers. Nevertheless, although it is somewhat obvious, it must be acknowledged that a pastor's greatest friend is the Lord.¹⁷

¹¹ Ibid., 83.

¹² Ibid., 87-88.

¹³ Ibid., 98.

¹⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁵ Ibid., 99.

¹⁶ Ibid., 127.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Moreover, the concept that pastors should not defend themselves was also asserted as well, especially in the context of handling a storm within their lives inside and outside the church.¹⁸ The author further reinforces this point by stating how the Lord will guide the believer or preacher to victory over his enemies.¹⁹ While it will seem to others that you will have nothing to retaliate back to your opponent and that you will be seen as the one who had lost the argument, in reality you have not lost as long as the Lord is on your side. In more direct terms, defensiveness is never a good personality trait to have as a spiritual leader and as a preacher or a minister. It is never favorable to be the individual who loses his or her temper at a provocation by an enemy in the church. True faith dictates that the believer must trust in the Lord rather than trust in his or her defensiveness in order to have true protection.

In pertinence to the management of the church in terms of being aware of possible internal storms or difficulties within the church, there were three things Beecher H. Hicks mentions which stood out to me. The first was that “Churches which do not invest in a serious, responsible systematic program for Bible study are headed for stormy weather.”²⁰ Thus, it is pivotal for a preacher to do more than the minimum of preaching a sermon to the congregates. He or she must consistently make the study of the biblical scriptures appealing and relevant to his or her congregates’ spiritual lives. From there, the minister can then attempt to help them integrate their spiritual lives in Christ with their secular lives, so that they can exemplify Christ not only in the church, but also outside of it as well. This is also very important to do in missions as well. Missionaries must use contextualization and persuasion to help others receive the Gospel and help the recipient develop faith even as small as a mustard seed which can later grow into a strong tree of faith. But before the Christian church can accomplish this feat, they must first help

¹⁸ Ibid., 103.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 101.

the congregates to love reading and meditating upon the biblical scriptures rather than simply doing so out of duty as a Christian believer.

The second piece of advice was that “Churches which adopt the standards of corporate America as a tool of administration and governance are headed for trouble.”²¹ He further states that “The church of our fathers and mothers survived quite well without systems analysis, management audits, or sophisticated electronic databases.”²² Beecher H. Hicks is emphasizing the point that the church should not rely heavily upon the ways of administration and governance by the federal government, since they do not have Christ in their center of priorities.

The third point which was made to remain cognizant of possible internal storms of hardship within the church was that “Pastors who tailor their preaching to suit their audience are courting disaster.”²³ Some examples of such pastors are those who are advocating gospel prosperity to their congregates, many of whom are only believing in the Christian faith to be blessed with materialistic wealth. Another example can be a pastor who is more focused on pleasing his or her congregates than the Lord Himself.²⁴

In finality, one of the strengths of the author would be the utilization of real-life scenarios in his life to illustrate his points. An additional strength of his is provide the reader with specific sermons that are fleshed out completely which is relevant to the point of each individual chapter of the book. Pastors who are struggling with the same kind of issue can reference his sermons and be inspired and create their own original sermon when they are experiencing a storm in their own church. Another one of the author’s strengths is decent organization for each individual chapter. For an example, he places an ellipsis after the sermon he provides as to prevent the

²¹ Ibid., 102.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

reader from being confused of when the sermon ends and when the narrating of the chapter begins again. He has a subheading called epilogue in which he provides his last thoughts for each chapter. Unfortunately, I could not find any apparent weaknesses of the author.

Bibliography

Hicks, Beecher H. Jr. *Preaching Through a Storm: Confirming the Power of Preaching in the Tempest of Church Conflict*. Michigan: Zondervan, 1987.

