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Pastoring the Urban Church

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Preaching Through the Storm

Hicks starts off with a very vivid illustration of his feelings towards his ministry. He shared his tendency of falling victim to the trap of comparison Hicks continues to share his pains through the storms in the calling that the Lord has placed in his hands. Hicks also shines a light on the unbelievable burdens, and expectations that people place on preachers to have it all together. Hicks places a strong conviction on the dangers of stepping into the calling without being sure. He breaks down the work and responsibilities of the Church. The pushback he experienced from his own ministry, and strategies that helped him through these questioning moments. Hicks also blesses the reader with his personal archive of sermons that he uses in moments where he found himself in the eye of the storm. Sermons that not only were necessary for him, but crucial for the seasons that the church found itself in.

The book revolves on the storms, and seasons that pastor and preachers are exposed to. He stresses the endurance and strength one must have from God to preserve in the calling He's placed you in. He also talked about the realistic, human battles that he faced in church, and in his personal life. The book is aimed to edify the reader that is either in the same storm, or in the process of entering one. The objective is to equip and sympathize with leaders that may find themselves questioning God's will in their storm. This book relates to many raw issues that pastors and preachers don't commonly share with the public. In my opinion, the purpose of the

book is to share the timeline of events in a preacher's journey that ultimately lead to a stronger love and trust in Christ.

The audience the book targets are current pastor and preachers, future leaders, and church members. The writing style is fluid in the emotions the writer is portraying. The reader can experience the desperation Hicks has in staying afloat in the mist of the storms. The writing is easy to follow along and is written appropriately to show the honesty of a leader's weak moments. It helps understand that our leaders are just as human and in need of Christ as everyone else. The writer brings the reader on a road of brokenness and victory. He also doesn't hold back on his own honest thoughts. Hicks doesn't try to prove himself in his ability to fight, but rather he focuses more on the difficulty of the incapability to keep going.

The first strength is the constant theological references that Hicks includes in his arguments and teachings. Hicks includes a lot of expository breakdowns directly to specific issues. For example, Hicks brings up the problems of having walls in relationships, and how to break them down. In pg. 67, Hicks says "how are you going to have your walls broken? the wall is only broken down once one acknowledges their humanity, once you realize that you are no more than anyone else. When the walls come down this is peace" Hicks includes the story of Joshua and the Jericho walls. He explains that once the Israelites make it to the Promise Land, the first thing he has them do is deal with the wall.

Another strength is the relevance his sermons serve in the book. In pg. 38, Hicks shares a sermon called How to silence a preacher or, shut your mouth. Hicks brings up moments when his own board members would turn on him and question his leadership capabilities to "shut his mouth." Hicks writes about the need for the preacher to open their mouth and speak truth. Hicks brings up a good point, one which I don't think I've heard before. When we think about Jesus,

we realize that God could have given him any career - a tax collector, a fisherman, among many others. Instead, God made him a carpenter and a preacher.

The third strength is his ability to portray his honesty, especially in moments where things felt lost. In page 24, Hicks shares a sermon called How long the night? This was inspired from the rut that he found himself in after the death of his mother. The sermon is based on David's emotions and hope to his circumstances. Hicks doesn't hold on his question how long his pain will last. The question of "how long" doesn't come with an actual answer, but just a hope of "not long." A statement of hope mixed with question. Hicks relates himself to David, who has visited hell way too many times. This informed the reader that there are things that you can only learn in a storm.

In my honest and humble opinion, I have no critiques on the book except for leaving the reader with a thirst to learn more through Hick's archive of sermons. Although the book was published in 1987, the principles Hicks brings are so relevant now. He gives insights of the storm, helps with simple foundational tips of how to build a church, the duties of a church as the body of Christ, and the duties of the preacher.

What I took away is how the scary it is knowing that the church is supposed to be the safest, most peaceful place on earth, but it has wolves that seek to destroy. How the enemy will try to isolate you to destroy your image of God. The urban church seems to turn on the leader when they feel like the church isn't meeting up to their standards. It seems like there must always be a new high or source of endorphins produce, or the church becomes irrelevant.

A couple of takeaways for me are - the first thing is keeping myself on my knees when I find myself in storms. Going to the source of the one that can calm them. Second is being able to accept help even when it feels uncomfortable. Knowing that God never designed me to do

ministry alone, nor life on my own. Even with the Holy Spirit, God designed the church to be in communion with each other as the body. Lastly, being sure on the direction the Lord wants me to go. I was surprised how the writer never gave up on the calling God placed in his hands. Even when the church threatened his life, his focus was more on his love and safety of his family and the church. There doesn't seem to be any resentment toward the Lord. What I take from the book is a bigger trust in the Lord, the Lord who gives and takes away. I also enjoyed the biblical references that the writer uses in the strategies he uses to build, like the story of Solomon and the building of the temple.