MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE PASTOR’S GUIDE TO LEADING AND LIVING

A BOOK REVIEW

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND PASTORAL CARE

BY

WILSON

CITY, STATE

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***Hawkins, O.S. The Pastor’s Guide to Leading and Living. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012. ISBN-13: 978-1401675691. 383 pages.***

**Introduction**

OS Hawkins has served Christianity for the past 20 years. For years he has served as a Pastor for Baptist Church in Florida, Dallas, Texas and Fort Lauderdale throughout his life. He is currently leading the Guidestone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention as President. His organization serves more than 250,000 individuals who are members of the church, involved with missionary organizations, colleges, hospitals, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations. The organization is aimed at providing financial and service needs to them. Hawkins is known for his exceptional approach in writing about biblical subjects. He has authored more than 25 books. Hawkins regularly speaks and preaches at churches and conferences throughout the nation.

**Synopsis**

Hawkins in his book ‘The Pastor’s Guide to Leading and Living’ provides guideline to the pastors. There are twenty-six chapters in the book which comprehensively explain the ways in which pastors shall preach, lead and live their lives. Hawkins highlights the pastor’s personal and professional facets in life and provides guidelines for them. Hawkins has provided a manual long with the themes in the form of chapters defining the purpose preparation, passion and preaching and many more characteristics of pastors. Matters of personal and familial concern of the pastor are also addressed in the chapters following themes of parenting, life, pressures, earning, politics training and many more. Hawkins supports his views by quoting references from the Bible. Hawkins reinstates that the purpose of the pastor shall be aligned with the teachings of the Gospel. He suggests that the aims and goals the pastor desires shall reflect the will of God.Although it is a pastor’s job to market the church through preaching and maintaining the Gospel’s word making it central to their sermons[[1]](#footnote-2). Preparing for preaching is an important task hence it is important that the pastors prepare well before the sermons. They shall instill the essence of Jesus's life in their sermon, have absolute command over the texts they are to preach by expanding the teachings of the Gospel to assertive and contemporary associations[[2]](#footnote-3). Passionate dedication is also an important element in the pastor's service since it leads to effective and productive mission and preaching that attract people towards the word of truth[[3]](#footnote-4). Hawkins submits that the pastor's perspective should identify that they are designated by God as His subjects to spread his message across mankind with utter sincerity[[4]](#footnote-5).As a pastor one shall provide spiritual leadership to the community, by conducting sermons and counseling emergency situations[[5]](#footnote-6). The book also discusses the pastoral leadership and the power the pastor holds over people by providing them with a direction to move on the right path. Hawkins suggests that the pastor shall maintain a pure relationship with God by praying to him and guide younger pastors to follow the same path. The pastor must carry the vision to extend the Glory of God[[6]](#footnote-7). Hawkins further elaborates on the personality and personal matters of the pastor. The pastors show utmost concern for the community in their happiness and grief. Hawkins states that the partners of the Pastors shall also be acquainted with accurate biblical knowledge and to sustain a posture in the community so that they can support their spouse in their noble cause[[7]](#footnote-8). Hawkins marks that the pastors shall devote their considerations towards the church however parenting shall not be ignored at any costs, they should educate their children,accustom them with the word of God and let them go to pursue their aims when the time comes[[8]](#footnote-9). Another significant feature of the pastor is to manage his priorities from his private life to life in church and family. He shall sustain a relationship that is private and between him and God. Moreover, like the financial aspects of the pastor's life state, he should set aside an amount from his years in service for his retirement years. He then concluded the book by stating that learning is an important aspect in order to comprehend contemporary issues. It is a blessing to glorify the word of God by service of years, therefore, pastors shall always look forward to the prize and reward from Him only.

**Critical Evaluation**

 ‘The Pastor’s Guide to Leading and Living’ guide by Hawkins is an optimistic read. It serves as a complete manual for aspiring pastors and those already in the line of service. Since Hawkins himself worked as a pastor for years, this book comprises of years of successful service in just one book. The book delivers a careful recommendation of ways through which pastors can accomplish an ideal service. The resources state that the interpretation of Gospel shall be accurately incorporated in the preaching[[9]](#footnote-10). This not only delivers a transparent understanding of the scripture in the community but also help them incorporate these teachings in their daily lives, instead of boring sermons which repel individual's from the church. The effective leadership of a pastor does not only glorify the word of God but also creates a God loving community. The intrinsic qualities and issues of the pastoral life are unconditionally addressed without leaving any subjects out of concern. The book is regarded as a unique work of literature, as it emphasizes the exceptional facets of the lives of the pastors which have not been explored before. The author targets the personal and professional wellbeing of the pastors by guiding them. He supports his guidelines with the help of biblical texts since it has a significant effect on the delivery of service such as sermons, counseling and community work of the Pastor. Hawkins demonstrates a practical approach towards the service rather than just addressing the theoretical ideals of the subject. He provides effective insight towards the roles of parenting and wives. The resource illustrates a humble, accurate and honest account of experiences restoring faith in effective preaching.

Although the book expansively demonstrates how the life of a pastor shall be led and lived. However, certain characteristics of the book are widely criticized. Hawkins is criticized for limiting and conditioning the practices that the pastors follow, applying a cookie cutter approach to pastoring. Many argue that every pastor is free to approach his Ministry however they want to. Critics also argue that the not all pastors acquire the same character and personality hence adopting the principles laid by Hawkins may differ in their application and adoption[[10]](#footnote-11). Moreover, principles laid in the book reflect idealistic considerations thus are far from being achievable. Critics state that a substantial way of preaching can sometimes suffocate the preacher as well, hence controlling temptations is one thing but restricting oneself against legitimate temptations can cause psychological implications in Pastors[[11]](#footnote-12). The word of Gospel needs to be expanded however, compliance with ever advancing society and rising new concerns gives birth to questions in people’s minds. Hence it is important that the preachers, especially the pastors maintain an association with the contemporary world in order to address many psychological, political and other issues. In an age of technology, the preachers seem to differentiate between religion and society's technological advancement. This has lead people to believe more in technology and science as compared to Christianity. The burden is therefore relayed upon the pastors who have to preach beyond traditional and old fashioned techniques[[12]](#footnote-13). Online preaching sessions by the pastors are one way of attracting those who have become distant from the Bible and the word of God to reconnect.

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