

correct can let me know, and we'll see who does the best. I'll announce the winner(s) on Saturday. This'll be fun.

An Experiment

Someone suggested recently that it could be profitable if I would sometimes read out loud some spiritually-minded excerpts from outstanding books and send them out by e-mail for anyone who might be interested in hearing them. The idea wasn't initially very attractive to me. But then I recalled once being in a Wednesday evening service in another church that began with the pastor standing in the pulpit and doing just that. I never did catch exactly when he would begin, whether fifteen minutes previous to the service or just a minute or two ahead of time, but I do know that when I arrived the "official" start of the service had already passed, and it seemed as if he'd already been reading for several minutes. The book, if I remember correctly, was the autobiography of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The Wednesday night group wasn't large; maybe a hundred or so, but most of them seemed to be college students and young couples who didn't yet have children. They all seemed to pay close attention to the reading. So it was evidently effective.

Our church is characterized to a considerable degree as a "reading" church. One of the elders remarked to me several years ago that it's a part of our "corporate culture" that he'd come to really appreciate. I'd never thought of it that way, but since then I've realized that he was right. Pastor Vincent's many years of working at stocking the church bookstore with really substantive works has been a big part of developing that. And then, too, our congregation tends to be highly motivated about its own spiritual development and recognizes that good books are an invaluable aid.

But even at that, there are many times that I find myself wishing that there was some practical way to help busy people do a little more reading and meditating. The Wednesday night series on prayer that drew on the writings from figures of the past (Augustine, Luther, etc.) was an attempt to help with that. So was the series on Thomas Goodwin's, *The Return of Prayers*. And, of course, the five-year reading plan has been an effort along the same line.

Very seldom do I read anything out loud to anyone else. But when I do, I sometimes find myself doing a little “editorializing” along the way; paraphrasing a line here and there, inserting an occasional explanation, even rewording a sentence once in a while. And, of course, I try to read with vocal inflections that communicate.

So I’ve been thinking about all this, and have decided to make a trial run at it. Not everyone will have the time to listen. That’s o.k. Listening won’t be the new test of spirituality (smile). But for those interested, what I’ll probably do is alternate readings with pastoral letters; probably three of each every week. I won’t read whole books, or even whole chapters of particular books. In a given week I may read from three different books. But I’ll pray for a sense of the Lord’s leading about what to use, and choose accordingly.

It’s an experiment, that’s all (smile).

Praying for You Today,

Pastor Minnick