



Saving Eutychus: How to Preach God's Word and Keep People Awake

J. Gary Millar , Phil Campbell

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Poor Eutychus might have tumbled off his perch in Acts 20, but it's humbling to notice that what took Paul many hours of preaching to achieve—near-fatal napping in one of his listeners—takes most preachers only a few minutes on a Sunday.

Saving Eutychus will help you save your listeners from such a fate. Written by an Aussie and an Irishman with very different styles who share a passion for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Saving Eutychus delivers fresh, honest, faithful and practical insights into preaching the whole word of God, Sunday by Sunday, in an engaging way. This book is a practical distillation of decades of thinking, writing, preaching, failing, humbly praying and seeing God at work, and is an invaluable tool for honing your own gifts to become the best preacher you can be.

Includes sermons and mutual critique from each author, a sermon critique sheet, and practical tips and helpful diagrams.

Saving Eutychus: How to Preach God's Word and Keep People Awake Details

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Doug Hibbard says

Acts 20 has an interesting story along Paul's route back to Jerusalem. In the city of Troas, Paul preaches and preaches. And preaches. And preaches some more. Somewhere in the midst of the last night, a young man named Eutychus falls out of the window to his death. That would have been a bad night...except the Holy Spirit enabled Paul to raise Eutychus from the dead.

And then go back to preaching.

Saving Eutychus takes its title from this story, but this book is not about the resurrection of the dead. Neither is it a CPR manual for those we bore to death on a Sunday to Sunday basis. Instead, this is a preventative medicine book. Saving Eutychus is about keeping him from dropping dead in the first place.

In all honesty, Saving Eutychus is a tightly-targeted book. If you are not involved in the proclamation and presentation of Biblical truth, this is not going to be of much use to you. If, however, you are involved in teaching or preaching, you are in the target audience here. There is some benefit for those who study rhetoric, but we are talking a pretty specialized book here.

Gary Millar and Phil Campbell co-author Saving Eutychus. These authors have experience in teaching, in preaching, and in teaching preaching. Their work presents an approach to preaching that differs from some current American-written texts on the subject. Instead, they reflect their Irish and Australian backgrounds. Well, I assume so. I don't know if I should judge all of Ireland and Australia based on these two men.

However, on to content. After all, we're not interviewing Millar and Campbell. We're reading their book. Counting the appendices, Saving Eutychus comes in at 168 pages. Having been printed with footnotes, those 168 pages are certainly better than the same 168 pages with endnotes.

Then, we must look at what Millar and Campbell hope to communicate. Saving Eutychus is subtitled "How to preach God's word and keep people awake." This is the two-pronged attack: the sermon should be based in God's Word; the sermon should keep people awake.

I found Saving Eutychus effective in communicating the need for clarity in preaching. Additionally, the authors point out how text-centered preaching will result in a similarity of messages, and how this is not a bad thing in itself. I was surprised to see a personal story that came across as critical of Bill Hybels, but it is placed strictly in the context of ensuring our preaching is about the text, not about common sense.

Having read three books on preaching in the last year, Saving Eutychus was truly the most practical of them. A major reason is that, while Millar and Campbell briefly address Biblical interpretation, this book focuses on the development and delivery of the sermon. It is presented with an underlying assumption that you can study the text and comprehend major ideas from it.

I liked the inclusion of sample sermons and critiques of those sermons. Further, the website at www.savingeutychus.com has the videos of these as well. Also in the appendix one finds blank sermon critique forms, though these can also be downloaded at the same website.

At the present time, if I had the opportunity to have a preaching study group, I would start with Saving Eutychus.

Now a word: not being up-to-date with Australian Evangelicals (or Irish ones living in Australia), I know nothing about the day-to-day ministries of Millar and Campbell. They may or may not be nice people—I know of a few very good books from American preachers who I would neither attend nor recommend attending their churches. That's one advantage I see in this book, generally: there is no baggage to recommending Millar and Campbell.

Read their book. Be a better preacher. Keep people awake, both physically and spiritually.

And watch God work.

(I had already bought this book before I received a free copy to review, so there's no conflict of interest here.)

Joe Haack says

I love books like this: practical, simple, transferable. I walked away with two points: 1/ Let the Word do what the Word does. Don't be clever. Our job is to unleash the Word and let it roam. 2/ Pay attention to good principles for oral communication. The chapter with speaking tips is worth the price of the book.

Douglas Wilson says

Though Millar and Campbell belong to a school of preaching that is more conversational than I am used to, I still appreciated this book very much. There are gems here for anyone who cares about getting through.

Matt Chapman says

Much of what is written here is, as the authors admit, not new. But it is so clearly, concisely, and convincingly written that it makes for an excellent primer and reminder of many key preaching and communication principles.

Also, what it has to say on scripting sermons is not often found in other books on preaching.

This is definitely a book I could come back to re-read and profit from each year.

The only slight negatives were:

1. They advocate very short sermons (23 minutes) which I think can often be too short to delve deeper into the passage and into searching application.

2. I watched the two example sermons on the accompanying website but didn't feel they were nearly as dynamic as the authors want to encourage other preachers to be. But this doesn't detract from the principles in the book.

Joseph says

Millar and Campbell's book on preaching is readable and helpful, no matter your preaching style. I was reminded of things I already do, prompted to focus on doing some I may have let slip, and given some ideas - for preparation in particular - that I'll integrate into my process.

If your preaching is boring, irrelevant, or disconnected from the text, you are disrespecting your people and your task. Saving Eutychus can get you started on improving each of those areas.

Joe Cassada says

This book's title includes the byline "How to preach God's Word and keep people awake." At the risk of sounding arrogant I will say that I don't struggle with either. But I know many preachers do. If you are one of those preachers that know that your preaching has a tendency to lull the sheep instead of feeding them, then I recommend this book.

It's a good book. Not a great one. I liked it and found some helpful suggestions. However, the main premise of the book was that preaching from a sermon manuscript (not an outline) was the best way to improve one's preaching. Now, the authors do a good job explaining how to preach from a script instead of a skeletal outline, but there is no way I could do that. I prefer to do a mixture of extemporaneous preaching from an outline and using some word-for-word scripted sentences when a difficult or confusing subject requires precision.

So for those preachers who struggle with keeping their people awake: read this book. But honestly, if you're a new preacher and would like to learn how to preach well, I suggest you teach an elementary age Sunday school class for boys. Do this for a couple years. If you can learn to keep them interested, then you will come close to mastering the fundamental basics of homiletics.

Christopher Chelpka says

A breezy read with lots of practical advice on how to preach more clearly. It helped me. Recommended.

Peter Krol says

I would absolutely recommend this to those learning to preach. There are important ideas here that are best learnt early. The experienced expositor will find some encouraging reinforcement, but not too many aha moments.

That said, Millar and Campbell strike an excellent balance between addressing content and guiding delivery, all with an emphasis on preaching what is in the text. Very important, indeed.

Matthew says

This book has garnered some recent attention and accolades for being very good and it did not disappoint. The two authors, both preachers themselves, give very helpful and practical tips for those who are privileged to preach Sunday after Sunday. Highly recommended.

Josh says

This book might win "title of the year" since it immediately grabbed my attention with how different it was compared to other books currently being published. After grabbing me with such a unique title, the authors kept me hooked with their wise, and practical, insight on how to preach a sermon that is both attention-grabbing and doctrinally sound. Both Gary and Phil Campbell shared their own personal struggles with preaching sermons that were definitely "on the mark" doctrinally speaking, but the way in which they were delivered to their respective congregations only resulted in members who started counting the bricks on the wall behind the Pastors or some members pulling a Eutychus and falling asleep during the preaching (but thankfully not falling to their deaths). There was so much practical wisdom packed into such a relatively small book. I absolutely loved the last chapter which was a practical "how-to" where Phil walks us through how he built his most recent sermon (before the book was published) on Acts 8. Not only did he show us how he got to the "big idea" of the text, but he was also kind enough to put into print how the text was actually preached and he gave side-notes on why he preached what he did when he did.

All-in-all, this book was an excellent read and one that I know I will be referencing again and one that I will be recommending to my friends in the ministry.

Thanks to Cross Focused Reviews for a free copy of this book, *Saving Eutychus: How to Preach God's Word and Keep People Awake*, by Gary Millar and Phil Campbell, in exchange for a fair and unbiased review.

Becky Hintz says

After all of the glowing reviews I'd read, I came to this book with high expectations. By the end, I was wondering whether I'd missed something. The book is engaging, humorous, practical. There are some very helpful suggestions--preach narratives in the present-tense, write in a conversational style, don't be boring--but on the whole, the book is just too simplistic, too brief to be really helpful. Part of the problem is that they advocate the 23-minute sermon. I've never been asked to speak for less than 45 minutes. Keeping things interesting for twice as long is an entirely different beast, as is the development of a 45-minute theme and argument. Brian Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching* is still my favorite book on the topic.

Josh says

Very good. One of the best short overviews and how-to's for expository preaching I've read.

Craig says

As someone who has grown up in the church and has never had the courage to preach while also feeling a sense of calling to do so at some level, and as someone who was given this book by my pastor as I prepare to preach my first sermon, I can honestly say there are so many gold 'nuggets' of wisdom in these pages!

Right from the outset I was hooked, and both Millar and Campbell did well to inject enough humor and 'real life' alongside the invaluable tips and advice to keep me interested the whole way through, which I suppose isn't surprising since the book is about how to preach and keep people awake!

Perhaps the most helpful things for me were the strong cal to prayer at the beginning of the book, Phil's top ten list of things to remember when preparing a sermon and the example sermons and feedback forms from both preachers at the end of the book.

This is the kind of book I'm sure I will need to read multiple times in order to mine all the useful advice, instruction and tips from, and it is certainly the kind of book I'd recommend to anyone who currently preaches or who is preparing to begin preaching.

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Jeanie says

Even though I am not a preacher, I do like to share my faith and God's word in a meaningful way that will encourage others to desire a relationship with Jesus Christ. How do we do that? Do I have to go to seminary school? Do I even have to be a gifted speaker/teacher? Even though this book is designed for preachers, I received some sound encouragement from this study. What entails good preaching and how preaching can change the heart. It does take prayer and preparation.

Change only happens when the bible itself controls and defines the message we hear (and speak). To share, we need to work at it constantly, developing our ability to understand, to teach and apply the scripture. Understanding the Old Testament and how it applies to the new testament can make the scripture come more alive. So many think the God of the Old Testament is different from the New Testament because of failure to show how the old is part of the new.

With our delivery (tone of voice, bringing the scripture to how it applies in my life now, and making the point of the Gospel), we can preach the word of God without needing a pulpit. This is a great tool to come back to and apply over and over again.

A complimentary review copy was provided to me by Cross Focused Reviews (A Service of Cross Focused Media, LLC). I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own
