

DBTS News & Notes

Spring 2003

Book Review

In Search of God's Man: A Help for Pulpit Committees by Douglas E. DeVore (BJU Press, 2002, 142 pp.). Reviewed by Dr. Claude B. Wiggins, II

Few events in the local church can be as unsettling as the announcement that the pastor is leaving. Transitions in leadership can leave church members feeling vulnerable or overwhelmed. When a leadership change occurs, the weight of decision making and ministry to the congregation normally falls even more heavily upon the deacons. *In Search of God's Man* was written by Douglas E. DeVore to provide direction, support, and encouragement to those faithful leaders in the church at such a time as this. The book is described as a "compassionate, spiritual, and thorough step-by-step guide for those who find themselves at the helm during a formidable time in the life of their church." Pastors and their staff will profit from knowing what kind of measures need to be in place when (not if) a leadership transition takes place. It is also a valuable resource for students to read in anticipation of their own involvement in the candidating process.

Douglas DeVore is no stranger to leadership transitions. *In Search of God's Man* developed out of his twenty years of experience as a deacon in a fundamental Baptist church, which included serving on several pastoral search committees. He has also assisted other churches in their search for a pastor and worked individually with many Christian leaders as they sought God's will. In addition to all the lessons learned through the painful process of discovery, Mr. DeVore states that he drew heavily from the wisdom of two seasoned ministry leaders, Dr. Harry Love and Dr. Wayne VanGelderren, both of whom are now with the Lord. Having been personally impacted in profound ways by Dr. Harry Love from my early teen years and through most of my pastoral ministry, I can attest to the breadth of experience and depth of wisdom men like him can offer to church leadership in need of a pastor.

In Search of God's Man is written from a perspective that makes it useful for the largest of congregations with multiple staff and a complex organizational structure. Yet, with a few simple adaptations, it is equally as valuable for the smallest of churches. The author regularly places an emphasis upon the necessity of prayer for unity and wisdom in the selection process. There are also a number of practical reminders of how important discretion and confidentiality are in the pastoral search process. The reader is challenged to think through the matter of financial support for a new pastor. While generosity must be evident, several practical guidelines are provided to establish reasonable parameters for each individual situation. In addition, many awkward or controversial issues facing a pastoral search committee are addressed with practical insight. However, in this writer's opinion, the most valuable contribution of the book is the well-organized and thorough approach to the pastoral search process patterned for the reader. A number of checklists for the various phases are included in the text. Many sample resources are also included in the extensive appendices. This provides the basis for careful communication, accurate record keeping, and personal accountability throughout the process.

I served as a pastor for most of two decades and now work with many young men preparing for pastoral ministry. I am regularly called upon by local churches seeking pastoral prospects or guidance on how to carry out the daunting task of a pastoral search. *In Search of God's Man* is a welcome gift to the body of Christ. We cannot take seriously enough the task of calling a pastor. In the words of Douglas DeVore,

“You can have a man under contract and in the pulpit within the week. But to find God's man demands individual and corporate prayer that is humble yet bold, fervent yet constant. Every detail considered, letter written, phone call made, and visit conducted needs to be bathed in prayer. You must seek His mind on every issue that is forthcoming and know with full resolve when you have His answer. Expect an answer! Be willing to wait for that answer.”