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A Little Book for New Preachers: Why and How to Study Homiletics

by Matthew D. Kim, Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2020.


A *Little Book for New Preachers* is the sixth volume in the IVP Academic's Little Books series, wherein career scholars sum up their time-tested wisdom and pass it on to a new generation. Cognizant of the fact that preaching is one of the most daunting tasks faced by a pastor, Matthew D. Kim, associate professor of preaching and ministry and the director of the Haddon W. Robinson Center for Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, provides young preachers with salient insights that assist them in mitigating their fear of preaching while rekindling their enthusiasm for preaching (15).

The book consists of nine chapters subdivided into three main parts. In part one, captioned "Why Study Preaching?" Kim provides three rationales for studying preaching. First, although preaching is often treated as the forgotten discipline that is relegated to the back seat of society, the academy, and the church, it still remains the focal point of biblical and theological studies. Preaching continues to play a pivotal role in leading "congregations in living out kingdom values in a messy world" (29). Second, although preaching can feel like an onerous task, "it is actually God's great legacy for us to enjoy and pass down from generation to generation" (43). Third, preaching is important because of the vital role it plays in fulfilling the Great Commission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

In part 2, the author discusses three "characteristics of faithful preaching," which are faithful interpretation, cultural exegesis, and application. With regard to sound biblical interpretation, he recommends a five-step process represented by "the acronym HABIT: historical, grammatical, and literary study; author's cultural context; big

idea of the text; interpret in your context; and theological presuppositions" (65). On the note of cultural exegesis, the author maintains that great preaching "requires specialized knowledge of one's congregational culture" (72). In obtaining this specialized knowledge, preachers must be intentional in exegeting seven broad groups of listeners: (1) a biblically illiterate culture, (2) generational cultures, (3) secular cultures, (4) ethnic and racial cultures, (5) socioeconomic cultures, (6) educational cultures, and (7) the "least of these" cultures (74–81). Finally, faithful application of Scripture necessitates applying the original author's purpose, applying the actual passage being preached, and for preachers to apply the sermon to themselves before doing so to their listeners.

The final part of the book examines three "characteristics of faithful preachers." The first characteristic is that of being pastoral and loving. Simply put, a preacher must "preach as a pastor, and pastor as a preacher" (105). Preachers must be intentional in "shepherding and loving God's people" (97) both in and outside the pulpit. Second, preachers must be persons of "character and integrity." They must be deliberate in maintaining their ethos, delegating ministry tasks, practicing self-care, and finding their center in Christ. Kim admonishes his readers to "preach out of who you are: be yourself and especially like yourself" (112). Third, faithful preachers are "prayerful and Spirit-led." Preachers who are cognizant of the indispensable role that prayer plays in preaching are far more intentional in dedicating quality time to praying for the Holy Spirit's power, the transformation of lives, and congregational intentionality.

This succinct and practical volume on preaching is a rich resource for both new and experienced preachers who desire to faithfully declare the truths of Scripture from a pastoral heart. This book lays a solid foundation for young preachers and is also an excellent refresher course for veteran preachers on the basic tenets of preaching. *A Little Book for New Preachers* proves the old adage right, that "good things come in small packages." 

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