

Karoline Lewis. *She: Five Keys to Unlock the Power of Women in Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2016. 195 pages. \$16.54.

Preaching while female is a prophetic and precarious act: prophetic, because stepping into the pulpit as a female speaks truth to entrenched patriarchal power in the church; precarious, because this act brings scrutiny, sometimes hostility, and always the accumulation of two thousand years of sexism to bear on her. How each female preacher navigates this position is shaped by how she understands her authority and voice, her theology, her style of leadership, her gender and sense of self, as well as her own body and sexuality. Karoline Lewis' book, *She: Five Keys to Unlock the Power of Women in Ministry*, is a must-have manual for equipping not just female preachers but all women who answer God's call to ministry. From clergy to youth leaders, deacons, teachers, board members and denominational heads—women who lead in the church will find this book helpful for understanding the realities they must confront, and sage guidance for claiming their vocation in the face of those realities.

Each chapter of *She* examines a different "key" that opens frank discussions about issues women in ministry must deal with, as well as options, strategies, and approaches for traversing this territory. At the end of each chapter is a list of questions and/or exercises for discussion and reflection, and resources for further reading. The book would work well for women's clergy study groups, seminary courses or student discussion groups, and one-on-one spiritual direction or peer-to-peer mentoring.

One of the most poignant features is the inclusion of quotes and poems, some by Lewis' students. Their words capture the breathtaking depths of feeling and lived experience of women who have wrestled with birthing their emerging selves in the midst of a church that is unwelcoming at worst and ambivalent at best about their presence in leadership. Lewis' very act of writing this book models the importance of her own words: "Make clear decisions as to what you are going to do and say both about the Bible and about God when it comes to women in ministry" (3). As a biblical scholar and homiletician, Lewis knows what she stands for and what is at stake. Her approach to this book is one of invitation and conversation rather than complaining and combativeness.

Lewis is fearless in her approach to uncomfortable questions that women may be hesitant to ask themselves, let alone discuss with others, like: How can I feel comfortable in my own body when every aspect of my clothing, curves, voice, hair, make-up, and even shoes are subjected to scrutiny? How do I feel about my weight, my sexuality, and the changes my body undergoes as it ages—especially in the context of ministry? These are questions male ministers are rarely forced to ask, and may lead some to wonder, "Why do we need to talk about our bodies so much as women in ministry?" Lewis' blunt answer is: "Because everyone else does and everyone else will" (60). Thus, it is better to get ahead of the external talk by having prayerful internal conversations about these challenges, as well as discussions with trusted female colleagues and mentors.

Through her own experiences and those of her students, Lewis has dealt with nearly every scenario women face in ministry. Especially helpful is the "glossary of sexism" in Chapter 4 that explains important terms and gives language to describe what women in ministry experience. And while she is sympathetic to the double standards and biases women must deal with, she does not wallow in the unfairness. Instead, she accepts it as reality, urges prudence and discretion, and assures us that the very act of being our authentic selves as servants of God will help to bring about the changes the church needs. She encourages women in ministry to be in

solidarity with each other, while also realizing that “each woman has to be responsible for her own successes and failures in ministry” (55).

Lewis’ skill as a teacher of preaching shines throughout the book, especially in the particularities of vulnerability, embodiment, and voice. While such considerations are certainly applicable to male and female preachers alike, they take on added layers of complexity for women in the pulpit. Not only are their own positions in leadership in the balance, but also those of other female leaders as well. Lewis sees tremendous opportunity to lift up not just future female pastors but all women when a minister utters her truth, inhabits her role with authenticity, and proclaims the God who empowers women and men alike.

For Lewis, a theology of hospitality will enable the church to welcome women’s gifts. But hospitality cannot be a one-sided transaction. “It is not just about letting people in, but imagining how you must change as a result. It is anticipation that you will be changed in this encounter, in this relationship” (179). In this way, *She* reveals one of the keys for the *church* to unlock its own power, which is to embrace the change that comes with allowing women full access to all leadership positions, and nurturing their gifts for those roles.

Leah D. Schade, Lexington Theological Seminary, Lexington, KY