

Scott M. Gibson, ed. *The Worlds of the Preacher: Navigating Biblical, Cultural, and Personal Contexts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018. 164 pages. \$23.

Preachers confront myriad worlds in terms of the diversity of biblical interpretation, congregational makeup, and varying values that have arisen from rapid social, economic, political, cultural and ethical shifts. What might be the essential awareness that preachers need in the face of such an abundance of information? This book provides some key lenses based on Haddon W. Robinson's "four worlds of the preacher," aimed at helping preachers navigate their coordinates and understand what to do with them. The various authors are committed to Robinson's "four worlds" as part of a process of discovering, communicating with, and expanding upon Robinson's claims.

The introductory essay by Scott M. Gibson provides an overview of Robinson's life and preaching. In chapter 1, Robinson identifies the four worlds of preachers that are: 1) the world of the Bible; 2) the modern world; 3) the world of those who listen to the preacher; and 4) the world of the preacher, based on the history, language, and cultural aspects of each of the four worlds. In chapter 2, Steven D. Mathewson looks at the Old Testament world and identifies four aspects that preachers need to consider in order to preach effectively. These are an understanding of the text, including its genre and language, an understanding of ancient cultures, an application to the modern world, and finally, the preacher's world in terms of the way the preacher thinks about and deals with her or his life. Duane Litfin focuses on the New Testament world in chapter 3 and advocates a model of "applied theology" (40). Chapter 4 deals with developing the personality of a preacher. Gibson argues a preacher can work effectively for the gospel if the preacher has a well-developed character and life by practicing the virtues of confession, repentance, and holiness in the Holy Spirit (71–72). In chapter 5, Matthew D. Kim writes about the challenges and opportunities for ethnic and cultural diversity when preaching to one's contemporary culture. Kim addresses problems with preaching that overlooks ethnic diversity, makes suggestions for ethnic and cultural unity, and provides insights for celebrating diversity. Chapter 6 expands upon the world of listeners in terms of culture, language, and history (90). Jeffrey Arthurs looks at the gap between the Bible and listeners based on Robinson's three developmental questions (91). He suggests strategies that preachers might employ to enter and bridge between the world of their listeners and that of the Bible. In chapter 7, Patricia M. Batten concentrates on local churches and highlights the importance of understanding the history, culture and language of a local congregation. Victor D. Anderson, in chapter 8, argues that preaching affords a vision that goes beyond participating in God's mission for the world (116). He outlines the characteristics of God's mission and shows how preaching declares and enacts that mission. In chapter 9, Scott Wenig explores the importance of understanding the history of the text and the importance of language and culture in seeing behind the text. Chapter 10 presents three ways the preacher might create images in a culture dominated by images. Donald R. Sunukjian suggests expanding the images of a biblical author, creating a modern image that is similar to the intention of the biblical author, or creating images through visualization of modern situations, such as the use of examples, scenarios, and the truth applied to modern experiences.

In sum, this book contributes to a balanced and comprehensive understanding of the preacher's world. While it emphasizes theocentrism, it does not ignore the importance of people. It challenges the dangers of an anthropocentric distortion as well as the individual characteristics of preachers. The need to consider so many different possibilities is challenging for many

preachers. However, biblical preaching is more than just explaining the truth of the Bible. The preacher's challenges lie in the endless struggle of reconciling the Bible with today's culture, the congregation, and the preacher's self. Preachers may well need an extended version of each chapter of this book. It is also necessary to recognize the gaps between generations. In conclusion, when a preacher sincerely and faithfully responds to God's calling in the Holy Spirit, Robinson's four worlds can be usefully expanded upon and profitably used in the living field of any preacher.

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