

Matthew Kim. *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 288 pages. \$15.40.

One of the best pieces of preaching advice I received in seminary was that great preaching begins in the counseling office. It hearkened back to the therapeutic preaching of Harry Emerson Fosdick. The point was not that the preacher would use thinly veiled counseling encounters from the week as illustrations in the sermon, but rather when the preacher is preparing the sermon, she imagines her parishioners sitting with her, around the desk, struggling together with the meaning and application of the text. For many preachers in years gone by, the faces imagined around the desk during sermon preparation were homogeneous, as were the cultural issues they brought to the text. Overwhelmingly in churches today this is no longer true.

In his book, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence*, Matthew Kim addresses the difficulties arising from the fact that the faces the preacher imagines around the office during sermon preparation are diverse and bring unique cultural realities to the preparation of the sermon. Matthew's desire is "to prepare twenty-first century preachers for the realities of congregational diversity in North America and beyond" (xiv). He does this by addressing both the theory of cultural intelligence in Chapters 1 through 4 and the practice of cultural intelligence in Chapters 5 through 9.

After providing in Chapter 1 a heartfelt argument for the necessity of cultural intelligence in preaching due to the growing diversity within congregations, Kim provides a template for cross-cultural hermeneutics and homiletics in Chapter 2; this template guides the rest of the book. The template is laid out in three stages, and each stage is a mnemonic further laying out its steps:

- Stage 1 (Follow your HABIT): Kim's commitment to traditional evangelical theology is seen most clearly in this stage. His method falls within the evangelical tradition of Haddon Robinson, Bryan Chapel, Scott Gibson, and others. Therefore, following your HABIT involves exploring:
 - Historical, Grammatical, and Literary context
 - Author's Cultural Context
 - Big Idea of the Text
 - Interpret in Your Context
 - Theological Presuppositions
- Stage 2 (Build the BRIDGE): In this stage, Kim, following the legacy of John Stott's *Between Two Worlds*, provides some practical steps to understand the cultures of the congregation. This enables the preacher to practice a double listening, hearing the words of Scripture but also hearing the questions, concerns, and convictions raised by the multiple cultures represented in the congregation, enabling the preacher to build a BRIDGE with the congregation:
 - Beliefs
 - Rituals
 - Idols
 - Dreams
 - God
 - Experiences

- Stage 3 (Speak their DIALECT): In the final stage, Kim argues for the intentional practice of the preacher to develop a “commonness” with the congregation. Just because the preacher speaks the same language as the congregation does not mean that she will be heard; she must be intentional about speaking the same DIALECT through careful consideration of:
 - **Delivery**
 - **Illustrations**
 - **Application**
 - **Language**
 - **Embrace**
 - **Content**
 - **Trust**

Chapters 3, “Hermeneutics and Cultural Intelligence,” and 4, “Exegeting the Preacher,” round out the section on the theory of cultural intelligence. The third chapter once again reveals Kim’s commitments to evangelical hermeneutics and homiletics. For those who do not share his convictions, however, there is much within these chapters regarding the importance of cultural sensitivity and the importance of self-examination in the preaching task.

The final five chapters provide some practical application of the template as we approach denominational divides (Chapter 5), ethnic diversity (Chapter 6), differences between genders (Chapter 7), unique geographical concerns (Chapter 8), and sensitivity to other religions (Chapter 9). Each chapter addresses these unique cultural concerns by applying the HABIT, the BRIDGE, and the DIALECT laid out in Chapter 2.

Matthew is clearly a sensitive and intelligent practitioner of preaching as well as an excellent writer. His book lays out an almost clinical approach to developing cultural intelligence for the preacher. This clinical approach, I believe, is both the greatest strength and weakness of the book. The approach is clear, systematic, and comprehensive. At times it seems, however, to be addressing a matter of the heart by addressing the workings of the mind. That being said, the book makes a significant contribution to the field of preaching, and what is lacking in developing cultural sensitivity is certainly made up for in addressing cultural intelligence, which is the stated aim of the book. Regardless of one’s theological convictions, evangelical or otherwise, the book has much to commend itself to preachers from all traditions who want to take seriously the diverse cultures in their congregations and the diverse faces imagined around the desk during sermon preparation.

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