

T. D. Jakes (with Frank Thomas). *Don't Drop the Mic: The Power of Your Words Can Change the World*. Faith Words, 2021. 464 pages. \$26.00 (Hardcover).

On an otherwise unremarkable evening in the 1960's, a young boy from rural West Virginia watched Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the evening news and was so inspired by the courage and cadence of King that some 50 years later, he still recalls the experience: "Whatever the allure, that night left me with one unforgettable takeaway: *A man with a microphone could change the world!*" (emphasis original, 15). Now in his 60's, Thomas Dexter Jakes, Sr. (widely known as Bishop T. D. Jakes) has himself become an unforgettable pastor with a microphone, amassing millions of followers on each of the major social media platforms, twice gracing the cover of Ebony magazine, landing the cover of Time Magazine as "America's Best Preacher," and being featured in Time as one of the 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America. Jakes is an entrepreneur, filmmaker, and the founder and chancellor of Jakes Divinity School. His level of success rarely emerges in preaching circles, eliciting reverence in some and jealousy or skepticism in others.

Jakes has authored more than forty books, but *Don't Drop the Mic: The Power of Your Words Can Change the World* is his first focus on communication. Jakes states, "...my intent is to enhance our respect for the art of speaking and to enhance our eloquence as preachers, presenters, politicians, performers, poets, and entrepreneurs" (17). Perhaps as a nod to homileticians skeptical of his homiletical training, Jakes humbly, yet confidently, addresses the matter right away:

Down through the years, I've become best known for my communication as a preacher and public speaker... My speech and the style of my delivery began outside the camp of any academic training and beyond the doors of any seminary. Instead, I've relied on spirit and sound, wind and warmth, compassion and conversation seasoned with a passionate and often poetic fusion of ancestry, heritage, and the power of a listening ear and open heart. Nonetheless, I've always appreciated the academic perspective--theological, hermeneutical, and linguistic--showcased by many other preachers and ministry leaders (30-31).

By addressing the "elephant in the room," Jakes skillfully sets the stage to introduce Dr. Frank Thomas as a contributor to the book. Thomas, a homiletician and current president of the Academy of Homiletics, has built his career as an expert in African American preaching and founder of the world's first doctoral program on the subject. Thomas describes Jakes as "[u]ndeniably, one of the most nationally and globally imitated preachers in the digital age" (339) and "an optimist by nature" (366). Their collaboration comes at Thomas' urging.

The book consists of five parts (each with three chapters) and an appendix. Jakes authors the first four parts, starting each chapter with quotes from influential communicators such as activist Audre Lorde, writer Maya Angelou, and educator Stephen Covey. In Part 1 (Introduction: The Voice of Hope), Jakes revisits his childhood, the role of his parents in shaping his communication skills, and the impact of King on his understanding of "the power of communication." Jakes reflects on his first sermon and uses it to launch into a discussion on owning one's fear as a communicator and understanding the pain of others. Part 2 (The Legacy of Language) teaches brand development and reveals Jakes' process for preaching: "Study yourself full, think yourself clear, pray yourself hot, and let yourself go" (137). Part 3 (The Promise of Practice) highlights how and why to take advantage of each opportunity. The dynamism of Part 3 makes it a must read for communicators. In Part 4 (The Discovery of

Delivery), Jakes stresses authenticity, creativity, and responsibility in communication. Jakes writes each chapter with ease, demonstrating his effectiveness as a communicator while effortlessly drawing the audience through Bible stories and personal anecdotes. The audience experiences Jakes' Baptist and Pentecostal roots, alongside the breadth of his knowledge in a range of disciplines.

Thomas authors Part V (The Meal in the Message) and relies on an earlier established metaphor of preaching as cooking. He adds, "The recipe and sermonic food of Bishop Jakes comes directly out of African American preaching context and tradition" (341). Thomas focuses on the "recipe", "ingredients", and "taste" of Jakes' preaching alongside an analysis of a sermon by Jakes. To critique the preaching of Jakes is no easy task. Thomas treads lightly, for he is aware of his audience. He carefully refers to Jakes as "Bishop" or "Bishop Jakes", apologizes to readers when he quotes Jakes at length, and requests for readers to "[p]lease understand that I am not the kind of critic who seeks to find something wrong with Bishop's preaching, or what is missing, and offer correction" (380). Thomas encourages readers to examine the preaching of Jakes and use it to reflect on their own preaching styles. Readers new to African American preaching may want more from Thomas in his sections. As well, future editions would benefit from an index.

Students and teachers of homiletics will find this work refreshing, because Jakes is an expert storyteller. This work is useful for its accessibility, practicality, relevance, and clear examples. Additionally, Jakes covers topics usually not addressed in homiletics textbooks. To appeal to a range of audiences, the book is available in large print, audio, electronic, and paperback. Readers will also appreciate the 3-part interview between Jakes and Thomas (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=US2_FMgBwHI). Jakes shines as a storyteller and Thomas contributes the homiletical structure. I write this review as a homiletician and a professor of communication studies, a point of view particularly important in examining a book that seeks to appeal to both arenas and does so powerfully.

Elizabeth J.A. Siwo-Okundi, Emerson College, Boston, MA