

Kate Bruce and Liz Shercliff. *Out of the Shadows: Preaching the Women of the Bible*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022. 224 pages. \$28.

Out of the Shadows: Preaching the Women of the Bible is a compelling resource for preachers seeking to amplify women's voices in the Bible. The book centers on female figures and their perspectives, which are often overshadowed by more prominent male figures and perspectives of the Bible. It is written skillfully, paraphrasing scholarly resources while consistently weaving contemporary applications, particularly from the authors' ministry context in England.

The authors select a mixture of well-known and obscure women in the Scriptures. They challenge dominant interpretations of the more well-known women (such as Eve and Mary Magdalene) as they shine a spotlight on lesser-known women, whose stories of faithfulness and courage should be woven into preaching (such as Jephthah's daughter and Abigail).

Each of the 17 chapters opens with a table that shows the reader where this woman's story or voice appears (if at all) in the Revised Common Lectionary and/or the Common Worship Lectionary. Unique to this resource is the choice not to include the whole passage in which the woman is discussed. Rather, each woman's words are highlighted on their own, no matter how many (Woman Wisdom of Proverbs) or few (the hemorrhaging woman of the Synoptic Gospels). In their exegesis, Bruce and Shercliff engage with empathy and imagination the complexity of the woman/women, her/their historical and social situation, and our accumulated interpretations of the text. A brief sermon is included, followed by "homiletic points" for reflection. These points may be helpful for independent reading or as discussion prompts with a preaching lab or cohort. An original collect inspired by the witness of the woman/women featured concludes each chapter. The authors also include outlines for possible sermon series in the appendix.

Out of the Shadows demonstrates an awareness of the dynamics of preaching in contemporary church contexts. Bruce and Shercliff recognize that preaching about women in the Bible can be challenging, particularly in settings where patriarchal interpretations of Scripture may be deeply ingrained. To address this, they provide practical advice for how preachers can navigate potential resistance or discomfort when addressing these topics. The authors encourage preachers to be courageous in confronting difficult texts and to offer new, liberating interpretations that affirm the dignity and agency of women without chastising the reader for previously held understandings. The book's tone is empowering, inviting preachers to step into these stories with confidence and imagination.

Theologically, *Out of the Shadows* is rooted in a vision of the Bible as a living text, one that continues to speak to the church today. The authors challenge static or literalist readings of Scripture, advocating for interpretations attentive to context, gender dynamics, and the broader narrative of God's work in the world. In doing so, they offer a vision of preaching that is not only faithful to the text but also attuned to the needs and concerns of contemporary communities. Their emphasis on justice, equality, and inclusion resonates throughout the book, making it a timely and prophetic contribution to ongoing conversations about gender and faith at a time when women's voices are still being pushed to the margins.

This is not an exhaustive resource for scholars seeking comprehensive research on women in the Bible. Nor does it extensively integrate biblical scholarship; while the authors demonstrate an understanding of the complicated reception history of these texts, most of their conversation partners are figures from recent decades working in English. Notably absent is engagement with the essential Hebrew Bible scholarship of Wilda Gafney in *Womanist Midrash*,

Volume 1: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne (2017). Also missing is engagement with internationally recognized feminist biblical scholars such as Juliana Claassens, Christy Cobb, Musa Dube, Rhiannon Graybill, Jacqueline Hidalgo, Kwok Pui-lan, Christl Maier, Susanne Scholz, Carolyn Sharp, and Mitzi Smith. Nonetheless, this is a solid introduction to the voices of women in the Bible for preachers.

Out of the Shadows: Preaching the Women of the Bible is a helpful resource for anyone interested in deepening their understanding of the women in Scripture. Whether used as a guide for preachers or as a source of personal reflection, the book challenges readers to hear women in the Bible in new and empathic ways. Most importantly, the book calls on the church to embrace a more inclusive and liberating vision of Scripture—one in which women are no longer confined to the shadows but are recognized as central to the story of God's people.

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