

Lisa Washington Lamb. *Resonate: How to Preach for Deep Connection*. Cascade Books, 2022. 162 pages, \$23.00.

“We need to hear timeless truth articulated in fresh, timely ways that resonate with the unique struggles and opportunities we face as individuals, churches, and members of our communities,” argues Lisa Washington Lamb, an ordained Presbyterian minister with faculty affiliation at Fuller Theological School in California and St. Paul’s Theological College in Malaysia (35). Lamb begins her book by acknowledging the changing faith landscape. She argues that those who preach—whether in pulpits or other leadership contexts—must learn to deliver sermons that resonate and connect more deeply with their congregations. Lamb has listened to thousands of sermons and contends that the best way to do this is through the use of verbs. Why verbs? According to Lamb:

Sermons do not just want to look pretty on a page or be doctrinally precise; they want to *do* something—to catalyze transformation. Verbs are literally where the action is, and how we use, neglect, or misuse them reveals our theology, heart, and capacity to be present with our listeners” (xviii).

Lamb rightly recognizes the need for a refresher on verbs, including how they function, and the formal terminology used to describe them. She presents eleven verbal forms, noting nuances in how other languages use verbs. Then she advances her argument through nine well-organized chapters, each beginning with a quote and story related to the topic, followed by a deeper explanation of the verbal form and illustrations. She closes each chapter with two reflective tasks: “Ask This,” a set of questions inviting preachers to examine their own lives and ministries, and “Try This,” a set of practices that help them experiment with action-oriented language.

Lamb does not insist that readers move through the chapters in a fixed order. Nevertheless, each chapter introduces more complex verb forms and preacher roles, shifting the emphasis from the preacher’s personal formation toward the congregation and wider community. Chapter one focuses on “Preacher as Witness and Host: The Power of First-Person Speech” followed by chapter two “Preacher as Shepherd: The Promise of Second-Person Speech.” Chapters three and four work together as Lamb explores third-person-singular (Proclaimer) and third-person-plural verbs (Sage).

Chapter four exemplifies Lamb’s inclusive framework and approach to preaching that equips people to navigate through life. She stresses that neither new, young, nor seasoned preachers should feel intimidated by the term “sage” since wisdom does not depend on age. Wisdom comes as a mysterious gift from God to those who seek it. Lamb encourages preachers to learn from ancient wisdom of developing life-giving virtues in community with others and letting go of death-dealing vices. She provides ten stepping-stones to help preachers move from abstract thoughts to “articulate what matters most about an idea” (47).

In the remaining chapters, Lamb offers preachers flexibility and freedom, with a call to ground preaching in scripture. Chapter five positions the preacher as Storyteller who narrates the past through lively and effective storytelling. Chapter six argues for the preacher as Priest who discerns current events and offers congregations a glimpse into what God is doing in the world. Chapter seven moves to the future, with the preacher as Visionary Prophet who can offer hope and nurture discipleship. In chapter eight, Lamb highlights the preacher as Leader who chooses and uses various modes of influence to direct people to action. She argues that “preaching is fundamentally an act of leadership. We are in this to influence” (101). Chapter nine concludes

by delving into the active and passive voice. The preacher as Catalyst can work through congregational resistance to change while reflecting on their own resistance and discouragement.

Lamb draws insight from scripture, theologians across the globe, and preachers from a range of traditions. For those wanting to redefine and reinvigorate their preaching, Lamb's book serves as a useful guide for approaching sermons each week. For homiletics professors hoping to expand resource options for their students, Lamb's work is useful for introductory and advanced preaching courses.

Lamb acknowledges that her book asks readers to grasp new or long-neglected concepts about verbs, which can make the work feel "daunting" (xvii–xxi). She eases this challenge by offering plenty of anecdotes and concrete descriptions. The book gives preachers a fresh opportunity to advance their preaching and connect with their congregations. Readers who experiment with the verbal forms in their sermons will be rewarded with a book that can be a tool and conversation partner for years to come.

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