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Pierson, Bankston, and Lewis' "Exploring parables in Luke: Integrated skills for ESL/EFL students of theology" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Pierson, C., Bankston, W., & Lewis, M. (2014). *Exploring parables in Luke: Integrated skills for ESL/EFL students of theology*. Carlyle, UK: Langham Global Library. 180pp. \$24.95. ISBN 9781783689408

This work is the product of a team of three professors led by Cheri Pierson, professor of Intercultural Studies at Wheaton College. It is written from an evangelical perspective, for students of English as a second language as it pertains to the teaching of theology. As its subtitle states forthrightly, it has the ambitious goal of integrating the study and exploration of parables in Luke's Gospel, while practicing and improving proficiency in English, for students for whom English is a second or foreign language.

As the authors state in their introduction, the majority of theological work is written and published in English or other Western languages. The West does not have the last word on theology, but neither should non-Western traditions claim the last word. Their purpose in presenting this textbook is "to open avenues of dialogue between the many "cultural scenes" that compose the church." In this respect, their textbook is a successful one.

The heart of the book consists of seven chapters, together with a concluding summary chapter. Each chapter corresponds to principles of biblical parables. Parables are a) brief and to the point; b) contain layers of meaning; c) usually contain only human characters, i.e., no animal fables; d) use indirect communication to alter the hearers' perspective; e) use concealment to get hearers past their own "watchful dragons"; f) use familiar settings with exaggerated drama; and g) are grounded in contexts familiar to their listeners.

Each chapter is meant to be self-contained. Directed as it is towards international students, each chapter begins with non-biblical parables drawn from several different sources. The stories are well-chosen for how they speak to our common human predicament, and each one is paired with parables from the Gospel of Luke. Each chapter offers explication in parallel versions, one in scholarly English and the other using simplified English. Each chapter includes language exercises based upon each chapter's reading, integrated with space for journal-writing and reflection upon each parable, the issues raised by the parables from other cultures, and the opportunity to compose one's own parables. Journaling is a growing part of education in many social sciences, and the attention it gets here is a strong aspect of this textbook.

The summary chapter concludes with appendices that offer a bibliography for further reading and a table of scriptural citations to the parables used. Finally, the book includes an answer key, to assist students in using the book as a self-directed learning tool.

This textbook will be of some interest to academic libraries serving a growing population of international students. It is a very specialized textbook, although the authors make a commendable effort to make it a flexible tool for classrooms and self-study, and thus usable to an array of students and teachers.

Reviewer

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