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Sancken's "Words that heal: Preaching hope to wounded souls" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Sancken, J. S. (2018). *Words that heal: Preaching hope to wounded souls*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 122pp. \$18.99. ISBN 9781501849688

The author Joni S. Sancken is an Associate Professor of Homiletics at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, an ordained pastor with Mennonite Church USA, and author of multiple published books, articles, and reviews. Professor Sancken starts the book by introducing her sister-in-law's recent sudden and unexpected death, setting the foundation of the world of reality that is filled with hurt and trauma, yet, ends the book with a peaceful and grateful tone, stating that life is made of ordinary and extraordinary moments and is worth living and fighting for, because of God's blessings in victory and healing power.

This book is the work result of Sancken's research project, which she was granted a sabbatical for. The book is the fifth of the Artistry of Preaching series. Although the content is targeted mainly to preachers, because of the rich knowledge that integrates the fields of theology, medical science, and philosophy, the book can be beneficial to a wide range of readers, such as students of theology and psychology, church administrators and members, family members and friends of trauma survivors, and survivors of trauma, sudden life loss, bullying and abuse, and suffers of PTSD.

The book discusses sensitive topics about trauma survivors. It leads readers to explore the physical, mental, and spiritual experience of trauma survivors as well as their coping processes. It teaches practical strategies and vocabularies to effectively guide trauma survivors to heal and receive within a theological context. The chapters and appendixes also provide interpretive tools for biblical events and sermon for an audience with past hurt and emotional wounds. However, when discussing church issues, the author does not stay on a surface level. Pages are allocated to discussions of situations as well as potential solutions.

The book achieves its purpose because it integrates multi-disciplinary knowledge, real life experience and example, as well as quotations of fellow researchers and authors of the field. It provides practical approaches of preaching and communicating to church congregations as well as trauma survivors. It has a clear structure with four chapters and two appendixes and clear titles and subtitles within each chapter.

One thing to point out, because chapter three addresses church issues that might not be familiar to a lot of readers, it might benefit from a clearer arrangement or an introduction, for less experienced readers. The whole book is well-documented with endnotes and over one hundred bibliography references.

Reviewer

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