

Book Reviews

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Syzygy: Living a Powerfully Aligned Life by Johnnie C. Godwin (Chalice Press)

In *Syzygy: Living a Powerfully Aligned Life*, Johnnie Godwin introduced to me a new word for an age-old concept. I found “syzygy” to be a funny new word that reminded me of the importance of proper alignment and balance in my relationships. The root of this old Greek word means to be “yoked” together, which explains the power behind the synergy that so many individuals, companies and churches long for.


What are you reading that other Texas Baptists would find helpful? Send suggestions and reviews to books@baptiststandard.com .

Godwin shares his personal journey toward discovering syzygy in his life at home, at church and at work. His practical insights reinforce the importance of us working together with each other and especially with the Lord. Life takes on new meaning and effectiveness when we take up the “yoke” of Christ.

I found the sections of the book on family, friendships and working relationships to be very perceptive and useful. I would recommend this book for devotional reading for leaders or for a team-building exercise at work. It also could be used as a witnessing tool for a friend at work.

David Lowrie, pastor

First Baptist Church

Canyon

An Introduction to Baptist Principles by Bill Leonard (Baptist History and Heritage Society)



Bill Leonard, dean and professor of church history at Wake Forest University Divinity School, possesses the too-rare ability to write a clear sentence in which every word counts. His gift is on display in this 24-page pamphlet, which is a part of the Baptist Heritage Library.

Do not make the mistake of assuming the brevity of of this booklet indicates a paucity of information. Each page is packed with details that will delight and challenge Baptists of every persuasion.

Beginning with the assertion that Baptists are second-generation Protestants, Leonard tips his hat to Anabaptist influences while contending that Luther, Calvin and their 16th-century and subsequent interpreters are the true forebears of modern Baptists. He briefly surveys the Calvinist

influence by summarizing the five points of Calvinism, which are represented by the acronym TULIP, then lists some Calvinist Baptist churches and denominational groups. He also describes the abiding Arminian influence in Baptist life, not only as a self-sustaining tradition, but also as one that is lived out in synthesis with Calvinist teachings. Lest anyone think he gives Luther short shrift, I would point readers to the endnotes of the pamphlet, where they will find succinct definitions of “indulgences” and “transubstantiation,” along with a brief description of Luther’s contrarian position.

Leonard covers this material in the first five pages. Then, he plunges into those abiding principles that, while not uniquely Baptist, serve as touchstones of Baptist life. Among these are a regenerate church, biblical authority and liberty of conscience, congregational autonomy and associational fellowship, Baptist ministry and ordinances, religious liberty, and missions.

Throughout, Leonard reminds that Baptists are an opinionated people. While we share common convictions, we cherish the privilege of gracious (we pray) disagreement. Thus the title, AN Introduction Leonard is too humble and too much of a Baptist to say, THE Introduction Even so, every Baptist would find this pamphlet a good place to start in discovering our common ground.

Sam Underwood, pastor

First Baptist Church

Farmers Branch

In the Company of Jesus: Finding Unconventional Wisdom and Unexpected Hope by Bill Donahue. (InterVarsity)



There's a magnifying glass in the brain.

Wherever I mentally train the lens, its subject enlarges. I can choose to magnify the pressures and problems that always are around, or I can choose to magnify the ever-present Jesus. It's amazing what a difference that decision makes in how I feel and what I accomplish.

Bill Donahue has provided a welcome tool to train us how to see Jesus. His book is engagingly written, with a splendid mix of practical Christian wisdom and fresh devotional insight. It's a model for reflection on our own experiences in light of the roles Jesus plays in the life of the believer.

Each chapter concludes with helps for making personal application, prayer and further Bible reading. It's well-suited for use in small groups as well.

Christian adults of all ages, from newer to more mature believers, can find in this book polish for the Jesus magnifying glass.

Rick Willis, pastor

First Baptist Church

Lampasas

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.