

Book Reviews: Dept-Proof Your Christmas

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[Dept-Proof Your Christmas: Celebrating the Holidays without Breaking the Bank](#) by Mary Hunt (Revel)

✘ When should we focus on saving for Christmas? The answer, of course, is in times of plenty and in times of need. Mary Hunt's *Dept-Proof Your Christmas* offers a wealth of plans and practical tips for getting through the holidays without using a credit card, so December's season of giving doesn't turn into January's season of paying. Hunt's collection of holiday ideas will delight even those readers who have celebrated many Christmases past.

Topics include tried and true ideas from the usual places, such as gifts from the kitchen and garden. But she also addresses attitudes toward giving along with planning ahead and finding cash to work the plan. On buying early Hunt says: "Come Christmas ... a little voice may start whispering in your ear. It will suggest your gifts aren't good enough. ... Determine that you will not listen. ... Trust yourself and believe in your plan." She emphasizes the importance of tradition, home decorating and entertaining—all with a focus of paying as you go.

The more experienced will find many gems that sparkle amongst the tried and true. The less experienced will find a treasure trove of ideas for experimenting. And probably the highlight of the book is the personal experience vignettes sprinkled throughout. These individual stories add a unique warmth and joy to what otherwise might have been simply a book of lists and instructions.

Kay Kolb

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**[Without Apology: Sermons for Christ's Church](#) by Stanley Hauerwas
(Seabury Books)**

What does a lifelong Methodist who worships at an Episcopal church,  draws inspiration from pacifist Anabaptists and makes frequent reference to verses from the Apocrypha in his sermons have to say to a Baptist audience? Quite a bit, as it turns out.

Stanley Hauerwas, professor of theological ethics at Duke Divinity School, offers tough love to the church—plainspoken admonitions to take seriously the church's role as the body of Christ. This collection includes five sermons delivered at Church of the Holy Family in Chapel Hill, N.C., where Hauerwas worships; five preached at Christ Church Cathedral in Nashville, Tenn., where he serves as canon theologian; five for diverse occasions; and four dealing specifically with what it means to be priests. It also includes essays on leadership, education and sex.

Preachers who read sermon collections looking for ready-made material for next Sunday's sermon may be disappointed. With a couple of notable exceptions, there's little here that could easily be uprooted and transplanted fruitfully into a typical Baptist pulpit. But anyone who wants to think deeply about what it means in practical terms to live, think and speak as a follower of Christ will find much to ponder here.

Ken Camp, managing editor

Baptist Standard

Plano

[Consider the Birds: A Provocative Guide to Birds of the Bible](#) by

Debbie Blue (Abingdon Press)

✘ We experience birds all around us. Some we hardly notice. Others we view as bothers. A few we eye through binoculars and note on sighting lists. In Scripture, we sometimes thoughtlessly read through the images of God's feathered creation. Not so with Debbie Blue. In *Consider the Birds*, she offers "A Provocative Guide to Birds of the Bible."

The author, a Yale Divinity School graduate, fell in love with birds when she fell in love with a birder and began to see them in a new light. The book offers her insights into scriptural layers of meaning provided by avian imagery. Each of the 10 well-researched chapters focuses on a different fowl and its symbolism, including the pigeon, pelican, quail, vulture, eagle, ostrich, sparrow, cock, hen and raven.

The eagle, for example, demonstrates both power and vulnerability. Blue discusses the soaring bird's physical characteristics and habits, killer instinct, historical associations and selection as an official United States symbol. Finally, she expands the images by applying knowledge of God's specific creation to Scripture.

The well-documented book would be a wonderful gift for the bird-watcher. *Consider the Birds* also would be a great addition to the library of any Christian who desires to take a rich "avian journey through the Bible." Additionally, it is an interesting read that offers meaningful life lessons.

Kathy Robinson Hillman, first vice president

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Waco