

Book Reviews: When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search

July 29, 2011

When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search by Chris Brauns (Moody Publishers)



This book does not take the place of the essential manual that gives a thorough, step-by-step approach for a pastor search committee. As a companion, however, it has value.

It does, for instance, add fresh ideas to some of the major issues facing search committees, often by sharing real mistakes committees make. Most importantly, while many manuals either ignore spiritual foundations (possibly because they trust the committee to have a spiritual base), or they pay lip service to them, prayer and Scripture are the main foci and strengths of Braun's book.

The reader may have to forgive the author for a little personal bias in his treatment of the Bereans in the Book of Acts, but many Scriptures are used that can help guide the search committee. There also may be too much emphasis on using sermons as the key element for picking a pastor, but the sermon evaluation method is helpful. So, while a committee needs other primary resources, *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search* is a helpful supplement.

Karl Fickling, director

Pastorless Church Team

Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas

Orphanology: Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care by Tony Merida and Rick Morton (New Hope, 2011)



In *Orphanology*, Tony Merida and Rick Morton estimate the number of orphans worldwide at around 200 million. And the figures don't count practical orphans who have been abandoned or sold, including 300,000 to 400,000 trafficked across international borders annually, or teens aging out of orphan care with no future. Regardless of the definition, all these children bear scars and desire and deserve the permanence, hope, safety and love of a forever family.

After outlining the biblical basis of orphan care using the Apostle Paul's letters, the two adoptive dads build a case for individual and church involvement. Merida and Morton provide concrete examples, practical ideas and applications. Suggestions include adoption, adoption support, foster care, certified sitters for foster parents, transitional aid for older teens, institutional assistance, overseas partnerships and orphan hosting. To help, the book includes a bibliography and extensive resource list.

Orphanology offers feel-good stories but warns against temporary feel-good involvement. Instead, the authors encourage long-term commitment that makes a difference, one orphan at a time. That way, individuals and the church fulfill the James 1:27 challenge, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans ... in their distress."

Kathy Robinson Hillman, former president

Woman's Missionary Union of Texas, Waco

In the Court of the Master: An Ordinary Man's Walk With an Extraordinary God by Lyn Robbins (Austin Brothers Publishing)



What do a donkey, a witness in a jury trial and an ordinary Christian have in common? They all serve as props for Lyn Robbins to describe the relationship between faith and daily experience. That's a relationship Robbins—a lifelong lay Christian, active both in God's kingdom and the secular world—takes seriously and explores rigorously through the pages of *In the Court of the Master*.

"Court" is an operative term for Robbins. He's the senior general attorney for a large national corporation, and he brings a lawyer's passion for details and penchant for analysis to bear on key aspects of Christian living—from church, to discipleship, to sharing faith with others, to the nature of God and more.

Robbins calls himself "an ordinary guy, a working stiff," but his book also reveals he's a person with insatiable curiosity about questions raised by faith, life and God's work in the world. "I am convinced that there are answers to most of those questions for those who have the wisdom and patience and the imagination to hear God's responses to our wonderings," he writes. "I do not pretend that these pages hold answers for everyone."

Actually, Robbins' pages raise the questions and invite fellow Christians to seek the answers. They're not easy answers, and if that's what you want, this isn't your book. But if you want to share the rough, rocky, breathtaking road that explores life's terrain, walk alongside Robbins.

Marv Knox, Editor

Baptist Standard, Dallas