

# RESOURCE REVIEW



January is 'down time' for most people involved in ministry. It's a chance to rest up, recover, hit the beach and enjoy some much needed space for refreshment. We often use January to help us get refreshed physically and socially, but how much space are you creating to refresh your heart and mind? That's where reading comes in. I know there are a ton of other ways we can learn and grow, however nothing allows for as much free flowing thought as reading. If you're into your podcasts- great! However as soon as you hear something that sparks your imagination you miss everything else the person will say. Same with a TED talk - it's hard to allow your mind to wander when you only have 18 minutes. That's the beauty of reading.

A.W. Tozer once said that 'a good book should never be quick to read. A good book should be the impetus for you to wander off in different directions as your imagination and passion takes you. It's a doorway to your soul.' If we are not distracted over and over by ideas flowing from the book- it's probably not a great book. Oswald Sanders, in his classic book '*Spiritual Leadership*', dedicates 3 chapters to the art of reading for a leader. For him, it is an essential part of a leader's health and development.

So this January, find somewhere with a good view, enough sunshine to make you feel alive and your favourite drink and get lost in a book that will capture your passion and refresh your mind and heart for ministry, faith and life. Before the year begins, get reading. You'll be thankful that you did.

Here are some tips for you as you choose something to read to refresh you and challenge you as a leader.

### 1. READ SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

We have a tendency to stick with what fits us. We order the same thing each time at Macca's; we buy the same brand clothing; we hit the same beaches- and of course we read the same kinds of books. There is something refreshing about getting into a book that has a completely different perspective to myself. Why not find a book about youth ministry or faith that comes from a different tradition to you? Read something that will stretch your thinking.

### 2. GO FOR CLASSICS, OR GO FOR NEW.

This sounds like a weird one, but it's helpful. There are certain books and authors that are classics. Often they are older, from some of the legends of church history. Although not specifically around youth ministry, they are texts that will open a doorway into a passionate and vibrant faith and love for Jesus that we all need to taste. These are great books to get into. However, when it comes to youth ministry related books, anything 8 years or older is kind of out of date. Anything written pre-2007 will not take into account the massive social and cultural changes that have occurred in youth culture. In 2006 Facebook opened to the public; in 2007 the first iPhone was released with Android released in 2008. Apps weren't mainstream until 2009+ and social media on mobile devices is only really 4 years old. All of this significantly shapes the lives of young people. I would argue that there is value in youth ministry books written pre 2007, however they can't address the current reality of youth culture. So why not find something written in the last 3 years- it will tackle some of the issues that arise in our current culture.

### 3. VARY IT UP.

Don't stick to one style of book. Vary it up. Read something for ministry, something for leadership and something for your soul. This will help refresh you rather than keeping you focused too heavily on what you want to 'do' in 2015.

### 4. ALLOW YOURSELF TO DREAM.

Don't rush through the book. As mentioned before, the strength of a really great book is that each paragraph is a doorway into a new idea and new challenge. If something you read shoots your mind into a new place, a new question, a new idea, a new dream- go with it. Most of what we take from a book is not the words on the pages but what it stirs within us. Maybe journaling as you read will help in this.

### 5. MAKE SURE IT REFRESHES YOU.

Don't read something that causes you stress. Sounds dumb. But if you are tired and worn out from ministry, don't read something about ministry strategy. Read to be challenged, but also to be refreshed.

### On My Reading List:

1. Scott McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the radical mission of the local church*, 2014
2. Rick Lawrence (ed), *Jesus Centred Youth Ministry: Moving from Jesus plus to Jesus only*, 2014
3. Kenda Creasy Dean, *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*, 2006
4. John Woolman, *The Journal of John Woolman*, first pub. 1774
5. Richard Forster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 2009 (ed)
6. J.R.R. Tolkeien, *The Hobbit*, (watched the movie instead...)

**“the strength of a really good book is that each paragraph is a doorway into a new idea and challenge. If something you read shoots your mind into a new place, a new question, a new idea, a new dream- go with it.”**