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Book Reviews

Klaus Issler & Ronald Habermas. *How We Learn: A Christian Teacher's Guide to Educational Psychology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994, 224 pp., pbk., \$17.95) reviewed by Omar Adams.

As Christian Education advances to the forefront of Fundamental circles, this book is refreshing. Issler and Habermas are writing concerning the way God has designed the individual to develop and mature in the area of learning. How does the teacher approach the differing age levels in terms of teaching methodology?

This is an expansion of an earlier book written by this duo, *Teaching for Reconciliation: Foundations and Practice of Christian Educational Ministry*. Their purpose is to assist teachers in choosing the best teaching method for particular learners and situations. They identify three key principles: means and barriers to learning; motivational factors that make learners receptive; and learning's outcome in attitudes, spirituality and behavior.

The material is developed through five divisions utilizing the acrostic "LEARN" which represents: levels, extent, avenues, readiness and nature in education. They synthesize traditional secular teaching of educational psychology and Bible to reach their goal. Another important subject discussed is modeling the truth before one's students.

How We Learn is loaded with helpful graphs and tables to make the material much more practical and accessible to the full-time and lay-teacher alike. The examples used in various

applications come from the extent of Christian educational experience: the pulpit, Sunday School, youth ministry and Christian Day School. For this reason it should be required reading for anyone in full-time Christian education. It is a valuable help for pastors as well as lay-teachers in the Sunday School and junior church.

Malphurs, Aubrey, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins: How to Change a Church without Destroying It* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993, 212 pp., pbk., \$12.99) reviewed by Jeffrey P. Tuttle.

Aubrey Malphurs is the chairman of the Department of Field Education at Dallas Theological Seminary. In this book he has provided a challenging and insightful look at the matter of change and the relationship of churches to it. The sub-title, "How to Change a Church without Destroying It," aptly describes the goal of the work, which is to provide a practical and useful guide to the various components of effective change. Statistics suggest that some kind of change is necessary. Eighty to eighty-five percent of established American churches are either plateaued or declining (in other words, stagnant or dying). An average of fifty to sixty congregations in American Protestantism choose to dissolve every week. At the same time, the unchurched American population is growing. The fact that these statistics reflect a broader spectrum of belief that fundamentalism, or even evangelicalism, does not mitigate the necessity to consider the advisability of significant change.

Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins is divided into four parts. The first part deals with "The Problem of Change: *Leading Churches to See the Need for Change.*" In it, Malphurs lays a foundation for the rest of the book by addressing the changes in our culture and the necessity for churches to consider how best to respond to these. The second section is called "The

Personnel for Change: *Finding the Right Leaders for Change.*" The suggestion that pastors assess their leadership in relation to being a "change agent" may be unsettling to many, but would lead to better understanding of how each of us fits in the body of Christ. Malphurs calls this "understanding how you are wired." His presentation does not seem to me to be inconsistent with the leading of the Lord in individual lives and ministries.

The most extensive treatment is devoted to the third part, "The Practice of Change: *Leading Established Churches through the Process of Change.*" Malphurs classifies church members into four groups in relation to change: early adopters, middle adopters, late adopters, and never adopters. He explains reasons why people resist change and have a difficult time responding to new ideas. He considers how various groups within the church are related to change, how to determine the best time for change, and the steps involved in accomplishing positive change. In the final section, "The Product of Change: *Seeing Established Churches Reach Their Goal of Change,*" the author outlines some of the potential results of biblical, productive change. Worksheets for each chapter are included to aid the discussion and implementation of the principles suggested.

While no church leader is likely to accept all the steps that Malphurs recommends or all the examples he uses, the process of reading and wrestling with this material will be beneficial to any pastor of an established church. We will not all agree on the exact nature and extent of the change that this book confronts, but there can be little doubt that change at some level is essential if we are to carry out the Great Commission in this generation.

Sue Nilson and Andy Morgan, *Starting A Single Adult Ministry* (Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1994, 199 pp., pbk., \$16.95) reviewed by Preston L. Mayes.

Two and one-half years ago, my pastor approached me about starting a single adult ministry in our church. I moved out of the area shortly after starting the ministry, so I never had the opportunity to see it develop over a period of time. I could not, however, avoid the conclusion that the ministry was lacking in several areas. Access to a book such as this would have helped us position the group for genuine growth.

The authors take a thoughtful and sensible approach to starting a single adult ministry. Their goal, as stated in the first chapter, is three-fold. First, they endeavor to "provide tools by which you can assess whether or not your church needs a singles ministry program." Second they aim "to help answer the 'how-to' questions about singles ministry . . . and to offer specific practical suggestions about the best ways to begin and sustain the efforts." Finally, they discuss "additional resources for support in developing a healthy, well-balanced singles ministry program."

Chapters one and two are devoted to determining the feasibility of single adult ministries for a particular church. The authors observe that every church should minister to singles (whether never married, divorced, or widowed), but not every church will benefit from a formally established singles group. The prospective singles ministry leader should take inventory of local demographics and church attitudes toward singles to determine the potential for and the best approach to ministry.

Chapters three through six are particularly helpful for starting and building the group. Chapter three includes a section to guide a fledgling group through the process of formulating a statement of purpose. Chapters four through six discuss group growth. They emphasize planning high-quality events to attract a specific audience. The authors include a section discussing

follow-up methods. They evaluate various methods while noting some common follow-up mistakes.

Chapters seven through ten discuss growth principles. First, the authors analyze the five types of people which comprise every group (the prospective attenders, perimeter people, regular attenders, willing volunteers, and leadership team). Attenders are motivated to greater commitment if the program exhibits quality, meets felt needs, and offers help, home (a sense of community), and hope. Issues discussed in subsequent chapters include building and enabling volunteer involvement, financing the group, and promoting the ministry throughout the community.

Finally, two additional chapters are devoted to discussing special situations. The authors include a section for single adult ministries in smaller churches. The final chapter discusses the reasons behind ministry failure and strategies for combatting it. A five-page bibliography at the end of the book lists a number of recent works relevant for single adult ministries.

The format of the book is user-friendly. At the end of each chapter, resource pages are included to help leaders implement the concepts in their ministries. Local churches are given permission to copy these resource pages for use with their groups. Special segments throughout the book include graphs or brief discussions of issues relevant to single adult ministries. Topics considered include understanding demographic trends, finding demographic information for a region, choosing a name for the group, deciding on a location, providing child care, recruiting volunteers, and writing public service announcements. Finally, the authors incorporate a series of arrows throughout the text to point readers to other sections discussing a particular topic.

The book is a helpful guide for anyone either involved in or thinking of beginning a single adult ministry. It is an excellent step-by-step guide. Lacking, however, were discussions of relevant scriptural principles. For example, the

helpful discussion on formulating a statement of purpose for a single adult ministry failed to mention important texts for the church's mission such as Matthew 28:18-20 or Ephesians 4:11-13. This trend fits with the authors' emphasis on recent church growth trends (as evidenced by frequent references to the Barna Research Group and discussion of topics such as meeting felt needs). Admittedly, much of this information is helpful. It should be considered by leaders of any ministry. Lacking, however, were scriptural references to the methodology of Christ and the Apostles. The scriptural accounts of Christ with the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:13-26) and Peter with Simon the sorcerer (Acts 18:9-25) can hardly be construed as illustrations of meeting felt needs. Christ and the Apostles did not always meet felt needs; they always met real needs. Since the authors' theological positions are not discussed in any detail, the book will appeal to a wide range of churches and theological perspectives.

Stubblefield, Jerry. *The Effective Minister of Education* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman, 1993, 250 pp., pbk., \$17.99) reviewed by Steve Brosius.

The author is well acquainted with the field of Christian education. He has served in this specialized ministry for nearly twenty years. In 1970 when he began his position as Minister of education (ME), he looked for books and articles to help him get off in the right direction and found none. Stubblefield's purpose in writing this book is to provide a comprehensive handbook for those looking to do further study in this field. He desired to achieve a text usable for the college and seminary level classroom studies.

Stubblefield's definition of the minister of education is as follows:

A minister of education is a person called of God, trained as a Christian educator, called by a local church to provide leadership to the educational aspects of the church's total program, committed to devoting major time to the educational work of the church, and regarded as one who stands beside the senior minister as a professional member of the church staff.

The author begins with personal and professional characteristics needed to be effective in this ministry. Then he deals with the job description of an ME. The third part of the book focuses on the relationships vital to the person (spiritual, family, and staff). This section was found to be very refreshing to this reviewer and contained good insight into the true heart of any effective ministry: that is, a love for people. Stubblefield also strikes the cord of personal, spiritual priorities which is always a healthy reminder.

The end of the book was the most surprising to me. Stubblefield has in his text what I'm sure he wishes someone could have placed in his hands back in 1970. Here he deals with the "how to get started" of the ME. Stubblefield starts with a discussion on ministerial ethics in dealing with churches. He states, "ME's may use any ethical and proper means to get their name and qualifications before a church." He adds later though that most positions usually come by personal contacts and by friends. Chapter 19 contains a sample form of a resume for ME's; this could also prove helpful. Chapter 20 deals with pre-visit checklists, arrival, and post-interview considerations. Stubblefield also provides considerations regarding questions to expect in an interview and questions to ask at an interview. This section is very helpful in that it answers many practical concerns about how to prepare for this vocational ministry. Moreover, the handbook comes complete with suggestions on what to do to begin well once you get a job and how to know when it's time to leave.

The Effective Minister of Education is a resource that provides a wealth of experience to help any college or seminary student become more familiar with this avenue of ministry. It would be beneficial for both casual inquirers and those seeking vocational ministry in Christian education.

Barna, George. *Virtual America: The Barna Report 1994-95* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1994, 347 pp, \$24.99) reviewed by Mark Farnham.

Many Christians still believe that the majority of Americans are in favor of banning pornography, outlawing euthanasia and prohibiting sex education in school. However, this latest report from the Barna Research Group reveals otherwise. This organization polls Americans about religious matters the way Gallop polls about popular opinion. *Virtual America* reveals some startling news about the way Americans think.

Some have criticized Barna in the past for promoting the church marketing concept in his books. Regardless of the validity of that criticism, this book is valuable for the light it sheds on the way Americans think. Its stated purpose is to show those in ministry the reality of our world's condition so we can respond to it accordingly.

The book is divided into three sections. Section one gives information on the way Americans live. Section two deals with the way Americans think. Section three attempts to draw conclusions from the first two sections and explain what it all means. These three sections comprise almost half the book. Three appendices and an index make up the other half of the book. The second appendix is the actual surveys used to gather the information for the book.

The book draws a few questionable conclusions (25% of Catholics are born again; 24% of baby busters are born again), but Barna himself challenges figures that seem suspicious. He

readily acknowledges that some people answer questions the way they know they should and not how they actually live. Overall, though, the numbers seem accurate. The insight into the mind and life of 'Joe American' is a valuable tool for ministry. Some won't like the book because they don't like to face reality. They would rather continue to see America their way. The truth about the condition of our country may be too much for them to bear. *Virtual America* is a valuable book to help Christians reach the people of the world where they are. It also gives Christians an understanding of unbelievers and themselves. It will be a useful resource to those who want to effectively reach America for Christ.

Bugg, Charles B. *Preaching From the Inside Out* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1992, 144 pp, paper) reviewed by Douglas Finkbeiner.

Charles Bugg has written a vivid and practical primer on preaching. His content is not novel, yet his approach to the material has a personal touch to it. In addition, he seeks to emphasize the importance of preaching out of a life of personal integrity, sensitivity to people, and dependence upon God. Such emphases are necessary reminders.

In part one of his volume, Bugg discusses the context of preaching. This includes personal integrity and cultural sensitivity. In part two, Bugg suggests ways to interpret and communicate a passage of scripture. The influence of Craddock is evident in the section. In part three, Bugg discusses a potpourri of issues ranging from Old Testament preaching to key elements in a sermon.

The volume could have been improved by adding an introductory and concluding chapter. A selective bibliography would also be a welcomed addition. The volume could serve as an introductory text for a student. It could also be a fresh

reminder for the veteran preacher. It is a helpful text but not an essential text in a preacher's arsenal.

MacArthur, John F., Jr., Wayne A. Mack and the Master's College Faculty. *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1994, 408 pp, \$24.99) reviewed by Mark Farnham.

Since Jay Adams first developed the principals of nouthetic (or biblical) counseling in the 1960's, the movement to return to dealing with man's problems biblically has flourished. In the late 1980's the leaders at Grace Community Church and the Master's College and Seminary began intensely studying the issues of psychology and biblical counseling. As a result, the curriculum in the college and seminary were restructured "to reflect a commitment to use biblical truth to explain people's needs and to offer them help."

This volume is a compilation of essays that define quite succinctly the nouthetic counseling movement. The premise of the book is that counseling based on God's Word is sufficient to deal with all the problems people face. More specifically, its purpose is "to enlarge and reinforce the confidence of God's people in the sufficiency, superiority, and practicality of Scripture for dealing with all the issues of life." The preface lists eleven objectives that include theological, practical, and historical considerations.

The book is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on the historical perspectives of biblical counseling and includes the rationale for the book. The second section presents the theological foundations for biblical counseling. Section three, written entirely by Wayne Mack, details the process of counseling. The last section deals with practical issues such as local church authority, preaching and spiritual gifts in relation to counseling.

The background of the English Puritans given in chapter two is a helpful treatise on their attitudes toward sin and their desire for pure living. A Puritan's constant attention to his sinfulness and the deceitfulness of sin produced a careful life marked by personal holiness. His focus on God and His nature kept him from many of the problems that plague 20th century Christianity.

The book sets straight many important concepts that psychology has distorted, including sanctification, healing and the true nature of sin. One of the most important parts of the book is a clear explanation of the different schools of thought behind the attempted integration of psychology and Scripture. This section alone is worth the price of the book as it sheds light on the impetus behind the flood of eclectic books, tapes and videos in the Christian market. In critiquing the Two-Book Approach, the author insightfully shows how the misuse of the term "general revelation" has provided a false foundation for the system. It also unmasks the hermeneutic behind the No-Book Approach and reveals the scheme to be "a deconstructionist wolf in the clothing of an evangelical sheep."

One of the best parts of the book is the 28-page chapter listing and summarizing resources for biblical counseling. This chapter is well-structured with information beneficial to beginners and veterans of counseling. In addition, there are three indexes in the back of the book: authority, Scripture and subject. A 'Personal Data Inventory' is included for gathering data on a counselee.

The authors successfully correct misconceptions about biblical counseling and those who practice it with objective, reasoned defense backed by Scripture. They present a strong argument for abandoning any attempt to marry theology and psychology. This book will give confidence to those struggling with the validity of biblical counseling and the sufficiency of Scripture. It will also give guidance and instruction to those new to the idea of truly biblical counseling. Pastors and laymen alike

will find this book to be an invaluable tool in counseling and will certainly refer to it many times in their counseling.