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BOOK REVIEWS

PASTORAL GRACES: REFLECTIONS ON THE CARE OF SOULS

By Lee Eclov
Chicago, IL: Moody Press (2012)
Paperback, 171 pages

Reviewed by STEPHEN J. CARLILE

“Doctors enter the practice of medicine, lawyers enter the practice of law, pastors enter the practice of grace” (Eclov, 2012, p. 11). *Pastoral Graces* is a book that is intended to help pastors see the bigger picture when it comes to ministry. The author shares practical stories and illustrations to make sure pastors take care of people and not just an organization. The stories Eclov shares have to do with the good, the bad, and the ugly of pastoral ministry. The author wanted to share real life situations that pastors would not learn about in a classroom, as well as comfort weary pastors ready to give up and walk away from pastoral ministry.

It is refreshing to pick up a book about pastoral ministry and find that it is actually about pastoral ministry. Lee Eclov subtly sets aside visioning, styles of leadership, and ministry

ideas and simply talks about how to take care of people. While it is difficult to talk about how to take care of people without talking about leadership styles, overall the author accomplished his purpose in this book. This book is not, however, “five easy steps to take care of people.” The author simply looks at God’s grace and shows how a pastor may share it with the flock. Since most of the book is made up of stories drawn from his ministry, the situations are unique and extremely personal. There are a few situations he encountered that would be relevant for a pastor in another congregation, but for the most part, it would not be easy to replicate. The reader must distinguish between the parts that can be used in the future and the parts that are unique to the context of Eclov’s experience. Since there are no step-by-step leadership protocols or practices, this book is more reflective rather than a self-help volume. Overall, the author did a decent job of keeping the situations as broad as possible to meet the needs of his readers.

The first application the author wants to drive home for pastors is that the grace of God must be applied in their own lives. If you, as a pastor, struggle with the idea of not being good enough, or a constant guilt that is holding you down, it is time to allow the grace of God to change that. When someone has experienced God’s grace, it is much more natural to give that grace to others. The remainder of the book is primarily focused on granting grace to others—whether it is extending grace publicly or one-on-one.

Public grace is focused more on the transaction from the pulpit toward the church at large. If tragedy strikes, take time to work it through with the congregation; do not just

sweep things under the rug or pretend it never happened. In worship services, take time to share with the people how rich they are in God's grace rather than just telling them how they should behave. In this section of the book, the author does get very specific on how to make sure grace is shared publicly. Whether it is in the worship service or dealing with visitors as they walk in the door, making sure people experience Christ is vital.

"Portable Grace," as Eclov calls it, reveals how to minister outside the walls of the church through hospital ministry, death and grief, childbirth visits, or home and work visitation. One practical application that pastors should hear is that one does not need to be invited to go. As young pastors, we usually do not go where we are not invited, but the author recommends challenging that thinking by going proactively. I have taken this advice, and it really has been a great blessing for me and for those I'm visiting.

Probably one of the most practical chapters in the book is "March Into the Smoke." When times are scary, cloudy and daunting, a leader can easily experience disorientation and loss of focus. This section of the book is for such pastors who are weary and tired. It emphasizes the importance of being healthy on the inside so that you can take care of those on the outside. The pastor may project unresolved anger onto the congregation without even realizing it. The things he brings up are valid, but one thing he is lacking is the how-to or even the call to action for the pastor to get help with anger or depression.

One concluding critique: in the midst of his stories and encounters, the author interjects his unique doctrinal understandings in the mix of his stories and illustrations.

Consequently, some of the conversations and interactions with others would be very different if processed in different faith tradition contexts. The reader simply needs to filter and adapt accordingly.

Pastoral Graces is a good book for those who need encouragement. I found the book to be helpful when it comes to personal connections with parishioners. As pastors, we can get burned out and depressed, and feel very much alone. This book is not a fix-all, but it is a reminder that God really does love us and care about us as His messengers of grace. I cannot say this book is for every pastor, but I do recommend it for the young pastors, new pastors, and discouraged pastors who are on the verge of giving up. I believe the author accomplished what he set out to accomplish.

STEPHEN CARLILE is a student in the Andrews University Master's of Pastoral Ministry extension program and serves as church pastor of Adventist Fellowship in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

CHANGE LEADER: LEARNING TO DO WHAT MATTERS MOST

*By Michael Fullan
San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Wiley
(2011)
Hardback, 172 pages*

Reviewed by JORGE PEREZ

In *Change Leader*, Michael Fullan argues for the importance of practice as a learning tool for leaders, claiming that it plays a more central role than theory does in leading to effective change. He presents the case that research and theory should be used in the service of practice, and not the other way around (pp. xii, xiii). This last book in his trilogy on leadership