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Review of The Recovery-Minded Church: Loving and Ministering to People with Addiction, by Jonathon Benz with Kristina Robb-Dover

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regulation. By working with the leader and by helping him/her differentiate, the whole system would be affected. The leader, viewed as an element of change, is encouraged to keep highlighting the vision, promoting it, instead of wasting time and energy opposing anarchical resistance.

Another important point highlighted by the book is the emotional regression process that is currently taking place in the great American family, making more difficult the task of a leader, be it in a family, secular institution, or church setting. Even though the author is not a Christian, it seems that his religious background helped him to build an interesting analysis of society. This emotional regression, according to him, may be recognized by five components: (1) high reactivity to events and individuals; (2) herding, a process that overpowers differentiation through togetherness, leading all to adapt to the most immature element of the system; (3) blame displacement, that values victimization over one's own responsibility, external forces rather than resilience (media reports more about victims than about overcomers), and overprotects those who are "easily hurt 'injustice-collectors' and slow healers (loc. 2863);" (4) a quick-fix mentality that looks for removing symptoms rather than causes (loc. 1178); and (5) the lack of well-differentiated leadership, that when present, would allow leaders to find non-traditional (sometimes opposite) ways to manage their function (loc. 1180).

This book will be appreciated, especially by leaders who are facing a relational crisis, challenges to their leadership, and an anarchic pressure for minimizing the importance of the democratic process. Parents also will profit from its reading, as the parental leadership process is based

on the same principles. It is a must-read book for those who, besides leadership issues, would like to understand a little more about of society in which we live, a time the Bible prophecy refers to as "the last days."

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THE RECOVERY-MINDED CHURCH: LOVING AND MINISTERING TO PEOPLE WITH ADDICTION

*By Jonathon Benz with Kristina Robb-Dover
Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books (2016)
Paperback, 185 pages*

Reviewed by TRACY ANDERSON

"We are the most in debt, obese, addicted, and medicated adult cohort in US history" (Brown, 2010). This statement made by Brene Brown, social scientist, therapist, and founder of *The Daring Way*, found in the first chapter of *The Recovery-Minded Church*, suggests that American society faces a serious dilemma. Add to this statement the Benz and Robb-Dover's estimate that about 30 percent of Americans struggle with some type of addiction, and the curtain is drawn back, revealing the true condition of many Americans. *The Recovery Minded Church* is a book written to the attention of church leaders, members, and the faith community at large to challenge the way individuals with addictions are received and cared for by the church.

The authors of *The Recovery-Minded Church* reference Luke 15:20–24, the prodigal son's story, and suggest that

the church can be a “prodigal church” for those seeking refuge and recovery support. They challenge the church leadership of today to consider if their church receives both those with active addictions, as well as those in recovery, as “prodigal children” returning from the faraway country of addiction to a home of unconditional love and acceptance (versus a spirit of judgment and disdain).

This book asks some important questions: if the church were considered a prodigal church, is it ready to receive addicts into their pews each week? Is the church equipped to love those with addictions through the long-term recovery process? Does the church have the tools to help their congregations receive (with love and acceptance) the prodigal addict who has wandered very far from home?

The authors “surveyed an ecumenical focus group of one hundred church leaders (both lay and ordained) to discover the biggest obstacles they face in loving and ministering to people with addictions” (p. 14). Each chapter addresses different obstacles, offering church leaders tools to help congregations become a recovery-friendly place for these individuals. The authors stress that this book does *not* show the church how to set up a recovery program; however, it *does* offer church leaders methods for how to respond to individuals with addictions in ways other than giving them a pamphlet to a local NA or AA meeting. This book challenges and invites church leaders to go beyond their comfort zone into uncharted territory by offering addicts in their midst real support, not simply a referral.

The Recovery-Minded Church provides valuable insight, as reported by those with addiction, into how the church has failed to respond to the person behind the addiction, leaving

many more hurt than healed. It offers a clinically informed, biblical, and theological framework to correct this problem. The authors suggest looking at how the church leader personally responds to addiction. If the typical response is to refer the person for help outside the church, and the dialogue with the person ends there, the first step is to reevaluate. The author suggests that church leaders and members can do so much more by personally including and getting to know the person behind the addiction. They also suggest going with the person to a meeting. More challenging is the authors’ suggestion that to prepare to meet the deeper needs of the addict, and it is first necessary to acknowledge how much alike one is to the addict. The author suggests doing a personal moral inventory (step four in the AA/NA 12-step process), review fears, identify false gods, and look at intimate relationships, both past and present. This process will allow church leaders to be humble as their own addictive tendencies are revealed and the grace of God becomes more of a personal need.

The first pressing concern discovered by the authors’ survey focuses on how to get the addict into recovery. This book provides the reader with the ways to best approach the person with an addiction and discusses what not to do. The next section covers how to keep the person in recovery; this section suggests that emotional resiliency is the best predictor of whether addicts will be able to manage life’s stress without using. The authors suggest that the church can help recovering addicts stay in recovery “by providing spiritual resiliency, which can be the byproduct of a church culture that defines itself in terms of authentic, long term relationships entrusted to God’s care and transformation” (p. 86). They suggest that the church can

facilitate this process with mutual responsibility, truth-telling, commitment, acceptance, compassion, and understanding.

The authors explore the issue of shame related to addiction and provide several helpful ways in which it can be deprogrammed. They suggest finding ways to normalize the experience of the addiction; validating the feelings of shame while removing the notion that their shame is warranted; creating safe, confidential settings for honest group sharing; making yourself available for confession; always keeping confidentiality; modeling vulnerability by being honest about your own imperfections and addictive behaviors; connecting recovering addicts with people who are on the same path; and finally, always extending hope.

The one chapter in the book that did not provide a comprehensive or completely accurate overview was chapter three. This chapter examined myths of addiction, including addiction as demon possession. The authors do not provide an accurate biblical understanding of this content, nor do they provide information available regarding how to appropriately/effectively approach this aspect of addiction recovery. In fact, there were several conclusions drawn that are totally inaccurate. This section of the book should be read with this awareness. More is needed in this chapter to provide church leaders with a sound biblical understanding of these myths.

In conclusion, *The Recovery-Minded Church* offers church leaders a good resource for evaluating if their church is ready to “enter into another’s pain, anoint it as holy and stick around no matter the outcome” (p. 142), as Jesus has done for all His lost sheep. It offers practical and appropriate tools to assist the church in

becoming a place where individuals can be accepted just as they are, recognizing that all fall short of the glory of God and need of God’s redeeming love to bring us back into a right relationship with Him.

TRACY ANDERSON, MA, LPC, CAADC.

THE RESPONSE LEADERSHIP SEQUENCE: EMPOWERING AND IMPROVING YOUR LEADERSHIP BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A CRISIS

By Mike McKenna

*Lexington, KY: TEAM Solutions (2017)
Paperback, 352 pages*

Reviewed by JORGE A. ZELAYA

Leadership is needed in all realms. However, not every leader can be expected to act responsibly unless s/he has first learned the basics of leadership. Crises are not about *if* they will occur, but *when*. Responsible leaders must be trained and ready to respond to any crisis. The attitude and response of a leader will directly impact the people, place, and items subsequently affected by the crisis. Moreover, how a leader is prepared beforehand and the kind of team he or she leads will be crucial.

Mike McKenna is an authority on leadership. He has participated in leading positions and responding to planned and unplanned crisis events for more than 20 years. With all the experience he has acquired, McKenna is now promoting programs to instruct and develop capable leaders, particularly when times get tough.

McKenna first identifies the basic