

# Book Reviews



The book reviews submitted offer a critique of some of the latest family ministry titles. If you would like to see a title reviewed in the future, please submit at least two copies of either the book or galley copy (Publisher's PDF proof is acceptable if not yet published or to galley stage).



Linhart, Terry. *The Self-Aware Leader: Discovering Your Blind Spots to Reach Your Ministry Potential*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017. 184 pages. \$16.00. Paper.

Review by John Fix, COO of Urban Youth Impact

Every teenager with a new permit is taught early and often of the dangers of not checking their blind spots when driving. Motorists can be extremely careful in all other elements of driver safety, but if they ignore these blind spots there is the potential for accidents and great harm to happen. And the perils are not just limited to the person behind the wheel. Failure to keep an eye on these areas can cause pain and suffering to countless others on the road. In his book *The Self-Aware Leader*, author Terry Linhart uses this same automobile analogy to demonstrate the importance for all Christian leaders to take time to assess their own hidden shortcomings. Failure to do so can not only crash your organization's mission, but it can also cause emotional damage to both the leader and the people they lead.

Linhart begins each chapter by explaining key areas of our lives where these pitfalls to effectiveness can hide. By using stories from his own personal growth journey as a leader, he helps the reader to shine light on areas of past hurt, temptations, slowly growing pressures, and personal boundary issues that can stunt our ability to direct and develop the people that God has put in our charge.

*The Self-Aware Leader* is not your typical leadership book that lists the ten things you can do to instantly be more effective in directing your team. It is not a book you can read though in one sitting and glean a few invaluable nuggets to transform you into a Fortune 500 CEO. Rather, it is a book that you must work through purposefully, one chapter at a time. Terry provides "self-check" questions after explaining each potential blind spot that requires time and brutal honesty to work through.

I found, however, that when I was willing to take the time to stare in the mirror, acknowledge my weaknesses, and truly put in an effort to work

on them, that the potential for growth was far more valuable for me than just reading about someone else's tips that got them to the top.

*The Self-Aware Leader* is not a quick read, but it isn't meant to be. It is a book for people who understand that being good at anything takes a lot of work and practice. Linhart has provided an invaluable workbook that can be used as a periodic checkup to ensure you are succeeding in the areas that provide the greatest potential for failure. If you are looking for a book that challenges you to see yourself as you really are, helps you identify blind spots in your leadership, and helps you wrestle through these issues until you can improve them, then you will love the guidance that Linhart provides in these pages.



Talbot, Christopher. *Remodeling Youth Ministry: A Biblical Blueprint for Ministering to Students*. Gallatin, TN: Welch College Press, 2017. 195 pages. \$17.99. Paper.

Review by Christopher Sanchez, Education and Evangelism Pastor at Northside Baptist Church in Valdosta, Georgia.

In *Remodeling Youth Ministry: A Biblical Blueprint for Ministering to Students*, Talbot sets the goal of inspiring the youth and family minister to think more deeply about his ministry and the souls he ministers to. He separates the book into three parts: (1) Laying the Foundation, (2) Making Renovations, and (3) Building for the Future. In part one, Talbot addresses the question “Is Youth Ministry Biblical?” He draws the attention of the reader to the tension that exists in answering this important question first with a “no” in that youth ministry should not be segregated from the church. He then answers the question with a “yes” concluding youth ministry is biblical when it occurs in the home and the church. The next two chapters clarify the purpose of youth ministry and the future of youth ministry and the church.

Four chapters form Making Renovations, part two of the book. Here Talbot offers his thoughts on specific remodeling tasks necessary in youth ministry. Chapter four gets right to the heart of the matter: making the gospel the focal point and not only teaching youth to share their faith, but to live out their faith as well. In chapter five Talbot rightly points out that what youth and family ministers teach and demonstrate as being important shape students in very powerful ways. He then addresses the means and methodology connecting preaching, fellowship, prayer, and service specifically to youth ministry.

Talbot devotes an entire chapter to rethinking apologetics. He argues one of the purposes of apologetics in youth ministry is to help students develop confidence in and develop the ability to defend their faith. The development of a Christian worldview is a right and proper goal of youth ministry. Rather than focusing on an evidential approach to apologetics,

Talbot argues for a presuppositional approach as better helping to develop a holistic understanding of their own faith and the world around them. He acknowledges there are challenges youth and family ministers will face shifting from teaching evidential apologetics to presuppositional apologetics making a strong case for the later. Part two concludes in chapter seven with Talbot arguing for a family as church/church as family ministry paradigm.

In part three, also four chapters, Talbot looks to the future. He writes of the foundation that must be in place before changes can be made in chapter eight. The primacy of Scripture in youth ministry is emphasized while also stressing the importance of coupling it with methodology. Talbot argues for organic change in which leadership sustainability is comprised of character and consistency on the part of young ministers that also allows for the slow pace of positive change in ministry. A timely reminder that all pastors, including youth pastors, have as their primary responsibility teaching and preaching the Word of God. Talbot addresses teaching teens particularly in chapter nine and the specific challenges technology presents in youth and family ministry in chapter ten. The concluding chapter urges those who serve in youth and family ministry to make rest one of their priorities.

Talbot accomplishes his goal of inspiring the youth and family minister to think more deeply about his ministry and the souls he ministers to. Key strengths include practical suggestions strongly tethered to Scripture and the recognition of real issues youth ministers are facing today and will face well into the future, such as the proliferation of technology and the lack of balance that results in failing to make rest a normal part of ministry. Drawing from a broad range of sources also strengthens the book making it appealing across denominational lines. Though no national consensus data exists in terms of youth pastor tenure, examples supporting the claim of an eighteen-month average would be helpful. That said, *Remodeling Youth Ministry* is well-researched, very well written, and is an excellent resource for youth pastors and others who desire to think about youth and family ministry differently. I highly recommend putting this book in the hands of all who serve in youth and family ministry.