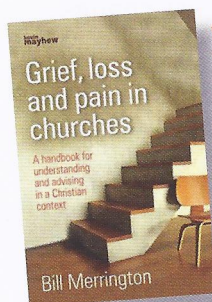


Book reviews



Grief, Loss and Pain in Churches by Bill Merrington

Published by Kevin Mayhew

Bill Merrington has many years experience of pastoral ministry under his belt, as well as impressive academic credentials and several other books to his name. This book is an ambitious and wide-ranging exploration of loss issues and a practical guide to better equip ministers and pastoral carers.

The book is structured in six parts, each of which is made up of short chapters. There are questions to reflect on at the end of each chapter, helpfully engaging the reader and encouraging them to develop a personal, practical response to each issue.

Part one explores the importance of grief and loss and considers the journey of grief and related theories, whilst recognising their limitations.

Part two looks at the role of faith, including healthy Christian grief and a chapter on Jesus as the "expert at work".

The following three parts explore specific types of loss, dealing with different aspects of death ranging from stillbirth to the death of an adult child, to suicide and murder. There is also a useful chapter on how to minister in the unique situation of a disaster occurring locally. Part five looks at losses that are unrelated to death and also long term situations such as singleness and childlessness, as well as an interesting chapter on

grief issues that can arise when a minister moves on.

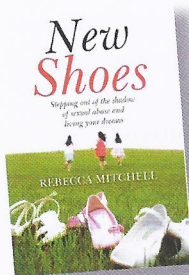
For the church at large, the final part is possibly the most important, in trying to ensure that pastoral workers and ministers are able to carry out their work without succumbing to exhaustion. The author is clear that support and supervision structures are vital, as well as recommending that churches develop a realistic pastoral policy for handling loss both within and outside the church community.

This handbook is very readable, containing a good blend of academic knowledge, anecdote and insight based on the author's personal experience. It works well as a hands-on manual for dipping into, rather than a book to be read cover to cover. Certainly it would be a valuable addition to the bookshelf of any minister, pastoral carer or children's worker wishing to develop their skills in this area.

Sarah Colville,

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New Shoes by Rebecca Mitchell

Published by Lion Hudson

ISBN 978-0-7459-5552-0

This book is deceptive. It has a quirky front cover and title wrapped around a book that packs a hefty punch. Rebecca has a very easily readable style that lures the reader into thinking they will be through it

in a couple of hours. But beware! If you are a survivor of sexual abuse, lurking beneath its accessibility is a plethora of tasks. The questions that are raised within the text generate a lot of thinking and potential journal writing but also some very practical ways of helping the reader get to grips with the issues Rebecca addresses.

The book is clearly written, with each chapter concentrating on a specific topic, e.g. anger, relationships, shame etc. Rebecca is very honest and open about how her personal story demonstrates the different points she seeks to drive home. On first reading the book seems simple and the message obvious, however within its simplicity I had moments of being impacted by how profound it is.

There is so much within this book that I am sure Rebecca could have expanded into a much bigger volume. I was particularly intrigued by 'suspicion' and 'mealtimes.' I felt that the grounding tips would be very useful to survivors and the addiction to fear and crisis was an eye-opener. There is a strong emphasis on survivors seeking support and counselling, which I endorse.

My only difficulty with this book was that I felt 'justice' was too brief and almost skated over with no mention of the possibility of prosecution, the subsequent processes and its pros and cons. However for counsellors and survivors there is much material to be thought through and a way forward indicated by utilising the questions and strategies described.

Greta Randle