

Pastor Stef's Book Review – March 2018

I'm going to cover two books this month because of their similarity. Both are memoirs of growing up in the evangelical subculture. They reflect on what the authors have come to embrace and reject of that tradition. The writers are still Christians, but have worked through (and are still working through) the process of making their faith their own. ("Reformed and Reforming").

The first book by **Jason Boyett** is entitled ***O Me of Little Faith: True Confessions of a Spiritual Weakling, 2010***. The staff at *Bethany* spent a few months working through this book, and it was also given out as a gift to our church grads last year).

The second book is by **Randal Rauser**, a friend of mine and the theology professor at our denomination's school *Taylor Seminary* in Edmonton. As I read through his ***What's So Confusing About Grace?, 2017*** I felt like I was reliving my high school years. Though Randal and I are the same age, we never knew each other at the time. But our stories have many parallels - everything from our love of *Stryper*, to embarrassingly wearing "witness wear", participating in street evangelism and having Jack Chick tracks scare the hell out of us (which was the point of his tracks). I had to continually remind myself that I was reading Randal's story and not my own.

Boyett and Rauser's books are hilarious. This is important because humor can be one of the best doses of medicine to help us through the *healthy* journey of reexamining our faith. As Kathleen Norris writes, slightly adapting Michael O' Carroll words, from his *Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Spirit*:

Christians with a growing sense of humor are, in fact, shedding things which blind them to the vision of the meek and humble Saviour; bitterness, harshness, hardness, arrogance, self-sufficiency. Many heretics would have been saved if they had a sense of humor.

It is good to deconstruct our traditions because no one gets it all correct. Let's face it, a lot of things about the Americanized evangelical pop-culture of the 1980's was downright cheesy. Just think of the word "televangelist." God used some of it to ground me, and some of it I'm still recovering from. These books are helpful examinations of the way faith and culture influence each other for good and bad. It is when we think they don't that we truly become blind. The books are also a historical snapshot of a particular time in our evangelical history that many of us have lived through. To be honest, many of us are surprised to even be here since the world was supposed to end in 1981 (Chuck Smith), 1982 (Pat Robertson), 1988 (Edgar C. Whisenant), 1989 (Edgar C. Whisenant), 1994 (Harold Camping), 1995 (Harold Camping), 2000 (Jarry Falwell, Tim LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins, Ed Dobson), 2007 (Pat Robertson), May 21, 2011 (Harold Camping), Oct .21, 2011 (Harold Camping – at least he keeps trying), 2014-2015 (John Hagee).

Anybody read the story of the boy who cried wolf?