

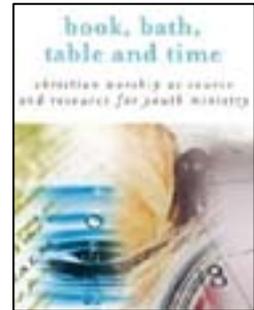
BOOK REVIEW: Reclaiming youth ministry

Andrew C. Thompson, Aug 8, 2008

Book, Bath, Table, and Time: Christian Worship as Source and Resource for Youth Ministry

Fred P. Edie

Pilgrim Press, 2007, 258 pages



By Andrew C. Thompson

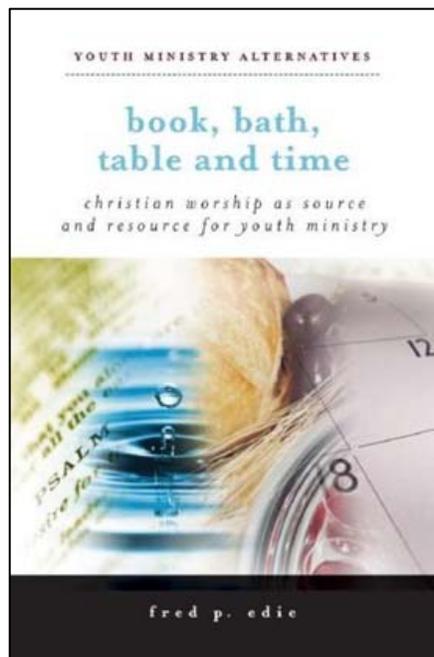
Special Contributor

Much of youth ministry has become a consumer-oriented, highly individualistic enterprise driven more by the market than the church. In the process, it has lost touch with the rich resources of the Christian tradition.

This is bad for the church, and more importantly, bad for the church's youth. That's the critique Fred Edie makes in his compelling new book.

Writing with a penetrating and witty insight, Dr. Edie offers an alternative vision of youth ministry that is both old and new. He suggests that youth ministry should be oriented around the wisdom of the church's most sacred practices: the Book (Scripture), the Bath (Baptism), the Table (Holy Communion) and Time (the pattern of regular Prayer).

Dr. Edie is the faculty director of the Duke Youth Academy (DYA) for Christian Formation, held each summer at Duke Divinity School in Durham, N.C. At DYA, about 60 students converge for two weeks of intense study and to engage with the practices of the Christian life.



In this book, Dr. Edie shows how youth ministers in local churches can reclaim the theological approach to youth ministry used at DYA.

He wants to turn the formation of youth away from a focus on superficially felt needs foisted upon them by the market (such as status, consumer goods and ever-heightened experience) and toward the church's life in God. The key to unlocking this possibility begins with worship itself.

Dr. Edie writes, "We tend to ask, 'How can we make worship more appealing to our youth?' rather than, 'How can we ensure that youth will encounter the fullness of the presence of the living God in worship?'"

His answer is to center youth ministry and youth worship on the church's *ordo*, or liturgical life. By this he means the "book, bath, table and time" of the title. Dr. Edie contends that such an orientation is "critical to authentic encounter with God and, therefore, to authentic [Christian] formation."

Ultimately, he hopes that youth ministry pursued through these gifts may form mature disciples with a firsthand familiarity of God's saving story as embodied in the church. Such formation will help youth "to discover who God is and who God intends them to be," and in the process, will keep youth ministry from becoming "merely justification for our culture's consumerist, individualist, and therapeutic agendas."

Real formation through book, bath, table and time can lead to what Dr. Edie calls an *ordo*-nary life for youth. It can integrate their lives into the full life of the church. And it can also form them to understand "out-in-the-world" issues such as friendship to the stranger, care for the earth and compassion for the poor.

Ultimately, it will help them understand their calling into ministry—whether as clergy or laity.

This book is a breath of fresh air in an area dominated by curriculum resources that too-often mimic the consumer world in the hopes of keeping youth's attention.

Dr. Edie's work names the status quo in youth ministry and offers an alternative that is both theologically grounded and integrated with the rest of the church's life. Even more, he demonstrates that the church already has the resources needed to reform youth ministry through the gifts God has given to it.

This book is an excellent resource for pastors, youth ministers and other youth workers who care about how their own youth should be formed in the church.

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