

David S. Young, *Springs of Living Water: Christ-Centered Church Renewal*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2008. 389 pp. Foreword by Richard J. Foster.

How to bring renewal to stalled congregations is an ongoing challenge. Some leaders opt for revival fires, which often burn out quickly. David Young prefers bubbling springs which refresh and renew for long-term growth. He finds a model in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4). Four movements emerge from his reading of that account: thirst, encounter, transformation, and mission. Using these, he has developed an approach to church renewal which has many strong elements. Thorough exposition plus nearly 70 pages of appendices, notes, and index make this a chunky book, but one rich in detail of both perspective and planning.

What is fresh, and possibly unique, in Dr. Young's approach is that he puts spiritual formation -- often considered a private matter -- at the heart of corporate renewal. He is intent on "Christ-centered church renewal," and he stresses this from first to last. More than a program, he offers a process that will take at least four years. "Renewal is never a quick fix," he writes, "and never follows a straight line" (p. 40f). It is "not linear but multifaceted ... an art rather than a science" (p. 46). Using Richard Foster's threefold model of personal spiritual growth, Young sees congregational renewal as a movement that must be upward and inward before it can proceed outward.

This means putting spiritual formation first with much attention to prayer and discernment of where God is leading. It is refreshing to find the author challenging churches to concentrate on their strengths, not their weaknesses. He encourages them to

create occasions to celebrate the good that is happening within them. Leaders are servants in the outlined process who do not dictate, but engage in extensive ongoing dialogue and discernment. The goal of such Christ-centered renewal is quality before quantity, depth first and then breadth. To that end, Part 3 (Transformation) ends with “Experiencing Deep Transformation” while Part 4 (Mission) finishes with “Claiming the Deeper Journey.” The book concludes with “Postlude: The Deeper Joy.”

In all of this, Dr. Young draws heavily from his own ministry as a seasoned pastor who has taught renewal in several seminaries and worked with dozens of churches in various denominations. This is not his first foray into writing, but with *Springs of Living Water* he shows himself to be “the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” Each chapter is informed by wide reading in both theoretical and practical literature, as the extensive notes demonstrate. Numerous references and quotations represent the best of spiritual formation literature as well. In fact, by reading selectively one could almost use this as a manual for personal growth developed out of the author’s decades of dedication to his own growth.

From my acquaintance with him, I can testify to the attention this pastor-teacher gives to his own spiritual life, and his book shows the fruit of that. Richard Foster has affirmed this in his warm endorsement of David Young’s work. Church leaders looking for an approach to renewal that is spiritual at the core, discerning in process, and geared to long-term growth can profit from this meaty, personal, clearly written manual.

Jerry Flora