



Latimer Trust Monthly Reading List - January 2018

This is a summary of recent books read by Martin Davie, compiling his evaluations and the commendations of others.

In this edition:

Author	Title	Martin's opinion
Harry Benson and Kate Benson	<i>What Mums want (and Dads need to know)</i>	This is an important study of a vital issue and needs to be widely read by those beginning marriage, by those struggling to make their marriages work and by those supporting married couples.
Bryan D Estelle	<i>Echoes of Exodus</i>	This is a book which will be valuable to anyone, whether in college or in the ministry, who wants to understand the Bible better and expound it more faithfully.
Michael Green	<i>Christian Foundations: A discipleship guide for new Christians</i>	A resource that gives people what they need to know in order to start on the path of Christian discipleship. Highly recommended.
Anthony Milton et al (eds)	<i>The Oxford History of Anglicanism</i>	If Evangelicals want to make an informed contribution to the current debate about the nature and development of Anglicanism they now have to engage with this series.
Michael J Ovey	<i>The Goldilocks Zone: Collected writings of Michael J Ovey</i>	A worthy tribute and an opportunity to continue to learn from Ovey's teaching and to be inspired to follow his example by thinking deeply about the Reformation Anglican tradition.
Jonathan T Pennington	<i>The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing</i>	An important new study, written in a way that will make it accessible not only to New Testament specialists, but to ministers and interested lay people.
Vaughan Roberts	<i>The Porn Problem</i>	This is a great resource which could be used with profit not only for individual reading, but as the basis for sermons on the topic, or for looking at the topic in a home group setting.
Klyne R Snodgrass	<i>Who God says you are – A Christian Understanding of Identity</i>	This book is a thorough and important study on identity, and a valuable resource for understanding this revelation more clearly. It can be recommended to anyone who wants to think these things through from a Christian perspective.
Helen Thorne	<i>Walking with Domestic Abuse Sufferers</i>	An invaluable resource on a key pastoral issue which needs to be on every Christian's radar.
Todd Wilson	<i>Mere Sexuality: Rediscovering the Christian Vision of Sexuality</i>	This is an excellent resource for anyone who wants to understand the classic Christian view of sex or to think about how to commend it to others.

Harry Benson and Kate Benson, *What Mums want (and Dads need to know)*, Lion, ISBN 978-0-74596-885-8, £8.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

In their book the Bensons explain their thesis in a very clear and readable fashion. This is an important study of a vital issue and needs to be widely read by those contemplating or beginning marriage, by those struggling to make their marriages work and by those preparing and supporting married couples. The high divorce rate is not inevitable. It is possible to build strong, successful, marriages and the Bensons explain how.

Overview:

Although the divorce rate in this country has fallen slightly, nearly half of marriages currently end in divorce. This is not how God intended it to be. God created marriage to be a life-long covenant between a man and a woman 'till death do us part.' So why do so many marriages break down and what can be done to prevent this happening?

Harry Benson is the research director of the Marriage Foundation, a body which exists to support and promote marriage. He also helps to run 'Let's stick together' courses for new parents on how to help marriages endure. In his new book he and his wife Kate draw on their own personal story, stories from other couples, and at least seventy pieces of academic research, to explain what leads to family breakdown and how it can be avoided.

As the Bensons note, their own story is that of 'a marriage brought back from the brink.' Although their marriage began with great expectations on both sides, within a few years they were standing on the brink of divorce. Today, however, their marriage is stronger than ever and they have helped many other struggling couples. So what changed?

The solution they discovered, and which they see as supported by both anecdote and serious academic study is that the key to a lasting marriage is 'what Mums want.' That is to say, their research suggests a happy wife tends to mean a happy household. The wife is the lynchpin around whom the family rotates. So for most wives, the success of a marriage depends primarily on her husband's ability to make her feel valued. In other words, as the New Testament says, husband, love your wife. And she will love you right back. In that order. That, they say, is what mums want and that is the recipe for a happy family life and a lasting marriage.

Commendations:

Nicky and Sila Lee write

'We have known Harry and Kate for many years. They are the real deal. Having rescued their marriage from the brink, they write with great honesty and give sound, practical advice, backed up by the latest research, that will give hope to many couples who can't see a way forward. Everyone will enjoy and benefit from this book, but for some it will be life-changing.'

Bryan D Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus*, IVP Academic, ISBN 978-0-83085-168-3, £28.26.

Martin's opinion:

In this book Estelle combines literary readings of the biblical text with biblical-theological insights. He not only helps his readers to understand how the Exodus motif is used and reused throughout the Bible, but, by so doing, introduces them to the study of quotation, allusion, and echo in the Bible, thereby providing them with the tools needed to interpret, teach and apply the Bible in a responsible fashion. This is a book which will be valuable to anyone, whether in college or in the ministry, who wants to understand the Bible better and expound it more faithfully.

Overview:

Bryan Estelle is Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary, California. As he explains in his introduction to his new book from IVP academic, he is someone who is fascinated by the way that the story of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt is told and re-told throughout the Bible.

'Humans love stories. A good yarn can keep someone seated, turning page after page, without becoming restless. The exodus event does that for me. I am fascinated by the way it is re-actualized and re-contextualized in subsequent biblical books. Throughout the Old Testament, there are reminiscences of the exodus event again and again. The lexical, conceptual, and influential allusions to this founding event of the ancient Hebrew nation resonate throughout the Bible: in the Psalms, Prophets, and the postexilic literature. Yet the ripples do not stop in the Hebrew Bible. The New Testament literature appeals to the exodus event as well. Of the numerous references in the New Testament to the Old Testament, the exodus event comes in a noble third, trailing behind only the prophet Isaiah and the Psalms in number of citations. It serves as the organizing paradigm for several of the Gospels and influences the book of Acts. Paul's two most doctrinal letters, Romans and Galatians, lean heavily on the exodus for their theology. The apostle Peter puts an ecclesiastical spin on the exodus, and Revelation ties all the threads together in John's tapestry of consummation.'

The purpose of Estelle's book is to help students of the Bible to spot and make sense of these 'echoes of Exodus' throughout the biblical narrative. As he puts it:

'This book is about the continuing thread of the exodus motif in the Old Testament and New Testament. Students, pastors, and biblical scholars will come to appreciate how interconnected the Scriptures are and how a biblical motif works through allusion and transformation of that motif.'

His aim, he says, is 'to help readers grow in their 'allusion competence,' especially in their ability to recognize scriptural allusions to the exodus motif.'

Commendations:

David Pao comments:

'In this work one finds a mature reflection of the importance of the exodus paradigm throughout Scripture that is sensitive to both diachronic and synchronic concerns in locating this paradigm within the wider biblical-theological landscape. Readers of this volume will not only appreciate the insights this study generates in the reading of particular biblical books and individual passages, they will also be rewarded by the guidance this volume provides in navigating through numerous contested issues in contemporary biblical scholarship. As such, both introductory and advanced students will benefit from this study.'

Michael Green, *Christian Foundations: A discipleship guide for new Christians*, Monarch, ISBN 978-0-85721-876-6, £8.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

There are many other Christian basics courses on the market, but this one is well worth considering because it has all the typical Green virtues of being biblically based, clear, succinct and yet comprehensive. It is a resource that gives people what they need to know in order to start on the path of Christian discipleship and provides a solid platform for their further growth. Highly recommended.

Overview:

Michael Green is a veteran Evangelical Anglican minister, theologian, apologist and evangelist. This new book is, as the title says, a guide to discipleship for new Christians.

As Green explains in his introductory chapter, the conviction underlying this book is that:

'Jesus did not tell his apostles to encourage decisions, but to make disciples. It is not easy to help people decide for Christ, as anyone knows who has tried it. But sadly a great many of those who have made a profession of faith fall by the wayside and never become true disciples, because they have never been carefully nurtured. And that is tragic.'

To avoid this tragedy, he writes, those who have made a decision for Christ:

'...need a starter kit if their profession of faith is to flower into a lifelong commitment. So what we have here is a short introductory course to Christian living for those who have recently professed faith, or who are seriously considering it. It is written to help folk get started on the road to discipleship (that is, learning from Jesus).'

The guide has been road tested over many years in four continents. It is designed primarily for use in groups, but could also be used with individuals. It consists of a six week discipleship course which goes through what it means to be a Christian and live as a Christian. Each week there is an introductory talk, a bible study, and a time for prayer. There is also a piece of Scripture for participants to learn by heart.

The guide consists of a 'guide for participants,' a 'guide for leaders,' the material for leaders to use in the six sessions, a 'tail piece' explaining how participants can go on as Christians once the course as finished and a set of photocopiable resources for group use.

Anthony Milton et al (eds), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, Vols 1-V, OUP.

Martin's opinion:

These volumes are available in both hardback and e editions, but they are extremely expensive in both and most people will probably want to consult them in a library rather than own them themselves. However, anyone interested in the character and development of Anglicanism should consult these volumes. They represent up-to-date scholarship on the topics they cover and are thus a 'must read' for anyone who wants to know what this scholarship is currently saying. If Evangelicals want to make an informed contribution to the current debate about the nature and development of Anglicanism they now have to engage with this series. They may well disagree with some of the perspectives and conclusions reflected in these volumes, but they need to know that they are out there if only to think how best to respond to them from an Evangelical viewpoint.

Overview:

The Oxford University Press *Oxford History of Anglicanism* is a major new five volume international study of the identity and historical influence of one of the Anglican tradition. It is written by a team of scholars from across the world and looks at the ways in which Anglicanism has developed across the world since the time of the English Reformation in the sixteenth century.

The volumes in this study look at how Anglican identity has been constructed and contested at various periods since the sixteenth century and nature of its influence around the world over the past six centuries. They consider not just the ecclesiastical and theological aspects of global Anglicanism, but also the political, social, economic, and cultural influences of this form of Christianity that has been historically significant in western culture, and is a burgeoning force in non-western societies today. Each volume consists of a series of essays, each of which is written by an expert in the field concerned and reflects both original research by the author and the most recent research by others.

The five volumes in the series are:

Anthony Milton (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume I: Reformation and Identity c.1520-1662*.

Jeremy Gregory (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume II: Establishment and Empire, 1662 -1829*.

Rowan Strong (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume III: Partisan Anglicanism and its Global Expansion 1829-c. 1914*.

Jeremy Morris (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume IV: Global Western Anglicanism, c. 1910-present*.

William L Sachs (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume V: Global Anglicanism, c. 1910-2000*.

Michael J Ovey, *The Goldilocks Zone: Collected writings of Michael J Ovey*, Inter-Varsity Press, ISBN 978-1-7835-9609-6, £14.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

This collection will be valued by those who knew Mike Ovey as a worthy tribute to the memory of a colleague, friend, teacher and mentor. However, its value goes beyond this. It is an opportunity to continue to learn from Ovey's teaching and to be inspired to follow his example by thinking deeply about the Reformation Anglican tradition and the classical Christian tradition more generally and seeing how they enable us to understand and critique the world in which we live and offer a better Christian alternative.

Overview:

Mike Ovey was a lawyer turned theologian who was a greatly loved and highly regarded Principal of Oak Hill College from 2007 until his unexpected and untimely death in 2017. He was a theologian who concentrated on teaching his students and as a result wrote very few books. However, what he did produce as an extension of his teaching ministry was a collection of important talks and articles on various aspects of theology and Christian apologetics.

At the time of his death there was a widespread concern that these writings should be collected together and preserved for posterity and this new book from IVP edited by Chris Green is the result. It consists of twenty seven articles and lectures written by Mike Ovey, together with an appreciation on Mike Ovey as a theologian by Mark Thompson, an account of his life by Chris Green, an afterword by Dan Strange on 'Mike Ovey – the best possible gift' and the text of the sermon preached by Peter Jensen at Mike Ovey's memorial service at All Souls, Langham place.

The pieces by Mike Ovey himself are grouped into four parts.

Part 1 consists of fifteen articles published in *Themelios*, the journal for Evangelical theological students. These articles include the article on 'The Goldilocks zone' after which the book is named, which argues that in the same way that the earth is a 'Goldilocks planet', with conditions 'just right' to sustain life, so for theology we need a 'Goldilocks zone' which is 'just right', encompassing both 'local' and 'global' theologies. Other articles in this part cover a variety of subjects including 'The right to ridicule?' 'The covert thrill of violence? Reading the Bible in disbelief?' and 'The echo chamber of idolatry.'

Part 2 consists of seven papers published in the *Cambridge Papers* series, which look at a variety of contemporary social and religious developments from a Christian perspective. Topics covered in these papers include 'Women, men and the nature of God: equality but not symmetry,' 'Does Athens need Jerusalem? A Christian context for secular thought,' and 'Victim chic? The rhetoric of victimhood.'

Part 3 consists of two papers on the Gospel and the atonement, 'Can we speak of 'the gospel' in a postmodern world? Pluralism, polytheism and the gospel of the one true God' and 'Appropriating Aulen? Employing *Christus Victor* models of the atonement.'

Part 4 consists of three addresses given at GAFCON in 2008 and 2013 on 'The gospel 'how' of theological education,' 'The gospel 'what' of theological education' and 'The grace of God or the world of the West' in the third of which he told his hearers 'Ultimately you cannot have both. It is either/or.'

Jonathan T Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, Baker Academic, ISBN 978-1-54096-064-1, £21.21 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

This is an important new study of the Sermon on the Mount. It explains how the Sermon fits into its original Jewish and Hellenistic context and how its teaching connects with both the rest of Matthew and the rest of the biblical canon. It also shows how the Sermon's teaching relates to the ancient tradition of virtue ethics and the contemporary quest for human flourishing. Pennington's study is rooted in wide-ranging and up-to-date scholarship, but it is written in a way that will make it accessible not only to New Testament specialists, but to ministers and interested lay people. If you already have the commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount by Lloyd Jones and Stott then this is an excellent place to go next.

Overview:

Jonathan Pennington is associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation and director of research doctoral studies at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the United States. He is the author of a number of books on the Gospels and his new book is a historical, theological, and literary commentary at the Sermon on the Mount, which he sees as a 'Christocentric, flourishing-oriented, kingdom-awaiting, eschatological wisdom exhortation.' In this commentary he explores the literary dimensions and theological themes of the Sermon in relation to Jewish and Greek virtue traditions and the philosophical-theological question of human flourishing. He also relates the Sermon's theological themes to contemporary issues such as ethics, philosophy, and economics.

His commentary consists of an Introduction and three main parts.

In the introduction Pennington suggests that the Sermon should be read in both a Jewish and Greco-Roman context and that it is concerned not simply with theological questions but also with the important existential question of the nature of 'human flourishing.' By this he means happiness, blessedness, or *shalom*, a true flourishing which is only available through fellowship with God revealed through his Son and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In part 1, 'Orientation,' he begins with a chapter on the context of the Sermon. Drawing on Umberto Eco's Encyclopedic Context model he suggests the ideal 'model reader' of the sermon has a cultural and philosophical 'encyclopedia' which consists of both Greco-Roman and Jewish elements. The Sermon on the Mount sits at the crossroads of both the Greco-Roman virtue tradition and the Jewish wisdom tradition.

He then goes on to look at the key terms used in the Sermon, primarily *makarios* (blessed/happy) and *teleios* (perfect.) and finishes by looking at the Sermon's literary structure and how it fits into the Gospel of Matthew.

Part 2, 'Commentary,' is the commentary proper. It looks in turn at Matthew 5:1-16, Matthew 5:17-48, Matthew 6:1-21, Matthew 6:19-34, Matthew 7:1-12, Matthew 7:13-8:1. Pennington begins his comments on each of these sections with his own translation which is then followed by an explanation of the teaching of the text and theological commentary upon it. Detailed exegetical discussion is mostly restricted to the footnotes and interaction with the Greek text is minimal (with the Greek being transliterated). This makes for a very readable commentary which will appeal to ordinary clergy and laypeople as well as New Testament specialists.

In part 3, 'theological reflection,' Pennington puts forward six 'theological assertions [or theses] that seek to pull together several threads and themes to construct a theology of human flourishing rooted in the Sermon.' First, the Bible is about human flourishing. Secondly, the Bible's vision of human flourishing is God centered and (ultimately) eschatological. By participating in the story of redemption, humans work toward God's eschatological goal of restoring *shalom*. Thirdly, the moral view of the Bible is a 'revelatory virtue ethic.' The virtue demanded by the Bible is shaped by and encircled by divine revelation. Fourthly, salvation is 'inextricably entailed' with discipleship and virtuous transformation. Fifthly, virtue and grace are compatible. Sixthly, the concept of human flourishing provides an insight into the meaning of God's saving work. Human flourishing is not the only metaphor to describe the message of the Bible, but it does provide a useful framework for understanding redemption and the kingdom of God.

Commendations:

Robert Yarborough has written:

'Is there need for *another* book on the Sermon on the Mount? Yes, because few others combine the strengths, clarity, pathos, and insight of this one. It is rooted in wide reading across many centuries and traditions. It takes full measure of the range of methods available to shed light on the passage. It is alert to personal transformation as a justified aim in reading. It is balanced, hermeneutically informed, and academically grounded without failing to be pastorally useful as well as theologically responsible. Readers of all stripes will benefit from interaction with Pennington's expositions and sometimes painfully honest wrestlings.'

Vaughan Roberts, *The Porn Problem*, The Good Book Company, ISBN 978-1-7849-8197-6, £2.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

Like Roberts' other contributions to the 'talking points' series, this is an excellent introduction to its subject matter. Anyone who wants to get to grips with why porn is a problem from a Christian perspective and how Jesus can help can do no better than start here. Being a comparatively brief study it is not (and does not claim to be) the last word on the subject, but it points its readers in the right direction and tells them where they can then find out more. This is a great resource which could be used with profit not only for individual reading, but as the basis for sermons on the topic, or for looking at the topic in a home group setting.

Overview:

Following his earlier books on transgender and assisted suicide, Vaughan Roberts' third contribution to the Good Book Company's 'talking points' series is a look at the subject of pornography.

As Roberts notes, the existence of pornography is not new, but it has now become much more prevalent:

'There has always been pornography of some kind or another – erotic descriptions in art, sculpture and on pottery have been discovered in virtually every ancient culture. In some cultures and eras, its availability, acceptability and use have been widespread. At other times, it has been repressed, legislated against and driven underground. But something very dramatic has happened in the last twenty years or so. We've seen a monumental explosion of porn, sparked by the 'triple-A engine' of cyber-sex: *Accessibility, Affordability and Anonymity.*'

The growth of the use of porn that has resulted from these three factors has affected Christians as well as people outside the Church and has left large numbers of people struggling in the grip of guilt, shame and despair. In order to help people who struggle in this way, writes Roberts:

'We need to speak more openly about these issues and encourage those who struggle to be honest with trusted friends or pastors. They can then be pointed away from the darkness and lies that hold them captive towards the light and truth of Christ that can set them free.

The Bible has wonderful news for those who are beginning to feel that they will never find victory in the battle against porn. The gospel of Jesus Christ offers complete forgiveness and also a new power in the Holy Spirit to enable us to fight sin and grow in holiness. It really is possible to live porn free. Jesus is realistic about the power that sin can exert over us, but he also has a message of glorious hope for us, however low we have sunk. 'Everyone who sins is a slave to sin...[but] if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.' (John 8 v 34,36).'

The Porn Problem develops these basic ideas in more detail. It consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1, which has just been quoted, sets out the issues which the book will address. Chapter 2 provides a Christian framework for addressing these issues by looking at 'Sex and God's design.' Chapters 3 and 4 expound why porn is a problem by looking at 'The ugliness of porn' and 'The slavery of porn.' Chapter 5 explains how Jesus offers 'True Freedom' to those enslaved by porn and chapter 6 explains how 'Living porn free' is possible in the strength that God provides. Finally, chapter 7 looks at 'Helping others' who are trapped by porn.

Roberts also provides information on further resources and a discussion guide to help those using the book in a group setting.

Klyne R Snodgrass, *Who God says you are – A Christian Understanding of Identity*, Eerdmans, ISBN 978-0-80287-518-1, £19.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

This book is a thorough and important study of a key topic. As Snodgrass says, we all live on the basis of our understanding of our identity and being a Christian involves allowing this understanding to be reshaped by the revelation of who we truly are that is given to us in Scripture. Snodgrass' book is a valuable resource for understanding this revelation more clearly and can be recommended to anyone who wants to think from a Christian perspective about who God says they really are and how they should live in consequence.

Overview:

Until his retirement in 2015 Klyne Snodgrass was the Professor of New Testament studies at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. As he explains in his preface, his new book, which draws on lectures given at Dallas Theological Seminary:

'... is intended for anyone willing to wrestle with identity, especially Christians. In focussing on identity, this book offers a chance for each of us to consider who we really are, what makes us that way, and who we should become.'

In his view it is necessary that we should wrestle with the issue of identity because:

'All of life is lived out of a sense of identity, even if one's sense of identity is confused or unconscious. Therefore we *must* give direct and frequent attention to identity. The Christian faith says not only that you can know yourself, at least at some level, but that you must know yourself, sin and all; that grace makes it possible to look honestly at yourself; and that you will know yourself and find your true self only by knowing the God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Snodgrass goes on to suggest that 'there are nine factors from which our identity is constructed. These nine factors are true of all persons regardless of their religion or lack thereof – Jews, Muslims, secularists, atheists, Christians, or whatever. Of most significance, as we will see, is that the Bible addresses all nine factors.'

These nine factors are our physical and psychological makeup, our history, our relationships, our commitments, our actions, our boundaries, the ongoing process of change in our life, our future and our 'internal self-interpreting, self-directing memory.'

In his book Snodgrass explores what the Bible has to say about each of these nine factors and how its teaching 'reframes' our understanding of human identity. Thus, he says, the biblical doctrine of creation tells that 'our physical and psychological makeups derive ultimately (not directly) from God, are to reflect God, and give us certain abilities and responsibilities.' In similar fashion, the Bible tells us that for Christians 'our true history is the history of Christ into which we are grafted' and that 'the primary relation for Christians is our relation to God in Christ.'

Helen Thorne, *Walking with Domestic Abuse Sufferers*, Inter-Varsity Press, ISBN 978-1-78359-595-2, £7.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

Given the prevalence of domestic abuse, within the Christian community as well as outside it, this is a subject which needs to be on every Christian's radar. In order to help people suffering from abuse we need to know about the reality of abuse and what can and should be done for those who are victims of it. This book gives us that information and for that reason it deserves to be widely read and then acted upon. It is an invaluable resource on a key pastoral issue.

Overview:

Helen Thorne is the Director of Training and Mentoring at London City Mission. She is an experienced biblical counsellor who undertakes counselling for a range of church and parachurch organizations and has a particular interest in standing alongside those who struggle with eating disorders, self-harm and domestic abuse.

Her new book, which is the first of a series of primers on important pastoral issues from IVP and Biblical Counselling UK, is concerned with the issue of domestic abuse. As she notes in her introduction, such abuse is widespread and it takes many forms:

'...a husband beating his wife, a wife punitively controlling her husband's finances, or two cohabiting adults (of any sexual orientation) manipulating or intimidating each other with threats. It encompasses adult children being verbally tormented by ageing parents, and elderly relatives living in terror of their own offspring. Forced marriage, marital rape or the sexual abuse of a disabled adult sibling – these and other horrors take place, behind closed doors, each and every day.'

The purpose of her book is encourage Christians to avoid ignoring or colluding with such abuse, but to instead begin to create 'communities of hope' that are:

- serious about creating a culture where people can share their lives in a way that means abuse can come to light
- serious about reflecting God's hatred of abuse
- serious about speaking words of comfort, love, grace and confidence into the lives of those affected
- serious about taking action to protect the vulnerable
- serious about promoting gospel-centred transformation in the lives of those who have been hurt (and, indeed, those who do the hurting).

The book is in three sections. Section 1 'Listening to the pain' highlights the nature of abuse, the importance of taking it seriously, and how to have a God-centred conversation with someone when abuse is known or suspected. Section 2 'Speaking words of Transformation' is about how we can help people to move forward from situations of abuse by enabling them to 'glimpse what life could be like free from abuse' and how, with God's help, such a life might be possible. Section 3 'Encouraging practical change' looks at what it means in practice to help people to begin to live lives free from abuse. There are also four appendices which contain a disclose of abuse flow chart, a model statement from a church about its opposition to abuse and its determination to help abused people, some model prayers for use with abused people and a list of useful resources and organizations.

As Thorne notes, her book:

'...doesn't try to set out everything there is to know about domestic abuse. It doesn't go into details about the roles of the police, social workers, Victim Support or GPs. It doesn't seek to make us experts in the nuances of the law. Rather, the following pages contain stories (some harrowing, some full of hope) to help us understand what abuse is like. This book provides words of orientation from Scripture to help promote change. Finally, it offers practical hints that will enable us to encourage people to live lives free of pain from manipulation and pain.'

Commendations:

Fiona Castle has commented:

'Many of us are unaware of the enormous volume of people experiencing domestic abuse globally. This book is a hugely educational and enlightening explanation of such atrocities, which, without our awareness, could be happening in our very churches and neighbourhoods. It offers sound teaching for the professional counsellor as well as the untrained, enabling us to act wisely and decisively, helping and supporting such victims. A must for every church!'

Todd Wilson, *Mere Sexuality: Rediscovering the Christian Vision of Sexuality*, Zondervan, ISBN 978-0-31053-535-5, £10.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

This book is an important contribution to the current Christian debate about sexuality. It explains clearly that there is an agreed vision of human sexuality that Christians have held down the centuries, what this vision is, and why there are good reasons for continuing to hold it. In the light of this it also shows that the traditional teaching about homosexuality is not arbitrary, but is a necessary outworking of this wider vision. This is an excellent resource for anyone who wants to understand the classic Christian view of sex or to think about how to commend it to others.

Overview:

Todd Wilson is the Senior Pastor of Calvary Memorial Church in Oak Park, Illinois in the United States and the chairman and co-founder of the Center for Pastor Theologians, a ministry dedicated to resourcing pastors engaged in biblical and theological scholarship.

The starting point for his new book is the observation that the Christian debate about same-sex relationships and gay marriages has focussed on two questions 'What does the Bible really teach about homosexuality?' and 'How can we love homosexuals as Jesus would?' As Wilson sees it:

'...these are important questions, but they're not the only questions we should ask. They're not sufficient to settle the question of what we should think about same-sex relationships. We need to put the question into a larger theological context.'

Wilson's book is an attempt to do just that by exploring 'a whole range of biblical, theological, cultural and practical questions related to human sexuality – from birth control and transgenderism to the hook up culture and theologian Karl Barth's view of the image of God.'

The book considers these questions in eight chapters.

Chapter 1 explains that down the centuries the Christian church as whole has held a 'coherent vision of human sexuality' (what Wilson, echoing C S Lewis, calls 'mere sexuality') and that it has had good reasons for doing so.

Chapter 2 looks at the sexuality of Jesus as 'a fully-fledged human and therefore a sexual being.'

Chapter 3 looks at how our sexuality relates to our identity on the basis of the teaching of Genesis 1 about 'what it means to be created in the image of God as male and female.'

Chapters 4 and 5 look at how marriage is a comprehensive union of 'heart, mind and body' between one man and one woman and how this sheds light 'on how we ought to think about the purpose of sex.'

Chapter 6 looks at how a recovery of 'a biblical vision of friendship' and a consequent strengthening of the 'friendship culture' with the Church can avoid those with same-sex attraction being left with a choice between rejecting what the Bible and church teach about sexuality or living lives of isolated celibacy.

Chapter 7 looks at how sexuality 'relates to eschatology and ethics, hope and holiness, our personal future and how we live in the present.' It argues that 'patience is the key to living out the vision of mere sexuality faithfully.'

Chapter 8 concludes the book by considering how Christians should communicate mere sexuality 'with joy, tears and hope.'

The overall message which Wilson presents in these chapters is that 'Despite the consistent messaging of our culture, you are not who you desire sexually. Instead you are who God has created you to be in his image and likeness, whether male or female. And more importantly, you are who God calls you to be in his Son, Jesus Christ.'

Commendations:

Timothy George declares:

'This is not just another book about sex; it is a tract for the times. Relevant, timely, and theologically rich, it connects sexuality with Christology, and offers practical wisdom on a topic that God compares about a lot. Strongly recommended!'