

RESOURCE REVIEWS

PURPOSEFUL SEXUALITY: A SHORT CHRISTIAN INTRODUCTION

Ed Shaw

London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2021
ISBN: 978-1-78974-283-1 | pp. 66, £7.99

This short and easy to read book by Ed Shaw is a great tool for us as we try to make sense of sexuality in a culture which, as Ed suggests, has quickly moved from inventing the very concept of sexuality, past the binary labels, to a world which now embraces a freedom of fluidity.

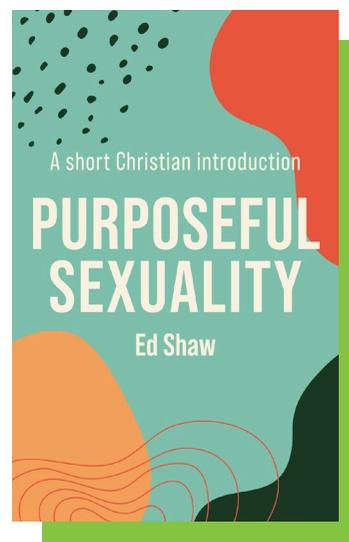
Ed intelligently argues that many Christians are asking the wrong questions about sexuality and his angle is to approach Scripture asking the question, 'What is our sexuality for?' Through doing this in the book, he quickly walks us past the popular secular responses into a much deeper and mature Christian response.

Initially he focuses on the value of sexuality to marriage, with the three traditional answers of marital union, child bearing and sharing pleasure. But as a same sex attracted Christian, Ed doesn't stop at the marriage explanation, being acutely aware himself that there has to be something more behind God's gift of sexuality to us all. He goes on to explore what the purpose of our sexuality is, trying to find an answer that would resonate with those who are single (whatever the circumstances behind their singleness) and this is where the book challenges us to think outside of the box.

Ed shares how two sentences from the writing of John Piper challenged him to explore how being a sexual being allows us to understand fully the total intensity of God's passionate and painful love for us. He explores this sensitively and opens up the mind to see the purpose of our sexuality, even for those who will never enjoy a sexual relationship with anyone. The book is an easy read, also practical with two chapters dedicated to considering how understanding the purpose of sexuality helps us to live our lives practically.

I would recommend this as a useful book for anyone in pastoral ministry, particularly those working with singles, but also as an essential book for anyone working with young people.

Reviewed by Sarah Sedgwick. Sarah is founder of Transformed Ministries, a ministry dedicated to supporting Christians with same sex attraction and the churches who support them.



50 LESSONS IN MINISTRY: REFLECTIONS ON FIFTY YEARS OF MINISTRY

Paul Beasley-Murray

London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2020
ISBN: 978-0-232-53468-9 | pp. 213, £12.99

The subtitle, 'Reflections on fifty years of ministry', is an excellent description. Paul Beasley-Murray was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1970. Over the past 50 years he has gained a wealth of experience, especially through the highs and lows of diverse contexts. So much of his wisdom is relevant to Methodism, as well as to other churches.

'50 Lessons in Ministry' is like fifty books in one. In both theological and practical ways, it touches on many aspects of church life and Christian ministry, and is engaging, thought-provoking and inspiring. Each chapter contains challenging things to consider for our own churches and ministries.

Paul Beasley-Murray acknowledges that life within the church and the world has changed significantly since he was ordained, and he has sought to rise to the challenge of learning new ways to serve God and his people, and to pass on the baton.

This book, along with his ministry, is firmly rooted in the Bible and upon faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He has always sought to keep the gospel, with its requirement of repentance of sin and belief in Jesus' saving work, as an essential aspect of church life, wanting others to see Jesus. He considers that through focusing on growing disciples, numerical increase will take place. Christ-like disciples recognise that there is a world to serve as well as to win, so it is vital that they are equipped to fulfil their ministry in the world.

The book's end chapters are most important, as they set the scene for all that lies within. Ministry begins with being rooted in the call of God, and ends with being rooted in the grace of God.

With 50 chapters there are more themes than this review gives space for, including Church Power Games, Team Ministry, Monday Morning Blues, Spiritual Sloth, and Retirement to name a few. This book is certainly a worthwhile read.

Reviewed by the Revd Derek Balsdon, who is a Methodist Presbyterian, and serves as the Development Worker for MET

