

List the 8 books (4 required, 4 chosen) and/or any handouts, articles, blogs, videos you've read/watched:

1. Burnett, Bill and Evans, Dave. *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life*.
2. Sayers, Mark. *The Road Trip That Changed The World: The Unlikely Theory that will Change How You View Culture, the Church, and Most Importantly, Yourself*.
3. Stone, Douglas and Patton, Bruce. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*.
4. Tyson, Jon & Grizzle, Heather. *Creative Minority: Influencing Culture Through Redemptive Participation*.
5. Devine, Megan. *It's OK That You're Not OK – Meeting Grief and Loss In A Culture That Doesn't Understand*.
6. Simpson, Amy. *Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and The Church's Mission*.
7. Schaller, Mary & Crilly, John. *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations: Walking Alongside People Who Believe Differently*.
8. Hirsch, Debra. *Redeeming Sex: Naked Conversations About Sex & Spirituality*

1) Why were these chosen?

I choose each of these books particularly because they round each of the topics which a minister may commonly encounter. From sexual identity to grief and loss to mental illness to difficult conversation, conflict can be a daily reality for the vast majority of people. Not only do these topics necessitate the minister to be aptly prepared, but they also warrant one's own introspection. I recall Dr. Martin Sanders' words that "you can't take someone to a place you've never been". And while some of the material we encounter in our studies may not be of our own personal experience, ministers should still endeavor to empathize *and* understand.

2) What was challenging? What was the most helpful? What was not helpful?

I found that the things most challenging included those things which challenged my preunderstanding. For example, *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations* continued to challenge my former bent toward evangelism to release the 'aggressive' approach toward conversion or commitment. The things about these reads which were most challenging were also the most helpful. Mark Sayers' book helped me see young adults in a new light when he described them as "refugees of faith" (32). This succinctly describes the culture we face as ministers and is also an admonition toward our response.

3) How have the readings continued to develop your approach to working with people? Were there any paradigm shifts for you? If so, what?

I believe I will be a better, more empathetic, and more effective listener and leader. For example, leaving a discussion *without* the "conversion" conversation might challenge most Christians. I found that these paradigm shifts are helpful, and necessary. Second, Debra Hirsch's book on sex has relieved me of the tension of sexuality and spirituality. I no longer see a dualistic separation of the two, but the sacredness of sex. It was particularly helpful to see the distinction between genital sex and social sex (and each as sacred).

4) How will the readings be applied to your personal and professional life?

I expect that the readings and their application will make me a more *mature* and *secure* person and professional. Affirming some things and critiquing others, working with people will improve by our own continued pursuit of our better selves. The world needs real leaders, and this type of personal development, guided by the Holy Spirit, refines the leader within.