

Critical Assessment Form

Required:

1. *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life* by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans
2. *The Road Trip That Changed The World: The Unlikely Theory that will Change How you View Culture, the Church, and, Most Importantly, Yourself* by Mark Sayers
3. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* by Douglas Stone and Bruce Patton
4. *Creative Minority: Influencing Culture Through Redemptive Participation* by Jon Tyson and Heather Grizzle

Chosen:

5. *Try Softer: A Fresh Approach to Move Us out of Anxiety, Stress, and Survival Mode - And Into a Life of Connection and Joy* by Aundi Kolber
6. *Is God anti-gay? (Questions Christians Ask Series)* by Sam Allberry
7. *The Gift of Being Yourself* by David G. Benner
8. *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* by Les & Leslie Parrot

1) Why were these chosen?

I chose *Try Softer: A Fresh Approach to Move Us out of Anxiety, Stress, and Survival Mode - And Into a Life of Connection and Joy* because I often have unrealistic expectations for myself. Especially with the season that I am in, I am constantly thinking about the next step, the next assignment, the next thing that I have to do and I forgot that I have limits and I forget to be present in the moment. I chose *Is God anti-gay?* because I have a good number of friends and coworkers who are attracted to the same sex. I wanted to get a better understanding of their perspectives and develop a stronger theology on marriage and gender attraction. I chose *The Gift of Being Yourself* because I am still trying to figure out where God wants to lead me in my unique calling. As I am finishing up seminary school in the next 2 years, I want to prepare myself to be ready when God calls. I chose *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* because I am currently engaged and will be married in a couple of months. I decided to read this book with my fiancée.

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

I found the teachings from *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* very challenging to actually put into practice. I love when things are going smoothly and I often avoid difficult conversations. But I found the scenarios that Douglas Stone and Bruce Patton gave during the book relatable and helpful. They broke down each argument and explained where each side was coming from. I also found *Try Softer: A Fresh Approach to Move Us out of Anxiety, Stress, and Survival Mode - And Into a Life of Connection and Joy* really helpful especially when the author talked about the different attachment styles. I was able to understand why I act a certain way with God and with my partner because of the type of attachment I had with my parents as a child. I did not find *Is God anti-gay?* as helpful as the book spent a lot of time on the theology behind homosexuality but didn't provide much practical tools and tips when engaging with someone that has same sex attraction.

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

Most of the readings have definitely continued to develop my approach to working with people. I found many of the books helpful particularly in my relationship with my fiancée. One of the biggest paradigm shifts for me was in *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* when the authors talked about intentions. We often have good intentions for things but at

the end of the day what the person felt is what needs to be addressed. I often thought if I just prove that my intentions were good then there is nothing to be mad about. But the authors explained in a scenario of the importance of addressing how a comment made someone feel in that moment.

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

Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts was a great resource for me and my fiancée as we are preparing for marriage. We felt called to pray together more and develop a stronger foundation for prayer in our marriage and for our future family. I plan to also apply the teachings from *Creative Minority: Influencing Culture Through Redemptive Participation* with my church community. The authors painted a picture of how the church should respond in the 21st century and in a post-modern world. The authors call the church to take the stance of a creative minority that models the way of Jesus to the surrounding community. I also feel that many of the books provided a stronger theological foundation for various topics such as homosexuality, calling, burn out, and marriage.