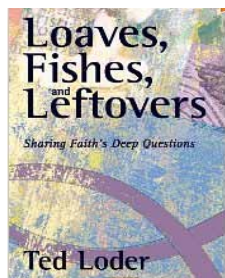


Q & A WORSHIPPING

Book Title:

Loaves, fishes and leftovers sharing faith's deep questions

Book Cover:

Author:

Ted Loder

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Augsburg, Minneapolis, 2005, pp. 188, \$11.69*
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Review Title:

Q & A Worshipping

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This review is available at:

<http://www.hts.org.za>

In the preface to his wonderful book, Ted Loder explains how he started what he describes as, taking a Sunday and replacing the sermon with an opportunity for people to ask questions to which he would respond spontaneously. That was the beginning of devoting two worship occasions a year to a format he called experiments of 'question and answer' (Q & A) sermons. However, he immediately repudiates himself by saying that this departure was wrong on two counts. They were not sermons and his responses were not answers – at least in the sense of being complete or conclusive. The answers he presented rather expressed his theological education and thinking, as well as his experience as Christian and as pastor. He and his congregation experienced a good deal of excitement due to the immediacy and relevance of what they shared to the vital issues with which people were wrestling. Where dialogue is assumed in writing and delivering sermons, the dialogue in these 'question and answer' sermons was publicly expressed by the interchange between pastor and congregation. If one keeps in mind that the path to understanding is paved by dialogue it is quite clear that he and his congregation have invested a great deal in the premise of Hans Georg-Gadamer, the well-known German philosopher: *genuine understanding proceeds through dialogue or conversation (Truth and Method, 2nd rev. ed. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005)*. This is exactly the value of this unique book for every minister or congregational worship team that seeks a new and refreshing way of worship!

According to Loder, the questions he received consistently revealed the faith struggles of the questioner and most others in the congregation. He confesses that, in a sense, it was his questions as well; it was a mutual exploration and a reminder that such mutuality is the process that pertains to all Christian life. In his own words:

The openness and intensity of those Sunday sessions stretched their understanding not only of worship but also of faith and life itself. They provided a deeper context and spirit for ongoing dialogue in and out of the church. People began asking variations of the questions more freely in other contexts; counseling, administrative meetings, mission projects, pastoral visits, even in community events.

(n.p.)

The Q & A format proved to be so successful that even after Loder had retired from the formal pastorate, a small group asked if they could continue with the Q&A format in someone's home. It then dawned on him that maybe the most authentic metaphor for this process is the story of Jesus feeding the multitude. This explains the catching title of the book. *Loaves, Fishes and Leftovers* has been compiled from transcripts of audiotapes of the small group sessions and it reflects the ongoing human explorations of faith's deep questions. The book comprises six 'sharings', each covering a wide spectrum of topics, issues and human hurts.

This book will benefit pastors and worship team members providing guidance as far as the structuring of refreshing approaches to communication in the congregation is concerned. This book is a must read, especially in postmodern times when many people are starved for connection and for the opportunity to ask faith's grave questions as well as to talk about life's most profound topics. ■