

★ **The Pastor's Bookshelf: Why Reading Matters for Ministry****Austin Carty**

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Though reading is sometimes maligned as an indulgence, Austin Carty insists that it is a necessity for those in the ministry. In *The Pastor's Bookshelf*, he gives tips on what and how to read, promising that “reading will make you a better person.”

Carty remembers feeling guilty for reading Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* in his church office. Before attending seminary, he'd taught high school English; he maintained a literature student's close reading habits, with a voracious appetite across genres. Nowadays, he considers himself a “pastor-reader,” with the insight and compassion he gains from reading finding their way into his sermons.

The book spotlights memorable reading experiences and conversations with fellow ministers. It makes a convincing case for reading as a way of learning to love one's neighbors. For instance, books on race were pivotal to Carty in 2020; and, to better understand the situation of the homeless, he read hard-hitting books like *Evicted* and *Dopesick*. He's found equal wisdom in a Leo Tolstoy short story about injustice.

As literature encourages curiosity, humility, and a sense of wonder, the book recommends a “balanced reading diet” of varied novels and simultaneous nonfiction. As to practicalities: an hour in the office and an hour at home daily, minimal online reading, a pencil in hand, a personalized notation system, and an open mind are suggested.

The Pastor's Bookshelf is an invaluable resource for members of the clergy, though its bookish enthusiasm is even farther reaching than that.

REBECCA FOSTER (May / June 2022)

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