

★ **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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