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## Book Review: Teach Like a Disciple

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## Book Review: Teach Like a Disciple

## **Book Review:**

**Lederhouse, J. N. (2016). Teach like a disciple: Exploring Jesus' instructive relationships from an educational perspective. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock. ISBN 9781498289795, 148 pages.**

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### **Abstract**

**I**t is fitting that in 12 chapters of this book, Lederhouse explores principles learned from the lives of another group of 12: Jesus' disciples. I am inspired to reflect similarly, when early in her volume she muses as to what rubric the Gospel writer and physician Luke might have used for deciding what events and encounters to include in his gospel. Lederhouse articulates a powerful rationale for her work when, describing the biblical authors, she states, "Since these Spirit-led authors followed a careful selection process for relating Jesus' impact on our world, those encounters that were included must be critically important for us to study" (2016, p. 2). By exploring the lives of those who apprenticed themselves to Jesus, Lederhouse presents a valuable and unique contribution to scholarship and in particular to those who view teaching as more than merely a means to earn a living.

There seems to be a polarization in the literature on teaching "Christianly." At one extreme are works that are overly theological in tone so as to be too obtuse for application; the other extreme may include works that are at best shallow and offer only tertiary biblical references to an educational topic. Lederhouse, conscious of these extremes, states, "I also do not want to imply that the only thing we need to do is order to teach effectively is read our Bible" (p. 8). She sets the tone in her first chapter by "wondering" about what unrecorded signs and miracles Jesus may have performed and why specific encounters are included in the Scriptures. She thereby causes her

reader to wonder and to be intrigued to pursue, along with her, answers to those questions.

Since we all tend to interpret the world primarily through personal lenses, as a professor of special education and educational psychology, I resonate with Lederhouse's assertions regarding the importance of relationship. To elaborate, in education the current model of full inclusion is predicated on the value of community. This is consistent with biblical teaching; Jesus' response to a question regarding the greatest commandment is that we are to love God, by loving people and ourselves as those that God has created. Thus, we are created for communion with God and others. Further, in her concluding chapters, Lederhouse notes that "Jesus' classroom contained a group of diverse learners" (p. 134), and thus lessons learned from his teaching are applicable toward inclusive praxis in the increasingly heterogeneous and therefore challenging educational communities of today.

From the lessons Jesus taught this diverse group of apprentices, Lederhouse derives important principles that can be applied to professional development both pre-service and in-service. Resonating with Parker Palmer's (2007) assertion that good teaching cannot be reduced to technique but that good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher, Lederhouse helps educators explore their integrity and identity. Consistent with the fact that our brains respond

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differently to narratives than to other forms of instruction, Lederhouse skillfully engages the readers in narratives. From chapters with titles such as “The Relational Jesus and the Heartbroken Student,” “The Multicultural Jesus and the Student Who Needed Acceptance,” or, one with whom all educators can no doubt identify, “The Patient Jesus and the Student Who Craved Attention,” we are able to derive principles applicable to our own unique educational ecologies. In addition to the content, I find the constancy in the book’s organization very helpful. Each chapter outlines one of Jesus’ relational encounters and asks and answers the same questions: What do we know about this student? What do we know about Jesus from this interaction? What do we learn from the student? What do we learn from Jesus from this interaction? What can we as educators learn from the interaction? I note the subtle but important difference in learning about and learning from.

In short, the author recognizes that Jesus was a remarkable teacher in part because he was relational. Rather than being overly prescriptive, Lederhouse describes 10 of Jesus’ relational encounters and adroitly allows us the dignity of applying lessons learned in our own unique relational ecologies as educators.

In some of my own writing, I suggest that professional development is as much the process of holistic development of the person who is the professional as it is a particular programme or set of workshops or other learning opportunities (Pudlas, 2010). Christian teacher-educators, therefore, should be more purposeful in embedding in their curriculum various means toward being more inclusive. As one means toward that goal, I highly recommend this very readable and valuable book to all teachers who want to develop in their profession and vocation and would recommend it as required reading for programs that educate teachers.

Pudlas, K. A. (2010). Leading teachers in professional development for inclusion. In Edmunds, A. L. & Macmillan, R.B. (Eds.). *Leadership for inclusion: A practical guide* (Chapter 11, pp. 117-131). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

## References

Palmer, P. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher’s life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.