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Kageler's "Youth Ministry in a Multifaith Society: Forming Christian Identity Among Skeptics, Syncretists and Sincere Believers of Other Faiths" (Book Review)

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**Your Life Still Counts:
How God Uses Your Past to Create a Beautiful Future,**
by Tracie Miles. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2014.
272 pp. \$14.99. ISBN 9780764211997

*Reviewed by Paul A. Roberts, Director of Library Services,
Southeastern Bible College, Laurel, Mississippi*

Tracie Miles is a national conference, retreat, and keynote speaker for Proverbs 31 Ministries. The author tells her story and that of other women who have discovered great purpose in spite of adverse experiences. The book helps readers find forgiveness and healing and provides inspiration for the future God has for them. Each chapter focuses on a life experience the author has gone through that caused her to trust in the Lord. Emphasis is made in trusting in God's Word and leaning upon Him at all times. The chapter ends with a testimony from another woman and group discussion questions.

I recommend this book. The variety of topics covered within the book will surely be helpful to many women today. Mrs. Miles' emphasis on the Scripture and dependence upon God no matter what the situation is a positive message for the twenty-first century.

**Youth Ministry in a Multifaith Society: Forming Christian Identity
Among Skeptics, Syncretists and Sincere Believers of Other Faiths,**
by Len Kageler. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014.

220 pp. \$16.00. ISBN 9780830841127

Reviewed by Elizabeth Pearson, Library Director, Montreat College, Montreat, NC

Youth Ministry in a Multifaith Society serves as an introduction to the challenges of engaging in youth ministry in a multifaith world. This book surveys youth ministry among youth of non-Christian faiths, syncretists, and youth who profess no faith at all (religious nones). Kageler is a professor of youth and family studies and Associate Dean of Faculty Development at Nyack College in New York. He asserts that Christian youth can benefit from contact with youth from other faiths and that such exposure can help Christian youth know and appreciate their own faith. Awareness of other religions may prompt Christian young people to question their assumptions and examine their beliefs, but that is an important step in their spiritual formation. Ultimately Christians can develop relationships with people of different faiths and deepen their own faith in the process.

The book summarizes what is happening in other religions and youth ministries. The author looks at Islam, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jewish understandings of childhood and adolescence and their approach to youth ministry. In many cases, other faiths have adopted the same methods as Christian youth workers to reach young people. In North America, this is due partly to being in a free market environment where competition for the attention of young people is a factor. The book notes that Muslim youth work in the U.S. and other Western countries often includes a focus on outreach to attract non-Muslim youth.

Attention is given to the rise of religious nones (youth who have no faith) and to syncretists (youth who pick and choose their religious beliefs without accepting the teachings of faith as a whole). Data is cited from social science research studies and surveys, such as the National Study of Youth and Religion and the American Religious Identification Survey. The author notes that research shows that youth who do not believe Christianity is the only way to salvation are more open to a syncretist faith. Biblical examples are presented of Old and New Testament figures who successfully navigated a multifaith world without diluting their faith. The book cites research that reveals that religion makes a positive difference in the lives of young people and that theologically traditional churches produce youth with strong Christian faith. The author cites data from these studies to make the case that conservative denominations nurture more highly religious youth than their less conservative counterparts.

Approaches that Christian youth workers use to try to reach nones and syncretists are discussed. The book provides examples of effective practices based on the experiences of youth ministers and notes that awareness of adolescent cognitive development can help youth workers understand what the best approach may be for youth at different stages of moral development.

The concluding chapters offer examples of how Christian youth ministries engage with other faith communities and how these interfaith groups help foster spiritual formation among Christian youth.

This book can start conversations about the role of youth ministry in a diverse and religiously plural world and is recommended for church youth workers and others who have an interest in youth culture and ministry.