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Sterretts' "Jesus conversations: Effective everyday engagement" (book review)

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Book Review



Sterrett, D. (2021). *Jesus conversations: Effective everyday engagement*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. 173 pp. \$14.95. ISBN 9781683073123

The title seems an oversimplification for a book that initially reads as not being written for simply engaging in casual everyday evangelistic conversations. By the title, that is what was thought would be the content. Sterrett was raised as the son of a preacher and was educated at Christian schools and colleges. He holds a BA in Theology, an MA in Apologetics, and an MA in Philosophy. The book's first six chapters are written on a high level of education and are not phrased nor presented with the sense of being used by someone in a simple conversation about Jesus. The methods outlined are not those that could be easily learned nor quickly used by an everyday Christian. Sterrett gives examples of his conversations that would be most difficult for a church lay worker that is led to share the gospel to implement. These thoughts are not to say that the methods given are in error or misleading but would require much the same life and education exposure afforded to Sterrett to be comfortably used. Many of the methods are very confrontational and require a significant measure of self-confidence and the need for deep biblical and spiritual knowledge. Again, this is not to say that the teaching is wrong; it is merely very advanced. As an example, in chapter 4, Sterrett gives four quotes from Alison Wood Brooks and Leslie K. John's "The Surprising Power of Questions" from the *Harvard Business Review*. The first line of the article is as follows, "Much of an executive's workday is spent asking others for information – requesting status updates from a team leader, for example, or questioning a counterpart in a tense negotiation." The style and tone of the quote befit the methods and examples of Jesus' conversations in the first six chapters. However, beginning with chapter 7, the tone completely changes. The change in approach and method is so sudden that it is surprising. Chapters 7 through 11 are written in a way that the title's tone is appropriate. It seems that a different person wrote the last five chapters. Even the wordage and phrasing are utterly different from the first six chapters. Even though the change was much of a surprise, it was very welcomed.

The quotes are still from scholarly sources but are presented so as not to overwhelm the reader. The methods given are much more "down to earth" and applicable to the lay or everyday Christian. It would seem that it began as two books, with the first chapters for a very advanced and experienced Christian worker and the latter chapters for the lay worker, and for an unknown or at least an unstated reason, the

two parts were combined. A consideration would be that the chapter order should be reversed. The current chapters seven to eleven would have a better placement as chapters one to five. The current chapters one to six would then become chapters six to eleven. With that change, the flow of the entire book would be smoother. This change would have prepared the reader, even the lay reader, for the much heavier content in the back chapters. Without this change, it is unsure how many lay readers would be overwhelmed by the first six chapters before getting to the smoother chapters of seven through eleven.

Nevertheless, credit must be given as all the chapters are well written. Whether complex or more straightforward, the methods are well stated, yet some require a broader understanding for application. There is a sincerity in Sterrett's writing that comes out even in the very scholastic sections. Sterrett states that his "current full-time job is medical sales" (p. 14), yet he has the time to have Jesus' conversations with doctors and nurses. This job is mentioned over and over and seems overly so. Perhaps it is merely another example of his premise. The examples and methods are not haphazardly constructed; however, they require effort for understanding and should be rehearsed to be well prepared.

Reviewer

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