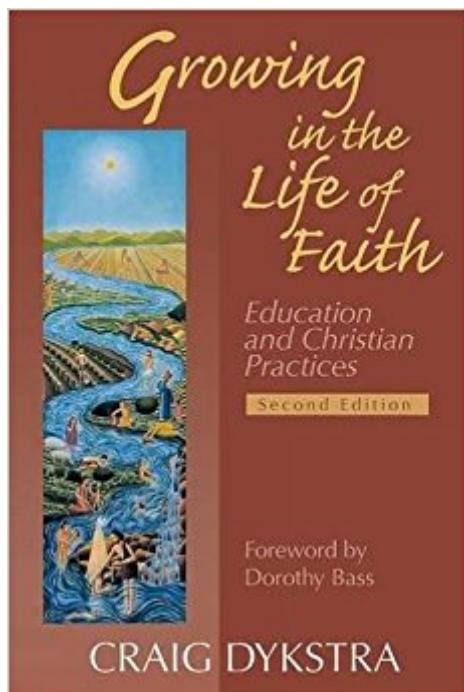


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Growing In The Life Of Faith, Second Edition: Education And Christian Practices



Synopsis

In this new edition of his popular book, Craig Dykstra explores the contributions of the traditions, education, worship practices, and disciplines of the Reformed Christian community in helping people grow in faith. In doing so, he makes the case that the Christian church, in its own traditions, has a wealth of wisdom about satisfying spiritual hunger and the desire to know God deeply--wisdom that offers coherent, thoughtful guidance in such diverse settings as congregational life, families, youth groups, and higher education.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Here is faith brought to life, and the teaching of religion described with knowing care; all the possibilities of such work wonderfully rendered. It is a distinct pleasure to read a book so clearly written; its pages stir the mind and touch the heart." --Robert Coles, Harvard University, author of *The Spiritual Life of Children* "What does it mean to live the Christian life faithfully and well? And how can we help one another to do so?" I recently heard Craig offer these two questions as a summary of his life-long interests. As he notes early in *Growing in the Life of Faith*, the ongoing forms of Christian living in his family and church were determinative in planting these questions in his mind and shaping his answers to them; He insists that thinking and doing cannot be separated--and neither can believing and living, education and its content, or theology and the means of sharing it with others. This is where "practices" come in--not at all through a simplistic "putting ideas into practice" approach but rather by showing how

the dualism implied in that clichÃ© disappears when people are actively engaged in the ongoing, thought-filled practices of the Christian life." --From the foreword by Dorothy Bass, Director of the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith

Craig Dykstra is Senior Vice President for Religion at the Lilly Endowment, Inc. in Indianapolis, Indiana.

This book has taken me a while to read because each chapter has caused me to reflect extensively on the role that Christian practices have had in my life and ministry. I was hooked from chapter 1 "Hunger for Daily Bread" where Dykstra tells of a current cultural interest in the questions of faith, the inability of the church to engage people in an active life of faith, and the lack of conviction in our theology due to our being compromised by the philosophies of the enlightenment. When I chose this book, I thought it would be more of a "nuts and bolts" type of book. I am glad it was not. I have had an encounter with this work and I will be chewing on it for a while to come. Please know that no summary does this work justice. It is both meaty and accessible. Don't let its compact 164 pages fool you, this work is pure dynamite. I recommend you read it for yourself.

I'll soon begin serving on our church's Christian Education team and bought this book to help guide me. It is a deeply insightful take on spiritual formation focusing on practices rather than the usual head-tripping the passes for Christian education among so many.

Craig Dykstra worked with Dorothy Bass to write 'Practicing Our Faith' - another classic book high on the recommended reading list. 'Growing in the Life of Faith' explores the areas of ministry and Christian education with flair, sensitivity, and an imaginative compassion that is sure to touch and inspire readers, ministers, and educators. Dykstra's compassionate stance and creative and subtle nuances, respectful of varying points of view without denigrating any and being supportive of general enlightened approaches parallels his work in the Lilly Foundation. Dykstra came of age during the 60s, a time which he describes as violent, a war on two fronts - his home city of Detroit, and the Vietnam conflict. While Dykstra himself was not a direct participant in either, the violence and aftermath left a lasting impression upon him. This led him to wonder what could be done differently, and education was high on list. He expresses this in various terms, but is always preeminently experiential, from the experience of education itself, to the experience of the mystery of God. The book traces the development of education in several broad strokes - hunger, life,

practices, places, and signs. There is a profound hunger, Dykstra says, that churches should be able to meet; those that engage people fully, where they are and as they are, giving them the living bread of truth, this is the calling of God. Leading a life of faith and growth involves many steps, not the least of which is honest engagement with community, and an acceptance of discipline toward certain growth-oriented practices. These practices have power and depth, but require education. According to Dykstra, we get wrapped up too often in the 'too big' and the 'too small'. Dykstra's section on places is the longest - this is not a survey of geographic places, but more akin to 'places of the heart'. Dykstra here writes about congregations, families, youth groups and peer groups, religious and education communities. He sees the important aspect for the future of the church in education, a spirit-led education that cares for all. Dykstra's final section is about the charge - echoing the response of prophets and disciples, he charges us to 'make it real'. His final sentiments reinforce the idea that so much of ministry and life is showing up and being present for the power of God in community to manifest itself. This is a wonderful book, one I re-read frequently.

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