give me these reservations so I think it is only fair that I suggest you explore the course yourself if you are of a more conservative persuasion.

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Seven Myths of Youth Ministry: How to Re-ignite Your Passion (Paperback).

This slim volume comes from the long experience of two youth workers who founded Ignite in the year 2000. The book reflects their desire to ignite passion in youth workers and young people alike and sets about doing so by debunking what they consider some entrenched myths that have arisen around youth ministry. The book starts with an introduction which deals briefly with three myths; it's not ministry; young people are not interested in Christianity; we've always done it like that. This is before they go on to consider the seven myths of the title with a chapter devoted to each.

In each of the chapters, the reader is first presented with what is titled “Gary's Rant”. This is a rough and ready experience which is the closest thing I've seen in a book to a tirade on some particular topic from a frustrated youth worker at a conference of similar gathering of youth workers. Each of these rants is certainly an accurate representation of the frustration so many youth workers feel. However, personally, I'm not in agreement with all of the rants or indeed with the idea of the “rant” being a good starting point for a discussion of ministry. I realise that this may well be my own preference for encouraging from a more pastoral care position rather than being starkly challenging in a confrontational manner. Following the rant, Nigel James goes on to discuss each of the myths with some quotations from various anonymous youth leaders who have been consulted in the preparation of the book. After the discussion, each chapter concludes with some questions for the read to use as the basis of reflecting on the myth and its debunking.

According to this book, the seven myths of Youth Ministry are: “We really make a difference in our one hour a week”, “Size isn't important”, “We don't preach,
we are just sowing seeds," "You have to ask them what they want," "Young people lack commitment," "Young people are the future of the church" and "We aren't in the entertainment business". I'm not sure I would say these are what I would choose as the myths of ministry but I can see that they might be the myths for some.

I must admit that the title and the "rant" model disinclined me to this book. Despite my initial reluctance to read this book, I must also admit that the response to the myths does appeal. Though I may not agree with the choice of beginning or the veracity of the myths themselves, in tackling these myths, Nigel James and the un-named youth leaders who have also commented capture some deep truths of youth ministry.

As a youth worker who has worked with both successful and unsuccessful large youth events as well as fruitful and unfruitful small groups, my defences went up as I read the chapter on "size isn't important". However, the way the subject was tackled opened me up to this book. An anonymous youth leader captures it best; "Every size is important" (p. 33). Instead of making the reader feel guilty that their group isn't huge and growing in numbers every second, this chapter focuses on how Jesus himself built up a small group as well as preaching to the crowd and encourages us to "dream big dreams" (p. 33).

Mellowed by the chapter on size, I turned to the following chapter on "We don't preach – we're just sowing seeds". In Gary's rant (pp.36-37), he speaks out against those who seek to share the Gospel solely through modelling their lives on Christ but without speaking of their faith. I think this chapter for me demonstrates one of the weaknesses of the book's approach. It seems, at first, to polarise things which are not mutually exclusive; preaching with sowing seeds, incarnational ministry with spirit-filled preaching. However this polarisation is moderated in the discussion element of each chapter. It genuinely isn't my experience that "preaching has become a bad word in youth ministry circles today" (p. 41) but, of course, I accept that this may be the experience of others. Towards the end of the chapter, James makes a concession to a mixed model of ministry and admits, "We are saying that preaching is vital, but to redress the balance slightly it is important to recognize that nothing backs up powerful preaching like an exemplary lifestyle." (p. 43) He goes on to address the issue of sowing seeds in a way I had not expected. James suggests that the "sowing seeds" model, rather than reflecting, as I would consider it, an honesty that we can't always reach all the young people we meet, in fact, gives us an excuse not to offer young people an opportunity to respond for themselves.