Although this book set out to debunk myths I myself did not really consider myths and set about doing so in a model I did not agree with, I have to admit that the underlying message of the book is something that I do agree with. It calls for all youth workers to think deeper, to take responsibility, to aim for quality and to work with passion and with vision in our ministry to young people. Our outlooks may be different but I am pleased to say our passion is the same. As they conclude; “So here’s the challenge for you: don’t just take our word for it, but go back to the Bible and work through these myths for yourself...” (pp. 97) Go and do likewise.

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You Fish Shoes: connecting 30 key issues with Christian faith for 14-18 year olds.

The title of this book has divided opinion amongst those I’ve shared it with. You Fish Shoes is either a really clever title or really cheesy. Yet however the title is viewed it is one of the things that make this book one which is not easily forgotten. In this compilation of the work of seven experienced youth workers, Jenny Baker has edited together thirty sessions for older teenagers. In my experience it is often difficult to find good resources for work with this age group but this volume offers an excellent resource for school groups and youth groups. The book is clearly not intended as a course to be followed through but as a resource to be used as appropriate. It covers topics such as prejudice, drugs, commercialism, the occult, bereavement and self harming. I think it would be a particularly useful volume to turn to in the event of one of these issues arising for the group either through personal experience or after events in the local community.

The book is versatile in that it can be used almost as an off the shelf, last minute session but that is not the original intention of the book. Indeed more than that it offers group leaders suggestions and opportunities for going deeper with issues. Like any good session resource, You Fish Shoes offers more than you could fit in any one
session providing panoply of activities, discussions, film clips and Bible studies. This means that, unlike some other resources of this kind, you can tailor a session for your group without necessarily having to use a source book merely as a starting point. This book offers such a good choice of alternatives that youth leaders and teachers will not need to add material of their own, though they might well be inspired to do so. As well as providing thirty sessions for use with young people, this book also revitalised my own planning of sessions on other topics as it offers such a good model of a balanced session made up of a variety of styles and activities.

Each session is punctuated with thoughts on the topic by modern thinkers, Christian writers, contemporary novels or celebrities which helps make the pages more approachable and readable. The chapter begins with an explanation of the issue in question. Following this brief introduction, there is a list of web resources for the youth leader to explore for themselves in preparing the topic or point the group towards for follow up. Next comes a few thought-provoking questions for use in preparing the session or to begin a discussion within the session itself. The Extras section which follows gives a handful of other things you could use in the session. There is then a list of books to read about the topic and some Bible references (with explanations) which link to the topic. These elements alone would be a good start to planning a session but You Fish Shoes goes on to offer the group leader even more.

The main part of each session offers various elements; Ways In, Bible Study, Response, Worship and Prayer. Each of these starts by explaining what type of activity it is, what the aim of this particular part is and what you will need for it. The Ways In offer a variety of types of beginning to the group session including film clips with follow up discussion, icebreakers, games, craft, brainstorming and team activities. The Bible Studies are thoughtful (deeper in places than some other books might offer) and encourage reflection from the group.

I think it is in the Response, Worship and Prayer elements, that this book really places itself at the top of my list for resources of this kind. Unlike some other youth discussion books, You Fish Shoes really engages young people not only in Bible study and discussion but also in responding personally to issues through art, action and meeting with God in prayer and worship.

It is no surprise that Jenny Baker, who brought us Tune in Chill out, Transforming Prayer and Transforming Prayers: 40 Unique Experiences for Youth Ministry has given us another resource of innovative and engaging ways into communicating with God through a vast array of experiences including melting sugar...