BOOKS I HAVE READ: CLARION CALL

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If you are looking for something for church small groups to study, look no further.
Category: Observations

I have a fondness for the marginal characters in Scripture; for example, I'm much more interested in Barnabas, than I am in Paul. John the Baptist is another of those people that I find endlessly fascinating. His position as the last of the prophets and the herald of the Messiah intrigues me. Was he a member of one of the Essene cults? Clarion Call: Finding Joy in Christ with John the Baptist by Paul Coulter doesn't exactly shy away from these sorts of questions, but like John, himself, its main aim is to point to Jesus. It's a very good book.

A normal format paperback of 154 pages, this will set you back about Â£7 and a little over half of that for the Kindle version. It's well worth the price. The style is popular and there is no reason why any regular reader couldn't get to grips with this book. There are a few footnotes, but they aren't overly academic and there is a helpful index of Bible passages at the end of the book.

The main text of the book is straightforward in outline. Twelve chapters take us through John's life from the announcement of his conception to his martyrdom. Each significant event is examined with historical context and contemporary illustrations to help the reader situate the text. However, the chapters don't stop with a discussion of John's life, each one leads into a reflection on Jesus and God's work in calling a people to himself. It starts with John, but leads us to Jesus: I think the Baptist would approve!

However, the genius of this book does not lie in the actual text. Each chapter is accompanied by a prayer of response and then two sets of questions, one for individual consideration and then another for group discussion. This would be an absolutely cracking book for a church small group to study.

If you lead a church and you are wondering what your home groups can study next term, look no further. There is material here which could be adapted either for a reading group type setting or for an inductive study. Did I mention that I liked it.

Disclaimer. The author is a friend of mine and provided me with an electronic copy of the book free of charge in exchange for this review. However, I have not allowed this generosity to affect what I've said. To be honest, if I'd not enjoyed it, I'd simply have apologised to Paul and refused to write a review. I've done that with other books that friends have written in the past.