THE GOD I DON'T UNDERSTAND

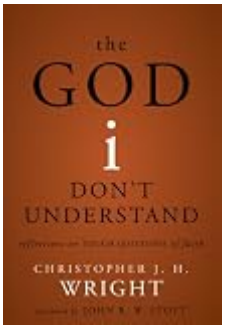
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Category: Reviews

I've been planning to write a short review of this book for the last couple of days, but I've been distracted by the need to write about Bible translation.

The bottom line is that you almost certainly should buy and read The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith by Christopher Wright. The *caveat* is that he doesn't look at every tough question, nor does he come up with neat one word answers to the ones he deals with.

In four sections, Dr Wright looks at the problem of evil, the genocide of the Canaanites, the cross and the end times.



This is an earthy, realistic and pastoral book which doesn't seek to shirk the uncomfortable questions that it deals with. Yes, it is hard to understand why a loving God would allow evil, would ordain the death of the Canaanites or cause his own Son to die on the cross. In plain and straightforward language Dr Wright takes our hand and walks us through the difficult questions. The book combines scholarship of the highest order with a keen pastoral insight. He doesn't give easy answers, because there are no easy answers to be given. But he does help us to see how applying the whole of the Scriptures to difficult issues brings a degree of clarity and understanding.

If you have not been following the debate about the nature of the atonement that has occupied so many people of late, the section on the cross will help you. Wright explains what it was that Steve Chalke said that upset so many people. Wright doesn't hedge on this question, he knows what he believes and why and he sets it out clearly. But he doesn't indulge in the name calling that has sadly typified much of the online comment on this.

For my money, the best bit of the book is the section on the end times. If you don't have the time or energy to ready Surprised by Hope there can be no excuse not to read the fifty pages that Wright spends on this subject.Â He has strong words for those who get their understanding of the last things from the *Left Behind* series or similar.

> *There are many strong and very different convictions about these things held by many sincere people. And in my life as an Old testament teacher I have come up against many of them one way or another. It is not easy to swim against the tide of such popular convictions. There is also a massive weight of poular assumptions, books, movies, websites and muti-million dollar promotion - all of which give some end times scenarios an air of infallibility and inevitablity. The are just so powerfully persuasive in the way they are dressed up.*

> *But it is tragic if Chrisitans take their beliefs more from fictional novels and even comics and Hollywood movies than from a careful study of the Bible itself and of the solid tradition of Christian faith through the ages of the church. we need to ask whether our beliefs in these matters are shaped bht eh recent popular "folk Christianity" in our surrounding culture, or by thoughtful understanding of the Bible for ourselves.*

That last paragraph is worth the price of the book on its own. You can hear Chris Wright talking about the book here, but don't let that stop you buying the book.