PURSUIT OF A THIRSTY FOOL

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Missionary biographies have had a huge impact on me. I suspect that if I'd never come across the stories of people like Jim Elliot and Isobel Kuhn, my life would have taken a very different path. That being said, I now struggle with the genre. Over the last fifty years the world has changed and the church is far more diverse and multi-cultural than ever before, yet missionary biographies still tend to focus on the role of the Western expat. Books which give a good, holistic picture of the world church are few and far between (Kingdom Without Borders: The Untold Story of Global Christianity, is probably the best).

If you are looking for a missionary biography which gives a broad picture of the world church, Pursuit of a Thirsty Fool is not the book for you, but nor is it a typical missionary biography either. To be honest, the fact that the author, T. J. MacLeslie, is a missionary is more or less incidental to the book. This is a story about a man's lifelong, turbulent, relationship with the Triune God.

At first the story seems a familiar one; a young man from a Christian family goes off the rails, turns to drink and drugs and then discovers that God is real and cares about him. But there is a twist; he is uncompromisingly honest about the struggles in his family and church - the things which caused him to reject Christianity. This is not comfortable reading.

The story doesn't turn a corner with his conversion either. It isn't simply a case that the lights switch on, Jesus comes into his life and every day from then on in is a happy day. He continues to struggle. In other words he is a real Christian, someone who knows what it is to be seduced by the false gods of success and human recognition. Most people who read this book will find themselves at some point in its pages, whether we have the same honesty and trusty in our heavenly Father to deal with the issues is another question.

T.J. MacLeslie is a work in progress. He isn't perfect by the end of the book, far from it. In fact the book comes to a rather abrupt end because who knows what the next chapter will be?

This is a brutally honest book about one man's struggle to walk faithfully and humbly with his God, but much more than that, it is a glorious picture of God's willing and gracious acceptance of those who seek to follow him through Jesus Christ.

There aren't many Christian books that are so gripping that I read them in one sitting on a Saturday afternoon - this one is! Buy it.