THE SOUL SURVIVOR YOUTH BIBLE

Posted on August 16, 2012 by Eddie

Categories: Bible & Mission, Reviews

Hodder and Stoughton have kindly sent me a copy of theÂ NIV Soul Survivor Youth Bible to review.

In their blurb, Amazon write:

> *With over 500 extra bits from the team and young people at Soul Survivor and other well-known experts, the NIV Soul Survivor Youth Bible digs deep into the Bible - its key themes, the big stories that run all the way through, the wisdom, stories and human lives that we can learn from. It also shows what the Bible has to say about things that we all face today, from tough life and world issues to the questions you really hope your mates don't ask.*
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> *'We've asked tough questions (like, 'Why does God allow suffering?' and 'What's Leviticus all about?!') as well as tackling important issues that we face today (like relationships, terrorism, money).There are different streams on each topic for individual or group study, Bible reading plans, helpful facts and accessible stories. In short, we've packed every last thing that we could into these pages- and we've banned all jargon so it all makes sense!'*

The first question that I might be expected to ask is whether there is need for yet another English Bible. However, this is not a new translation - it uses the NIV text - but a new edition with various helps to Bible reading and study included. If this gets people reading God's Word, I'm all for it.

This Bible is currently only available in hardback, which makes for a nice solid book, but I'm not sure how well it will be adapted to a life of being stuffed into backpacks and carried around. Sometimes paperback Bibles can put up with a nomadic life better than hardbacks. The cover has a three colour dramatic design with the Soul Survivor name and logo prominently displayed; it certainly isn't your standard 'Bible-black'. While the cover isn't a big issue, I do think that the prominent 'Soul Survivor' branding could be a mixed blessing. It will certainly be attractive to the large number of young people who are associated with Soul Survivor, but it may alienate those who have no contact with the movement. This would be a shame, because this really is a very good 'youth Bible'.

The extra materials; study guides, introductions and such like, are all clearly set apart from the biblical text and, for the most part, don't distract from reading the Bible itself, which is undoubtedly a good thing. That being said, the quality of the 'extra material' is generally very good. Each biblical book is preceded by a short introduction explaining what the book is about and why we should read it. These introductions are short, pithy and they were written for young people just getting to grips with the Bible, not for specialists in biblical studies. No doubt, it would be possible to pick holes in them, but that would be to miss the point. They set out to do a simple job and they do it well. I wish I'd had these introductions available to me 35 years ago. At the end of the Bible there is a short study guide to the Bible and a list of verses to look at in particular situations.

One particularly helpful concept is the 'Walks'; these are guided series of readings touching on essential topics in the Bible. Each of these walks has fourteen passages to read and takes you

through a subject such as the life of Jesus, or the journey to the promised land. I reckon that each of these walks could provide excellent material for a term's talks or studies for a church youth group.

Scattered through the Bible are individual articles on subjects such as giving, prayer, evangelism and such like. These articles don't avoid the tough questions and there are pieces on hell and genocide. As you would expect, the quality of these articles is variable; some are excellent, most are good and one or two could do with rewriting - but I'm being picky.

On a lighter note, there are some great little pieces which are not very deep, but which would grab the attention of the intended readership. Who could resist a study of the most disgusting meals in the Bible?

Overall, I think that this is an excellent edition of the NIV. I'm not sure whether the Soul Survivor branding is a good idea or not. It will certainly help people who have attended the various manifestations of Soul Survivor to pay attention to their Bibles, but it might also alienate others who would benefit from this great youth Bible. Just being a little picky, unless I missed something, the issue of world mission doesn't really get adequate coverage though some of the trendier causes of the day do get a mention.

If you are looking for a Bible to give to a young person, I strongly suggest that you go out and give the Soul Survivor Youth Bible a look. Now that I've finished writing this, I'm going to go and give my review copy to our Youth department!