BOOKS I HAVE READ: CROSSING CULTURES IN SCRIPTURE

Posted on February 13, 2017 by Eddie

To be honest, I don't know a better introduction to the practice of cross-cultural mission.
Category: Reviews

If you are involved in training missionaries or encouraging people to get involved in cross-cultural mission then you need to buyÂ Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice. Please don't argue with me, don't even bother to read the rest of this short review. Just go and buy it.

This is a medium format paperback book, of around 300 pages and will set you back around fifteen pounds for the paperback and about eight pounds fifty for the Kindle format. As you might have gathered, I think it is pretty good.

Starting at Genesis and working through to Revelation, the book picks up on a number of cross-cultural encounters (36 in all) and draws lessons from them for contemporary cross-cultural mission.Â At this point, let me mention a slight quibble that I have with the book; there are times when to my reading the link between the biblical passage and the contemporary lesson is slightly forced. However,Â thisÂ is only a slight quibble and it shouldn't put you off getting hold of a copy.

The book falls into three sections, an introduction to culture (which is basically Genesis 1-12), the Old Testament and the New Testament. Each of these sections has a short introduction and then a series of chapters which chart a particular cross-cultural interaction in the Bible.

Each chapter has a broadly similar structure.

- The Scripture passage in focus is quoted in full (which means that you don't have to read the book with a Bible to hand).
- There is a short story from contemporary mission life which illustrates the issue which the chapter addresses.Â These stories break the chapter up and help the book flow. However, more importantly, they do a great job of illustrating some of the difficult issues that missionaries can face, from sexual temptation to the difficulties in dealing with intransigent officials.
- The Setting, is a brief overview of the context of the passage that is being discussed.
- The meat of each chapter is in the Cross-Cultural Insights, which get to grips with an issue emerging (see myÂ *caveatÂ* above) from the passage. In thirty six chapters, the author has the space to address a wide range of issues and subjects such as culture-shock, language learning, unreached people and international students are all given an airing. The book roams far and wide over the mission landscape and touches on just about all of the issues that I'd want a book to touch on.
- The chapters endÂ with a Crossing Takeaway; a pithy, short paragraph that gives you one thing to meditate on from the subject that has been covered.

There are charts and quotes from other books scattered throughout and there is a good bibliography at the end for anyone who wants to follow up more.

Who should read this book? It's strength is the breadth of the material it covers and the honestyÂ with which it describes the issues that missionaries can face on the field. However,

covering this breadth of material means that it isn't able to go into any of the issues that it covers in great depth. This means that it isn't really a book for the specialist; though, if I am anything to go by, specialists will enjoy and profit from it. The people I would love to see reading this book are:

- Church leaders and mission committee members. These folks don't have the time to read the in depth about cross-cultural mission and the pitfalls surrounding it. However, this book will go a long way to helping them understand the issues that their mission partners are likely to face and why cross-cultural training is important.
- Cross-cultural workers in training. ThereÂ has been a tendency to shorten the amount of time that cross-cultural workers spend in training.Â Crossing Cultures in ScriptureÂ would make an excellent resource for some of the three month courses that are springing up at colleges around the country. It would also make a good introductory, first-year textbook for those doing BA degrees in preparation for mission work.

There is a guide for a suggested 13 week sermon series which might be of interest to pastors looking at cross-cultural issues in church life. Equally, I think this book could be studied by home-groups and churchesÂ who are looking at how to become more multiculturalÂ here in the UK.

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