



Clarion Review ★★★★☆

RELIGION

A Journey through the Life of Jesus: A Yearlong Devotional Series of the Gospels: Volume I: Days 1-90

Mike Folmer

WestBow Press (Jun 30, 2015)

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Folmer offers considered, researched observations for understanding the word of God through scripture.

In the devotional *A Journey through the Life of Jesus*, Mike Folmer helps Christian readers deepen and strengthen their relationship with God by offering insight into the meaning of the gospel. This book's strengths lie in its excellent structure and its sharing of best practices for a positive and meaningful understanding of God.

The purpose of a devotional is to deepen readers' relationship with God by explaining the Bible; they are guides meant to be read in tandem with the holy book. Folmer's yearlong devotional series is divided into four volumes, and the first book covers days one through ninety. Each day's devotional is numbered, rather than offering a precise start date. This way, a practitioner may begin reading the material immediately, rather than fumble through the book for the corresponding date. The passages all conclude with a "Ponder Point," a question (or two) meant to engage readers in thinking about how that particular portion of scripture can have an impact on daily life. Some questions are more probative than others, and this simply reflects the content of each section. This format is extremely well executed and easy to follow.

Folmer's scholarship is considerable, but for the most part he has managed to keep the writing from veering into academic territory. For each biblical passage, the author explains the main points, then delves into the heart of the teachings and their significance. Some of the sections are better-written than others, and that seems to correlate with portions of scripture that are more complex than others. For example, chapter 37, "A Sabbath Snack," is an attempt to explain the divergence between Moses's laws regarding eating on the sabbath and Jesus's defense of the actions of his hungry disciples. Here, the text gets mired in run-on sentences and awkward turns of phrase. Yet chapter 27, "A Demon Throws a Hissy Fit," is short and sweet and gets right to the point. It wouldn't take much to revise the more challenging chapters to make them easier to follow. Overall, however, the book maintains a clear voice and is accessible to anyone—no academic or theological background required.

Folmer meets his goal of supplementing daily Bible readings by offering considered, researched observations for understanding the word of God through scripture. Bible study groups, Christian youth groups, and individuals interested in strengthening their relationship with God will find this well-organized book to be useful, practical, and intuitive.

BARBARA NICKLES (November 24, 2015)

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