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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ RELIGION

A Rattling of Sabers: Preparing Your Heart for Life's Battles

Greg Bourgond
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Leave it to a retired naval officer turned doctor of divinity to take what he learned from the military and apply it to his ministry. Realizing that so many of the men he was trying to reach through traditional Christian teaching methods just "did not get it," Dr. Greg Bourgond sought a way to reach the hearts of his male students. He believes he found that path by appealing to the warrior within, for, as he writes, "at the heart of a male soul is a hero dying to get out."

A Rattling of Sabers: Preparing Your Heart for Life's Battles is a man's book—a male-focused, military-style field manual for those seeking to combat the inner demons that lead them into temptation. Written like a battle plan, it requires soldiers fighting for their souls to "survey the battlefield" in order to identify their own particular enemies, and then to pick the terrain on which they will confront that foe. Choice of ground is a military maxim of history's great battlefield leaders, and so it is for Bourgond, too, who not only asks his students to take the high ground but to embrace the idea that "values are the hills on which we are prepared to die."

Bourgond punctuates his field manual with references to military-themed movies (*Gladiator*, *The Last Samurai* , even *Robin Hood*) and to martial events in the Old Testament. He also addresses the yearning for camaraderie that lies at the heart of any team or combat unit—how "every man longs to be a part of something larger than himself." It is as part of a fighting squad, he believes, that men can successfully confront and defeat the unacceptable and "live lives of integrity and honor."

"The Bible is full of military metaphors, symbols and stories," explains the author, noting that many of those stories speak to and address the human heart. In one appendix, Bourgond lists the 820 references to the heart found in the Bible and draws upon many of those to support his martial theme. The result is what he calls his "Heart of a Warrior Ministry."

Bourgond writes beautifully, with a style, energy, and grace befitting a man as well educated and experienced as he is (he shares his personal biography with readers in Appendix B). Bourgond is Catholic turned Evangelical Christian, and he writes from that perspective. His enthusiasm and confidence are invigorating and inspiring. Readers familiar with John Eldredge's work will find this guide reminiscent of the *Wild at Heart* book and study series.

Bourgond is on a laudable and high-minded mission to help men save their souls and turn their lives around, and for that he has taken a path familiar to many an order of warrior monks. There is much here about mental discipline and preparation for spiritual combat that would be familiar to a Jesuit, Templar, or Japanese Buddhist Sohei. Readers will learn about giving oneself over to "the joys of battle"—a battle fought for a higher purpose than mere temporal gain.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN (January 3, 2013)

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