

Blessings: A Devotional Inspired by the Imitation of Christ

Alan Carruth

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Hope and security can be found in God, according to Blessings, a devotional with instructions for setting aside beliefs that differ from Jesus's teachings.

Alan Carruth's sensible and straightforward Christian devotional *Blessings* encourages letting go of vain pursuits and pursuing the teachings and ways of Jesus.

Asserting that it is futile to learn the commands of Jesus yet live in a manner that is contrary to them, this book instructs Christians on how to be followers of Jesus through their everyday deeds. It was written for people at all stages of their spiritual walks, regardless of age or background; it encourages them all to heed Jesus's counsel and to embrace the peace, forgiveness, and love found in him. It also discusses the fundamental values that are emphasized in scriptural teachings, including discipline, wisdom, and gratitude, alongside instructions for spiritual development.

Though its suggestions are based on *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, which was written in the early 1400s, the book utilizes familiar, modern language when explaining topics like the need to respect authority, pray for justice, and shun behavior that is rooted in gossip and violence. It also avoids religious jargon in service of being accessible to a wide audience. Still, its advice is too familiar: it contains messages about pursuing divine revelation, living free from everyday anxieties, pursuing spiritual discipline, and hearing godly wisdom. Its encouragements of devotion and love toward others are similarly worn, and it does little to refresh them.

Despite their universal application, many of the book's admonitions are focused within a narrow paradigm of what needs to be done and what a Christian should avoid. As a result, the book often reads like a list of dos and don'ts (*do* pray before acting, *do* commit to overcoming weaknesses, *do not* become obsessed with other people's opinions) with too little specific information or examples to flesh them out; practical steps explaining how these instructions can be followed on a daily basis are absent.

Still, the book's topical chapters are usefully brief and to the point. Their main messages are clear, and their appeals to Christians are appealingly fervent. In encouraging people to look beyond themselves and love others, to be empowered by God's wisdom toward kindness, and to be humble and ready to learn, the book is inspiring.

Blessings is a heartfelt devotional that examines what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

EDITH WAIRIMU (May 8, 2023)

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