Clarion Review

Religion

Destined to Live, Despite Me: Biblical Truths for Suicide Survivors
Yolanda Shanks
Bethany Press
978-0-578-05468-1
Three Stars (out of Five)

Destined to Live, Despite Me promises help to desperate suicide survivors. The reader would expect it to offer spiritual comfort and flashes of insight. Yolanda Shanks' book does offer some comfort but at times is a drift of word clouds that never completely coalesce to rain down wisdom.

Chapters are titled by suicidal thoughts ("Why do I feel so alone?"). And subtitled with religious questions ("Who is God?" and "Can Jesus Save me?"). Neither set of questions seems to address the other, nor are direct answers given for either set of questions. Instead, copious Biblical references are given. Their connection to the questions is unclear, too.

Shanks is strongest when she offers comfort and practical advice and quotes reassuring Biblical passages. She warns the reader that so long as people are apart from God, they are "susceptible to Satan's deceptive tactics," which include suicidal thoughts. Satan wants to distract us before we can receive the gift of salvation. Her solution is simple and practical: "Find a Bible-believing church and ask to be baptized into it." Accept the authority of scripture and believe in absolute biblical truth. She uses this fatalistic approach to build a comforting message. She believes that God created people for a purpose and he knew their end before they were born. And that because of this, one can be joyful and develop an attitude of self worth because of God's love. "We can absorb tremendous hits if we believe that God did not personally single me out to cause me pain and suffering, but instead he personally singled me out to save me," she writes. Early in the book, Shanks testifies to the importance of confronting the source of despair and advises against pretending and building walls of denial. She promotes that the past is past and that you should forgive yourself as God has.

She is less strong when she submits to circular thinking, such as this one: "humans are made of sin and free will. We have the free will to accept God's will." Another weakness is her

employment of fuzzy logic: “Faith is belief in action, but hope is belief that faith really works.” If that doesn’t quite make sense, read on. She clarifies, “Faith is belief in action, but hope is insistent (persistent, adamant, firm, unrelenting, resolute) belief that faith really works!”

The trinity of God is meant to be her sustaining metaphor. She wants the reader to know that if the existence of a trinity is not explicit in the bible, it is implicit. Her conclusion is strong and clear, but it might have been used to better effect.

In the end, Yolanda Shanks points out that, “When we have hidden God’s Word in our hearts, something unexplainable happens during the seasons of trials in our lives…A *regurgitation* (a flow in the opposite direction to normal, a repetition or reproduction of what has been heard, read, or thought, in a purely mechanical way, with no evidence of personal thought or understanding) of God’s Word occurs.”

Marilyn Berry