ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

SHORT STORIES

I Am Job
Effiong E. Ibok
AuthorHouse
978-1-4490-4354-4
Four Stars (out of Five)

Many religious leaders, authors, philosophers, and everyday people have attempted to answer the age-old question: Why do bad things happen to good people? Effiong E. Ibok, an engineer and born-again Christian, offers his views through narrative. This collection of short stories is an honest look at how to keep faith afloat during trying times. Ibok examines the deep truths at the heart of human suffering.

Each story is told from the perspective of a person experiencing suffering. The first story is the biblical narrative of Job told solely in his voice. The latter stories feature the first-person voices of William Stevens, a Nebraskan farmer whose trouble begins with the loss of his farm; Leonard Milstein, a Jew who converts to Christianity prompting his mother to question his sanity; and Michael Atai, a Nigerian Christian who is plagued by illness and a voice that tells him to blaspheme God.

While the men have different backgrounds and showcase a broad range of human experience, some readers might long for stories from the perspectives of women or children. It is a safe but perhaps wise choice by Ibok, as a male author, to stick to male characters.

Each story is broken up into several chapters, making them easier for readers to digest. The introduction of each character may feel elementary to some readers because the first-person point of view features each man introducing his name and basic biographical information. The writing is clear and basic, but it doesn't reach a level of artfulness or elegance that would make the stories more fully engaging. In addition, the first-person point of view causes the reader to feel far from the action because the narrators are telling their stories in the past tense.

Ibok's stories are a unique and powerful method to examine the question that haunts us all. Readers learn and grow from his narratives, finding not objective answers but strength to carry on. Told from a solidly Christian perspective, the stories will help Christians to grow the simple yet deep faith that will help them persevere through life's trials.

Melissa Wuske