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Integrated Lives: Living the Good News of Jesus

Dale L. Stoll
Harriet Miller, illustrator
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In recent decades, people have run so hard after a few pet doctrines that they have forgotten to balance them with the rest of Scripture. Doctrines taken in isolation can result in an inadequate foundation and a fragmented church. In Integrated Lives, author Dale L. Stoll calls for a return to wholeness and integrity, presenting teachings that are balanced, biblical, and traditional. For example, in a discussion of the process of salvation, at the point of praying to invite Jesus in, he writes, “It is a clear statement of intent, as they pray and invite Jesus in. Is the person saved at this point? Would they go to heaven if they died? The answer—as unsatisfying as it may be—is that we don’t know…a new spiritual birth is the Holy Spirit’s work…We can only give assurance of salvation at this point if our faith is in a formula.”

Stoll, the founder of Radical Restoration Ministries, pastored Tri Lakes Community Church in Bristol, Indiana, for twenty-two years. After reviewing the fragmented state of the Church, he shows the basic division between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God, and how one can become part of the latter. He shows readers how God’s life can restore them to wholeness and how they can develop spiritually and live in relationship with others in the church community.

Stoll faults the Church for oversimplifying and distorting the gospel, reminding Christians that it is the gospel of the kingdom that shall be preached in all the world before the end comes. He writes, “If we want people to…become mature and fruitful followers of Jesus who impact this world, that desire must be reflected in our words and actions.” He points to discipline as means of spiritual development, and reminds that real maturity doesn’t happen in isolation. The true expression of God’s kingdom on earth occurs in community. We find healthy individuality as we “follow Jesus in healthy Christian community, where people take responsibility for their own lives and help each other become all God meant them to be.”

Integrated Lives is not a flashy book. It does not impress with polished statements and dynamic emphases. Even the book’s outline is less clear than it could be, but it will be appreciated for its comprehensive scope and the solutions it presents for today’s distressed churches. According to Stoll, it will take hard work and a more comprehensive approach to discipleship to reach those solutions. This book seems to put it all together. Pastors and church workers who desire real converts, changed lives, and mature relationships in the church would do well to read this book and be guided by its wisdom.

DAVID GEORGE (July 1, 2010)

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