FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥

Surrender to Love: Discovering the Heart of Christian Spirituality

David G. Benner
InterVarsity Press (June 2003)
Unknown $13.00 (120pp)
978-0-8308-2302-4

“This book is about love-not the soft, sentimental kind but the strong, spirit-transforming kind,” writes the author. The distinction is important, since the word “love” can signify different things to different people. To Benner, love is more than an abstract concept, an ideal to strive toward, or even an attitude to adopt. It is nothing less than the central truth of the Christian faith, the subtitle’s “heart of Christian spirituality.”

Although divine love is often well understood by Christians, Benner contends that it needs to be experienced. A seasoned psychologist (as well as a professor of psychology and Director of the Institute for Psychospiritual Health), Benner draws on his own and his clients’ experiences to demonstrate the all-transforming power of divine love.

Too often, Benner argues, Christians fall into the trap of trying to earn God’s approval. However, according to the author, “The Father’s love reflects the Father’s character, not the children’s behavior.” In other words, a person’s moral performance is, with regard to his or her spiritual quest, beside the point. Striving to earn divine approval is the result of an unhealthy fear of God-a fear from which the experience of God’s love can liberate. As Benner writes, “The words of St. John that perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18) communicate an absolutely profound psychospiritual truth.”

In reality, this book is a restatement of ideas about divine love conveyed by many Christian thinkers throughout history, and recently recapitulated in Brennan Manning’s popular book, The Ragamuffin Gospel. Benner’s work, however, is not derivative or unimportant, because he offers a skillful, passionate articulation of thoughts that are profoundly relevant. That he has experienced firsthand their redemptive power adds to the force of his writing.

Each chapter ends with exercises designed to encourage the reader to reflect upon the chapter in greater depth. This makes Surrender to Love perfect for a Bible study or discussion group. Readers who have personally encountered the very real transformational power of divine love will get a welcome reminder of God’s astonishing kindness; readers who have yet to experience it may be challenged to seek a more personal knowledge of the love of Christ.
(June 15, 2003)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author provided free copies of his/her book to have his/her book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love and make no guarantee that the author will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255.