Clarion Review

Biography

The Accidental Christian
Brian Humphreys
978-1-4389-1351-3
Three Stars (out of Five)

Protestant churches all over the world organize “mission trips” for members of their congregations in the hope that their eyes will be opened to need beyond their own doors. Some of these trips take place close to home; some of them take volunteers to foreign lands where everyday life is much different. In these efforts Christianity is present but conversion to Christianity is not the object. The goal is to provide basic necessities to people who suffer through each day.

When author Brian Humphreys joined the Kenyan Mission trip in April 2006 he was an on-again off-again member of the church not very well acquainted with the idea of a mission trip and not familiar with any of the other members of the team. The author who was fifty-seven years old tells readers that going on an adventure was something he had always wanted to do and that he would have gone wherever the church had planned for the group to go.

Humphreys’ daily journal of his trip to Kenya helps the reader understand what a trip like this can entail from visa issues to drinking water problems to latrine visits. For readers who plan to participate in a mission trip for the first time this will prove a valuable “first look” handbook. However any attempt at a spiritual statement with his diary is lost in criticism of the leaders of the trip and the church that sponsored it.

The length of the manuscript and the division of the parts is a bit awkward. The table of contents includes fourteen subtitles under part two most of which are less than three pages. This breakdown should be more compact since it is designed to help the reader navigate the book rather than reflect the writer’s outline.

The photos of the Kenyan people included in the center of the book provide a clearer understanding of the environment in which the mission trip volunteers worked. And for groups interested in fundraising there is a myriad of ideas included here. Appendices of these ideas and helpful resources for planning return trips would have been helpful.

Humphreys' attention to detail has given the reader a chance to ride along with him on this adventure and to experience second-hand what the country and people of Kenya are like. If readers are not spurred to empathy for the Kenyan people it is not the fault of the author. However if the goal is to jostle people out of their complacency and spur them toward great acts of generosity and compassion this text misses the mark.

Joyce Rice