ForeWord Reviews
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CHRISTIAN

The Cure: Prescription for Life
Steve Byrens
Ambassador International
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Four Stars (out of Five)

A guide for Christians to live humbly in a secular world, this book is a thoughtful addition to spiritual literature.

Steve Byrens, a former missionary who graduated from Liberty University, presents an evocative, Gospel-based spiritual guidebook. Penned with evangelical conviction, the book aims to address what the author identifies as a pervasive human ailment: the absence of God in contemporary life.

Byrens begins with reflections on human bravado to illustrate how one's sense of invincibility only lasts until it is challenged, making use of anecdotes—one about an Olympian, one from his own adolescence—to show how youthful bravado leaves people vulnerable to frightening confrontations with their own mortality. These points, sternly conveyed, are likely to find a sympathetic adult readership.

Byrens draws a somewhat shaky line between physical fragility and spiritual vivacity and claims that the moments in which bravado meets reality are determinative in our lives: "When our God-given spiritual needs go unmet, the result is a spiritual cancer—a disease of the soul that is just as fatal and just as deadly as any form of physical cancer." Religious readers may find these metaphors provocative and will be hooked into the following chapters, which make use of the Beatitudes to show how spiritual decrepitude might be addressed.

Byrens holds up religious virtues as the cure: meekness, defined as power held under control, is presented as spiritually medicinal in one chapter, and hunger and thirst for righteousness are encouraged in another. A chapter on mercy reworks the concept from its biblical roots to show that it requires profound empathy.

Such chapters have their appeal, and not just because they encourage fruitful outward work. Byrens's prompts insist on lives directed by kindness, so that one is always both right with God and a light unto others. Questions follow each section's meditation, giving the

impression of study guides and readying readers for subsequent sections.

Amusing parenthetical remarks are sometimes employed, as in the example of Miriam and Aaron in the chapter on meekness; “(here it comes!)” and other allusions to God’s looming rebuke lend the lesson a playful tone.

Byrens’s readings of New Testament texts are decidedly literalist, and not all of his observations will curry favor with readers. Judaism is called a “once great religion” whose “apostasy” stripped it of the ability to proffer hope; a comparison of Miriam’s leprosy to AIDS is made; and Muhammad Ali’s Parkinson’s disease is used to prove his fallibility. Such textual decisions seem clumsy among otherwise well-organized passages and may undermine the power of Byrens’s prose.

These effects are redoubled by chapters that seem to treat Christian theology as monolithic. The chapter on persecution takes for granted Christian positions on a few hot-button political issues and suggests that opposing ideas are themselves oppressive. Christians who disagree with the highlighted stances will find these notions more difficult to swallow, particularly since they are rendered persecutors of their own faith.

Nevertheless, the bulk of Byrens’s work encourages thoughtful and humble living and suggests that interacting with others in an intentionally loving way can be both healing and exemplary. There’s much here to sympathize with, and conservative Christian audiences will likely appreciate Byrens’s inoculation against the spiritually corrosive pulls of a secular world.

Overall, *The Cure: Prescription for Life* is a thoughtful contribution to conservative Christian spiritual conversations.

Michelle Anne Schingler