Clarion Review

Religion

The Father's Call: God's Invitation to Spiritual Intimacy

Jimmy Edwards
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Four Stars (out of Five)

God has always sought a close relationship with mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This relationship, however, quickly soured as the first couple succumbed to temptation, isolated themselves from their creator, and were banished from Eden. God's wrath meant hardship would forever follow humankind. Later in the Bible, author Jimmy Edward writes, "we are introduced to God's gracious, wondrous, and eternal plan to restore intimacy between Himself and man." That's what man's relationship with God is still about today.

A minister with more than twenty-five years of experience, Edwards masterfully relates this yearning for, and ways to find, "intimacy with God" through familiar Biblical stories, contemporary and classic authors, and Jesus' own words. Edwards offers realistic, practical ways for readers to find a closer personal relationship with God, regardless of Christian denomination.

Such intimacy cannot be developed simply through attending a weekend retreat; it must be incorporated into daily life. It involves spiritual discipline (solitude, worship, devotional reading, prayer, and meditation) and most importantly, desire. "I believe that if we are to develop intimacy with God we have to, first and foremost, desire him…There must be a holy hunger, a holy thirst for intimacy with Him," Edwards writes.

Biblical examples show how David and Paul were filled with spiritual desire, and Edwards bolsters his own thoughts and observations with well-documented and meaningful quotes from other authors.

He suggests that scheduled solitude need not be onerous, but perhaps a few minutes set aside in the morning or during the drive to work. Seekers should identify a quiet place, such as a corner of a room, or a backyard swing, and go there faithfully.

Drawing on his academic training and pastoral work, Edwards writes about various types

of devotional study. He advocates devotional reading (not just intellectual study) to absorb the Word into the heart and spirit. Devotional reading, of course, would include Scripture, but also might involve meditation on a hymn.

Each carefully developed chapter concludes with a list of stimulating questions for groups or individuals.

Unfortunately, this otherwise excellent book suffers from distracting typographical, formatting, and proofing problems which are especially evident when it comes to the endnotes. Endnote references in the text should be set in superscript so that they are not confused with lists of points, or with text itself. For example, a name with an endnote reads “Packer1” and a citation for an endnote with a numeral reads “Chapter 2 3.” Standard commas and hyphenation are occasionally missing (“twenty five”), and an index would be useful.

The book is inspirational nonetheless. Edwards understands individuals’ struggles to take that first step in the closer walk, largely because they often feel intensely unworthy. He quotes R. Kent Hughes, who said, “The soul-tingling truth is, if you go after God, He will go after you.”

The Father’s Call should be kept for reference and rereading. There is nothing stuffy about this book; it’s invitational and filled with a sense of joy and possibilities.

Linda Salisbury