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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ BODY, MIND & SPIRIT

The Ride, the Rose, and the Resurrection: A True Story about Crisis, Faith, and Survival

David Charles Stieler
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In the blink of an eye, a life can change. David Charles Stieler's memoir, *The Ride, the Rose, and the Resurrection*, chronicles the life-changing motorcycle accident that injures him and his wife, Carole. His memoir covers David's childhood, his auto-repair business and struggles with retirement, his family, and how he and his wife found faith and survived their personal crisis.

At first, the couple leads a fairly normal middle-class life. Their biggest concerns include how to retire, who will take on David's business, and how they can afford their middle-class lifestyle, their motorcycle, and trips around the country. Stieler's personable voice makes it seem as if he is speaking directly to the reader. For example, readers will feel like the author is talking to them when he recounts his tough childhood with his father, who became an amputee while serving in the military.

The author is careful not to use overly dramatic language to explain the horrific accident that changed his family's life, and his restraint makes the events feel realistic. When Stieler is allowed to visit his wife, he notes that all of the tubes and machines make it seem as though she is "plugged into her room the way an engine is installed under the hood of a car." Carole's injuries become more real because of such symbolism.

Stieler deftly describes living without Carole during her long recovery time as "similar to the way a person continues absentmindedly flipping the light switch during a power outage." And there are other challenges following the accident. For example, a prolonged settlement fight with the insurance company causes financial problems. Stieler also has to deal with his own post-traumatic stress disorder and a rift with his son Jason.

There are many individual moments that help the author find peace: visiting Carole, talking to a therapist, his son moving out, and the relief he feels when he attends a church service. As he writes, "compassion provided a remarkable sense of relief." Stieler has to remind himself that "God provides the shovel," but the couple will have to "do the digging" to fully heal. In the end, the traumatic experience actually leads the couple toward a deepening of their relationship.

While the subject is compelling, the delivery is uneven. The opening five chapters are long, covering Stieler's childhood, marriage, business, and retirement plan. On the other hand, Chapter 6, "Stunned Community," is only five pages long. Fleshing out shorter sections and dividing longer chapters would have better balanced the story. For example, though the author's estrangement from son Jason is a major plot point but the reconciliation between father and son is not fully shown.

Stieler's memoir is perfect for people who want to read an inspiring and realistic tale about overcoming adversity. The author reminds readers never to take life for granted and that recovery isn't only physical. He believes that resurrection can happen when forgiveness, love, and faith meld together. After all, as he writes in the opening sentence, "Nobody wants to be unhappy." The couple's accident serves as a wakeup call and sets them on a new life course.

LISA BOWER (June 25, 2013)

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