

## Walking Closer

**Jonathan Temple**

Quippy Quill

(90pp)

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*Walking Closer is an earnest monthlong devotional for Christians that focuses on trust and faith over fear.*

Jonathan Temple's Christian devotional *Walking Closer* suggests a daily practice that reflects one's faith in God.

Proclaiming that God is with people at all times and is loving and merciful, and rejecting mere obedience, overwhelming feelings of sinfulness, and the fear of hell as motivations for the faithful, this is an encouraging devotional. Its work seeks to welcome God's spiritual presence and guidance in one's daily life, via thirty-one devotionals designed for a full month of Christian contemplation. Each day's work begins with a description of a point of focus, followed by related biblical verses. Explanations of what was meant to be taken from the readings follow; then come directions for interpretation. Prayers calling on Jesus for guidance conclude each exercise.

But in their concision, the interpretation sections take on the flavor of platitudes, repeating ideas such as that Jesus walks with believers every day. They end up stifling individual interpretation; the messages assume a heavy-handed quality that feels unwelcoming. Furthermore, the book's messages are too repetitive to hold interest, reiterating encouragements to trust in God's presence, to understand that one cannot know the full plan, and to allow God in. These overwhelm more singular foci, as on Jesus's devotion to the poor, denouncement of material wealth, and forgiveness for all who have sinned.

The descriptions that start each daily exercise also range in quality. The book is adamant about its central assertion of God's everyday presence, but such claims are made without connecting to contemporary concerns; there's little in the text that reflects its twenty-first-century footing, making it feel distant and out of touch. Some descriptions explain stories from the Bible, including those of Jesus and David, but their takes on original sin, the crucifixion, and overcoming adversity are simultaneously tranquil and unsurprising. Some metaphors are included that better connect the book to modern concerns: the book notes that world-class distance swimmer Florence Chadwick gave up a half mile before shore because she could not see through the mist, linking her situation to the mists of life (or, times when people cannot see God's plan) and saying that faith is necessary to reach one's goals. Not all such examples are compelling, though, as with a comparison of a man's trust in his truck's horsepower to one's trust in God.

An earnest monthlong devotional for Christians, *Walking Closer* shares material to direct one's personal contemplation on internal peace.

ALI ORTIZ (March 28, 2024)

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