

Mission on the Outside

Andrew Francis

Wow! Written with an earthy and rather humorous Aussie style a bit reminiscent of David Kossoff, I found this book engrossing, challenging and yet sometimes it brought me to the verge of tears. Andrew takes us through the story of the woman at the well in Luke 4 phrase by phrase. Throughout he points us to Jesus and his way of approach and communication with the woman at the well and in doing so leads us to see the way, like Jesus, we can relate to the outcasts, the hurting and the damaged in our society.

Andrew draws from his own experience of ministry in the gay bars in his city. He describes people, conversations and outcomes that line up with the particular sections of the Luke story he is illustrating. He points out the shortcomings of church growth seminars, evangelism programs and crusade evangelism and encourages us to radically see and emulate the way Jesus met with, accepted and shared with 'sinners' in a far more down-to-earth and personal way.

This is not a book you will enjoy if you are not serious about wanting to take on the imperative of the call to seek out those God is wanting us to reach in order to demonstrate the Kingdom. If you do, you will be changed I believe! The book is hard-hitting as Andrew cuts through the ways of milk sop approaches and pushes us to see what Jesus actually did and said and the implications they have for us.

However, Andrew's approach is not harsh as we often feel his heart and sensitivity in the things he shares. On P. 58 I quote –

"I remember a young lady who came to live with my wife and me. She had been a prostitute since she was 13 and a drug addict even longer. She sat opposite me on our veranda one day and asked me a question that nearly floored me. "Why do you bother with someone like me?" After I'd had a chance to really consider her question and get beyond its sad implication, I realised the answer was quite simple: "Because someone bothered with someone like me."

Towards the end of the book, Andrew highlights the openness of the Samaritan woman compared to the Jews who found it so difficult or even opposed Jesus and the message of the Kingdom. He sees a parallel in the way Christians so often oppose fresh approaches God calls people to fulfil for the Kingdom's sake. So often the hurting and the ones in the margins of our society are more open to God than those lumbered with pre-conceived Christian baggage who will hinder and persecute those with fresh revelation or called to a different approach to the Kingdom's outreach.

This would be a great book for those wanting to step out of their comfort zones, to find the 'wells' in their society, and to sit and relate with those who think God hates them because of their lifestyle and damage. "God so loved the world..." Andrew reminds us. Again I quote from the book on P.67 –

"I am just as convinced that the encouragement, joy and sense of God we experience ...must be shared with others who remain outside our gatherings. To keep God's blessings to ourselves must ultimately be anti-Gospel when God's intentions since Creation and expressed directly to Moses is that God has blessed us so that through us all nations on earth will be blessed." (Gen 12:2-3)

Editor