

# Book Reviews: Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World

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**Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World** by Michael Horton (Zondervan)

☒ How would you feel if you reached the end of your life without achieving anything remarkable? A strong aversion to the ordinary resides in many people today—Christians included. The pressures of modern culture call for individuals to leave behind a legacy that sticks, one marked by influence, impact and difference-making. As a result, a pervading sense of restlessness has crept to the surface of life.

No stranger to the struggle, Michael Horton, professor of systematic theology and apologetics at Westminster Seminary California, confronts the issue in his recent book, *Ordinary*. He argues ordinary life leads to the discontentment of unfulfilled expectations when it becomes anything less than sacred. With wise counsel, he points to the gospel to show how an idolatrous pursuit of radical faith leads to disillusionment, a sure consequence when personal ambition outweighs love for neighbor. The world already has its hero—Jesus Christ, the Son of God who left behind his glory to become flesh and rescue humanity through obedience to the Father.

For this reason, ordinary does not equate to mediocrity. God has invaded all of life, redefining the conditions of existence as Christians derive their individual purpose from the fact God is near throughout the daily routine. “Everydayness” gives way to profound moments when it flows from the

fount of God's abiding presence. Horton's work revitalizes the downcast through a simple truth: God delights in using ordinary means to accomplish his extraordinary purposes.

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**Stumps and Sweet-Smelling Soap by Helen C. Lane (Westbow Press)**

Sometimes it feels good to go home again and visit people who have loved Jesus and witnessed for him during their lifetimes. Such is the feeling when reading *Stumps and Sweet-Smelling Soap*, Helen C. Lane's memories of her life as a Baptist minister's wife in congregations from Montana to Mexico. As a mother of five and grandmother of 12, who also had a career as a medical-office manager, Lane's rich experiences offer a book-length supply of anecdotes and lessons in trusting God and following the Bible's teachings through life's trials and triumphs.

Each short message gives a Scripture reference, brief narratives and explanation of a biblical principle. Lane does not hesitate to address today's issues and how the Bible advises believers to view such topics as tolerance, respect and parenting. She presents the plan of salvation regularly in a clear and inviting way that can be a script for personal witnessing.

From the icy chill of North Dakota winters and the beautiful wildlife she reveres to crime in Mexico, Lane relives her life as a minister's wife in a loving and dedicated testimony. *Stumps and Sweet-Smelling Soap* is a pleasure for anyone who longs to hear the story of Jesus retold in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Alice Stone Thomas

Conroe