

Reviews: Books on the cross, fathers and sons, and the image of God

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To the Cross

By Christopher J.H. Wright (IVP)

“Preaching about the cross of Christ is one of the greatest privileges and responsibilities any preacher can have,” Christopher J.H. Wright writes in the preface to this book. Yet for the veteran preacher—and the veteran congregant—it can begin to seem like you’ve already heard everything there is to say on the subject.

As if in response to that conundrum, *To the Cross* offers fresh, biblical  insights into familiar stories. Each chapter is a sermon Wright preached to his congregation at All Souls Church in London, beginning with the Last Supper and concluding with Jesus’ final words from the cross.

Particularly enlightening is the way Wright connects Old Testament passages to the events of the cross. In doing so, he eloquently depicts the cross as the fulfillment of a plan for salvation that stretched back long before Bethlehem.

Preachers and teachers also may be interested in the appendix, where he briefly describes his process in preparing each sermon. But whether pastor or layperson, any Christian will find something to appreciate in this slim book—and perhaps even learn something new about a story so familiar.

Daniel Camp, pastor

Shiloh Baptist Church

Crawford

We Stood Upon Stars

By Roger W. Thompson (Waterbrook)

✘ Fishing and camping outdoors in the national parks of western America is the backdrop for *We Stood Upon Stars*, a collection of essays that reads like pithy prose poems. Written by Roger W. Thompson, a successful entrepreneur and adventurer, it is a memoir of a father of pre-teen sons who attempts to implant in them his Christian faith, along with his love, understanding and reverence for nature's magnificence.

Thompson's poetical style appeals to the senses. He describes mountains standing "as pinnacles tickling the feet of heaven." He engages all the senses, writing how the "silence of crisp winds gave way to roosters and birds." Along the way, he drops in philosophical observations, such as: "A boy's dream is for himself. A man's dream is for others" (p. 67). Theological statements pepper the essays: "Death is a road best ridden with no regrets and with relationships restored. With an understanding of who our God is and a peace that we know him." Love, loss, joys, fears and accomplishments are expressed through generational stories told with humor and wisdom.

We Stood Upon Stars leads the reader to say with Thompson, "This is what lasts forever: character and faith passed from generation to generation."

Alice Stone Thomas

Conroe

Killing Us Softly: Reborn in the Upside-Down Image of God

By Efrem Smith (Navpress)

Efrem Smith, teaching pastor at Bayside Midtown Church in Sacramento, Calif., and president of World Impact, an urban-missions and church-planting organization, pens this work about how to have an upright image of God and the gospel message.

Comparing the lack of a relationship with Christ to being in the upside-down image and world, Smith guides readers through the correct steps to get to the right-side-up world and relationship.

A right-side-up remnant occupies the upside-down world, Smith notes. The world's upside-down status can be corrected only by the remnant bringing the rest of the world to faith and helping them grow in Christ.

However, the individual has to die to self, hence the title, *Killing Us Softly*. Smith goes on to explain Christian maturity and love are the only forces that advance the kingdom of God.

The book is bathed in urban culture. It is a wonderful tool to see how anyone in an upside-down relationship and world can enter the right-side-up relationship and world.

Skip Holman, minister of discipleship

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