

Ruffle, Douglas. *A Missionary Mindset: What Church Leaders Need to Know to Reach Their Community, Lessons from E. Stanley Jones*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2016. 191 pp. \$17.00.

The lengthy title to Douglas Ruffle's new book gives helpful insight into the multiple purposes that the author wants to accomplish in his text. First, as a former missionary and local church pastor, he desires to exhort his readers to be more missional in their lives and ministries. Second, as the current Associate Director of Path 1, the United Methodist agency that oversees new church starts, he wants to provide helpful practices for being more missional both for individuals and congregations. Finally, someone who was aided by the writings of E. Stanley Jones, he wants to introduce Jones to his readers.

The order in which the different emphases are listed in the title give a good clue to how much time Ruffle spends on each item in the book. It is clear that his primary concern is to raise traits that Christians need in order to be missional. The practices tend to show up in brief descriptions at the end of each section, often delivered through anecdotes. References to Jones, beyond the early chapter introducing him, are intermittent and almost exclusively focus on specific practices or teachings of Jones that support ideas Ruffle wants to make. Someone looking for a book specifically on E. Stanley Jones will be disappointed with this text and would do better to look elsewhere.

What readers will find in this book is a heartfelt call based on Ruffle's personal ministry experience for us to be transformed into faithful missionaries. Implicit in this is the idea that all Christians can be missionaries in whatever context where we already live, so all Christians need to seek the mindset that Ruffle describes.

Ruffle contends that there are eight "right ways" to reach our communities, and he dedicates a chapter to each: prayer using a variety of spiritual disciplines, self-awareness by

learning to tell our own stories, listening to others in a way that we can be affected by them, humility toward others by seeking their help, love by reaching out to meet others' needs, planting churches, focusing on the Kingdom of God, and trusting in the power of God.

As the list of “right ways” suggests, Ruffle teeters between prompting readers to grow in their Christian maturity (self-awareness, humility, love, trust) and recommending specific missionary practices (prayer, listening, planting churches, focusing on the Kingdom). This could lead to some confusion as to who the audience for this book is. At times it seems more like a guide for spiritual formation and at other times a description of evangelistic best practices. This is likely an accurate presentation of what Ruffle himself found necessary to be an effective missionary, but that also makes the presentation somewhat erratic. There is no strong theory or historical narrative aside from the author's own life experiences, to explain why we are introduced to the “right ways” as we are.

One possible reason Ruffle finds himself slipping between formation and practices is because The United Methodist Church in which he ministers is part of what Ed Stetzer refers to as the “squishy middle” of American Christianity. In such a context, the need to call people to grow in grace and to provide basic practices for how to live missionally makes sense. However, it does lack the focus of evangelical texts addressing these concerns or the academic depth to ground its recommendations. The result is a well-meaning book that includes several good ideas and much good advice, but never quite lives up to what it promises in its titles.

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