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Gustafson's "Gospel witness: Evangelism in word and deed" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Gustafson, D. M. (2019). *Gospel witness: Evangelism in word and deed*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 156 pp. \$19.17. ISBN 9780802876805

David M. Gustafson is chair of the mission and evangelism department at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. His thesis in, *Gospel Witness*, is to provide “a framework of missional ecclesiology that is applied to our increasingly post-Christian contexts in the West” (p. xi). In order to support his thesis, he argues that “we must engage in gospel praxis by speaking the good news in words and demonstrating it with deeds” (p. xi). Now more than ever, he desires for Christians to think like missionaries “as we seek to bring the good news to others” (p. xi). In addition, he credits the composition of this volume to both word and deed, as he honors the experts of mission and evangelism, he has had the pleasure of studying under for many years (p. xi). He also credits the thousands of people he has shared the gospel with throughout the years, noting, “I have listened to their responses and questions. I have learned from them” (p. xi). Ultimately, for Gustafson “The church lives its identity through participation in the sending activity of the triune God. The church’s nature is rooted in the theology of *Missio Dei*, the mission of God” (p. 7). As followers of Christ invite others into a relationship with Him and one another (p. 7).

The content of *Gospel Witness* fits within a particular theological framework for Gustafson (p. 11). At the foundation of this framework is the Bible, which is the “final rule of Christian faith and practice” (p. 11). Next, he appeals to “a theoretical framework that draws on the knowledge of people, human cultures, and local contexts,” while taking into consideration the “influences of social location and the larger sociocultural context” (p. 13). This does not undermine the biblical foundation of his framework. However, it does expose his desire to incorporate a theological method that permits human experience to speak into the development of gospel proclamation in a post-Christian context. Finally, for Gustafson, “we practice gospel proclamation in specific contexts” (p. 14). He calls this, *Form in Praxis*, and means that the gospel “is something we do, not something we consider” (p. 14). Gustafson argues, “Praxis allows for assessment, which in turn leads to a deeper theological reflection and reshaping of praxis” (p. 14).

Gustafson has achieved his goal, the book is clear and well-documented throughout with footnotes and a bibliography. *Gospel Witness* is a reference book that will serve as a helpful textbook for those interested in missiology and evangelism. Churches and academic institutions might find the discussion questions at the end of each chapter to be helpful for discipleship and training purposes.

Reviewer

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