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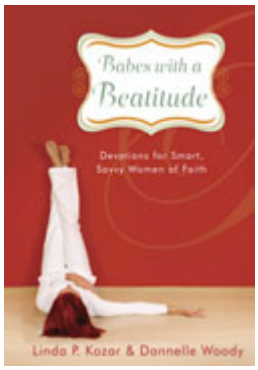
Ditzy chick lit for Christian chicks

Melissa Musick Nussbaum | Oct. 16, 2010



BABES WITH A BEATITUDE: DEVOTIONS FOR SMART, SAVVY WOMEN OF FAITH
By Linda P. Kozar and Danielle Woody
Published by Howard Books, $14.99

To speak of the ineffable God is to speak in figures. God is like ... God is like a mothering bird. God is like a good shepherd.

We do not mean that God is a robin or a nomad. We mean that these images are as close as halting human language will allow us to the One who is beyond words, beyond images, beyond our ability to know or to say.

But the analogies themselves must be sturdy enough to bear even the shadow of the divine, the merest whisper of the Spirit. The analogies should not be disposable nor should they be clumsy. The analogies may be strange. They may be shot through with pain, for the losses God allows, or ordains, that bring us, trembling, to our knees.

And the analogies we use when we speak of God must not be stupid, which brings us to Linda P. Kozar and Danielle Woody?s unfortunate work, *Babes With a Beatitude*. The ?savvy? in the subtitle leaves behind the pregnant and unwed Mary, the Mother of God, the lion-shredded Felicity and Perpetua as well as a host of other holy women, as the ?babes? march on with, judging from the cover art, toned abs, thickly perfect hair and really great-fitting jeans.

The book -- I use the term loosely -- is set out as a series of daily positive thoughts. Kozar and Woody are writing chick lit for Christian chicks. They write as if the domestic is petty, and the daily merely amusing or annoying.

There is no sense of the holiness of ordinary time. Christian households are part of a cosmic sitcom, with God as the paterfamilias, often bemused, a little confused and always ready to fix the car ditzy mom has wrecked. Those crazy girls!

In January, the authors speak of God: ?He is the Super Glue that makes broken pieces whole again.? This, in the context of a woman who has lost both ?a precious daughter? and, in the ?when it rains it pours? category, ?a valuable vase.?

?Bigger, faster, stronger -- God is the ultimate lineman,? we are told in February. God as football lineman, that is, not telephone repairman.

Though we do learn in June that ?the Word of God is like those wires, connecting the vital facts of our faith. His Word stretches from the beginning to the end ... and the electrical current that flows through those lines is the power of God unto salvation.? And no pressing 1 for English or 2 for Spanish!

Still later in the month, God is introduced, not as a telecommunications giant, but as a Big Lots! bargain, ?the find of a lifetime that every seasoned shopper must look for.?

Sometimes the analogies work by way of what a thing is not. The authors tell us in April, ?Good without God is just a zero.? Actually, I think ?good without God? is just the letter O, but I see how that moves the analogy from silly to pointless.

By summer we are introduced to God who ?can cure the inside hurts just as a hairstylist can ... handle that bad hairdo.? Jesus died to save us from the eternal bad perm, and other tales of faith.

The seasons pass, though, alas, not quickly enough. Here are some highlights:

- It?s important to eat right and exercise. ?For some of us, getting off the couch and onto a treadmill is as monumental as Neil Armstrong taking those first steps on the Moon.?
- The mind and the soul need spinach, too, and vigorous hikes through the metaphorical woods.
- Satan is a shark swimming off the Florida coast.
- Job needed better friends.
- ?There?s nothing like the blended voices of a barbershop quartet.? But Satan doesn?t like Christians ?singing from the same sheet of music.?
- Parents often behave badly at Little League games.
- Americans eat too much from Thanksgiving Day to New Year?s Day.
- Elijah was ?down in the dumps? when the king decided to hunt him down and kill him.
- ?Halloween is a perfect occasion to hand out candy and Bible-story coloring books.? Putting this house right up there in popularity with the householders who hand out dental floss, small boxes of raisins, and tracts on the evils of high-fructrose corn syrup.
- ?Being flexible is one thing; being a pushover is quite another.?
- God doesn?t care if a woman colors her gray hair. No word on men and hair dye. ?Don?t ask; don?t tell,? would be my guess.
- Satan pitches curve balls. God is a strong team captain. ?With God on our side, we can swing and never miss.? And, don?t forget, dear reader, God lettered in two sports.

If, as these authors recall doing, you buy lunch for a woman dressed in duct tape and lying on a duct tape-covered pillow in the parking lot of a McDonald?s, you may find ?the burger, fries and coffee lobbed back at you like fast-food bombs.? You may also find that ?something is obviously very wrong with this woman, something fast food could not remedy.?

Indeed. Though God, were he like a burger, would surely be a Whopper or a Big Mac, there are some things fast food, or its literary equivalent, cannot remedy.

And there many things McWriting cannot convey, such as the mystery we approach when we speak about God.

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