

III Chronicles

Darlene Klingensmith

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Darlene Klingensmith's testimonial memoir *III Chronicles* concerns Christian faith and a life with God.

Conceived of as a follow-up to the biblical books of I and II Chronicles, which tell stories about God's interactions with people, this book makes an effort to relate "the Trinity's interaction" with Klingensmith specifically. Born and raised near Pittsburgh, she grew up with five siblings in the 1940s; her mother was abusive, and as a child she felt lonely and bewildered. She recalls her brothers and sisters being abused with particular severity; strong, detailed descriptions of these verbal and physical abuses impart a sense of how her personality was shaped by what she witnessed and endured.

Despite its sobering descriptions of such hardships, though, the book's joyful memories are more prominent. After graduating, Klingensmith worked as a long-distance telephone operator and for the United States Postal Service. Later, she was ordained by the Presbyterian Church (USA) and began serving in various churches across the United States.

Even more than these personal details, this short book focuses on imparting a sense of how personal belief develops. Klingensmith says that meeting Jesus gave her life; her efforts to live one day at a time direct the book's organization and progress. Each chapter is prefaced by words from the Bible to set the scene; these act as a loose parallel commentary on the events of Klingensmith's life. Memories and anecdotes from her childhood and adulthood are dissected for connections to the idea that God cared for her, protected her, and kept her sane despite "feelings of rejection." The book asserts that God still cares for Klingensmith in the same way today. A compelling account of "distinctly and very explicitly" encountering God at the age of three is a microcosm of these larger efforts; it is succeeded by similar recollections of other instances of meeting God again.

Though this is quite personal work, it's also work founded on the conviction that its chronicle is "not unique." It asserts that all who follow God will find fulfillment in their lives and that, while her experiences are different from those of other people, all "journeys with the Lord" bring possibilities for growth. But in reaching to embrace all people's stories as similar to its, the book also undermines the particularity of its own work. Further, the book is prone to assuming familiarity with its concepts to the extent that some of its passages are vague; religious terms are included without enough context, holding the audience at a distance.

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ANNA MARIA COLIVICCHI (April 18, 2023)

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