



The Wonder of it All

Helen Goldie

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Life: God's Plan gently captures the complexities of church work in the modern era.

In her tender memoir, *Life: God's Plan; The Wonder of It All*, Helen Goldie finds God's handwork in the everyday.

Goldie was a year old when the stock market crashed, impacting everyone in her hometown of Brantford, Ontario. Goldie's father was working for the Canadian railroad at the time; they struggled, as everyone did. Even amid such tough times, Goldie finds wonder. Her book explores the various ways that God's love and care impacted her over a lifetime. Repeatedly, Goldie seeks the fingerprints of the divine in her life.

Beginning with Goldie's childhood, the narrative follows her into marriage in the 1950s, and into her husband Archie's world mission work with the Baptist church. Her portrait of Archie captures a gifted pastor and leader who sought to bring Jesus's word and message into a needy world.

The husband-and-wife team made frequent trips abroad, and their story also speaks to the challenges of raising a family while juggling a career and contending with standard difficulties. All incidents come together to form a sweet story of love, music, and living in service to God. The book tries hard to balance the specifics of ministry with the historical moment, sometimes resulting in dry passages.

Archie's star rises in the Baptist world as the book progresses. His changing positions in the Department of Canadian Missions provide insight into Baptist churches from many countries.

Some of the world's humanitarian and geopolitical crises, particularly in Eastern Europe and Russia, are also addressed with personal insights, as Goldie's husband's work took them to places like communist Russia and to Poland for a tour of the Nazis' camps. Goldie contrasts such encounters, which included experiences with churches struggling to fill their pews, with her church experiences at home, where some congregations lacked enough children to form a youth group. Hope-filled global lessons are drawn. Methodical passages offer a window into church bureaucracies from Goldie's higher-level, functionary perspective, including thoughts on its governance, ministry activities, and missionary work.

The book is organized chronologically, with each chapter representing a pivotal milestone in Goldie's life. The narrative is engaging as it moves beyond the particulars of family and place to find hope and opportunity in situations that others might consider tragic. Clear details and fluid pacing help to deliver events in a compelling way.

Goldie paints a clear picture of how life in the local church can help to fulfill a wider church mission. Church people in the book are sometimes judgmental, sometimes kind, and other times healing beyond words. This textured portrayal is useful when considering the contemporary church, and helps show how Goldie came to possess her overarching sense of wonder.

This gentle memoir captures the complexities of church work in the modern era.

JEREMIAH ROOD (January 30, 2019)

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