

## The Hole in Our Gospel by Richard Stearns

In *The Hole in Our Gospel*, Richard Stearns, President of World Vision, challenges American believers to rethink the gospel message. His approach holds on to the tradition of eternal salvation by faith alone and reclaims the neglected aspect of fullness and victory through the coming of God's kingdom on earth.

Stearns argues that in our good attempts to make the gospel understood, we have narrowed and simplified it, focusing on saving people from hell in the next life. This has short-changed our discipleship and our participation in God's redemptive work, which changes and challenges everything in our fallen world. Stearns desires to broaden our understanding of the gospel and of evangelism as we proclaim the gospel in the world. Specifically, he wants to see American Christians active in not only preaching eternal salvation but bringing Christ's victory to the oppressed and relief to the poor in the world.

*The Hole in Our Gospel* is Scripturally based, focusing especially on Jesus' teachings about the gospel and the kingdom of God and on the prophets' condemnations against Israel, who ignored the poor as they participated in religious ceremonies. Stearns doesn't just reference Scripture, he quotes whole passages, forcing the reader to confront it. In doing so, he also avoids taking ideas out of context or proof-texting his arguments. Stearns also uses his story of how the CEO of Lenox became the CEO of World Vision so that we can see how God works in and through this broken man. He's honest about his shortcomings and fears in taking up this task, with which the reader easily identifies. He peppers his message with stories of leaders throughout the world who know the power of the gospel and puts faces to the poor, who we tend to dehumanize. This combination presents facts heard everyday in fresh ways that makes the reader pay attention.

He follows up his exhortation to flesh out the gospel with practical application, acknowledging that though it may be difficult, the task at hand is doable through the power of God.

Perhaps in his writing Stearns gets repetitive, but the reader can forgive him that. God gets repetitive with this same message throughout the Bible.

Review by Heather A. Goodman