

Pastor Stef's Book Review – October 2017

I take the book reviews in *Christianity Today* so seriously that when I see a book awarded five out of five stars I usually end up purchasing it. How is that for effective advertising? I'm also grateful for my clergy book fund that *Bethany* provides. ☺ In last month's issue of *Christianity Today* John Dunlop's (MD) book ***Finding Grace in the Face of Dementia (2017)*** was given a five out of five rating. So guess what that meant? Yep. I bought it. But it wasn't simply because of the rating it received. The aging of many in our congregation, as well as the aging of my parents, and the ongoing societal issue of euthanasia also motivated me to make this purchase and start educating myself.

John Dunlop is a Christian medical doctor who is board certified in geriatrics and has a Masters degree in bioethics. ***Finding Grace in the Face of Dementia***, however, is not written for other professionals in his field, with all the technical jargon that this usually entails, but in simple language for a common audience. His chapters include stories of his patients as well as sections on areas like the different kinds of dementia, diagnosis, medications, and the importance of things like hospital stays, diet, exercise and maintaining a regular schedule. I found this section of the book (chapters 2 through 5) the most informative personally.

After this Dunlop writes a chapter for those coping with the early stages of dementia and then a chapter for caregivers. One of his major themes for caregivers is self-care and the use of support networks. He follows this up with a couple of chapters to help the reader develop a Biblical and theological perspective on suffering. Here is where I felt most at home in my own area of "expertise" – at least intellectually.

Dunlop concludes his book with a chapter on the ethics around end of life care. Dunlop is against euthanasia, but he is also against lifesaving intervention for those in the late stages of dementia. He admits that not all Christians will agree with him on this, but he discourages interventions, like the use of a feeding tube, treating sepsis, or even the continued use of insulin for those with diabetes, when they are in the late stages of dementia. Prolonging someone's life unnecessarily can actually be cruel and selfish.

This is a helpful book for those who are aging as well as for anyone working with the elderly. It deals with an ugly disease with grace and the ultimate hope that God will, one day, make everything right.