

## Book Review of *The Tides of Life*

by Andrew Nelson, College Church Member

*"The Tides of Life* is about the choices we make in life. Choices that require navigating those changing tides and winds of life as we pursue the right choice and avoid those that will result in harm or failure. For the leader there is often only one choice to make, to lead or mislead." This opening quote sums up the premise of this volume nicely.

In his most recent book, Bill Pollard seeks to encourage biblical leadership and right navigation of all life has to offer as he draws upon his extensive resumé of life experiences and his Christian faith. Pollard spent the majority of his career as CEO of ServiceMaster, a Fortune 500 company in the service industry whose motto included "To Honor God in all We Do". While those familiar with Pollard may immediately consider his business background and assume the book's audience, I found that the principles within its pages were applicable to all walks of life. Admittedly, businessmen may be able to glean more than others from his words when he touches on such topics as boardroom standards and compensation committees, but Pollard's advice and methods ring true across the spectrum of daily living.

His humble tone matches well with the three themes that emerged as I read: service, others and a biblical foundation. However, if I were to order those themes in conjunction with their importance in the book, I would put the idea of a biblical foundation first. From the start, in the lengthy opening chapter, Pollard emphasizes the need for a framework and foundation in dealing with leadership and the tides of life. He asks the following question to set the stage for the rest of the book:

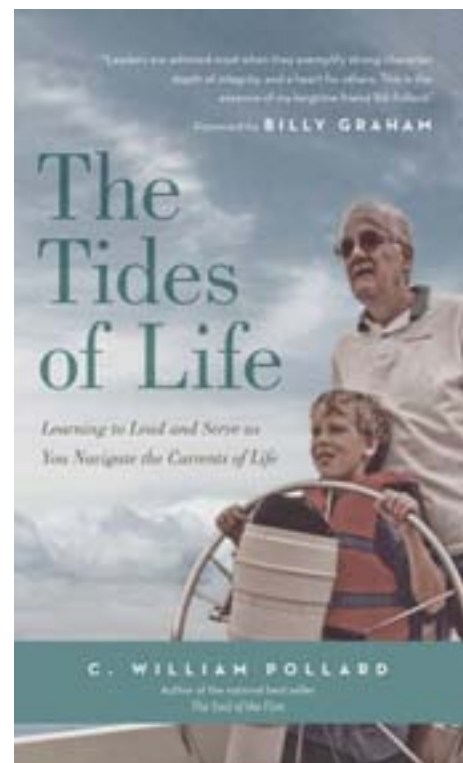
*"What about those choices of life—choices that must deal with the changing tides and winds of life? Is there a framework of learning and understanding that provides a guide for making these choices?"*

He answers his rhetorical question only a few pages later by allowing that, yes, there is a framework and it's his Christian faith. Pollard then moves from the theme of foundation to the theme of others, and his others-oriented mindset can be summed up in chapter 2:

"I have concluded that the only reason I have something that somebody else doesn't have, whether that something is money, possessions, education, talent or opportunity, is not for me to own or control it, but to use, share or invest it so that it will increase and be of benefit to others. My role is that of a steward or trustee, not an owner. God is the owner. Doing good is not to win favor with God or to earn my way to Heaven; instead, it's part of my responsibility and obligation to act within God's plan of fairness with eternity in view."

As mentioned earlier, principles such as these do not need a workplace to be acted upon. In our social media-saturated world of today, we are in sore need of reminders to live outside ourselves. For example, whether it be Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat, the goal of social media is often self-adulation. Pollard's call toward the opposite is both refreshing and a challenge.

The ideas of "others" and "service," the third theme, are nearly entirely reliant upon each other. Again and again, Pollard brings up the service ideal with Jesus as the ultimate example. Underpinning this book is the reappearing thread that "[l]eaders should know what they believe, why they believe it and how that belief will benefit others". This intensely practical method of what, why and how is woven throughout the entire book, undergirding its three major themes. When you couple this idea with the context of who Pollard is, his experience and his starting framework, these principles only increase in value.



Admittedly this book spends a fair amount of time diving into the idea of God in the business world. With his background, it is to be expected that the majority of examples, analogies and stories come from the workplace. Multiple chapters are even dedicated to the Christian leader in the specific context of his or her job, but, as mentioned, I don't believe this limits Pollard's principles. That said, as someone who is a part of that workforce, I found it extremely helpful to consider Pollard's words—especially his seven-page section that gave specific, Scriptural examples for why we believe and act a certain way.

In conclusion, I would recommend this book especially for business people, but would not hesitate in the least to recommend it to anyone else. Pollard's ideals and leadership exhortations ring true not because they are good but because they are grounded in Scripture.