



# **To the Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson**

*Heidi S. Swinton*

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## **To the Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson** Heidi S. Swinton

*To the Rescue* is the much-anticipated official biography of President Thomas S. Monson. Beginning with President Monson's family heritage and his early years in Salt Lake City, it included his vocational preparation and his career in the world of journalism. More important, this inspiring book recounts his lifetime of Church service. Called as a bishop at the age of twenty-two, as a mission president at thirty-one, and as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve at age thirty-six, he has traveled the globe to minister to the Saints for more than fifty years. This book shares many of his personal experience, from his visits behind the Iron Curtain to his contributions on the Scriptures Publication Committee and in the missionary and welfare areas; it also provides up-to-the-minute information about his work as Church President.

Filled with wonderful photographs and little-known accounts, this biography is a portrait of a leader who ministers both to the one and to the many, and who is completely dedicated to doing whatever the Lord prompts him to do.

## **To the Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson Details**

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# **From Reader Review To the Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson for online ebook**

## **Linda says**

I really loved this book. It took me a while to get started with it, but once I was in it, I didn't want it to end! I was inspired, uplifted, and most of all my testimony has grown that President Monson truly is a Prophet of God.

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## **Jeanne Thackeray says**

One of the best and most uplifting book I have ever read.

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## **Jen says**

(Three stars for the book, not the man himself.) I wish this book dealt with his thoughts and feelings, with his personal challenges and how he has dealt with them. It is very factual -- the closest you get is the image of a young bishop praying alone in a dark church with his hand on the pulpit, but no mention of any struggle within.

Excerpts:

President Monson communicated via telegram to his missionaries while serving as mission president in Canada. He received one that said, "President, the temperature is 40 degrees below freezing. Please advise." His response: "Dress warm, work hard, and don't look at the thermometer." Another said, "Dear President Monson: We have tracted out the city of Kitchener. Please tell us where to go next." His response: "Dear Elder: Happy to hear that you have tracted out the city of Kitchener. Now if you will teach and baptize the people in Kitchener, that will be your next assignment." Ha!

"To measure the goodness of life by its delights and pleasures and safety is to apply a false standard. The abundant life does not consist of a glut of luxury. It does not make itself content with commercially produced pleasure, the nightclub idea of what is a good time, mistaking it for joy and happiness . . . [it is] to face trouble with courage, disappointment with cheerfulness, and triumph with humility."

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## **Rebecca Young says**

I LOVE President Monson...but only LIKED his biography! ; )

I felt it was way too long in pages and a little short on parts of his life. I would have liked to have known more about his parents and siblings...more about him BEFORE the call to the Twelve. His father was inactive for most of his life...that would have been something extremely interesting to explore. How did this

shape or effect him as a young boy? But it is basically glossed over.

There were thousands of wonderful stories of his personal ministering to those around him. They were all admirable and uplifting, I simply felt that the author tried to squeeze too many in!

My favorite chapter was about his work in Germany for over 20 years and how he was instrumental in getting a temple built there before the wall went down!

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## **Lowell says**

3.75 stars.

An inspiring biography of a wonderful man. Yes, it will change you. You will want to perform small, simple acts of service for everybody around you. You will serve better in your church. You will study the scriptures on a deeper level, pray better, and love your family more sincerely. You will, in essence, be a better Christian than you were previously.

So why my mediocre score?

I believe there are two ways to write an LDS biography. One says, "Look at the experiences of this prophet of God!" The second says, "Look at the life of this man who, because of how he chose to live and the character he developed at the crossroads of life, was called by God to be a prophet." I prefer the latter.

There is a big difference between the outcomes of these approaches. The first doesn't look at him as a man – it looks at him as a prophet, where everything he does is inspired and you never see the personal struggles and challenges he had to overcome. You see the result, but not the process that led to the results. Ms. Swinton takes the first approach. This is not a bad thing. However, it results in a book that means to make us love the Prophet rather than tell a detailed life story.

For me, the second approach develops greater faith. Perhaps I'm in the minority. I have a hard time relating to perfect, flawless people, because I'm not perfect and flawless. If I read of a perfect man, I realize how I can't be like them because I struggle so much. I love Joseph Smith's "Rough Stone Rolling" because you see Joseph Smith as a man. Ditto for the biography of Spencer W. Kimball. I finished those books inspired and thinking, "If God has the patience and mercy to work with these imperfect – but sincere and authentic – men to do His work, then just maybe I'm not as hopeless as I sometimes feel." Seeing them as human beings makes me want to do better, because I can glimpse what is possible in my own life.

Two small examples: President Monson served as a bishop while a young father with a very busy career. I'm in this stage right now. Did he ever struggle to balance work, church, and family responsibilities? I certainly do. When did he forego a project in his ward or office to spend time with his family? How did he determine what to attend, and what to miss?

Also, when Ms. Swinton discusses his calling as Mission President in Canada, it includes two lines that subliminally hint at his learning to balance. An apostle visited the mission, and while leaving felt impressed to remind him, "You are a mission president for only a few years, but a father forever." This impressed me, but nothing further is said in the biography. Why would that be the final advice shared with a young mission president? Were his priorities out of balance at all? Did Thomas Monson look

at his life and need to re-prioritize?

Again, it is a fantastic book. I was edified, inspired, and can more fully sustain him in his call as a prophet of God. My score reflects personal preference on the writing style. I felt like a fly on the wall watching President Monson magnify his callings, when I wanted to know who "Thomas" is.

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### **Tom Grover says**

2.5 Stars, which averages for 1 star for the actual book and 5 stars for the subject matter, President Monson. The best testimony is one lived by example, and few examples are better than that provided to us from President Monson for decades that precede my own birth. President Monson has dedicated his life to serving others. Where society forgets or looks past an individual, President Monson looks into their soul and sees divinity. He has brought out the very best in those he has come in contact with.

That's why the book itself is such a disappointment. Every time a new President of the Church is sustained, Deseret Book publishes a semi-official hagiography. Even within that context, this book is poorly written. It is short on anecdotes and long on travelogues. Some of the anecdotes are eye-rollers that seem to treat a President-Prophet like a wizard and less like an ordained religious servant. For example, according to Swinton, when President Monson went fishing in New Zealand, he caught the most and best rainbow trout while all the other anglers struggled. Or the time that he and other General Authorities were inspecting a new meeting house. In the gym, President Monson was challenged to drain a long, Steph Curry-esque three. Bottom of the net, of course! And when challenged, he did it a second time! LOL.

Prior to his call to the First Presidency, President Monson was the Church's liaison to the communist government in East Germany. President Monson's efforts were so successful that a temple was built in a communist country behind the iron curtain. Swinton is vague as to the specific challenges faced in East Germany. There's probably an interesting story there. Apparently, President Monson wrote a book about it. Maybe it has more details. Swinton also seems to contradict herself as to whether the East German communists are good guys or not. On the one hand, they spied on President Monson and kept minders with him at all times. On the other hand, she fawns over them when they praise the Church or President Monson. I'll stick with the position that East German communists were not good guys.

The book also brushes over the particulars of the rescission of the ban on men of African descent holding the priesthood. We never learn what President Monson thought about race prior to 1978, or any of the specifics of how and why the rescission came about.

Someday, I hope President Monson's life gets the same deserving treatment that Gregory Prince gave David O. McKay or that Leonard Arrington gave Brigham Young. If that ever happens, it will be years from now, sadly. Until then, we are left wanting from this poorly written book.

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### **Dave says**

I had a hard time keeping a consistent interest in the book, there were some chapters I really enjoyed, however they were few and far between. I think the author was trying to write a tribute rather than a biography.....still some really good stories worth reading like the chapters that covered his service in

communist Germany. In all, I really enjoyed learning more about Thomas Monson and have really gained an appreciation for the kind and compassionate person he is

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## Mimi says

If you have ever wanted to know more about the prophet, this is definitely the book for you. It was written under the request of Thomas S. Monson, and he collaborated greatly with the author. Heidi S. Swinton did an excellent job at showing the prophet's life and introducing readers to what President Monson was like as a boy, teenager, and man long before he ever became the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I will say, this is quite a tome. Obviously I read a lot of books while I was reading this one, but it took me a year and three months to finish.

And now, my favorite quotes.

"President Boyd K. Packer has observed, 'You can't talk about President Monson without talking about Frances. She's a wonderful woman. She has supported him through all the patterns of their life.' Elder Richard G. Scott adds, 'She is so loyal; she would do anything for him and for the work he has been called to do. They certainly have deep love for each other.'

...

For Frances, home has always been where she is most comfortable. From the very beginning of their marriage, she made their home inviting and serene—like herself. 'Our homes are to be more than sanctuaries; they should also be places where God's Spirit can dwell, where the storm stops at the door, where love reigns and peace dwells,' President Monson has told the Saints. He knows firsthand what that is like."

[President Monson is a mission president in Canada during the next few quotes.] "President Monson was contemplating transfers . . . . As he reviewed the missionaries, 'trying to place them, by the will of the Lord, with the right companion and in the right place,' he stopped at the name of an Elder Smith. He pondered why he was drawn to that elder's name. A transfer seemed premature. Yet the impression to move Elder Smith over to the Niagara Peninsula came so strongly that he made the move.

The next week, tears came to his eyes as he read the missionary letters: 'Dear President Monson, I know you were inspired in sending Elder Smith to us in Welland. We are teaching ten Italian-speaking families whose English skills are limited. In my heart I had been praying for a companion who could speak Italian. You found the only missionary in the mission who spoke Italian.'"

"One of President Monson's early visits among the Canadian Saints was to the struggling St. Thomas Branch. The members—just three families—met in a dilapidated "Orange Hall," named for a fraternal order of William of Orange. Irving Wilson served as branch president; he blessed and helped pass the sacrament and conducted the meetings. Brother Wilson envisioned a new chapel just like the one recently completed in Sydney, Australia, and pictured in the *Improvement Era*. He wanted an identical chapel in St. Thomas. President Monson suggested that in time such a structure could be built.

'We don't want to wait,' said President Wilson. He asked for additional missionaries, promising to provide sufficient referrals to keep them busy. President Monson looked at Brother Wilson's sincerity and eagerness and couldn't say no. He sent six missionaries to St. Thomas.

Brother Wilson operated a small jewelry store and met with the missionaries in his back workroom. They knelt in prayer, and then he said, 'This is the beginning of a new day in St. Thomas. We are going to build a chapel.' They needed members. 'You do the teaching; I'll get them here,' Brother Wilson told the missionaries. He reached for the phone directory and turned to the Yellow Pages, explaining, 'We ought to have a building designed by a Mormon architect, and since we don't have an architect who is a member of the branch, we need to convert one.' He went down the list of architects until he found a name he recognized. He did the same for others, including builder, barrister, mechanic, and brick mason. He invited the individuals to his home, introduced them to the missionaries, and bore his testimony, as did his wife. Within two and a half years, the fledgling branch of three families had expanded to more than two hundred members. And then they built their chapel."

"Because of the great distances in the mission, much of President Monson's communication to and from missionaries was by post or telegram. On one occasion, he received from a missionary in the north a telegram that said, 'President, the temperature is 40 degrees below freezing. Please advise.'

President Monson sent a telegram back: 'Dress warm, work hard, and don't look at the thermometer.'"

"The district leader in Kitchener, Ontario, a city of some 80,000 people, wrote, 'Dear President Monson: We have tracted out the city of Kitchener. Please tell us where to go next.'

President Monson responded, 'Dear Elder: Happy to hear that you have tracted out the city of Kitchener. Now if you will teach and baptize the people of Kitchener, that will be your next assignment.'"

"When President Monson learned that the Kingston area to the east has seen but one convert baptism in six years, he decided it was time to exert great faith. For years, missionaries assigned to 'Stony Kingston' had marked their time there on the calendar like days in jail. One day Sister Monson read aloud to President Monson an entry in a book she was reading: 'Brigham Young entered Kingston, Ontario, on a cold, snow-filled day. He labored there thirty days and baptized forty-five souls.'

The passage gave President Monson an idea. He moved all the missionaries out of Kingston—they were happy to leave—and then he waited. Soon he announced that a "new city" would be opened for missionary work and described it as 'the city where Brigham Young proselyted and baptized forty-five persons in thirty days.' The speculations began, and in weekly letters several missionaries hinted that they would like the chance to open this new bonanza for missionary work. He assigned missionaries to Kingston—again—and it became 'the most productive city in the Canadian mission.' All involved learned an important lesson. The city had not altered its appearance; the population had remained the same. 'The change was one of attitude. Doubt yielded to faith.' Indeed, 'they just picked up the plow and plowed on.'"

[President Monson ("Tom") is called to be an area supervisor during the time of this quote.] "Apostles kept a close eye on the work, and when conversions for the first five months of the year fell below the previous year's number, and reports indicated that the number of stake missionaries had reduced by hundreds, the area

supervisors were encouraged to impress on stake leaders the need for a greater emphasis on missionary work.

Preparing to visit the Wasatch Stake in Heber City, Utah, Tom reviewed the reports and 'was appalled by the relatively few serving as stake missionaries.' He had enthusiasm for stake missionary work, particularly since the member-missionary program had been one of the keys to his success in Canada. He assured committee chairman Elder Kimball that 'this stake would soon have more than four stake missionaries.' At a meeting in Heber, he randomly called the bishop of the Midway Second Ward to find out how many of the brethren in his ward were serving as stake missionaries.

The bishop answered, 'None.'

Tom continued, 'Bishop, how many nonmembers of the Church do you have living within your ward boundaries?'

'One, Brother Monson,' the bishop replied, to Tom's surprise.

Not to lose his point, Tom countered, 'And what are you doing to bring that precious nonmember to the waters of baptism?'

'He is the ward custodian, and his wife is active as a teacher in Primary,' the bishop explained. 'We're making progress.'

Tom concluded the interview, 'God bless you, Bishop. Keep up the good work.'

The encounter taught Tom a lesson. Never again would he walk into an assignment without knowing what to expect."

[Thomas S. Monson is now an apostle.] "Brother Fetzer, with his special assignment, was able to give patriarchal blessings in East Germany and other Communist countries. When he was in Selbongen, Poland, giving blessings to a family named Konietz, he was inspired to promise 'a young son that he would serve a mission in another country.' He then promised the daughter 'that she would marry in the house of God.' To the parents, he promised that 'they and the entire family would be together in the holy temple.' Inasmuch as Poland's borders were closed, Brother Fetzer worried about the blessings he had given.

When he returned home, he called Elder Monson and asked to meet with him. As he sat down in Elder Monson's office, he wept. 'Brother Monson,' he said, 'I have pronounced blessings which cannot be fulfilled, but I was persuaded by the Holy Spirit to say what I did. What shall I do?'

Elder Monson quietly motioned for Percy to join him in a kneeling prayer. At the conclusion of their prayer, the two 'knew that somehow the blessings would be fulfilled.' Not long after, a Polish treaty allowed all German nationals trapped at the end of the war in Poland to go west. The Konietz family moved to Dortmund, in West Germany, and Brother Konietz eventually became a bishop. In 1973, Percy Fetzer, who had been called as president of the Swiss Temple, with his wife, Thelma, as matron, performed their family sealing in that temple. To Elder Monson's mind came the familiar truth: 'The wisdom of God oftentimes appears as foolishness to men, but the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and a man obeys, that man will always be right.'"



"The singing of the German Saints always stirred his heart. At one leadership session, he heard singing from another room and asked if that was the choir practicing. 'No,' he was told, 'the men are just passing the time until their meeting.' Elder Russell M. Nelson once reported that a priesthood leader in Germany had told him if he wanted to get the attention of anyone in his congregation, he simply had to ban that person from singing in the choir."

[This quote takes place recently after the death of President Monson's mother.] "Not surprisingly, at October conference, Elder Monson's address was titled 'Behold Thy Mother.' In a tender expression, he spoke of his memory of Sunday School on Mother's Day when he was a boy. 'We would hand to each mother present a small potted plant and sit in silent reverie as Melvin Watson, a bling member, would stand by the piano and sing, 'That Wonderful Mother of Mine.' This was the first time I saw a blind man cry. Even today, in memory, I can see the moist tears move from those sightless eyes, then form tiny rivulets and course down his cheeks, falling finally upon the lapel of the suit he had never seen. In boyhood puzzlement I wondered why all the of the grown men were silent, why so many handkerchiefs came forth. Now I know. You see, mother was remembered. Each boy, every girl, all fathers and husbands seemed to make a silent pledge: 'I will remember that wonderful mother of mine.'"

"He [Thomas S. Monson] has this energy, this liveliness and bounce. He goes through the halls like a whirlwind; sometimes the paintings have to be straightened after he had gone by.' —Elder Jeffrey R. Holland"

"The bottom line is that when he leaves a meeting, conference, or gathering, everyone feels edified. They feel loved and validated,' observes Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy. 'They do not feel like unprofitable servants of the Lord. They believe President Monson feels they are okay, so maybe Heavenly Father thinks they are okay. They know they have got to do a lot better than they are doing, but they are going to do better because he has shown them such love and respect.'"

[This quote is in regards to the Boy Scouts of America.] "For more than forty years, President Monson has attended regular meetings of the board, national and international jamborees, annual conventions, and Eagle Scout courts of honor, and he has been a merit badge counselor. His enthusiasm for Scouting has never been about tying knots; it has been about touching lives. To him, Scouting is 'the building of boys.'"

"He [Thomas S. Monson] quotes often, 'The greatest gift a man can give a boy is his willingness to share a part of his life with him.' He believes it; he teaches it; he practices it."

"He [TSM] can look back in his life and see the John Burts and the Paul Childs, and even the burly Scoutmaster who took Troop 60 up to Brighton canyon, just east of Salt Lake City, for summer campout, dropped them off, asked Tommy—the most responsible of the lot—if he had brought his fishing pole, and then ordered, 'Catch trout for breakfast for each of the boys for the two days you are here. I'll see you Saturday and take you home.' He drove off; Tommy did his 'Scout duty'; no one went hungry."

"President Monson sees Scouting as 'a spiritual program, a builder of men.' He has said, 'If ever there were a time when the principles of Scouting were vitally needed—that time is now. If ever there were a generation who would benefit by keeping physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight—that generation is

the present generation."

An incident "fairly characteristic of President Monson occurred at a weekday General Authority training meeting in April 2008 before general conference. All of the Brethren were seated twenty minutes before the hour the meeting was scheduled to begin, as had been the practice for years, and then they waited. President Monson arrived late—ten minutes past the hour—and explained that he had been doing something for Sister Monson. Interestingly, many of the General Authorities remember that meeting not for what was said but for what was demonstrated by the prophet of God. Commented Elder David A. Bednar, 'If he focused on efficiency and timeliness, he would have said, "I have to be there." But he was taking care of his wife.' There was a lesson to be learned that has stayed with those who waited patiently. That morning Frances was the one on whom he needed to focus."

Thomas S. Monson "counsels those just starting out in their families and careers to seek 'the abundant life.' Wishing will not make it so, he says. 'The Lord expects our thinking. He expects our action. He expects our labors. He expects our testimonies. He expects our devotion.' He cautions: 'To measure the goodness of life by its delights and pleasures and safety is to apply a false standard. The abundant life does not consist of a glut of luxury. It does not make itself content with commercially produced pleasure, the nightclub idea of what is a good time, mistaking it for joy and happiness.' He measures the abundant life by the capacity 'to face trouble with courage, disappointment with cheerfulness, and triumph with humility.'"

Speaking of Thomas S. Monson: "This is a man who loves Birmingham roller pigeons, Vivian Park, and the Provo River, fishing, duck hunting, and cream soups for lunch—especially tomato, which he orders at the Little America Hotel coffee shop owned by his friend Earl Holding. If he starts a book, he will finish it. He likes to eat Wheaties in the morning, a habit stemming clear back to his childhood. He favors orange juice and lime-flavored yogurt, and he likes to drink milk with his meals. He loves elderly people, dogs, chickens, and mentors such as J. Reuben Clark, Jr., and Mark E. Petersen. He likes lines from Broadway musicals, like King Arthur's statement in *Camelot*: 'Violence is not strength, and compassion is not weakness.' He is simple in his faith, firm in his resolve to do things 'right,' and possesses of a half-century-long work ethic difficult to match."

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## Kristen says

I should probably justify my 3-star rating by saying biographies are hard for me to read, because they often contain SO MUCH detail. To that end, I think Swinton did a pretty good job of sticking to main themes rather than a solely chronological structure. Some reviewers have complained that it did skip around a bit; I definitely noticed it/was a little confused by it but wasn't super bugged by it.

I read this book because I wanted to have a better appreciation for President Monson, and to that end, I think it's impossible NOT to after reading. What I learned is that President Monson is the same person he is on the stand as he is in life. Some of the stories we have heard him tell over the pulpit; I especially enjoyed the stories we haven't heard before (like his work behind the Iron Curtain) or the countless times when he followed a prompting and something miraculous occurred.

Some of the other reviewers have wished we would have learned more about what made President Monson

who he is - his struggles and hardships (of which there must have been plenty). I agree. In fact, the only example I can think of in the entire book is a time when he failed to follow a prompting immediately and by the time he arrived at the hospital to give a brother a blessing, he had died. That taught him never again to delay acting on a prompting. That was a powerful story and I would've liked to have seen more of that in his biography. But I also don't think that's Swinton's fault. As most of her source material was President Monson himself (either his interviews, talks, or journals), I think it's consistent with who he is. He doesn't dwell on his struggles but focuses on the job ahead.

So why only 3 stars? The writing is a bit folksy at times ("That's President Monson," is said several times to illustrate his character). There is probably too much time spent on some parts of his life. But overall, I am really glad I read it, because it gives me an appreciation for President Monson, and makes me want to reach out and have more of a concern for others, just as he does.

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### **Ann says**

Great beginning... but what happened in the middle? From reading this book one would think that Germany was the only country who suffered the ravages of war between 1939-1945!

Also, where was any connection between President Monson and President Hinckley who had worked together for so many years? I was sorely disappointed! - Only a brief note of sadness at President Hinckley's funeral in the penultimate chapter!

I fully realise that this is an autobiography about President Monson, but surely he has many happy memories of serving with more recent prophets? Also compassion on Saints in Europe and England!

What started great, became hard to read and in fact I skipped many pages as I felt all Elder Monson (as he was then) was interested in was the German nation and their suffering was above all others!

This book made me feel like Elder Monson was not concerned about me - which I know is not true!

I will not be reading another of your books!

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### **Christie says**

President Monson is an amazing man. Many times as I read this book I felt a flood of love wash over me and testify that he is a Prophet of God. I cried and laughed and learned. It was a great experience. I want to be more like President Monson; more concerned with people. I love that President Monson sees the big picture. In the book a story is related in which there is an attorney who had married a catholic and been inactive in the LDS church for many years. The attorney's business partner was being ordained as a mission President by President Monson. Just before the blessing, President Monson turned to the attorney and said something TO THE EFFECT OF, "aren't you an Elder?" To which the attorney said, "Yes." "Then come help us set apart your friend." This touched me so deeply. The culture of mormonism is sometimes so focused on the letter of the law whereas President Monson reminds us to focus on the spirit of the law and the individual person.

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### **Melanie says**

I have read a lot of books in my lifetime. When I rate a book five stars, it has to be fantastic. This definitely meets my definition of fantastic, and I want to go a step further by saying that this was absolutely inspiring. I

bought this book to read because I wanted to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for President Monson. I was not disappointed at all! What an amazing man he is. At a very young age he was taught about serving the less fortunate. Throughout his entire life his focus has been on the individual. This book made me take a step back and really take a deep look inside myself. I want to be less selfish and more selfless. I want to teach my children the importance of serving the "one." I love this quote at the end of the book. "I believe the Savior is telling us that unless we lose ourselves in service to others, there is little purpose to our own lives." I would recommend this book to everyone. It could change your life.

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## **Greg says**

While the subject matter of this book is definite 5-star material, the execution left very much to be desired. So many entire paragraphs in this book were simply lists of names or dates or places with absolutely no point. Honestly, I would rather read Leviticus and Numbers than ever pick this book up again. This author would labor over details of the background of an anecdote, only to complete it without giving any of the important details of the resolution. One in particular stands out in my mind where several paragraphs were devoted to laying out the problem, and then followed with "President Monson was sent to fix the problem, and he did." Worthless drivel. Also, this author seems obsessed with hyperbole to the point where one can hardly bear to read any more. When it comes to writing style, the author is among the most impoverished of any I've ever read.

Bottom line: it took me several months to get through this book. Since this year I've read 45 other books so far (including text books and technical manuals), that's indicative of how difficult it was to read. 2 stars only because of the subject of the book; otherwise it would be 0.

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## **Ruth says**

3.5 stars.

Most of you probably know that Thomas S. Monson is the current president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. He is an absolutely fascinating man. One of his strengths is his personal warmth and love for other people. In 2009, Slate.com ranked him number one in its list of eighty most powerful octogenarians in American.

This book is full of lots of details and many wonderful anecdotes about President Monson, but overall, it was kind of uneven writing. Some parts moved right along, and sometimes I just felt bogged down. I also had some trouble because the author tended to skip around with the chronology, so sometimes she would be talking about one time period, and suddenly the next story would take place before the previous one, which was confusing.

I am very glad I read the book, and would recommend it to anyone interested in the subject matter, but I was a bit disappointed in the writing.

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## Preethi says

I almost feel guilty giving a 3-star rating to a biography about the beloved prophet of our church. While I enjoyed learning more about his ministry, however, the writing was decidedly sub-par.

My biggest gripe is the lack of personal flavor in the book. Having read several other prophet biographies, I thought this one was severely lacking in personal anecdotes, and was almost devoid of characterization outside of the obvious and ubiquitous commentary about his love, kindness, and willingness to serve. While I certainly appreciate all those characteristics, I'm certain he has other personal traits outside of his remarkable spiritual gifts. The book was superficial in its treatment of his character; while I wasn't looking for faults, Swinton placed him on an unnatural pedestal lacking dimension and depth. Additionally, the constant use of the word "rescue" and his focus on doing so was tiresome and forced.

Similarly, I felt Swinton glossed over President Monson's relationships, failing to delve into them with any sort of rigor or meaning. She mentions some mentors, and occasionally throws out the name "Frances," but I came away from the book knowing virtually nothing about them or their interaction with him. I was particularly puzzled by the lack of detail about his wife; Swinton only mentions her a handful of times in terms of being the mission mom and cooking meals, and in referencing the prophet's love for her - a given, in my book (no pun intended).

Finally, the book's organization was confusing and difficult to follow. My husband (with whom I read it) and I were constantly asking each other, "what year is this, again?" and "where are we?" Every biography doesn't need to be chronological - I understand that. But To the Rescue just seemed haphazard. The chapters didn't make sense, the paragraphs themselves skipped around a ton between years or even decades, and thoughts would often end abruptly with little to no transition to the next thought. Some random little stories were included (ones that didn't have much of a point and made us wonder whether they were from a relative of the author), while bigger, more important people and events received little attention (for instance, you get the impression from the book that President Monson's father only became active in the Church in his later years, but there is no discussion about how this did or didn't affect his son).

Overall, I really enjoyed learning more about the Prophet's preparation and experience, especially regarding his work in East Germany. That was, by far, the most engaging part of the book, and the part I feel sure I'll reference often. The rest, however, could've used a good dose of personalization and editing.

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