

Book title: *My Seventh Monsoon* (2007) and *No Ordinary View* (2008)
Author: Naomi Reed
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Reviewer: Lesley Hicks

Naomi Reed is a gifted writer. *My Seventh Monsoon* is selling well, promoted readily by word of mouth as readers share their delight in it and buy extra copies to give as gifts. *No Ordinary View* should do likewise as it becomes known. Naomi and her husband Darren are physiotherapists from Sydney. They fell in love as keen Christian high school students, studied physiotherapy together, married young and then pursued what became their dream of serving God overseas.

As missionaries with the International Nepal Fellowship and more recently with Interserve, they have served for a total of thirteen years in the 90s and since 2000 in Nepal. This country is populated by some of the poorest and neediest people in the world, torn recently by a Maoist revolution and civil war. In between terms there, and at present, the Reeds have worked locally as physiotherapists, living at Blaxland in the Blue Mountains. They belong to the Presbyterian Church.

Naomi's two books tell the story of their lives thus far. I suspect it might have started out as just one long book, as the second picks up where the first ends, amid a drenching Nepali monsoon season in the isolated Himalayan village of Dhulikhel.

Their story is told using the framework of seasons as in the Ecclesiastes passage, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die ..." So there are seasons of preparation, of enrichment, longing, and inadequacy; seasons of confusion, fear and grief.

The Reeds' lives have already held more than an ordinary share of drama and heartache, but nevertheless Naomi relates it all with a light, self-deprecating touch and a good deal of humour. There are challenging testimonies of how God opened the Scriptures to them and how He transformed Nepali lives; we learn too how they were able to test and experience His great faithfulness in some desperate family situations and health crises and, in the second book, amid the dangers and horrors of the civil war.

Naomi writes of an extended season of unfulfilled longing for a child: "... my desire was to trust God for whatever He had for us. It is such a hard place to be, month in and month out. ... It's all very well to know great amounts of truth your head. Transferring that truth to the heart level is another matter altogether. At a heart level, the pain still sits" (*Monsoon*, pp. 84-85).

Back home (although often Nepal seemed more home than Australia) they learned that there were 5,000 Nepalis in Sydney, and a ready-made ministry here, not only for the Reeds, but later for a gifted Nepali pastor and his wife for whom Nepal became too dangerous and the persecution too extreme. But the pull was strong for the Reeds to return, especially because of the sense of unfinished business.

One dream of Darren's was to establish a proper training school for physiotherapists in Nepal. That became a reality in Dhulikhel. The second book tells mainly of the time they were based there. Most Nepalis live in the direst poverty; this meant that the Reeds were confronted daily with wrenching needs and the realization that it is impossible to meet them all. But when they know Christ their contentment and joy in worship puts Westerners to shame.

My Seventh Monsoon was short-listed for the Australian Christian Book of the Year award for 2008 – due to be announced in August. It is stocked in good general and Christian bookshops. Newly published, *No Ordinary View* may not yet be as widely available. Each book is priced at \$20 and all profits go to the mission. They are obtainable from:

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