

FREE ACCESS LEAVING CHURCH A MEMOIR OF FAITH

Leaving Church

Tells how a renowned preacher left her ministry to rediscover the authentic heart of her faith. A moving reflection on keeping faith amidst the relentless demands of modern life.

Leaving Alexandria

This Sunday Times bestseller is a memoir about faith and doubt, with a strong meditative and philosophical heart

The Preaching Life

Like Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life*, Taylor emphasizes the holy dimensions of ordinary life and describes the essentials of faith with insight and humor, touching on the vocations, imagination, worship, sacraments, ministry and the Bible as they relate to the life of faith.

Holy Envy

The renowned Christian preacher and New York Times bestselling author of *An Altar in the World* recounts her moving discoveries of finding the sacred in unexpected places while teaching world religions to undergraduates in Baptist-saturated rural Georgia, revealing how God delights in confounding our expectations. Christians are taught that God is everywhere--a tenet that is central to Barbara Brown Taylor's life and faith. In *Holy Envy*, she continues her spiritual journey, contemplating the myriad ways she encountered God while exploring other faiths with her students in the classroom, and on field trips to diverse places of worship. Both she and her students ponder how the knowledge and insights they have gained raise important questions about belief, and explore how different practices relate to their own faith. Inspired by this intellectual and spiritual quest, Barbara turns once again to the Bible for guidance, to see what secrets lay buried there. Throughout *Holy Envy*, Barbara weaves together stories from her classroom with reflections on how her own spiritual journey has been challenged and renewed by connecting with people of other traditions--and by meeting God in them. At the heart of her odyssey is her trust that it is God who pushes her beyond her comfortable boundaries and calls us to "disown" our privatized versions of the divine--a change that ultimately deepens her relationship with both the world and with God, and ours.

Learning to Walk in the Dark

In this long awaited follow-up to the best-selling *An Altar in the World*, Barbara Brown Taylor explores 'the treasures of darkness' that the Bible speaks about. What can we learn about the ways of God when we cannot see the way ahead, are lost, alone, frightened, not in control or when the world around us seems to have descended into darkness? Contemporary culture throws many brightly lit distractions at us to divert our attention away from the dark, but Barbara Brown Taylor combines her great grace, sensitivity and insight as a writer and priest with the deep wisdom of the biblical and Christian traditions to discover how God is more present to our vulnerable, open night-time selves than to our pre-occupied daylight selves.

An Altar in the World

In this highly acclaimed and lyrical modern classic, bestselling author Barbara Brown Taylor reveals the countless ways we can discover divine depths in the small things we do and see every day. While people will often go to extraordinary lengths in search of a 'spiritual experience', she shows that the stuff of our everyday lives is a holy ground where we can encounter God at every turn. For her, as for Jacob in the Genesis story, even barren, empty deserts can become \"the house of God and the gate of heaven\"

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Leaving the Witness

\"À la Tara Westover's *Educated*, Scorah's pensive, ultimately liberating memoir chronicles her formative years as a Jehovah's Witness...and captures the bewilderment of belief and the bliss of self-discovery.\"--O, The Oprah Magazine, Named one of \"The Best Books by Women of Summer 2019\" \"Scorah's book, the bravery of which cannot be overstated, is an earnest one, fueled by a plucky humor and a can-do spirit that endears. Her tale, though an exploration of extremity, is highly readable and warm.\"--The New York Times Book Review A riveting memoir of losing faith and finding freedom while a covert missionary in one of the world's most restrictive countries. A third-generation Jehovah's Witness, Amber Scorah had devoted her life to sounding God's warning of impending Armageddon. She volunteered to take the message to China, where the preaching she did was illegal and could result in her expulsion or worse. Here, she had some distance from her community for the first time. Immersion in a foreign language and culture--and a whole new way of thinking--turned her world upside down, and eventually led her to lose all that she had been sure was true. As a proselytizer in Shanghai, using fake names and secret codes to evade the authorities' notice, Scorah discreetly looked for targets in public parks and stores. To support herself, she found work at a Chinese language learning podcast, hiding her real purpose from her coworkers. Now with a creative outlet, getting to know worldly people for the first time, she began to understand that there were other ways of seeing the world and living a fulfilling life. When one of these relationships became an \"escape hatch,\" Scorah's loss of faith culminated in her own personal apocalypse, the only kind of ending possible for a Jehovah's Witness. Shunned by family and friends as an apostate, Scorah was alone in Shanghai and thrown into a world she had only known from the periphery--with no education or support system. A coming of age story of a woman already in her thirties, this unforgettable memoir examines what it's like to start one's life over again with an entirely new identity. It follows Scorah to New York City, where a personal tragedy forces her to look for new ways to find meaning in the absence of religion. With compelling, spare prose, *Leaving the Witness* traces the bittersweet process of starting over, when everything one's life was built around is gone.

Unfollow

'For anyone who enjoyed *Hillbilly Elegy* or *Educated*, *Unfollow* is an essential text' - Louis Theroux 'Such a moving, redemptive, clear-eyed account of religious indoctrination' - Pandora Sykes 'A nuanced portrait of the lure and pain of zealotry' New York Times 'Unfolds like a suspense novel . . . A brave, unsettling, and fascinating memoir about the damage done by religious fundamentalism' NPR A Radio Four Book of the Week Pick for June 2021 As featured on the BBC documentaries, 'The Most Hated Family in America' and 'Surviving America's Most Hated Family' It was an upbringing in many ways normal. A loving home, shared with squabbling siblings, overseen by devoted parents. Yet in other ways it was the precise opposite: a revolving door of TV camera crews and documentary makers, a world of extreme discipline, of siblings

vanishing in the night. Megan Phelps-Roper was raised in the Westboro Baptist Church - the fire-and-brimstone religious sect at once aggressively homophobic and anti-Semitic, rejoicing for AIDS and natural disasters, and notorious for its picketing the funerals of American soldiers. From her first public protest, aged five, to her instrumental role in spreading the church's invective via social media, her formative years brought their difficulties. But being reviled was not one of them. She was preaching God's truth. She was, in her words, 'all in'. In November 2012, at the age of twenty-six, she left the church, her family, and her life behind. *Unfollow* is a story about the rarest thing of all: a person changing their mind. It is a fascinating insight into a closed world of extreme belief, a biography of a complex family, and a hope-inspiring memoir of a young woman finding the courage to find compassion for others, as well as herself. --- More praise for *Unfollow* 'A beautiful, gripping book about a singular soul, and an unexpected redemption' - Nick Hornby 'A modern-day parable for how we should speak and listen to each other' - Dolly Alderton 'Her journey - from Westboro to becoming one of the most empathetic, thoughtful, humanistic writers around - is exceptional and inspiring' - Jon Ronson 'A gripping story, beautifully told . . . It takes real talent to produce a book like this. Its message could not be more urgent' Sunday Times

Post-Traumatic Church Syndrome

Simultaneously published in St. Louis, Missouri by Chalice Press, 2015.

The Book of Mormon Girl

From her days of feeling like “a root beer among the Cokes”—Coca-Cola being a forbidden fruit for Mormon girls like her—Joanna Brooks always understood that being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints set her apart from others. But, in her eyes, that made her special; the devout LDS home she grew up in was filled with love, spirituality, and an emphasis on service. With Marie Osmond as her celebrity role model and plenty of Sunday School teachers to fill in the rest of the details, Joanna felt warmly embraced by the community that was such an integral part of her family. But as she grew older, Joanna began to wrestle with some tenets of her religion, including the Church’s stance on women’s rights and homosexuality. In 1993, when the Church excommunicated a group of feminists for speaking out about an LDS controversy, Joanna found herself searching for a way to live by the leadings of her heart and the faith she loved. *The Book of Mormon Girl* is a story about leaving behind the innocence of childhood belief and embracing the complications and heartbreaks that come to every adult life of faith. Joanna’s journey through her faith explores a side of the religion that is rarely put on display: its humanity, its tenderness, its humor, its internal struggles. In Joanna’s hands, the everyday experience of being a Mormon—without polygamy, without fundamentalism—unfolds in fascinating detail. With its revelations about a faith so often misunderstood and characterized by secrecy, *The Book of Mormon Girl* is a welcome advocate and necessary guide.

Open Secrets

Open Secrets is Richard Lischer's story of his early career as a Lutheran minister. Fresh out of divinity school and full of enthusiasm, Lischer found himself assigned to a small conservative church in an economically depressed town in southern Illinois. This was far from what this overly enthusiastic and optimistic young man expected. The town was bleak, poor, and clearly not a step on his path to a brilliant career. It's an awkward marriage at best, a young man with a Ph.D. in theology, full of ideas and ambitions, determined to improve his parish and bring them into the twenty-first century, and a community that is “as tightly sealed as a jar of home-canned pickles.” In their own way, they welcome him and his family, even though they think he's “got bigger fish to fry.” Thus begins Richard Lischer's first year as a pastor: bringing communion to the sick (but forgetting to bring the wafers); marrying two unlikely couples--a pregnant teenager and her boyfriend, and two people who can't stop fighting. Often he doesn't understand his congregation, and sometimes they don't understand him; for instance, why does his wife hire a baby-sitter and instead of leaving, put on her bathing suit, grab a stack of novels, and hide from the kids? Or why can't Pastor Lischer

see how important it is for a woman with little money to buy an elaborate coffin to bury her husband in? There are also the moments of grace, when pastor and parishioner unite for a common goal: when he asks for prayers for his infant son, and can feel everyone in the congregation ministering to him; when old hurts are put aside to help a desperate young woman finish college and raise her baby; or when he helps save a woman from dying of a drug overdose. In *Open Secrets* Lischer tells not only his own story but also the story of New Cana and all of its inhabitants--lovable, deeply flawed, imperfect people that stick together. With his sharp eye and keen wit, Lischer perfectly captures the comedy of small town life with all of its feuds, rumors, scandals, and friendships. In the end he learns to appreciate not only the life New Cana has to offer, but also the people who have accepted him, at last, as part of themselves.

Empty the Pews

Growing up within the narrow confines of the Mormon Church, bestselling author Martha Beck was raised in a home frequented by the Church's high elders. After Adam, her second child, was born with Down's syndrome, she and her husband left their graduate programmes at Harvard to return to Martha's hometown of Provo, Utah, where they knew the supportive Mormon community would embrace them. But after Martha began teaching at Brigham Young University, she began to recall horrific memories of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of one of the Church's most respected leaders. This book chronicles her difficult decision to sever her relationship with the faith that had raised her, and to confront and forgive the person who betrayed her so deeply.

Leaving the Saints

From beloved writer and renowned preacher Barbara Brown Taylor comes a new collection of stories and sermons of faith, grace, and hope. Taylor, author of the best-selling books *Holy Envy* and *An Altar in the World*, among others, finds that when you are the invited guest speaking of faith to people you don't know, one must seek common ground: exploring the central human experience. Full of Taylor's astute observations on the Spirit and the state of the world along with her gentle wit, this collection will inspire Taylor's fans and preachers alike as she explores faith in all its beauty and complexity.

Always a Guest: Speaking of Faith Far from Home

It wasn't until Libby Phelps was an adult, a twenty-five year old, that she escaped the Westboro Baptist Church. She is the granddaughter of its founder, Fred Phelps, and when she left, the church and its values were all she'd known. She didn't tell her family she was leaving. It happened in just a few minutes; she ran into her house, grabbed a bag, and fled. No goodbyes. Based in Topeka, Kansas, the Westboro Baptist Church community is one the country's most notorious evangelical groups. Its members are known for their boisterous picketing—their zealous members with anti-military, anti-Semitic, and anti-gay signs—“Thank God for Dead Soldiers,” “God Hates Jews,” or “Thank God for 9/11”—and their notorious catchphrase “God hates fags.” Search for them online and you're directed to their website, www.godhatesfags.com. The church makes headlines in news across the country. You've driven past its picketers or seen them on TV. It has seventy members and ninety percent of them are part of Libby's family. They picket concerts, football games, other churches, and, most notoriously, the funerals of servicemen and victims of hate crimes. For its members, to question its rules is to risk going to hell—where worms eat at your body and fire shoots out of your eyeballs. In *Girl on a Wire*, Libby is candid about her experience and what's happened since her escape. On *Anderson Cooper Live*, she was confronted by the mother of a soldier whose funeral had been picketed, and had to respond. Despite it all, she cares for her family. Her grandfather's sermons were fear mongering, but she loves him. This unusual memoir presents a rare, inside look into a notorious cult, and is an astonishing story of strength, bravery, and determination.

Girl on a Wire

‘Almost before I had begun this wonderful book, I was hooked’ STEPHEN COTTRELL ‘Robyn Wrigley-Carr has produced a masterpiece of insight and wisdom’ CLARION JOURNAL ‘Nourishment for the soul on every page’ AYLAL LEPINE, CHURCH TIMES ‘Wrigley-Carr illustrates how Underhill wonderfully unites reflection and prayer’ DANA GREENE Beloved spiritual writer Evelyn Underhill believed that God does not just come to us at special times, but is always coming to us. But how do we recognise his coming and make ourselves open to it? In *Music of Eternity*, the Archbishop of York’s Advent Book 2021, Robyn Wrigley-Carr shares a series of meditations exploring the nature God’s comings. Skilfully weaving together Underhill’s writings with the psalms and short prayers, she shows how, as Christians, we can embrace God’s coming and be transformed by them in order to better love others. Full of rich warmth and encouragement, these Christian meditations will help you make the most of the Advent season and more able to connect with God at all times. Set out in four parts to take you through Advent and with questions for reflection, the Archbishop of York’s Advent book can be used as a study for individuals or small groups to prepare for Christmas. *Music of Eternity* will help you find space to deepen your relationship with God, and to understand what Evelyn Underhill called the ‘many-sided truth of God’s perpetual coming to His creatures’.

Music of Eternity: Meditations for Advent with Evelyn Underhill

Much has been written on the centenary of the First World War; however, no book has yet explored the tragedy of the conflict from a theological perspective. This book fills that gap. Taking their cue from the famous British army chaplain Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, seven central essays--all by authors associated with the cathedral where Studdert Kennedy first preached to troops--examine aspects of faith that featured in the war, such as the notion of “home,” poetry, theological doctrine, preaching, social reform, humanitarianism, and remembrance. Each essay applies its reflections to the life of faith today. The essays thus represent a highly original contribution to the history of the First World War in general and the work of Studdert Kennedy in particular; and they provide wider theological insight into how, in the contemporary world, life and tragedy, God and suffering, can be integrated. The book will accordingly be of considerable interest to historians, both of the war and of the church; to communities commemorating the war; and to all those who wrestle with current challenges to faith. A foreword by Studdert Kennedy's grandson and an afterword by the bishop of Magdeburg in Germany render this a volume of remarkable depth and worth.

Life after Tragedy

William Lobdell's journey of faith—and doubt—may be the most compelling spiritual memoir of our time. Lobdell became a born-again Christian in his late 20s when personal problems—including a failed marriage—drove him to his knees in prayer. As a newly minted evangelical, Lobdell—a veteran journalist—noticed that religion wasn’t covered well in the mainstream media, and he prayed for the Lord to put him on the religion beat at a major newspaper. In 1998, his prayers were answered when the Los Angeles Times asked him to write about faith. Yet what happened over the next eight years was a roller-coaster of inspiration, confusion, doubt, and soul-searching as his reporting and experiences slowly chipped away at his faith. While reporting on hundreds of stories, he witnessed a disturbing gap between the tenets of various religions and the behaviors of the faithful and their leaders. He investigated religious institutions that acted less ethically than corrupt Wall St. firms. He found few differences between the morals of Christians and atheists. As this evidence piled up, he started to fear that God didn't exist. He explored every doubt, every question—until, finally, his faith collapsed. After the paper agreed to reassign him, he wrote a personal essay in the summer of 2007 that became an international sensation for its honest exploration of doubt. *Losing My Religion* is a book about life's deepest questions that speaks to everyone: Lobdell understands the longings and satisfactions of the faithful, as well as the unrelenting power of doubt. How he faced that power, and wrestled with it, is must reading for people of faith and nonbelievers alike.

Losing My Religion

‘Not until college days do I discover the shocking secret of my father's death.’ With a journalist's background

Philip Yancey is widely admired for taking on the more difficult and confusing aspects of faith. Now in *Where the Light Fell* he shares, for the first time, the painful details of his own origins - taking us on an evocative journey from the backwoods and Bible-belt pockets of the South to the bustling streets of Philadelphia; from trailer parks to church parking lots; from dark secrets and family oddballs to fire-and-brimstone preachers and interminable church services. Raised by their impoverished single mother, Philip and his brother Marshall struggle to comprehend her speeches about their dead father, an Old Testament Bible story, and sons sacrificed for a divine cause. This coming-of-age story is a slice of life, both intensely personal and broadly resonant, set against a turbulent time in post-WWII American history shaped by the racism and paranoia of fundamentalist Christianity and reshaped by the mounting pressures of the Civil Rights movement and 60s-era forces of social change. An unforgettable read, it is at once hugely funny, deeply disturbing and achingly poignant. A testament to the power of the human spirit, *Where the Light Fell* illuminates Yancey's ability to bring comfort to those bruised by the church, and hope to those who can't imagine ever finding a healthy faith.

Where the Light Fell

Vicky Beeching, called "arguably the most influential Christian of her generation" in *The Guardian*, began writing songs for the church in her teens. By the time she reached her early thirties, Vicky was a household name in churches on both sides of the pond.

Undivided: Coming Out, Becoming Whole, and Living Free From Shame

Beyond Words n (1.) Terms or names that point to the realm of mystery and depth that lies beyond our ordinary experience. (2.) The reality that is beyond even the power of beyond words to convey, and that can be known only by experiencing it for yourself. "A word a day to keep the demons at bay." This is how Frederick Buechner likes to describe this witty and incisive dictionary. A daily devotional from one of today's greatest spiritual writers, *Beyond Words* offers 366 entries from Buechner's three alphabet books, *Wishful Thinking*, *Peculiar Treasures*, and *Whistling in the Dark*, including a new Introduction and nineteen new entries. Providing definitions of both sacred and ordinary words, as well as biblical characters, Buechner unabashedly brings his fresh perspective to words, concepts, and characters we thought we understood. This is a great introduction to Buechner's work as well as a library staple for those already well versed in his writing. It is Buechner at his best. Whether readers find themselves tearful from a deeply moving insight or laughing out loud at an unexpected turn of phrase, they will always feel uplifted, illuminated, and enchanted by the wisdom of Frederick Buechner.

Beyond Words

Leaving the Saints is an unforgettable memoir about one woman's spiritual quest and journey toward faith. As "Mormon royalty" within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Martha Beck was raised in a home frequented by the Church's high elders—known as the apostles—and her existence was framed by their strict code of conduct. Wearing her sacred garments, she married in a secret temple ceremony—but only after two Mormon leaders ascertained that her "past contained no flirtation with serious sins, such as committing murder or drinking coffee." She went to church faithfully with the other brothers and sisters of her ward. When her son was born with Down syndrome, she and her husband left their graduate programs at Harvard to return to Provo, Utah, where they knew the supportive Mormon community would embrace them. However, soon after Martha began teaching at Brigham Young University, she began to see firsthand the Church's ruthlessness as it silenced dissidents and masked truths that contradicted its published beliefs. Most troubling of all, she was forced to face her history of sexual abuse by one of the Church's most prominent authorities. This book chronicles her difficult decision to sever her relationship with the faith that had cradled her for so long and to confront and forgive the person who betrayed her so deeply. This beautifully written, inspiring memoir explores the powerful yearning toward faith. It offers a rare glimpse inside one of the world's most secretive religions while telling a profoundly moving story of personal courage, survival, and

the transformative power of spirituality.

Leaving the Saints

"The Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor is widely considered one of the best preachers in the United States. This slender volume contains twelve of her sermons based on the Gospel of Matthew that were first heard on the radio during the Episcopal Series of the Protestant Hour. As you read them, you will walk with the preacher into "the spacious land of God's abiding presence with us all."

The Seeds of Heaven

In *The Pastor*, author Eugene Peterson, translator of the multimillion-selling *The Message*, tells the story of how he started Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland and his gradual discovery of what it really means to be a pastor. Steering away from abstractions, Peterson challenges conventional wisdom regarding church marketing, mega pastors, and the church's too-cozy relationship to American glitz and consumerism to present a simple, faith-based description of what being a minister means today. In the end, Peterson discovers that being a pastor boils down to "paying attention and calling attention to 'what is going on now' between men and women, with each other and with God."

The Pastor

A memoir of the profound destabilization that comes from losing one's faith--and a young woman's journey to reconcile her lack of belief with her love for her deeply religious family. Growing up in poverty in the rural backwoods of southern Maryland, the Pentecostal church was at the core of Jessica Wilbanks' family life. At sixteen, driven by a desire to discover the world, Jessica walked away from the church--trading her faith for freedom, and driving a wedge between her and her deeply religious family. But fundamentalist faiths haunt their adherents long after belief fades--former believers frequently live in limbo, straddling two world views and trying to reconcile their past and present. Ten years later, struggling with guilt and shame, Jessica began a quest to recover her faith. It led her to West Africa, where she explored the Yorùbá roots of the Pentecostal faith, and was once again swept up by the promises and power of the church. After a terrifying car crash, she finally began the difficult work of forgiving herself for leaving the church and her family and finding her own path. *When I Spoke in Tongues* is a story of the painful and complicated process of losing one's faith and moving across class divides. And in the end, it's a story of how a family splintered by dogmatic faith can eventually be knit together again through love.

When I Spoke in Tongues

Deinstitutionalizing God chronicles the author's journey from early religious exposure to full faith formation and pursuing ministry as a vocation. This tell-all memoir is laced with humor, applied psychology, and theological reflection to produce a compelling account of maintaining faith when all around you contradicts it. Her first-hand account of experiencing sexual harassment, denial of ordination, and apathy in the church is cast against the backdrop of the universal story of striving for a relationship with the divine. All she wanted to do was preach. All the church wanted to do was stop her. Pursuing that goal should have been a lot easier. Church is supposed to be safe space, but quite often is not. Spiritual trauma occurs because evil likes to cloak itself in benevolence. People are often not as guarded in religious settings as they would be in the world and thus become more vulnerable to invisible injury. It goes unaccounted for and is seldom addressed. Therefore, the most self-preserving thing to do at times is to leave. And that, she did. Being a management consultant by profession enabled Dionne to examine the church organically beyond its spiritual persona. The same dynamics occur in secular settings, but are tolerated in sacred space in full view of people who would like to think their hands are clean. This book is an indictment of the church, but one with a path to restoration.

Deinstitutionalizing God

In the strange, us-versus-them Christian subculture of the 1990s, a person's faith was measured by how many WWJD bracelets she wore and whether he had kissed dating goodbye. Evangelical poster child Addie Zierman wore three bracelets asking what Jesus would do. She also led two Bible studies and listened exclusively to Christian music. She was on fire for God and unaware that the flame was dwindling—until it burned out. Addie chronicles her journey through church culture and first love, and her entrance—unprepared and angry—into marriage. When she drops out of church and very nearly her marriage as well, it is on a sea of tequila and depression. She isn't sure if she'll ever go back. *When We Were on Fire* is a funny, heartbreaking story of untangling oneself from what is expected to arrive at faith that is not bound by tradition or current church fashion. Addie looks for what lasts when nothing else seems worth keeping. It's a story for doubters, cynics, and anyone who has felt alone in church.

When We Were on Fire

This book is a memoir of my journey in faith. That journey began in the home of my childhood, but the chapters cover experiences extending from some of my earliest memories until just a few years ago. I had already begun reflecting on these experiences, theologically, as the later ones were occurring, but it was not until a friend invited me to speak to his congregation that I connected them. "You're not what most of our people think of when they hear the word Baptist," the priest of a local Episcopal church said. "Come talk to us about how you got where you are from where you started." It was a fascinating challenge. As I sat down to prepare a one-hour Sunday school lesson for Episcopalian adults, I realized I had a story to tell. My suspicion is that this story, regardless of how eloquently I have or have not told it, will resonate with many people. Too frequently I hear people speak of their "bad experiences" with the church, experiences often occurring in the formative years of childhood or adolescence. Sadly, too many of these folks leave organized religion, if not turn their backs altogether on a God they suspect has turned a blind eye or a judgmental whim against them. I have managed to stay within the realm of organized religion. In fact, it is my life. I have not felt the need to abandon or reject God. In fact, God has become more important, more real, more central to my story. I understand those who leave, but because I believe so strongly in the church and the value of faith in one's life, I hope my experience might be an encouragement. One can question, doubt, reject much of what we learned in our childhood, and still remain faithful. There is a "new way home." Maybe my experiences will help some of you find it. Each chapter includes a sermon I have preached over the course of the last eighteen years as co-pastor of the Park Road Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, with my wife, Amy Jacks Dean. I include these sermons as a testimony to the faith that has been developing and changing. I have enjoyed the privilege of being a "professional proclaimer" of Christianity, and although I did not write the sermons for this book, it should be clear in reading them that the faith which is very real to me continues to be a "work in progress." Each chapter also begins with several "Questions to Consider." Unlike many books that conclude chapters with similar reflection/study questions, I have included these questions as a prelude to each chapter. I hope they will whet your appetite and get your wheels turning in the right direction for the chapter and sermon that follow. To get the most out of these questions, you might reflect on them briefly before you read and then come back to them before starting the next chapter. There is room for you to make notes about your own experience and any deepened insight you may have gained by reading my story and relating it to your own faith experience. *Finding a New Way Home* is not just a book; it really is the experience of my life. I am glad to have this opportunity to share it with you. Especially if you have strayed from the path and have considered leaving it all behind, I welcome you. It's a journey worth taking, because even if you are surprised where you find yourself along the way today, you can be sure that home is where your heart is—and where God is—and there's just no place like it. Welcome to the journey. Welcome home!

Finding a New Way Home

"The problem was, because Purity is an idol (a validated and worshiped idol), I didn't know who or what I'd be without my totem. My Christianity depended on Purity." Going to a conservative Christian church when she was young, Brenda Marie Davies heard a consistent message—save yourself for marriage—that instilled

in her fear and shame about sex. But after moving to Los Angeles at nineteen and finding herself suddenly exposed to a world far outside her comfort zone, she was forced to wrestle with the power and perversity of Christian purity culture. *On Her Knees* chronicles Brenda's spiritual journey over the course of a decade in LA, through marriage, divorce, unlikely friendship, and sexual exploration. Through it all, she began tearing down the false idol of purity while refusing to abandon her faith. Told with raw honesty, sans obligatory shame, this is a story for anyone who wonders if it's possible to love God without fearing sex, in all its shades of grey.

On Her Knees

Now a New York Times bestselling author, Nadia Bolz-Weber takes no prisoners as she reclaims the term "pastrix" (pronounced "pas-triks," a term used by some Christians who refuse to recognize female pastors) in her messy, beautiful, prayer-and-profanity laden narrative about an unconventional life of faith. Heavily tattooed and loud-mouthed, Nadia, a former stand-up comic, sure as hell didn't consider herself to be religious leader material—until the day she ended up leading a friend's funeral in a smoky downtown comedy club. Surrounded by fellow alcoholics, depressives, and cynics, she realized: These were her people. Maybe she was meant to be their pastor. Using life stories—from living in a hopeful-but-haggard commune of slackers and her unusual but undeniable spiritual calling to her experiences pastoring people from all walks of life—and poignant honesty, Nadia portrays a woman who is both deeply faithful and deeply flawed, giving hope to the rest of us along the way. Wildly entertaining and deeply resonant, this is the book for people who hunger for a bit of hope that doesn't come from vapid consumerism; for women who talk too loud and guys who love chick flicks; and for the gay person who loves Jesus and won't be shunned by the church. In short, this book is for every misfit suspicious of institutionalized religion but who is still seeking transcendence and mystery.

Pastrix

Your Story Matters presents a dynamic and spiritually formative process for understanding and redeeming the past in order to live well in the present and into the future. Leslie Leyland Fields has used and taught this practical and inspiring writing process for decades, helping people from all walks of life to access memory and sift through the truth of their stories. This is not just a book for writers. Each one of us has a story, and understanding God's work in our stories is a vital part of our faith. Through the spiritual practice of writing, we can "remember" his acts among us, "declare his glory among the nations," and pass on to others what we have witnessed of God in this life: the mysterious, the tragic, the miraculous, the ordinary. With a companion video curriculum from RightNow Media, this is a "why not" book as opposed to a "how to" book. Leslie asks each of us an important question: "Why not learn to tell your story, in the context of the grander story of God?"

Your Story Matters

When John C. H. Wu's spiritual autobiography *Beyond East and West* was published in 1951, it became an instant Catholic best seller and was compared to Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, which had appeared four years earlier. It was also hailed as the new Confession of St. Augustine for its moving description of Wu's conversion in 1937 and early years as a Catholic. This new edition, including a foreword written by Wu's son John Wu, Jr., makes this profoundly beautiful book by one of the most influential Chinese lay Catholic intellectuals of the twentieth century available for a new generation of readers hungry for spiritual sustenance. *Beyond East and West* recounts the story of Wu's early life in Ningpo, China, his family and friendships, education and law career, drafting of the constitution of the Republic of China, translation of the Bible into classical Chinese in collaboration with Chinese president Chiang Kai-Shek, and his role as China's delegate to the Holy See. In passages of arresting beauty, the book reveals the development of his thought and the progress of his growth toward love of God, arriving through experience at the conclusion that the wisdom in all of China's traditions, especially Confucian thought, Taoism, and

Buddhism, point to universal truths that come from, and are fulfilled in, Christ. In *Beyond East and West*, Wu develops a synthesis between Catholicism and the ancient culture of the Orient. A sublime expression of faith, here is a book for anyone who seeks the peace of the spirit, a memorable book whose ideas will linger long after its pages are closed.

Beyond East and West

“Courageous and inspiring.”—Karen Armstrong, author of *The Case for God* “James Carroll takes us to the heart of one of the great crises of our times.”—Stephen Greenblatt, author of *The Swerve* An eloquent memoir by a former priest and National Book Award–winning writer who traces the roots of the Catholic sexual abuse scandal back to the power structure of the Church itself, as he explores his own crisis of faith and journey to renewal **NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY PUBLISHERS WEEKLY** James Carroll weaves together the story of his quest to understand his personal beliefs and his relationship to the Catholic Church with the history of the Church itself. From his first awakening of faith as a boy to his gradual disillusionment as a Catholic, Carroll offers a razor-sharp examination both of himself and of how the Church became an institution that places power and dominance over people through an all-male clergy. Carroll argues that a male-supremacist clericalism is both the root cause and the ongoing enabler of the sexual abuse crisis. The power structure of clericalism poses an existential threat to the Church and compromises the ability of even a progressive pope like Pope Francis to advance change in an institution accountable only to itself. Carroll traces this dilemma back to the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages, when Scripture, Jesus Christ, and His teachings were reinterpreted as the Church became an empire. In a deeply personal re-examination of self, Carroll grapples with his own feelings of being chosen, his experiences as a priest, and the moments of doubt that made him leave the priesthood and embark on a long personal journey toward renewal—including his tenure as an op-ed columnist at *The Boston Globe* writing about sexual abuse in the Church. Ultimately, Carroll calls on the Church and all reform-minded Catholics to revive the culture from within by embracing anti-clerical, anti-misogynist resistance and staying grounded in the spirit of love that is the essential truth at the heart of Christian belief and Christian life.

The Truth at the Heart of the Lie

In this colourful memoir, from 1950’s childhood to the COVID crisis, Brian Mountford describes his life as a priest, which has spanned a period of immense social change and seen the secularisation of Britain to the point where 52% of the population say they have ‘no religion’. Opening with a vibrant account of London in the Sixties, he moves to Cambridge college life in the Seventies, Suburbia in the Eighties, and thirty years as Vicar of the ‘most visited parish church in England’, the University Church, Oxford. Rich in humour and anecdote, he unpacks his liberal theological ideas on the way, addressing questions such as God, the meaning of life, sexual ethics, and the relationship between doubt and faith. A central idea is that the abandonment of organised religion has not eradicated spiritual questioning and, following Philip Larkin’s poem *Church Going*, from which the book takes its title, people of all ages are forever ‘surprising/A hunger in (themselves) to be more serious.’ Both the story and the essay content will fascinate many, many more people than actually go to church.

Church Going Gone

“Forceful talent” (*Essence Magazine*) and R&B sensation Faith Evans gives us a first person account of life at ground zero of the most infamous part of hip-hop history. It's been over ten years since Big was killed. I grieved for him for a very long time. And then, as time passed, the icy wall of grief surrounding my heart began to thaw and I began to heal. I remarried, had more children, and continued to record and release more music. I continued to live my life. And while I can never discount the time I spent with Big, I've never felt the need to live in the past. But sometimes, I still find myself thinking about Big being rushed the hospital, and I break down in tears. It's not just because we hung up on each other during what would be our last telephone conversation. And it's not because I am raising our son, a young man who has never known his

father. It's partly all of those things. But mainly it's because he wasn't ready to go. His debut album was called Ready to Die. But in the end, he wasn't. Big never got a chance to tell his story. It's been left to others to tell it for him. In making the decision to tell my own story, it means that I've become one of those who can give insight to who Big really was. But I can only speak on what he meant to me. Yet I also want people to understand that although he was a large part of my life, my story doesn't actually begin or end with Big's death. My journey has been complicated on many levels. And since I am always linked to Big, there are a lot of misconceptions about who I really am. I hope that in reading my words, there is inspiration to be found. Perhaps you can duplicate my success or achieve where I have failed. Maybe you can skip over the mistakes I've made. Use my life as an example-of what to do and in some cases, what not to do. It's not easy putting your life out there for the masses. But I've decided I'll tell my own story. For Big. For my children. And for myself.

KEEP THE FAITH

The renowned Christian preacher and New York Times bestselling author of *An Altar in the World* recounts her moving discoveries of finding the sacred in unexpected places while teaching world religions to undergraduates in Baptist-saturated rural Georgia, revealing how God delights in confounding our expectations.

Holy Envy

Tim Sledge pulls back the curtain on Southern Baptist life as he chronicles nearly four decades of ministry in this highly personal, sometimes painful, and frequently provocative spiritual autobiography. Part memoir, part exposé, part polemic--this is an account of failures as well as accomplishments--and very nearly a case study in how faith may begin, how it evolves, and how it can fall apart. Sledge traces the childhood origins of his sincere faith, his efforts at spiritual obedience, his theological education, his climb up the ladder in ministry, his insights into the challenges of growth-oriented leadership, and his pioneering work in faith-based recovery ministries that ultimately guided participants in 20,000 support groups across the U.S. A recurring theme in his story is coming to grips with the significance of being an adult child of an alcoholic. After a fall from grace and a growing awareness that faith no longer worked for him, his journey took a new direction that required examining alternatives to his former belief system including Deism, agnosticism, humanism, and atheism. Ultimately, he found new ways to live a positive, value-driven life and emerged as a new version of the same person he had always been, still interested in creating avenues for personal growth in the lives of others. *Goodbye Jesus* is a relatable and thoughtful read for those seeking to better understand the evangelical mindset, for Christians who are questioning their faith, for ministers trying to decide whether to stay or go, and for those who have left their faith and are dealing with its loss.

Goodbye Jesus

Are you struggling to connect with your church community? Do you find yourself questioning the core beliefs that you once held dear? *Searching for Sunday*, from New York Times bestselling author Rachel Held Evans is a heartfelt ode to the past and a hopeful gaze into the future of what it means to be a part of the modern church. Like millions of her millennial peers, Rachel Held Evans didn't want to go to church anymore. The hypocrisy, the politics, the gargantuan building budgets, the scandals--to her, it was beginning to feel like church culture was too far removed from Jesus. Yet, despite her cynicism and misgivings, something kept drawing Evans back to church. Evans found herself wanting to better understand the church and find her place within it, so she set out on a new adventure. Within the pages of *Searching for Sunday*, Evans catalogs her journey as she loves, leaves, and finds the church once again. Evans tells the story of her faith through the lens of seven sacraments of the Catholic church--baptism, confession, holy orders, communion, confirmation, the anointing of the sick, and marriage--to teach us the essential truths about what she's learned along the way, including: Faith isn't just meant to be believed, it's meant to be lived and shared in community. Christianity isn't a kingdom for the worthy--it's a kingdom for the hungry, the broken, and the

imperfect The countless and beautiful ways that God shows up in the ordinary parts of our daily lives Searching for Sunday will help you unpack the messiness of community, teaching us that by overcoming our cynicism, we can all find hope, grace, love, and, somewhere in between, church.

Searching for Sunday

George was your average American kid born to traditional Middle Eastern immigrants. Curious about life but tortured by vicious bullying in middle school, he found what seemed like a solution: evangelical Christianity. It appeared to have the cure for his most "shameful sin." Believing his homosexual feelings were an abomination before God, he committed his life to a church community who accepted him ... conditionally. While hiding the scariest truths about him for fear of losing their love, he went from Bible study to Bible college, committing every aspect of his life to his faith - even forsaking important relationships "for the sake of the Gospel." Little did he know that the steady trickle of relinquished identity would create a psychological dysmorphia that allowed his oppressors to keep him in a dangerous isolation. Coming to Jesus: My Gay Church Days is the true story of a deeply insecure evangelical pastor who eventually decided enough was enough. After failed relationships, crippling anxiety, and cult-like codependency, George broke away from rigid Christianity to pursue the thing he once found most dreadful and fearful about himself. This book is a crusade of revealing, an exploration of conformity, oppression, awakening, and self-discovery unlike any other. Ultimately, it is also a quest to save other "lost souls" by example, calling others to rise above the expectations of others and accept themselves as they are.

Coming to Jesus: My Gay Church Days: Memoir of a Closeted Evangelical Pastor who Eventually Had Enough

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