

Leaving Church A Memoir Of Faith Barbara Brown Taylor

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Leaving the Saints

****THE INSTANT NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**** "A Gen-X This Boy's Life
Music and his fierce brilliance boost Jollett; a visceral urge to leave his background behind propels him to excel In the end, Jollett shakes off the past to become the captain of his own soul. Hollywood Park is a triumph." —O, The Oprah Magazine "This moving and profound memoir is for anyone who loves a good redemption story." —Good Morning America, 20 Books We're Excited for in 2020 "Several years ago, Jollett began writing Hollywood Park, the gripping and brutally honest memoir of his life. Published in the middle of the pandemic, it has gone on to become one of the summer's most celebrated books and a New York Times best seller" —Los Angeles Magazine
HOLLYWOOD PARK is a remarkable memoir of a tumultuous life. Mikel Jollett was born into one of the country's most infamous cults, and subjected to a childhood filled with poverty, addiction, and emotional abuse. Yet, ultimately, his is a story of fierce love and family loyalty told in a raw, poetic voice that signals the emergence of a uniquely gifted writer. We were never young. We were just too afraid of ourselves. No one told us who we were or what we were or where all our parents went. They would arrive like ghosts, visiting us for a morning, an afternoon. They would sit with us or walk around the grounds, to laugh or cry or toss us in the air while we screamed. Then they'd disappear again, for weeks, for months, for years, leaving us alone with our memories and dreams, our questions and confusion. So begins Hollywood Park, Mikel Jollett's remarkable memoir. His story opens in an experimental commune in California, which later morphed into the Church of Synanon, one of the country's most infamous and dangerous cults. Per the leader's mandate, all children, including Jollett and his older brother, were separated from their parents when they were six months old, and handed over to the cult's "School." After spending years in what was essentially an orphanage, Mikel escaped the cult one morning with his mother and older brother. But in many ways, life outside Synanon was even harder and more erratic. In his raw, poetic and powerful voice, Jollett portrays a childhood filled with abject poverty, trauma, emotional abuse, delinquency and the lure of drugs and alcohol. Raised by a clinically depressed mother, tormented by his angry older brother, subjected to the unpredictability of troubled step-fathers and longing for contact with his father, a former heroin addict and ex-con, Jollett

slowly, often painfully, builds a life that leads him to Stanford University and, eventually, to finding his voice as a writer and musician. *Hollywood Park* is told at first through the limited perspective of a child, and then broadens as Jollett begins to understand the world around him. Although Mikel Jollett's story is filled with heartbreak, it is ultimately an unforgettable portrayal of love at its fiercest and most loyal.

The Book of Mormon Girl

"Funny, elegiac a remarkably sunny coming-of-age story about growing up in a Midwest world." --- NPR This is a story of the 1970s. Of a road trip in a wood-paneled station wagon, with the kids in the way-back, singing along to the Steve Miller Band. Of brothers waking up early on Saturday mornings for five consecutive hours of cartoons. Of growing up in a magical era populated by Bic pens, Mr. Clean and Scrubbing Bubbles, lightsabers and those oh-so-coveted Schwinn Sting-Ray bikes. And of a father--one of 3M's greatest and last eight-track salesmen--traveling across the country on the brand-new Boeing 747, providing for his family but wanting nothing more than to get home. In *Sting-Ray Afternoons*, Steve Rushin paints an utterly nostalgic, psychedelically vibrant portrait of a decade overflowing with technological evolution, cultural revolution, as well as brotherly, sisterly, and parental love.

Bitten by a Camel

Barbara Melosh's story was a common one. A second-career seminarian, she arrived at her first pastorate brimming with enthusiasm and high hopes. The blue-collar congregation to which she'd been called had a glorious past but an uncertain future. Certain that she could turn around its slow yet undeniable slide into decline, Melosh inaugurated a number of church growth and outreach programs. Most of these efforts had little effect, and the ones that did seem to work soon suffered reverse outcomes and eventual demise. In the end, Melosh had to conclude that the members of the congregation liked their church the way it was and that she could not drag them into a future they did not want. Yet while the congregation failed to change itself, Melosh notes, it succeeded in changing her. Simply put, it made her a pastor. At times heartbreaking and hilarious, *Loving and Leaving a Church* offers a glimpse into the challenges and opportunities of ministry in a mainline church.

Wiving

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.

An Altar in the World

Story about leaving behind the innocence of childhood belief and embracing the complications and heartbreaks that come to every adult life of faith. Explores the author's journey through her faith, and the experience of being a Mormon.

Confessions of a Latter-day Virgin

A powerful, heartbreaking, and redemptive account of a boy who endured a childhood of poverty and abuse in an American Southwest trailer park named Cloud 9. Abandoned by his father at age two, Rick Sylvester lived with an abusive mother whose struggles as a member of the working poor led her to drugs, alcohol, theft, and prostitution--and eventually attempted suicide. Rick battled depression, anxiety, and PTSD as the chaos, neglect, and unpredictability of his childhood seemed to doom him to follow in his mother's footsteps. Well into adulthood, Rick stumbled through unemployment and divorce, using drugs and alcohol to numb the pain until he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Miraculously, though, he overcame the odds and today is a happy husband and father. How did this happen? Rick's answer is this: "It was the Lord." A message of hope to those who are drowning from an undeserved childhood, *Leaving Cloud 9* speaks to millions who grew up poor, feeling ignored and hopeless, and who need the healing power of God. This indelibly American story conveys the steadfast love of Jesus and his power to deliver us from the most devastating of pasts.

Hollywood Park

In a thoughtful examination of faith, bestselling author and life coach Beck chronicles her difficult decision to leave the Mormon church, and her struggle to overcome a dark secret buried in her childhood.

Brother, I'm Dying

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.

The Latter Days

For anyone who has ever felt like they don't belong, Sigh, Gone shares an irreverent, funny, and moving tale of displacement and assimilation woven together with poignant themes from beloved works of classic literature. In 1975, during the fall of Saigon, Phuc Tran immigrates to America along with his family. By sheer chance they land in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, a small town where the Trans struggle to assimilate into their new life. In this coming-of-age memoir told through the themes of great books such as *The Metamorphosis*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Iliad*, and more, Tran navigates the push and pull of finding and accepting himself despite the challenges of immigration, feelings of isolation, and teenage rebellion, all while attempting to meet the rigid expectations set by his immigrant parents. Appealing to fans of coming-of-age memoirs such as *Fresh Off the Boat*, *Running with Scissors*, or tales of assimilation like Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Displaced* and *The Refugees*, Sigh, Gone explores one man's bewildering experiences of abuse, racism, and tragedy and reveals redemption and connection in books and punk rock. Against the hairspray-and-synthesizer backdrop of the '80s, he finds solace and kinship in the wisdom of classic literature, and in the subculture of punk rock, he finds affirmation and echoes of his disaffection. In his journey for self-discovery Tran ultimately finds refuge and inspiration in the art that shapes—and ultimately saves—him.

Leaving Church

Kent Dobson climbed Mount Sinai in search of the God who had eluded him. Instead he got bitten by a camel. Dobson was

climbing the ladder of Christianity, too: a worship leader, teacher, and ultimately senior pastor of one of the largest and most prominent churches in America. But he was growing disillusioned with the faith, at least inside the shell of organized religion. One Sunday morning, he preached to his congregation, "I don't know what the word God even means anymore." He soon left the church, but his quest for God became more intense than ever. In *Bitten by a Camel*, Dobson deconstructs much of what passes as Christianity, but on the foundation of Jesus and the Bible, he reconstructs a faith that is fulfilling, life-giving, and true—true to himself and true to God. Dobson's message is funny, poignant, and winsome. And it is ultimately, like the message of Jesus himself, hopeful.

Gilead

"This beautiful book is rich with wit and humanness and honesty and loving detail....I cannot overstate how liberating and transforming I have found *Leaving Church* to be." —Frederick Buechner, author of *Beyond Words* "This is an astonishing book. . . . Taylor is a better writer than LaMott and a better theologian than Norris. In a word, she is the best there is." —*Living Church* Barbara Brown Taylor, once hailed as one of America's most effective and beloved preachers, eloquently tells the moving and delightful story of her search to find an authentic way of being Christian—even when it meant giving up her pulpit. The eBook includes a special excerpt from Barbara Brown Taylor's *Learning to Walk in the Dark*.

The Spiral Staircase

"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." —Matthew 2:1–2 This enchanting Christmas story by beloved author and preacher Barbara Brown Taylor follows the three wise men on their world-changing journey to Bethlehem. In this beautiful retelling of their adventure, Taylor captures the power of one very special star and gives readers a new perspective on the three wise men and their encounters with King Herod, Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus. *Home by Another Way: A Christmas Story* features breathtaking artwork from illustrator Melanie Cataldo and is perfect for gift-giving. Ideal for children ages 8-10.

Leaving Church

The Most Anticipated Memoirs of 2020, *She Reads* • Bay Area Authors to Read This Summer, 7X7 A literary memoir of one woman's journey from wife to warrior, in the vein of breakout hits like Cheryl Strayed's *Wild* and Jeannette Walls's *The Glass Castle*. At thirty-six years old, Caitlin Myer is ready to start a family with her husband. She has left behind the restrictive confines of her Mormon upbringing and early sexual trauma and believes she is now living her happily ever after . . . when

her body betrays her. In a single week, she suffers the twin losses of a hysterectomy and the death of her mother, and she is jolted into a terrible awakening that forces her to reckon with her past—and future. This is the story of one woman's lifelong combat with a culture—her “escape” from religion at age twenty, only to find herself similarly entrapped in the gender conventions of the secular culture at large, conventions that teach girls and women to shape themselves to please men, to become good wives and mothers. The biblical characters Yael and Judith, wives who became assassins, become her totems as she evolves from wifely submission to warrior independence. An electric debut that loudly redefines our notions of womanhood, *Wiving* grapples with the intersections of religion and sex, trauma and love, sickness and mental illness, and a woman's harrowing enlightenment. Building on the literary tradition of difficult women who struggle to be heard, *Wiving* introduces an urgent, striking voice to the scene of contemporary women's writing at a time when we must explode old myths and build new stories in their place.

Post-Traumatic Church Syndrome

At twenty-two, Judith Freeman--born and raised in a Mormon community--had abandoned her faith, but found herself working in the church-owned department store in the Utah town where she grew up. She was in the process of divorcing the man she'd married at age seventeen and was living in her parents' house with her four-year-old son, who had already endured two heart surgeries. The surgeon, a rising star in his field, had become her lover. It was at this fraught moment that she decided to become a writer. In this moving memoir, Freeman explores the circumstances and choices that informed her course, and those that allowed her to find a way forward. In shimmering prose, she gives us an illuminating, singular portrait of resilience and forgiveness, of memory and hindsight, and of the ways in which we come to identify our truest selves.

Still Christian

The activist and TED speaker Megan Phelps-Roper reveals her life growing up in the most hated family in America At the age of five, Megan Phelps-Roper began protesting homosexuality and other alleged vices alongside fellow members of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas. Founded by her grandfather and consisting almost entirely of her extended family, the tiny group would gain worldwide notoriety for its pickets at military funerals and celebrations of death and tragedy. As Phelps-Roper grew up, she saw that church members were close companions and accomplished debaters, applying the logic of predestination and the language of the King James Bible to everyday life with aplomb—which, as the church's Twitter spokeswoman, she learned to do with great skill. Soon, however, dialogue on Twitter caused her to begin doubting the church's leaders and message: If humans were sinful and fallible, how could the church itself be so confident about its beliefs? As she digitally jostled with critics, she started to wonder if sometimes they had a point—and then she

began exchanging messages with a man who would help change her life. A gripping memoir of escaping extremism and falling in love, *Unfollow* relates Phelps-Roper's moral awakening, her departure from the church, and how she exchanged the absolutes she grew up with for new forms of warmth and community. Rich with suspense and thoughtful reflection, Phelps-Roper's life story exposes the dangers of black-and-white thinking and the need for true humility in a time of angry polarization.

Leaving Alexandria

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", places where a ladder of angels connects heaven to earth and earth to heaven. *An Altar in the World* reveals concrete ways to discover the sacred in such ordinary occurrences as hanging out the washing, doing the supermarket shop, feeding an animal, or losing our way. It will transform our understanding of ourselves and the world we live in, and renew our sense of wonder at the extraordinary gift of life.

Sin Bravely

The moving story of her own search for God by the highly-acclaimed author of the bestselling *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*; *The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism*; and *Islam: A Short History*. In 1969, after seven years as a Roman Catholic nun -- hoping, but ultimately failing, to find God -- Armstrong left her convent. She knew almost nothing of the changed world she was entering, and she was tormented by panic attacks and inexplicable seizures. Her struggle against despair was fueled by a string of discouragements -- failed spirituality, doctorate and jobs, fruitless dealings with psychiatrists -- but finally, in 1976, she was diagnosed with epilepsy and given proper treatment. She then began the writing career that would become her true calling, and as she focused on the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, her own true inner story began to emerge. She would come to experience brief moments of transcendence through her work -- the profound fulfillment that she had not found in the long hours of prayer as a young nun. Powerfully engaging, often heart-breaking, but lit with bursts of humour, *The Spiral Staircase* is an extraordinary history of self. From the Hardcover edition.

Banished

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.

Leaving the Pink House

#1 NEW YORK TIMES, WALL STREET JOURNAL, AND BOSTON GLOBE BESTSELLER • One of the most acclaimed books of our time: an unforgettable memoir about a young woman who, kept out of school, leaves her survivalist family and goes on to earn a PhD from Cambridge University “An amazing story, and truly inspiring. It’s even better than you’ve heard.”—Bill Gates NAMED ONE OF THE TEN BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW • ONE OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA’S FAVORITE BOOKS OF THE YEAR • BILL GATES’S HOLIDAY READING LIST • FINALIST: National Book Critics Circle’s Award In Autobiography and John Leonard Prize For Best First Book • PEN/Jean Stein Book Award • Los Angeles Times Book Prize Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when one of Tara’s older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she’d traveled too far, if there was still a way home. “Beautiful and propulsive . . . Despite the singularity of [Westover’s] childhood, the questions her book poses are universal: How much of ourselves should we give to those we love? And how much must we betray them to grow up?”—Vogue NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The Washington Post • O: The Oprah Magazine • Time • NPR • Good Morning America • San Francisco Chronicle • The Guardian • The Economist • Financial Times • Newsday • New York Post • theSkimm • Refinery29 • Bloomberg • Self • Real Simple • Town & Country • Bustle • Paste • Publishers Weekly • Library Journal • LibraryReads • BookRiot • Pamela Paul, KQED • New York Public Library

Searching for Sunday

Journalist Walls grew up with parents whose ideals and stubborn nonconformity were their curse and their salvation. Rex and Rose Mary and their four children lived like nomads, moving among Southwest desert towns, camping in the mountains. Rex was a charismatic, brilliant man who, when sober, captured his children's imagination, teaching them how to embrace life fearlessly. Rose Mary painted and wrote and couldn't stand the responsibility of providing for her family. When the money ran out, the Walls retreated to the dismal West Virginia mining town Rex had tried to escape. As the dysfunction escalated, the children had to fend for themselves, supporting one another as they found the resources and will to leave home. Yet Walls describes her parents with deep affection in this tale of unconditional love in a family that, despite

its profound flaws, gave her the fiery determination to carve out a successful life. -- From publisher description.

Leaving Before the Rains Come

The Glass Castle

In a personal memoir, the author describes her relationships with the two men closest to her--her father and his brother, Joseph, a charismatic pastor with whom she lived after her parents emigrated from Haiti to the United States.

Educated

“Reading of God's silence in the Bible gives me courage to explore the practice of restraint in preaching—not as a deliberate withholding of God's word nor, I hope, as a rationale for my own reticence, but as a sober reaching for more reverence in the act of public speaking about God.” In these 1997 Lyman Beecher Lectures in Preaching delivered at Yale Divinity School, Barbara Brown Taylor focuses on the task of those who preach and those who hear sermons in a world where people thirst for a word from God. How may we approach this seemingly silent God with due respect, proclaiming the Word without violating the silence, by speaking with restraint? Her first chapter examines the late twentieth-century language with which we talk about God in theology and speak to God in prayer. The second chapter addresses the question of God's communication in Scripture and how the “voice of God” was heard less and less in the land as the centuries progressed. Finally, Taylor explores what the silence of God means for Christians and how we may exercise “homiletical restraint” in speaking of the divine.

The Preaching Life

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

Leaving the Saints

From New York Times bestselling author Rachel Held Evans comes a book that is both a heartfelt ode to the past and hopeful gaze into the future of what it means to be a part of the Church. Centered around seven sacraments, Evans' quest takes readers through a liturgical year with sharply honest and even funny stories about 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--church culture seemed so far removed from Jesus. Yet, despite her cynicism and misgivings, something kept drawing her back to Church. And so she set out on a journey to understand Church and to find her place in it. Baptism Communion Confirmation COnfession Marriage Vocation and even Death. 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--church culture seemed so far removed from Jesus. Yet, despite her cynicism and misgivings, something kept drawing her back to Church. And so she set out on a journey to understand Church and to find her place in it. A memoir about making do and taking risks, about the messiness of community and the power of grace, Searching for Sunday is about overcoming cynicism to find hope and, somewhere in between, Church.

Sting-Ray Afternoons

In this provocative tell-all, David Gushee gives an insider's look at the frictions and schisms of evangelical Christianity, based on his experiences that began with becoming a born-again Southern Baptist in 1978 to being kicked out of evangelicalism in 2014 for his stance on LGBT inclusion in the church. But Gushee's religious pilgrimage proves even broader than that, as he leads his reader through his childhood experiences in Roman Catholicism, his difficult days at the liberal Union Seminary in New York, his encounters with the Christian Right, and more. In telling his story, Gushee speaks to the cultural divisions of a generation, as well as of today, and to those who have themselves been disillusioned by many battles within American Christianity. As he describes his own struggles to find the right path at different stages of his journey, he highlights the turning points and decisions that we all face. When do we compromise, and when do we stand our ground? Is holding to moral conviction worth sacrificing friendship, jobs, and security? As he takes us through his sometimes-amusing, sometimes-heartbreaking, and always-stirring journey, Gushee shows us that we can retain our faith in Christ even when Christians disappoint us.

The Book of Separation

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 Cloud 9

Ladette Randolph understands her life best through the houses she has inhabited. From the isolated farmhouse of her childhood, to the series of houses her family occupied in small towns across Nebraska as her father pursued his dream of becoming a minister, to the equally small houses she lived in as a single mother and graduate student, houses have shaped

her understanding of her place in the world and served as touchstones for a life marked by both constancy and endless cycles of change. On September 12, 2001, Randolph and her husband bought a dilapidated farmhouse on twenty acres outside Lincoln, Nebraska, and set about gutting and rebuilding the house themselves. They had nine months to complete the work. The project, undertaken at a time of national unrest and uncertainty, led Randolph to reflect on the houses of her past and the stages of her life that played out in each, both painful and joyful. As the couple struggles to bring the dilapidated house back to life, Randolph simultaneously traces the contours of a life deeply shaped by the Nebraska plains, where her family has lived for generations, and how those roots helped her find the strength to overcome devastating losses as a young adult. Weaving together strands of departures and arrivals, new houses and deep roots, cycles of change and the cycles of the seasons, *Leaving the Pink House* is a richly layered and compelling memoir of the meaning of home and family, and how they can never really leave us, even if we leave them.

Unfollow

Barbara Brown Taylor is one of America's most renowned and beloved spiritual writers and author of the acclaimed *An Altar in the World*. Here she reflects on keeping faith and the relentless demands that characterise life for so many today. In this moving and memorable book she writes of her life and work as a priest and the burden of being one of the most celebrated preachers in America. She recalls with grace and wit what led her to priestly ministry, the privilege of exploring the mysteries of God with others, her growing fame, the crisis it provoked and the unexpected blessings that followed. Having been part of a team in a large urban church for ten years, she sought a parish of her own and it was love at first sight when she was invited to view a small rural parish in Georgia. Little did she imagine that here Jesus's words about losing one's life in order to find it would have such impact. She tells of the rapid growth of the church, the crowds who travelled miles to hear her preach, the tensions that arose - and the call to lay it all aside in order to rediscover the authentic heart of her faith.

Sigh, Gone

When Nicole Hardy's eye-opening "Modern Love" column appeared in the *New York Times*, the response from readers was overwhelming. Hardy's essay, which exposed the conflict between being true to herself as a woman and remaining true to her Mormon faith, struck a chord with women coast-to-coast. Now in her funny, intimate, and thoughtful memoir, Nicole Hardy explores how she came, at the age of thirty-five, to a crossroads regarding her faith and her identity. As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Nicole had held absolute conviction in her Mormon faith during her childhood and throughout her twenties. But as she aged out of the Church's "singles ward" and entered her thirties, she struggled to merge the life she envisioned for herself with the one the Church prescribed, wherein all women are called to be mothers

and the role of homemaker is the emphatic ideal. Confessions of a Latter-day Virgin chronicles the extraordinary lengths Nicole went to in an attempt to reconcile her human needs with her spiritual life--flying across the country for dates with LDS men, taking up salsa dancing as a source for physical contact, even moving to Grand Cayman, where the ocean and scuba diving provided some solace. But neither secular pursuits nor LDS guidance could help Nicole prepare for the dilemma she would eventually face: a crisis of faith that caused her to question everything she'd grown up believing. In the tradition of the memoirs Devotion and Mennonite in a Little Black Dress, Confessions of a Latter-day Virgin is a mesmerizing and wholly relatable account of one woman's hard-won mission to find love, acceptance, and happiness--on her own terms.

Home by Another Way

As the Reverend John Ames approaches the hour of his own death, he writes a letter to his son chronicling three previous generations of his family, a story that stretches back to the Civil War and reveals uncomfortable secrets about the family of preachers. Reader's Guide available. Reprint.

You Lost Me

NOW A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER You've likely heard of the Westboro Baptist Church. Perhaps you've seen their pickets on the news, the members holding signs with messages that are too offensive to copy here, protesting at events such as the funerals of soldiers, the 9-year old victim of the recent Tucson shooting, and Elizabeth Edwards, all in front of their grieving families. The WBC is fervently anti-gay, anti-Semitic, and anti- practically everything and everyone. And they aren't going anywhere: in March, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the WBC's right to picket funerals. Since no organized religion will claim affiliation with the WBC, it's perhaps more accurate to think of them as a cult. Lauren Drain was thrust into that cult at the age of 15, and then spat back out again seven years later. BANISHED is the first look inside the organization, as well as a fascinating story of adaptation and perseverance. Lauren spent her early years enjoying a normal life with her family in Florida. But when her formerly liberal and secular father set out to produce a documentary about the WBC, his detached interest gradually evolved into fascination, and he moved the entire family to Kansas to join the church and live on their compound. Over the next seven years, Lauren fully assimilated their extreme beliefs, and became a member of the church and an active and vocal picketer. But as she matured and began to challenge some of the church's tenets, she was unceremoniously cast out from the church and permanently cut off from her family and from everyone else she knew and loved. BANISHED is the story of Lauren's fight to find herself amidst dramatic changes in a world of extremists and a life in exile.

Holy Envy

As a young girl, Maggie Rowe took the idea of salvation very seriously. Growing up in a moderately religious household, her fear of eternal damnation turned into a childhood terror that drove her to become an outrageously dedicated Born-again Christian —regularly slinging Bible verses in cutthroat scripture memorization competitions and assaulting strangers at shopping malls with the “good news” that they were going to hell. Finally, at nineteen, crippled by her fear, she checked herself in to an Evangelical psychiatric facility. And that is where her journey really began. Surrounded by a ragtag cast of characters, including a former biker meth-head struggling with anger management issues, a set of identical twins tormented by erotic fantasies, a World War II veteran and artist of denial who insists that he’s only “locked up for a tune-up,” and a warm and upbeat chronic depressive who becomes the author’s closest ally, Maggie launches a campaign to, in the words of Martin Luther, “Sin bravely in order to know the forgiveness of God.” Told in a voice both funny and heartfelt, *Sin Bravely* is a tour de force, voice-driven debut that examines how one woman finally

When I Spoke in Tongues

The memoir of a woman who leaves her faith and her marriage and sets out to navigate the terrifying, liberating terrain of a newly mapless world Born and raised in a tight-knit Orthodox Jewish family, Tova Mirvis committed herself to observing the rules and rituals prescribed by this way of life. After all, to observe was to be accepted and to be accepted was to be loved. She married a man from within the fold and quickly began a family. But over the years, her doubts became noisier than her faith, and at age forty she could no longer breathe in what had become a suffocating existence. Even though it would mean the loss of her friends, her community, and possibly even her family, Tova decides to leave her husband and her faith. After years of trying to silence the voice inside her that said she did not agree, did not fit in, did not believe, she strikes out on her own to discover what she does believe and who she really is. This will mean forging a new way of life not just for herself, but for her children, who are struggling with what the divorce and her new status as “not Orthodox” mean for them. This is a memoir about what it means to decide to heed your inner compass at long last. To free the part of yourself that has been suppressed, even if it means walking away from the only life you’ve ever known. Honest and courageous, Tova takes us through her first year outside her marriage and community as she learns to silence her fears and seek adventure on her own path to happiness.

Empty the Pews

Close to 60 percent of young people who went to church as teens drop out after high school. Now the bestselling author of *unChristian* trains his researcher's eye on these young believers. Where Kinnaman's first book *unChristian* showed the world what outsiders aged 16-29 think of Christianity, *You Lost Me* shows why younger Christians aged 16-29 are leaving the church and rethinking their faith. Based on new research, *You Lost Me* shows pastors, church leaders, and parents how we

have failed to equip young people to live "in but not of" the world and how this has serious long-term consequences. More importantly, Kinnaman offers ideas on how to help young people develop and maintain a vibrant faith that they embrace over a lifetime.

Leaving the Witness

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?

When God is Silent

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 Church

"A fascinating glimpse into the consciousness of being an outsider in every possible way, and what it takes to find your path into the life you'd like to lead."--Nylon 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 Scoriah 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, Scoriah 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," Scoriah'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, Scoriah 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 Scoriah 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.

Learning to Walk in the Dark

New York Times Bestseller "One of the gutsiest memoirs I've ever read. And the writing--oh my god the writing."
--Entertainment Weekly A child of the Rhodesian wars and daughter of two deeply complicated parents, Alexandra Fuller is no stranger to pain. But the disintegration of Fuller's own marriage leaves her shattered. Looking to pick up the pieces of her life, she finally confronts the tough questions about her past, about the American man she married, and about the family she left behind in Africa. A breathtaking achievement, *Leaving Before the Rains Come* is a memoir of such grace and intelligence, filled with such wit and courage, that it could only have been written by Alexandra Fuller. *Leaving Before the Rains Come* begins with the dreadful first years of the American financial crisis when Fuller's delicate balance—between American pragmatism and African fatalism, the linchpin of her unorthodox marriage—irrevocably fails. Recalling her unusual courtship in Zambia—elephant attacks on the first date, sick with malaria on the wedding day—Fuller struggles to understand her younger self as she overcomes her current misfortunes. Fuller soon realizes what is missing from her life is something that was always there: the brash and uncompromising ways of her father, the man who warned his daughter that "the problem with most people is that they want to be alive for as long as possible without having any idea whatsoever how to live." Fuller's father—"Tim Fuller of No Fixed Abode" as he first introduced himself to his future wife—was a man who regretted nothing and wanted less, even after fighting harder and losing more than most men could bear. *Leaving Before the Rains Come* showcases Fuller at the peak of her abilities, threading panoramic vistas with her deepest revelations as a fully grown woman and mother. Fuller reveals how, after spending a lifetime fearfully waiting for someone to show up and save her, she discovered that, in the end, we all simply have to save ourselves. An unforgettable book, *Leaving Before the*

Rains Come is a story of sorrow grounded in the tragic grandeur and rueful joy only to be found in Fuller's Africa. From the Hardcover edition.

Loving and Leaving a Church

The prize-winning memoir: "an enlightening walk through a life that encompasses West Africa...rent strikes, the divided self and the question of grace" (Scotland on Sunday, UK). An international bestseller and winner of the PEN/Ackerley Prize, Ricard Holloway's candid memoir "is many things. It is a compelling account of a journey through life, told with great frankness; it is a subtle reflection on what it means to live in an imperfect and puzzling world; and it is a highly readable insight into one of the most humane and engaged minds of our times. It is, quite simply, a wonderful book" (Alexander McCall Smith). At the tender age of fourteen, Richard Holloway left his hometown of Alexandria, north of Glasgow, and travelled hundreds of miles to be educated and trained for the priesthood at an English monastery. By the age of twenty-five he had been ordained and was working in the slums of Glasgow. Through the forty years that followed, Richard touched the lives of many people as he rose to one of the highest positions in the Anglican Church. But behind his confident public faith lay a restless heart and an inquisitive mind. "Richard Holloway's memoir is endlessly vivid and fascinating. It's the record of a mind too large, too curious and far too generous to be confined within any single religious denomination...a delight and inspiration to believers, non-believers, and ex-believers alike."—Philip Pullman

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