

Leaving Church A Memoir Of Faith Barbara Brown Taylor

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An Altar in the World Penguin

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 jousted 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.

**Gay Girl, Good God** Beacon Press

"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 Scarah 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, Scarah 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," Scarah'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, Scarah 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 Scarah 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.

On Her Knees Bethany House

This unique and intensely personal memoir is about spirituality, not about religion,and it is alive with the raw energy of a journal and polisjed with the skill of the master storyteller. Leaving the Saints Canterbury Press

D. A. Carson's father was a pioneering church-planter and pastor in Quebec. But still, an ordinary pastor-except that he ministered during the decades that brought French Canada from the brutal challenges of persecution and imprisonment for Baptist ministers to spectacular growth and revival in the 1970s. It is a story, and an era, that few in the English-speaking world know anything about. But through Tom Carson's journals and written prayers, and the narrative and historical background supplied by his son, readers will be given a firsthand account of not only this trying time in North American church history, but of one pastor's life and times, dreams and disappointments. With words that will ring true for every person who has devoted themselves to the Lord's work, this unique book serves to remind readers that though the sacrifices of serving God are great, the sweetness of living a faithful, obedient life is greater still.

*Called to Question* Windblown Media

Jake Colsen, an overworked and disillusioned pastor, happens into a stranger who bears an uncanny resemblance (in manner) to the apostle John. A number of encounters with John as well as a family crisis lead Jake to a new understanding of what his life should be like: one filled with faith bolstered by a steady, close relationship with the God of the universe. Facing his own disappointment with Christianity, Jake must forsake the habits that have made his faith rote and rediscover the love that captured his heart when he first believed. Compelling and intensely personal, So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anything relates a man's rebirth from performance-based Christianity to a loving friendship with Christ that affects all he does, thinks, and says. As John tells Jake, "There is nothing the Father desires for you more than that you fall squarely in the lap of his love and never move from that place for the rest of your life."

Empty the Pews CreateSpace

From the New York Times bestselling author of Deacon King Kong and The Good Lord Bird, winner of the National Book Award for Fiction: The modern classic that Oprah.com calls one of the best memoirs of a generation and that launched James McBride's literary career. More than two years on The New York Times bestseller list. As a boy in

Brooklyn's Red Hook projects, James McBride knew his mother was different. But when he asked her about it, she'd simply say 'I'm light-skinned.' Later he wondered if he was different too, and asked his mother if he was black or white. 'You're a human being! Educate yourself or you'll be a nobody!' she snapped back. And when James asked about God, she told him 'God is the color of water.' This is the remarkable story of an eccentric and determined woman: a rabbi's daughter, born in Poland and raised in the Deep South who fled to Harlem, married a black preacher, founded a Baptist church and put twelve children through college. A celebration of resilience, faith and forgiveness, The Color of Water is an eloquent exploration of what family really means.

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

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.

**God Spare the Girls** Grand Central Publishing

INSTANT NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER Named one of Entertainment Tonight’s Best Celebrity Memoirs of 2023 As seen in The New York Times, People, The Cut, Vulture, The Daily Beast, Today, Bustle, Us Weekly, Life & Style, and Interview “No stone goes unturned” (People) in this memoir about The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City star Heather Gay’s departure from the Mormon Church, and her unforeseen success in business, television, and single motherhood. Straight off the slopes and into the spotlight, Heather Gay is famous for speaking the gospel truth. Whether as a businesswoman, mother, or television personality, she is unafraid to blaze a new trail, even if it means losing family, friends, and her community. Born and bred to be devout, Heather based her life around her faith. She attended Brigham Young University, served a mission in France, and married into Mormon royalty in the temple. But her life as a good Mormon abruptly ended when she lost the marriage and faith that she had once believed would last forever. With writing that is beautiful, sad, funny, and true, Heather recounts the difficult discovery of the darkness and damage that often exists behind a picture-perfect life, while examining the nuanced relationship between duty to self and duty to God. “An eye-opening firsthand account of religious indoctrination told with candor and sincerity” (Interview magazine), Bad Mormon is an unfiltered look at the religion that broke her heart.

Unveiling Grace A&C Black

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.

**When I Spoke in Tongues** Cowley Publications

In *Speaking of Sin*, Barbara Brown Taylor brings her fresh perspective to words that often cause us discomfort and have widely fallen into neglect: sin, damnation, repentance, penance, and salvation. In recovering this lost language in our worship and individual lives, she shows how we can take part in the divine work of redemption.

**The Color of Water** Harmony

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. Recording multiple albums and singing in America's largest megachurches, her music was used weekly around the globe and translated into numerous languages. But this poster girl for evangelical Christianity lived with a debilitating inner battle: she was gay. The tens of thousands of traditional Christians she sang in front of were unanimous in their view - they staunchly opposed same-sex relationships and saw homosexuality as a grievous sin. Vicky knew if she ever spoke up about her identity it would cost her everything. Faced with a major health crisis, at the age of thirty-five she decided to tell the world that she was gay. As a result, all hell broke loose. She lost her music career and livelihood, faced threats and vitriol from traditionalists, developed further health issues from the immense stress, and had to rebuild her life almost from scratch. But despite losing so much she gained far more: she was finally able to live from a place of wholeness, vulnerability, and authenticity. She finally found peace. What's more, Vicky became a champion for others, fighting for LGBT equality in the church and in the corporate sector. Her courageous work is creating change in the US and the UK, as she urges people to celebrate diversity, live authentically, and become undivided.

**Farewell to God** Rowman & Littlefield

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.

*Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor* Piatkus Books

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?

**There I Am** Crossway

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.

Your Story Matters Westminster John Knox Press

"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.

Always A Guest Canterbury Press

A gripping story of how an entire family, deeply enmeshed in Mormonism for thirty years, found their way out and found faith in Jesus Christ. For thirty years, Lynn Wilder, once a tenured faculty member at Brigham Young University, and her family lived in, loved, and promoted the Mormon Church. Then their son Micah, serving his Mormon mission in Florida, had a revelation: God knew him personally. God loved him. And the Mormon Church did not offer the true gospel. Micah's conversion to Christ put the family in a tailspin. They wondered, Have we believed the wrong thing for decades? If we leave Mormonism, what does this mean for our safety, jobs, and relationships? Is Christianity all that different from Mormonism anyway? As Lynn tells her story of abandoning the deception of Mormonism to receive God's grace, she gives a rare look into Mormon culture, what it means to grow up Mormon, and why the contrasts between Mormonism and Christianity make all the difference in the world. Whether you are in the Mormon Church, are curious about Mormonism, or simply are looking for a gripping story, *Unveiling Grace* will strengthen your faith in the true God who loves you no matter what.

Leaving Church Simon and Schuster

For more than twenty years, Charles Templeton was a major figure in the church in Canada and the United States. During the 1950s, he and Billy Graham were the two most successful exponents of mass evangelism in North America. Templeton spoke nightly to stadium crowds of up to thirty thousand people. However, increasing doubts about the validity of the Old Testament

and the teachings of the Christian church finally brought about a crisis in his faith and in 1957 he resigned from the ministry. In *Farewell to God*, Templeton speaks out about his reasons for the abandonment of his faith. In straightforward language, Templeton deals with such subjects as the Creation fable, racial prejudice in the Bible, the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus' alienation from his family, the second-class status of women in the church, the mystery of evil, the illusion that prayer works, why there is suffering and death, and the loss of faith in God. He concludes with a positive personal statement: "I Believe."

**The Unlikely Disciple** HarperCollins

The hilarious and heartwarming, respectful and thought-provoking memoir of a college student's semester at Liberty University, the "Bible Boot Camp" for young evangelicals, that will inspire believers and nonbelievers alike. No drinking. No smoking. No cursing. No dancing. No R-rated movies. Kevin Roose wasn't used to rules like these. As a sophomore at Brown University, he spent his days fitting right in with Brown's free-spirited, ultra-liberal student body. But when Roose leaves his Ivy League confines to spend a semester at Liberty University, a conservative Baptist school in Lynchburg, Virginia, obedience is no longer optional. Liberty is the late Reverend Jerry Falwell's "Bible Boot Camp" for young evangelicals, his training ground for the next generation of America's Religious Right. Liberty's ten thousand undergraduates take courses like Evangelism 101 and follow a forty-six-page code of conduct that regulates every aspect of their social lives. Hoping to connect with his evangelical peers, Roose decides to enroll at Liberty as a new transfer student, chronicling his adventures in this daring report from the front lines of America's culture war. His journey takes him from an evangelical hip-hop concert to a spring break mission trip to Daytona Beach (where he learns to preach the gospel to partying coeds). He meets pastors' kids, closet doubters, Christian rebels, and conducts what would be the last print interview of Rev. Falwell's life.

*Open Secrets* Zondervan

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?"

**Where the Light Fell** Sheed & Ward

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