



The Dark Path: A Memoir

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A young man struggles to reconcile God, faith, and sex as he stumbles toward finding his life in this frank and beautifully written memoir.

Since childhood, David Schickler has been torn between his intense desire to become a Catholic priest and his equally fervent desire for the company of women. Growing up in a family of staunch Catholics in upstate New York, Schickler senses God along what he calls "?the dark path"—a shadowy trail that winds through the woods behind his childhood home. On this path he begins his ongoing, frustratingly one-sided talks with God.

Things don't get any clearer for Schickler at college, where he initiates serious conversations about becoming a Jesuit just as he enters a passionate relationship with a vivacious, agnostic young woman. He tries various obsessions—karate, beer, writing fiction—attempting to duck the mystical God he feels called to serve as a priest. His pursuits of these passions, and of the young woman, take him from Germany to New York City and eventually to New England, where he has a life-changing reckoning about whether he will end up wearing the clerical collar or getting the girl.

Candid and funny, lyrical and blunt, *The Dark Path* is an evocative portrayal of one man's struggle with faith and women . . . both of which he tries to love with bold, bracing honesty.

The Dark Path: A Memoir Details

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From Reader Review The Dark Path: A Memoir for online ebook

Shannon says

Raised in a strictly Catholic family in upstate New York, author David Schickler long dreamed of being a priest. But as he grew older, he realized that his love and desire for women might prove to be a challenge to his goal. Schickler recalls this personal battle in his hilarious, heartfelt memoir *The Dark Path*.

Schickler had me from the first page of *The Dark Path*, as a ten year-old sitting in a pew, staring at his "wife", tagged as such because she also has a four syllable last name ending in -er. As he carries readers through his teenage years, where he begins to battle over his course in life, he introduces his hilarious idiosyncrasies and endearing quirks. Schickler's best flirting is learned from the *Grease* soundtrack, courtesy of his house full of sisters, and his most intimate conversations are the brutally honest heart-to-hearts he has with God.

Schickler's struggle continues in college, where he parties with his hard-drinking friends and non-religious girlfriend, but sneaks away to explore life as a Jesuit priest. Constantly pushing back his ultimate decision, but feeling increasing pressure to choose, Schickler begins to lose control before a radical change is able to ground him.

While it's framed around religion, David Schickler's memoir is less about Catholicism and more about finding yourself, despite where you imagined you might be. Believers and non-believers alike will find unforgettable honesty journeying along *The Dark Path*.

Blog: www.rivercityreading.com

Tejas Janet says

I was impressed with author David Schickler's ability to write about such an intensely personal subject, managing to be both forthright and insightful at once. It deals with his struggle to hear God's voice and so know his true life path, and culminates in an identity crisis when he finally recognizes that he will never become a priest as he had long-thought since childhood. The inner self-talk running throughout the course of the narrative captures his conflicted state remarkably well. I found it an easy story to relate to, and written in a way that kept up my interest to the end. I'd rate it somewhere between 4 and 5 stars.

Literary Vixens says

Reviewed by: Melissa

"When I swallow the wafer, I wait for God to bloom to life in my stomach, to give me muscles or wisdom. God doesn't seem to do this, but I'm hoping that one day He will."

David Schickler's memoir, *The Dark Path*, candidly outlines his very personal inner struggle between his

love of God and his lust for women with comical, poignant and sometimes uncomfortably bracing honesty. With sharp wit, keen insight and poetic detachment, Schickler retells his most revealing life experiences as only a man who has walked the walk can. His light tone seems to effortlessly capture the essence of an introspective gentleman who, while obviously talented and intelligent, is just a regular guy who doesn't appear to take himself too seriously in spite of the very serious nature of his spiritual dilemma. Schickler is a master storyteller who weaves his dark, stumbling path to enlightenment with suspense, light-hearted grace and humility.

Schickler unapologetically chronicles the most personal and moving experiences of his life in vivid detail. I found myself cringing, teary-eyed, but also laughing at his matter-of-fact reenactments of pivotal life lessons which have brought him to where he is today. He keeps you riveted to your seat as he escorts you through his awkward young adulthood when his true doubts about himself and his Maker unfold and the seeds of his rebellion against God's calling are planted, to his eventual realization that he is man with wants, needs and desires he cannot deny. He lets it all hang out - from his first sexual encounters to his crazy days of beer, booze and Karate kicking, I can't imagine Schickler has any skeletons left in his closet.

I absolutely loved this memoir and confess that David Schickler warmed my soul with his humble openness; his charming narration is clever and seductively engaging. As a mother of two young boys I was touched by his youthful innocence and later his jaded rebellion; and through his highs, lows and every misstep along the way I couldn't help but cheer him on. A central theme in the book, do what makes you happy rather than what you feel is expected, resonated with me as a mother, a wife and a Catholic, but it appeals to all people struggling to find their place in the world. This uplifting story left me feeling it's OK to be who I am, whoever that may be, as long as I do it with grace and authenticity. Bravo David, I can't wait for your encore.

Andrew says

Every good Catholic boy thinks about the priesthood at some point. Normally before he meets girls. So a book selling itself (on the advance edition anyway) as an epic internal struggle between these two paths sounds really interesting. *The Dark Path* is not that book.

David Schickler talks about his spiritual struggles as he moves through university and his early career. He gets as far as the eve of formally applying to the Jesuit novitiate, but at no point did it really seem likely he would go down this path (let's be clear, I'm commenting on his narrative of events as presented, not Schickler himself). Thus, no narrative tension.

I'm disappointed to rate this two stars. The book itself reads quite well with simple, tough prose. And Schickler calls out the the happy-fluffy Catholics whose facade too often turns people off religion and which hides the gritty personal struggles of believers. The problem is really in the presentation of the book. It's a coming of age memoir with a rare but deeply held religious element. It's not a tortured choice between two life paths.

Follow me on Twitter: @Dr_A_Taubman

John Wood says

In reading the book you soon find that "The Dark Path", although ominous sounding, is not at all what you may imagine. This book reads like fiction and I had to keep reminding myself that it isn't. I can definitely empathise with the Catholic, anxiety and depression issues. It is a quick, fun read and the author makes normal everyday happenings seem interesting, making the reader want to discover what comes next. It did get a bit old that he imagined every girl as his wife. His basic struggle, as with most Catholic boys, is choosing between the priesthood and the women. I don't think you necessarily need to be raised as a Catholic to enjoy the book but it added to my experience. Since the author usually writes fiction, and he made his real life sound so interesting, I may be compelled to read his other books! Just think what interesting stuff he could make up!

I received my copy of the book in a Goodreads Giveaway.

Angela says

Good book. It was a timely read for me. I really do not like to give stars, but I will. I would like to give this 4.5, but I cannot.

Thanks David Schickler.

Lorry Chwazik says

While I have no doubt after reading this memoir that Schickler felt (and suffered) mightily about his struggle between the priesthood and women (and really, that is the limited choice that he mentions throughout the book), I felt that his writing about it was overwrought, immature, and mind-numbingly dull. (Hey, look, Ma! I'm writing!) Personally, I was put off both by his treatment of women in real life and in the summation of his novels as recorded in this book, and his seeming lack of the perception that he alone is responsible for his belief system - not God, or "Lack of God" (as he still refers to God after his disenchantment with the priesthood but to whom he still annoyingly prays to frequently), or the sexual advance he, as a college student, unwelcomingly receives from a campus Jesuit. Dealing with religion, and the faith espoused by any religion, are two very different entities that many of us grapple with throughout our lives; what was missing here was any depth or mature explication of the process.

Colleen says

You will be laughing from the first page. You will want to be one of the girl's that David imagines could be his wife. You will not be sorry you picked up this book.

A great memoir that takes us on the journey of an internal battle between desires to be a priest and to love women- is it one or the other?

eb says

Over and over again, Schickler describes his youthful disdain for the "bubbly-safe" version of religion practiced by the adults around him--"all chipper and scrubbed too clean." He professes to prefer the dark path--a God who's unknowable and fearsome. What's so weird is that this entire memoir is bubbly-safe. In its language and its thoughts, it's juvenile, it's cutesy. It presents a series of un-funny, unsophisticated prayers ("Seriously, are You off talking to dying kids in distant lands, and that's why I'm not hearing from You now?") in place of hard thinking about Catholicism.

Also, it's not actually a memoir about faith; it's a memoir with some boring ruminations on faith thrown in.

Mary says

The Dark Path
a Memoir by David Schickler

First of all, this has been one of the best books I've read in a very long time. I grabbed it from the New Book section of the library. I did judge this book by its cover. I was not disappointed and stayed up nights reading page after page.

Starting from David Schickler's childhood, he was raised in a devoted Catholic family. He was comforted by a darkened space in the trees behind his home. He felt the Spirit of God. It influenced his life.

David always wanted to become a Catholic priest. As he became a college student, he struggled to be true to his faith. His desire for young women was often stronger and he strayed from the teaching of the Church causing mental stress. The stress led to a point that he was barely able to function in daily life.

In all this misery and indecision, you will find laugh out loud passages and uplifting of spirit. Believe me.

Jayrchase says

David Schickler, author and co-creator of the ever-so-dark Banshee series, writes a very readable memoir describing his efforts to determine his path (priesthood vs. teacher/author). He retells stories from his youth and blends them well providing a picture of how his experience mold him into his college years. His college years were pretty epic... I'm kinda jealous - but again, Schickler very deftly shows how his actions/decisions molded what comes next. He continues in this vein throughout the book leaving the reader with an understanding of his path and the costs/payoffs for everything he has done. The description of the other characters in the book are ever so believable and full. I found his descriptions and ideas regarding God and

mental illness were pretty unique and extremely thought provoking.

For those of you who do decide to read this, there is a passage when David is about 25, comes home for a visit and his sister sets him up with a girlfriend who was very meek in high school. The next morning, David is sitting at the breakfast table and has a conversation with his sister and mother about the previous evening. I laughed so hard that everyone in the house came running into the study to find out what had happened (I don't often laugh until I cry, sitting in a room by myself). I thought it was one of the funniest things I have read in years. If you did not think it was that funny, let me know... please!! (I am thinking it was so funny to me because it was so absolutely real - I can see how my family would have reacted in the same situation :))

If you are dogmatic or don't like rough language or light blasphemy, this book might not be for you. Otherwise, I highly recommend this peek into such a creative mind and how Mr. Schickler got to be where he is... This is a guy I would sit down and drink a beer with any day!!

FYI, I reviewed an ARC.

All the best,

Jay

Michael says

If I was Catholic, I would want to be a Jesuit; they seem to be the most pretentious of all the Catholic congregations. Not that I would want to be a priest as I'm married but for David Schickler the desire to be a priest was a driving force in his life. The Dark Path is a memoir of Schickler's struggle between a call to priesthood and his attraction to women. A memoir that explores his faith, sex and the internal conflict, The Dark Path is a funny and boldly honest look at his struggle.

I grew up in a strict religious home, though not Catholic, but I really connected with The Dark Path. Growing up, my parents were ministers and I often felt the pressure to join the ministry. Though it isn't as daunting as becoming a priest, it made this book relatable. I'm often drawn to books with an internal struggle and when I first heard about this book, I knew it was something I had to read. The whole idea of choosing a life in service to God or giving into your sexual urges is an interesting topic and Schickler tackled it in a way that remained respectful to both choices.

While this is a book about religion and Catholicism in general, I think of this book as a struggle to decide what path to take. In our high school and college years we all face choices that will affect the rest of our lives and The Dark Path is essentially about those decisions. As I've had a strong religious upbringing there was just so much in the book that I could relate to and enjoy, this does make my review very biased but I can't help it. I also married a Catholic so I had the opportunity to learn more about Catholicism while also having someone to answer all my questions I had in the book.

David Schickler has written one novel which is mentioned in this memoir called Kissing in Manhattan and also co-created the TV show Banshee, which I haven't had an opportunity to watch. I have to wonder if both the novel and show portray a similar element of struggle in the characters as well as maybe a hint of religious politics because I think he captured this really well in this book. I get a sense that his writing style is dark, gritty and transgressive. You can see hints of this in his writing but he still managed to make this memoir

hilarious and heart-warming.

There is so much I want to say about this book but I don't want to give too much of the book away. The Dark Path is the first book to receive a 5 star rating for 2014 and I hope to find many people to talk to about this memoir. If you have a religious background and want to read about a struggle of faith then I highly recommend The Dark Path. I plan to go read Kissing in Manhattan soon and maybe even try and get a hold of Banshee.

This review originally appeared on my blog; <http://www.knowledgelost.org/book-rev...>

Liam Green says

I dislike many memoirs. This is not most memoirs. It is *sui géneris* and it is a goddamned masterpiece. It may not mean quite as much to those of us who haven't struggled with Catholicism or with faith in general, but honestly anyone who's ever been mystified and stymied by love, life and family will find something here.

Stephen Lamb says

Read it in a day, and rated it 5 stars. And texted two friends excerpts while I was reading. That should be enough to figure out what I thought about it.

Anne says

This book was pretty dark, an aspect in books I usually try to avoid. However, the Catholic themes kept drawing me in. (religion nerds unite!) I was excited to read about the discernment process for the main character between marriage and the priesthood. While these themes were present, I soon felt I was simply reading a memoir of clinical depression instead.
