

# Naked Spirit- uality

A LIFE WITH GOD  
IN 12 SIMPLE WORDS

BRIAN D.  
MC LAREN

Author of *A New Kind of Christianity*

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*Brian D. McLaren*

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# **Naked Spirituality A Life With God in Twelve Simple Words**

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## **Naked Spirituality A Life With God in Twelve Simple Words Brian D. McLaren**

Prayer and spiritual practice tackled in raw and honest way and made simple and accessible for the reader to apply to their own life. Another inspiring and thought-provoking book from Brian D. McLaren, leading voice in the emerging church movement.

## **Naked Spirituality A Life With God in Twelve Simple Words Details**

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## **From Reader Review Naked Spirituality A Life With God in Twelve Simple Words for online ebook**

### **Trevor Lund says**

Starts out good...then sets up 12 things you need to do.

I feels like fake genuineness...if that's possible.

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### **Cornelia says**

Pithy, well written. Easily accessible for beginners in spiritual formation, but deep enough to engage persons on a deeper walk.

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### **Ashley says**

Great concept, poor execution. I'm not sure he really said anything original.

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### **Benjamin Vineyard says**

I enjoy McLaren's vulnerability within his writing - I get the sense that I'm listening to someone who's still wrestling over things, like I am, and not someone who's professing to have it all worked out.

My take away from this book was the permission McLaren's stages brought to my own life and walk with God. The seasons were: Simplicity: The Season of Spiritual Awakening; Complexity: The Season of Spiritual Strengthening; Perplexity: The Season of Spiritual Survival; and Harmony: The Season of Spiritual Deepening. McLaren took twelve words to flesh out these seasons and attached the words to practices of prayer and meditation which I felt reverted back to an introspective examination of the self and gave alleviating permission to whichever stage you happen to be in and to just be there.

Those twelve words are: Here, Thanks, O; Sorry, Help, Please; When, No, Why; and Behold, Yes, [...].

The stages McLaren wrote about were the reason I picked up the book. They're reminiscent of a few other things I've read by ancient church fathers and more recently by Adele Calhoon in her book, The Spiritual Discipline Handbook, where in an appendix she wrote about seasons of Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. McLaren's autumn was Calhoon's winter, but other than that, things were quite similar in terms of seasons.

I believe this book is good for introspective people but wonder if those who are less introspective would really get much out of it. I wonder if something more like Richard Foster's The Celebration of Discipline really fleshes out an understanding of spiritual attentiveness to the ways and person of God through intentional practices. Yet, Foster's book lacks an overarching sense of spiritual season, which I think is very helpful. It attaches us to what St. John of the Cross wrote 500 years ago about the Dark Night of the Soul and

such things and how they're all for the shaping of our whole selves toward absolute grace filled dependence on God.

Now, my fault for the book is that I feel McLaren's writing on the spiritual life, like many other books these days, seems to open a possibility of us working our spiritual life on our own with or without the Spirit of God propelling or filling us with spiritual life. Jesus and the Jesus Way themselves even seem optional by McLaren's writing - which I doubt would be the case if I sat down and talked with him. ...I wonder.

While I appreciate the mention of spiritual seasons and the words McLaren uses to flesh out those seasons, I'm left wondering at the end of the book what, in the author's words, is a true and living spirituality and what does Jesus have to do with it?

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### **James Titterton says**

I first heard about McLaren's book at a talk he gave at the Greenbelt festival in which he outlined his model of the 4 stages of the spiritual life - Simplicity, Complexity, Perplexity, Harmony, and then back around again. These four stages form the basis of 'Naked Spirituality', with each stage assigned three of the twelve words referred to in the book's subtitle. McLaren uses these twelve words as a framing device for his chapters on the practices and rituals that form the bedrock of the spiritual life - praise, thanksgiving, confession, meditation, lamentation etc.

What you get out of this book will depend on what you bring to it and where you are on your faith journey at the time of reading. As with the other McLaren book I've read, 'Everything Must Change', I felt like I wasn't really his target audience - he is writing for people of his own background, conservative evangelical American Christians, for whom some of the ideas in this book would be considered radical. I found the framework and the idea of a 'cycle' of spiritual seasons more helpful than the actual content of individual chapters.

I would recommend it as an introduction to the spiritual life or as a jumping off point for deepening your own faith, but don't expect too much from it.

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### **Shasta says**

Once I had time to finish this I absolutely loved it. Very thought provoking and challenging! I've got a feeling this will show up again.

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### **Rick says**

I have mixed thoughts on this book. I wanted to read it for a few reasons.

- 1.Brian McLaren seems to generate some controversy and I wanted to see for myself what all the hype was about.
- 2.The subtitle had the words life and simple in it and that sounds honestly refreshing.
- 3.The main title included the word naked. Sorry.

This book sold itself to me as something simple. At first I felt deceived. At first it seemed to me that something simple should not take so many words. It's simply complicated. Twelve simple words? That's like a sermon with 18 simple points.

It could be that Brian does not write it simply. Or I could just be a lot dumber than I thought. Either option is on the table. I'll let you decide.

But then I got past the introductory chapters. This may just be a me thing, but I prefer to see an author say what he's going to write about and then simply start writing about it. Because once I got into the heart of this book, I actually enjoyed it.

The premise is actually quite simple. Brian writes of 12 simple words that can help us focus through four seasons of life. The seasons are simplicity, complexity, perplexity and harmony. We may go through all of these seasons more than once and most will cycle through a few times. This is not intended to be a straight linear path. This is more proposed to be a winding circle as we go through the seasons of life.

Early on in the preface, Brian writes the following;

You won't find much in the way of aggressive arguments here, but rather a shy experience daring to step into the light. ... You won't need to agree with all the planks of my theological platform. I am a Christian, and all I write flows from my experience in that rich tradition, but you may be of another tradition entirely or of no known tradition at all.

Those couple of statements can be seen as both positive and negative. On the one hand, he clearly states he is a Christian. This is a good thing, because there are points that seem so muddled that I began to wonder. I had to repeatedly remind myself that we didn't have to agree on everything.

On the other hand, because Brian said this was not a book of theological arguments, it leaves him free to assume that we're all on the same page as far as how truth is interpreted. There are some obvious ways that he and I would differ in what we believe (which I will purposely avoid in this review for the sake of brevity). But there were times in which I had to seriously consider if his premise still held value considering the foundation of his points were shaky at best.

In the end, if you can look past where we would not agree and choose to look for what can be agreed upon, this book can be very much like sitting down with a friend over coffee and talking about how the two of you manage this thing we call life. I'd say that as long as you know what you believe, this book is worth the read.

I received this book from my great friends at The Ooze (<http://theooze.com>). They tell me to say something about the book, but not what to say. And so I do.

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### **Julie says**

I actually did glean a few good ideas about drawing closer to God from this book and I would have rated this 1 1/2 stars if I could as a result. But otherwise, I had a lot of problems with this and actually just skimmed the last 1/3. First, the author started off blaming all the world's social issues on organized religion which is something about which I am sick of hearing. The organized Christian churches of this world do more

socially than any other organizations out there. What is really odd is he later came back and said to help with our spiritual growth, we **SHOULD** attend a traditional church. Huh? He also had good insights on how to grow a stronger relationship with God during peaceful or even slightly turbulent times. But like everyone else, he has no answers for why the terrible things of life occur although he spent pages and pages acting like he did. Also, in one moment he took certain events of the Bible literally, yet slammed churches who took a literal stance on the Bible. Apparently, he only takes the Bible literally when it is easy to do so. When the tougher issues come up, suddenly we should ignore those because they aren't socially acceptable to address. I think you have to either say the Bible is a good story book that helps us to better to know God. Or the Bible is the God inspired truth, whether or not we like what it says and what we really should do is try to understand why certain things were said - - - not discount them.

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### **Stephen Williams says**

In this book Brian is writing into an area that challenges mainstream popular Christian presentations of the "spiritual life".

To me the book feels like wide open spaces....using the seasons of winter spring summer and autumn as metaphors for different seasons of spirituality Brian broadens out(perhaps somewhat paradoxically because it attempts to describe the narrow places through which we must enter if we are to grow up in our relationship with God) our concepts of what we may experience over our lifetime of relating to God...addressing the all to often "narrowly confined" spirituality of popular Christianity.

This book opens windows onto fresh spiritual air allowing you to breath...even if you are presently in a narrow confined place.

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### **Scott Holstad says**

I like Brian McLaren, but I've found his books to be either hit or miss and this one seems to be a miss for me. It's a lightweight, I guess intentionally, but there's nothing really challenging here, it seems to me. It's like he set out to write a new book and just phoned it in. Very disappointing. I expected his usually radical approach to religion and spirituality, but felt deflated while reading it. Indeed, I didn't even finish. Made it halfway through before giving up. Pity. At least I'm confident I'll find more books of his enjoyable and challenging....

Oh, the one thing I really did appreciate about the book came at the very front where McLaren described his evangelical/fundamentalist upbringing. It mirrored my own about 100%. Eerie. I feel sorry for him, as I've been tormented by my own stringent upbringing throughout my entire life. Unfortunately, the book lost any edge it may have started with shortly after.

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### **Jessica says**

In the introduction, McLaren talks about the many people who wish to have a spiritual connection to the world and/or a relationship with God, but who have been turned off by "organized religion" and all of its failings. He acknowledges the church's failure to reach these people and offers an alternative. McLaren attempts to help readers deepen their daily spiritual practices through the use of 12 simple words/prayers.

The chapters are written in pairs, with each pair focusing on a different word and its function in prayer. The twelve words are grouped into spiritual "seasons," that many people experience during their faith journey: Simplicity, Complexity, Perplexity, and Harmony. Each season encompasses the three words that express the emotions and goals of the seasons. I read this book because I wanted to expand my understanding and use of prayer, and to challenge myself to learn something new during Lent. While I probably won't use everything I learned on a daily basis, I found McLaren's insights useful and inspiring.

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### **Sue says**

This is a thoughtful book that aims to help individuals get to the heart of what it means to be spiritual. It proposes stripping away, at least for a while, the trappings and symbols of organised religion, and letting go of our preconceived ideas, and focussing on twelve short words that can help us focus more clearly on God.

These words are divided into four groups, each representing a 'season' of our lives, which the author refers to as simplicity, complexity, perplexity and harmony. He suggests that most of us go through these, to some extent, many times in our lives (albeit not with the predictable regularity of the earth's seasons) and that by getting rid of the extraneous, we can find God in any circumstances, and when times are hard, find some motivation to keep going.

It's an introspective book, which suits my temperament quite well, and also somewhat heavy-going so that I only read about ten pages a day, often pausing to think as I read. I don't know that the specific words themselves are all that helpful right now; I'm not sure I could define any of the 'seasons' as a good match currently, but can see that this may be a book to return to in future.

Recommended to anyone feeling overwhelmed by life, or other people, or church in general. This is not about avoiding community or congregational activities, but about finding space and time for God on one's own, so as to enrich and focus life in general.

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### **Barb Terpstra says**

This was an excellent book that dovetailed nicely with a Bible Study I'm in. Many of the spiritual disciplines that McLaren shares are practices I've learned during the course of the study.

If you are a person who desires to know God more intimately and wants to get out of the "hurry sickness" of the world I highly recommend Naked Spirituality. I was particularly moved by the last chapters, where McLaren's passion for God really shines through. The last three chapters really let you see that his love, the desire of his life, is for you and I to join him in loving God more.

If you are intrigued with the spiritual disciplines, or contemplation, this book will help you begin changing how you walk with God. I really liked how at the end of the chapters McLaren urges readers to set the book down and practice what he's "preaching".

I actually read the footnotes because there are so many books he quoted that I'm going to have to try to read

now! One particular quote that I love from Kenneth Leech's True Prayer:

Orthodoxy is about being consumed by Glory: the word means 'not right belief' (as dictionaries tell us) but right *doxy*, right glory. To be orthodox is to be set alight by the fire of God".

That's who I hope to grow into some day, a person alight with the fire of God. Practicing these disciplines, and others, will help.

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### **Andy Mitchell says**

This is Brian McLaren at his best.

He shares stories from his own faith journey and places them within a context of four seasons and 12 disciplines of the spiritual life:

Simplicity: Spring

Here = Presence

Thanks = Appreciation

O = Adoration

Complexity: Summer

Sorry = Confession

Help = Petition

Please = Intercession

Perplexity: Autumn

When = Aspiration

No = Refusal

Why = Lament

Harmony: Winter

Behold = Meditation

Yes = Consecration

[silence] = Contemplation

This is not a light read, so be prepared to chew on the ideas presented. Rather, it is a handbook for people looking to develop simple, sustainable spiritual disciplines in response to our love.

I give this book my highest recommendation.

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### **Chris says**

As another Goodreads' reader writes, Brian McLaren "shares stories from his own faith journey and places them within a context of four seasons and 12 disciplines of the spiritual life:

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