

Blessed Are the Nones: Mixed-Faith Marriage and My Search for Spiritual Community

Stina Kielsmeier-Cook

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In *Blessed Are the Nones*, a memoir about spiritual changes, personal shifts impact a marriage and a community.

Stina Kielsmeier-Cook met her husband, Josh, in college. They connected over their love of God and their desire to live a life of faith. But three years into their marriage, with a toddler in tow, Josh no longer believed in God. Kielsmeier-Cook was left reeling, wrestling with what his disbelief meant for her marriage and her faith, and acknowledging the changes that her faith had undergone, too.

The story unfolds with elegant narration, raw honesty, and unwavering belief in the goodness of God. While its voice is full of faith and hope, even in painful moments, Kielsmeier-Cook's struggle also makes room for heartfelt irreverence, as when she remarks that her father-in-law was "trying to talk his son back into eternal life."

The book tackles issues that have a broad impact on churches and people of faith, as with how Christian communities focus on marriage and married people. After many attempts to connect in faith community, Kielsmeier-Cook found "a place where women don't rely on their husbands for spiritual identity" through the hospitality of nuns. The story is empathetic to those who've experienced a severing in their lives of faith, and includes the gift of phrases like "spiritual singleness" and the simple word "relinquish."

Kielsmeier-Cook's search draws upon a number of Christian traditions, including Mennonite, Benedictine, and evangelical ones, and finds her weaving together a fluid faith that is rich with spiritual disciplines like devotional reading, prayer, and spiritual direction, some of which present challenges to mixed-faith families. The stages of grief echo through her story, and the importance of connections across boundaries is clear.

Blessed Are the Nones is a deep account of spiritual searching, and of finding a personal identity in marriage and one's community.

MELISSA WUSKE (September / October 2020)

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