

## Blessing the Chapel Doors: A Guide to Letting Go of Religious Guilt and Fear

**Cristi Jenkins**

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“You may be able to even bless it,” Cristi Jenkins writes regarding readers’ faith of origin, as she assures them that they can heal from it. Eventually they may view their original religion as a valuable learning experience.

Rejecting Mormonism caused Jenkins significant emotional turmoil. She believed that God told her to leave her religion. The final nudge that led to breaking church ties was a false accusation of homosexual activity, which Mormons regarded as a serious sin. She had not yet recognized her lesbian inclination.

The book emphasizes unconditional love. Jenkins writes, “Spirit does not judge our lives as good or bad.” She includes encouragement for gay and lesbian readers. For example, she writes that being homosexual “is perfectly okay with God, or Divine Source.”

Jenkins’ degrees from Brigham Young University consist of a master’s in library and information sciences and a bachelor’s in music. She minored in psychology and English. She authored a novel titled *Execute This: Confessions of a Mormon Freak* and a children’s book titled *A Path to Peace*. She has contributed to *School Library Journal*, *Just Out*, and other magazines. In addition to spiritual guidance, she does past-life and psychic readings.

Readers will appreciate the abundant and interesting information. For example, brain-produced bias favors maintaining original beliefs because repeated thoughts perpetuate themselves by causing growth of nerve pathways. Various attention-getting expressions will also delight readers. One describes the effect of Jenkins hanging up on her mother due to religious pressure. Jenkins writes that she feels “the earth shake all the way from Idaho to Washington.”

Jenkins designates the book for adults who have left conservative Christianity. However, it is most appropriate for people in that category who are comfortable with a New Age perspective. Jenkins suggests getting help from spirit guides. Readers with other belief systems may have trouble relating to this and other New Age concepts. However, they will find some of the suggestions helpful. For example, Jenkins advises readers who feel alone and frustrated setting limits with family “to call up a friend or to even call a help line.”

Unfortunately, the book has numerous errors, such as extra or missing words, grammar problems, and typos. The bibliography has a number of problems, including missing spaces between characters, frequently omitted punctuation between sections of entries, and inconsistent formatting, such as variation between complete spelling and abbreviations for months with long names. Three entries for one author give her first name as “Achyra,” but the correct name is “Acharya.”

Textual references referring to entries in the bibliography show evidence of extensive research, especially for the section about the history of Christianity. Those chapters will provide comfort to readers who feel uneasy about leaving that religion. For example, the story of Jesus has similarities with other godmen, including Horus, Krishna, and Mithra.

Even readers who will never again walk through the chapel doors may be able to bless them. With unconditional love, they will not need to hold a grudge against their original religion.

NORMA D. KELLAM (February 17, 2011)

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