



Following the Red Bird

Kate Rademacher

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This modern, succinct meditation on grace amply demonstrates that following God is an ongoing journey.

Following the Red Bird: First Steps into a Life of Faith portrays one woman's journey into an Episcopalian community. From the initial glow after baptism to the discovery that even seasoned believers find it hard to obey God, this elegant memoir offers practical encouragement.

Kate H. Rademacher brings wisdom to the newly converted. A compelling bouquet of quotations and personal experiences highlights the power of seeking the "still, small internal voice of the divine."

Born to liberal parents, raised outside of Boston, and married to a Buddhist, Rademacher never expected to become a Christian. Her conversion is a useful reminder that no matter the circumstances, anyone can find God. Clear, thoughtful nods to Kathleen Norris, C. S. Lewis, Thomas Merton, and T. M. Luhrmann provide a literary road map while also inspiring the author's own reflections.

Chapters explore familiar concepts, including honoring the sabbath; the temptation of self-promotional ambition; backsliding; embracing mystery and contradiction; learning discernment; discovering a vocation; and choosing love.

Rademacher's book fills a unique gap for new Christians. It doesn't assume previous exposure to religion, but neither does it dilute critical details. Each topic is broached with humility. Open-minded questioning keeps the tone from turning prescriptive.

Minimal references to Bible verses allow those who have yet to study the book in depth to focus on the broader message rather than a close reading. There's room for mysticism too; when the author realizes that God can be experienced through visions and emotional impressions as well as prayer, she expresses palpable relief that not everything has to be rational to be understood.

Especially fascinating sections detail Episcopalian ancestors and their influence. The author's lineage reveals a long-held belief in social justice, which later dovetails with discussions on answering one's calling as well as more general views on service. One of the strongest, most refreshing chapters considers the year-long sabbath—an unusual, even radical, notion in today's 24/7 wired workplace.

This modern, succinct meditation on grace amply demonstrates that following God is an ongoing journey. Personal failings, distance, and constant efforts to return mark a faith that is flawed and genuine and all the more convincing for its humanness.

KAREN RIGBY (Religion 2017)

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