



## Goodness Is Contagious: From Profit to Purpose

**David Ash**

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*Ash finds a flexible and individualized, but impassioned, definition of God and religion.*

David Ash's rousing *Goodness is Contagious* is a succinct and genuinely uplifting autobiography about finding fulfillment through faith and paying it forward.

Ash chronicles his journey from high school dropout to bankrupt entrepreneur, to wealthy loan shark, to Christian devoted to helping those in need. Coming from a troubled home with a mentally ill mother and an alcoholic father, teenage Ash dropped out of high school. As he floundered in his search for success, he decided that "to survive in this world, I needed two things: power and wealth. And Jesus wasn't going to get me either one."

After he plummeted into bankruptcy, Ash finally struck gold as a founder of a payday loan company, monetizing the too-good-to-be-true slogan, "Bad credit? No credit? No problem!" Still unfulfilled, Ash soon discovered the healing power of a strong faith, and meditative prayer. With a newfound sense of purpose, Ash gave back in ways that had a ripple effect. His journey from materialistic cynic to giving believer is fascinating and inspiring.

In a refreshingly progressive, accepting, and active brand of faith, Ash took the grief and helplessness he felt after his mother's death and channeled it into a shelter he founded for women. The shelter—called the Vivian—welcomed, without judgment, the survivors of any combination of abuse, addiction, sexual exploitation, and mental illness. Though sometimes these women use the safety and resources of the Vivian to fund their destructive lifestyles, Ash declared that if even one human life is saved, the effort is worth it. Rather than regurgitating platitudes, Ash finds a flexible and individualized, but impassioned, definition of God and religion. It shows a tolerance and value of not just human life, but freedom and love—qualities often overlooked in religious autobiographies.

While there is no denying Ash's incredible resilience and success, at times his narrative feels more like a strictly linear time line of events. Though some events he detailed were likely intensely emotional for him, often the story is told so quickly in two- to four-page chapters that there is little time to connect emotionally, particularly in the case of his relationship with his mother and how he grieved after her death. Perhaps if Ash built up his family relationships throughout the book and focused extensively on the details of a few events, *Goodness* would have a more lasting impact.

This religious memoir is full of compelling advice about living a fulfilling life devoted to God, using practical examples from Ash's life.

PAIGE VAN DE WINKLE (January 5, 2016)

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