



Love is the Answer, God is the Cure

Aimee Cabo Nikolov

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Love Is the Answer, God Is the Cure is a memoir centered on the power of faith in difficult times.

Aimee Cabo Nikolov's religious memoir, *Love Is the Answer, God Is the Cure*, explores her struggle to find love after a long history of sexual abuse and assault.

The book begins with Nikolov's Caribbean romance with her soon-to-be husband, Bobby, a doctor who whisks her off her feet. Her life is complicated, though, and her holiday romance soon comes crashing into the reality of life at home, where she is a single mom to a young daughter, struggles with drug abuse, and tries to make ends meet. Nikolov's faith in God pulled her through her difficult early years, in which she survived childhood sexual abuse, worked as an escort, and faced the constant threat of losing her daughter to her jealous ex.

The writing is clear, moving from Nikolov and Bobby's first meeting backward in time to explore her history of abuse. Changes in time are handled with care, and they foreshadow additional challenges. The relationship with Bobby grounds the narrative and gives it a sense of hope—a necessary counter to the severe, graphic details of the sexual abuse she suffered.

Roughly chronological and divided into clear scenes, the book makes effective use of detailed descriptions and dialogue. Nikolov's ongoing custody battle is detailed with specificity. However, supporting characters are sometimes reduced to types. Nikolov's ex is positioned as evil, and her new beau is prince charming. Such characterizations don't hold interest.

The strongest sections draw clear connections between Nikolov's challenges and the promises made by God. Each chapter begins with a prayer that speaks to the issues involved; these frame the narrative well. A dream containing a message from God is also effectively captured; in it, Jesus saves her from a charging bull, which is addressed as a metaphor for coming trouble. Jesus is continually mentioned as a means of salvation, and this is a useful through-line for the text.

Still, the memoir stops short of exploring its religious topics with depth. Some contradictions, especially around Nikolov's decisions during her custody battle, are not reconciled. There is some dissonance when it comes to the narrator's view of herself, and the end effect is that the book feels unreliable.

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JEREMIAH ROOD (December 5, 2018)

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