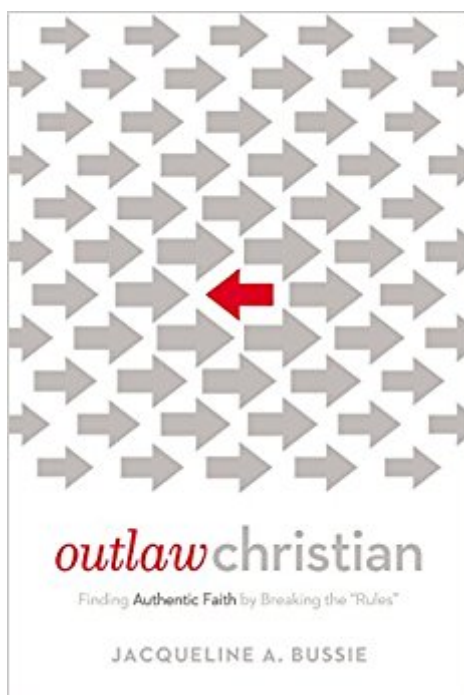


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# Outlaw Christian: Finding Authentic Faith By Breaking The 'Rules'



## Synopsis

**\*\*GOLD MEDAL WINNER, 2017 ILLUMINATION AWARDS\*\*** Jacqueline Bussie knows that too many Christians live according to unspoken "laws" that govern the Christian life: #1: Never get angry at God; #2: Never doubt; #3: Never question; #4: Never tell your real story; #5: Always speak in clichés about evil and suffering; and #6: Always believe hope comes easy for those who truly love God. Living according to these rules is killing real Christian life; Outlaw Christian proposes a rebellious, life-giving, authentic alternative. Through captivating stories and with disarming honesty, Bussie gives concrete, practical strategies to help readers cultivate hope, seek joy, practice accompaniment, compost their pain, and rediscover the spiritual practice of lament. Tackling difficult questions without political divisiveness, Bussie speaks to both progressive and conservative Christians in ways that unite rather than divide. And in doing so, she provides a new way to handle the most difficult and troubling questions of life in a broken world that God will never abandon.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A solid exhortation to live outside the sphere of hackneyed holiness...Excellent exegeses...authentic insights...Bussie piles on stories of hope to countermand lies such as 'nothing ever changes';...Bussie writes with poetry, pathos, and pepper."-Publishers Weekly (Starred Review) "There's nothing fluffy about this book. It is raw, sassy, and from the heart...This is a fresh invitation to the faith for skeptics, doubters, seekers, and even folks who like that old-time-religion. Become an outlaw Christian. God likes holy

rebels." - Shane Claiborne, author of *The Irresistible Revolution*, *Jesus for President*, and the new book *Executing Grace*"Reading *Outlaw Christian* was like having a late-night conversation with a dear friend. The experience is filled with deep confessions, refreshing honesty and new grace. I hope readers take away the same thing I did -- a rekindled love for the God who finds us and frees us." - Sarah Thebarger, author of *The Invisible Girls*"Dr. Jacqueline Bussie has written this book for those Christians who crave the honest Gospel, stripped of deceptive prettiness and unreal promises; one that acknowledges our pain, welcomes our doubts, legitimizes our anger and insists that only when we are able to witness to the entire truth of our lives can we truly understand what the Good News means for us and for the world. *Outlaw Christian* invites us to step out of bounds again and again in search of an authentic faith with the end result being that we encounter our most authentic self." - Paul Raushenbush, Huffington Post Executive Editor of Global Spirituality and Religion"While this is a Christian book, its gifts are available to anyone who has ever wrestled with the seemingly impossible task of making sense of suffering, loss, evil, inequity, and loneliness--including atheists like me. Reading Dr. Bussie's call to reject clichés and sit with uncertainty, I found myself hoping this book makes its way into the hands of every Christian who has ever had their questions or pain shut down by a platitude or an easy answer." --Chris Stedman, author of *Faithist* and Executive Director of the Yale Humanist Community"I served as a parish pastor for twenty five years. Walking with my people in times of crisis and deep pain I came to realize that some of their deepest struggles were not about loss nor about making sense out of what had happened, but finding the space within themselves and within their faith communities to speak honestly and openly about their doubt and anger toward God. Now Jacqueline Bussie, a theologian of the church, shares her experience and gives voice to all who have been caught in the belief that doubt is faithlessness and anger toward God is blasphemy. Quite the opposite, Dr. Bussie argues, doubt and anger are real expressions of a living faith. *Outlaw Christian* might break the rules but it opens up the possibility of deeper faith." - The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

"This is a fresh invitation to the faith for skeptics, doubters, seekers, and even folks who like that old-time-religion. Become an outlaw Christian. God likes holy rebels." - Shane Claiborne, author of *The Irresistible Revolution*, *Jesus for President*, and the new book *Executing Grace*

She has taken a subject that could be difficult, in fact would be difficult had she not placed it inside a fascinating story after a fascinating story. She grabbed my attention with the very first line. Not only has she challenged me, she has awakened something new in me: a desire to speak truthfully about how life is sometimes horrible, even for the most faithful followers of God. I've spoken my last well-intentioned pious "comfort lie" to people who are hurting. Thank you Dr. Bussie.

*Outlaw Christian* comes as a breath of fresh air for anyone who has ever felt angry at God, anyone whose faith is full of doubt, anyone who cannot simply "get over" a painful loss, anyone who struggles to honestly admit how imperfect life can be. Digging deep into messages from the biblical tradition that are too often overlooked, Jacqueline Bussie offers hope to those for whom Christianity is not a set of feel-good, cliché-sounding beliefs, but rather a path for seeking peace, justice, integrity, and healing in a world of overwhelming unfairness, suffering, and violence. In many ways, Bussie's book popularizes the kind of critical thinking and questioning that many scholars in the field of religion encourage—the kind that has the potential to make one's relationship with one's sacred values more authentic, honest, and life-giving. Personally, I no longer envision God as having human-like qualities (e.g., as acting, knowing, intending, loving like people do). Yet Bussie's theology is flexible enough to allow for (and even affirm) the kind of exploration and not-knowing that my unconventional spiritual proclivities require. By encouraging readers to "break the rules" that keep us from developing a more thoughtful, responsible, and honest faith, *Outlaw Christian* calls on everyone to confront the truth of their experience—even/especially if that truth is messy, painful, and/or uncertain—in order to grow personally and to bring some redemption to a broken world.

Curious about the following expressions: composting pain, steward of suffering, radical listening, hope sleuth and shedding secrets? If so, buy this book! If not, buy it anyway! Then, buckle up for the ride of your life. I consider myself a reasonably awake, believing Christian yet while reading this book, it was as if I'd taken The Red Pill (think Matrix) and started seeing a whole new reality. Scales came off and so did the shackles. Some anyway. Dr. Bussie's words not only liberate but challenge, affirm and inspire. Her truth telling is beyond refreshing— it's deeply necessary. For our culture...for our world. She is clearly a scholar yet writes a surprisingly accessible book. The biggest compliment I can give is upon finishing, I wanted to reread it immediately. This time, highlighter in hand. It has

been said that the glory of God is man - and woman - fully alive. It doesn't matter if you're disenfranchised, disconnected, disbelieving, doubting or somewhere else in a different pattern of alliteration, this book will set you on a path to full aliveness. And it may just launch you there.

In *Outlaw Christian*, Dr. Jacqueline Bussie writes for hurting souls by openly sharing her own scars and lessons learned about faith, life, and compassion. I have the great privilege to be a student of Jacqueline's and can attest to her genuine vulnerability. This book is **MUST** read and is perfect for anyone dealing with depression, loss, or hurt. To be an *Outlaw Christian* myself for a moment, I will share that just a few years ago I was diagnosed (rather late) with a rare genetic disorder that has changed my life in so many ways. Although the last few years have been extremely difficult, Jacqueline was and still is someone I can count on to share openly with my emotions, hurts, joys, and deep sorrows. She is the epitome of an *Outlaw Christian* and leads by example by writing this wonderful piece of literature. A raw, real faith is the only kind of faith I choose--Jacqueline's book is the realest I know. You are truly missing out if you don't buy.

Religion professor Jacqueline Bussie sees struggle and faith as intertwined. When her own mother was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's disease and subsequently died sixteen years later, Bussie was mightily offended by not-at-all-comforting clichés offered to her as comfort, remarks about "God's plan" or "God needing another angel." Borrowing the term "Outlaw Christian" from writer Reynolds Price, Bussie sets out to confront the dishonesty of unwritten "rules" Christians cling to when tragedy strikes. Instead, Bussie wants us to be honest about "doubt, grief, scars, or questions." She writes, "[i]f we do not speak authentically as people of faith about despair and calamity, no one will listen to us when we try to speak authentically about hope." I found it easy to agree with Bussie that we must break the "rules" to live in faith. Her conversational tone made her book a delightful read; her faith made it inspirational.

It started out in a promising way... telling God your true feelings about things, anger and disappointment with Him, and discussed the myths about God abandoning you if you did so, or expressed any doubts about His promises or intentions. How the things people say during times of pain or crisis have the opposite effect of what they might have intended, and how clichéd some of

those comments are. But then it became a session about whining... how the author allows, indeed encourages, her students to complain about just about anything that makes them unhappy, about any injustice that they see in the world. When that came along, I fear I lost all interest.

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