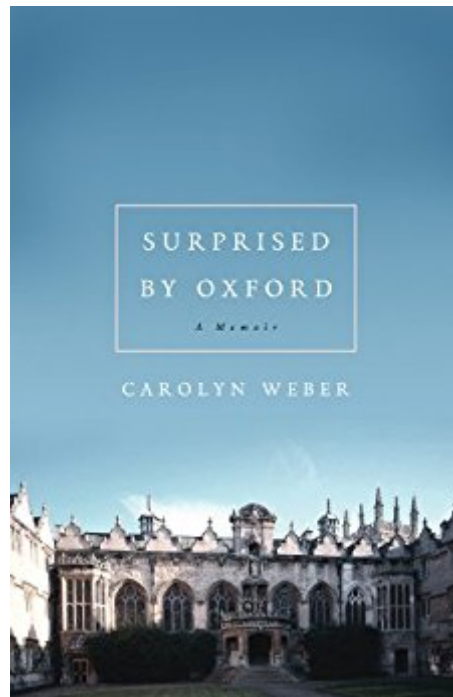


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Surprised By Oxford: A Memoir



Synopsis

"A hugely readable journey of cultural and spiritual discovery, sparkling with wit and wisdom." -Alister McGrath, Author & Theologian "this charming book ...will take you willingly on a highly personal and revelatory odyssey." -Christopher Schoppa, Washington Post "...reads like a fast-paced novel. I loved the humor, skillful use of language... I was totally captivated from beginning to end." -Marilyn Meberg, 'Women of Faith' ~ ECPA Christian Book Award Finalist ~ Winner of the Grace Irwin Prize, for the Christian book of the year by a Canadian Author ~ Recipient of the Logos Book Award ~ best book in Christian Living. BOOK SYNOPSIS Surprised by Oxford is the memoir of a skeptical agnostic who comes to a dynamic personal faith in God during graduate studies in literature at Oxford University. Carolyn Weber arrives at Oxford a feminist from a loving but broken family, suspicious of men and intellectually hostile to all things religious. As she grapples with her God-shaped void alongside the friends, classmates, and professors she meets, she tackles big questions in search of Truth, love, and a life that matters. From issues of fatherhood, feminism, doubt, doctrine, and love, Weber explores the intricacies of coming to faith with an aching honesty and insight echoing that of the poets and writers she studied. Rich with illustration and literary references, Surprised by Oxford is at once gritty and lyrical; both humorous and spiritually perceptive. This savvy, credible account of Christian conversion and its after-effects follows the Oxford liturgical calendar as it entertains, informs, and promises to engage even the most skeptical and unlikely reader. "...honest, entertaining and refreshingly free of superficial cant." -Vaughan Roberts, Rector, St. Ebbe's Oxford "...filled with prose that sings and paragraphs that beg to be read a second time. A delightful read." -Trevin Wax, Christianity Today's "Books to Note"

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Customer Reviews

Carolyn Weber's beautifully penned memoir of her personal faith journey is a delight to read. Her descriptions of Oxford are enough to make any Anglophile salivate. As a professor of English literature and an expert in the Romantic poets, she intersperses snippets of classic poetry throughout. Her ongoing references to the poetry of John Donne and John Milton especially captured my attention, their insights having been instrumental in my own spiritual walk. In the end, I want to dust off the Norton anthologies saved from my own college lit classes and immerse myself once more. When the author is awarded a full scholarship to do graduate work at Oxford University's Balliol College, she hasn't an inkling of the path on which she is setting out. In the company of her colleagues and friends, and spurred on by one particular theology student who lives across the hall, she explores the deep, existential questions that have nagged her for years. For the first time in her life she reads a Bible--what she says is "the most compelling piece of creative nonfiction I had ever read. If I sat around for thousands of years, I could never come up with what it proposes, let alone with how intricately Genesis unfolds toward Revelation." Following in the footsteps of C.S. Lewis, the truth of God's Word eventually leads her first to believe in God and ultimately to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Carolyn's journey unfurls as a twofold romance: even as she is being courted by the Divine Lover, she is also courted by "TDH" (Tall, Dark, & Handsome). Conversations with this particular lover of God (and with other friends, both believers and non-believers) serve as the catalyst for her search. The questions had always been there; TDH challenges her to finally seek hard after the answers.

Perhaps C.S. Lewis (no stooge at describing matters of faith and reason) nailed it when he observed: "Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil" (Lewis was a Christian apologist and spent most of his adult life in Oxford as an educator).

You don't need a degree in sociology to see what the good professor was saying; nonetheless in "Surprised by Oxford" Carolyn Weber (Weber is presently a visiting professor of literature at Westmont College) provides a captivating look at culture and religious life for those pursuing higher education in one of the most esteemed citadels of academia. Weber is a passionate wordsmith and enjoys exploring concepts interspersed in the minds and words of friends, connections, and colleagues. Weber was ready to be confronted with high educational expectations and standards, but what she found along with that, was a deeper knowledge of God and how He works in the lives of people. This book was so readable and charming that I found it difficult to put it down late at night. Before her commitment to Christ, the author had a high regard for rational quests in the halls of academia without much thought about the author of rationality: God. She found God because he found her as He opened her heart to the truth found in Christ: at Oxford! (Sorry Dawkins). Chapters include:- Summer Sunset- Michaelmas Term- Christmastide- Eastertide- Summer Sunrise- and more including numerous thought-provoking quotes from literati. One of my favorite sections was: "Jesus the Great Polarizer." The reader soon learns that one can discuss almost anything at Oxford, but if one mentions the name of Jesus, people get rankled fast.

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