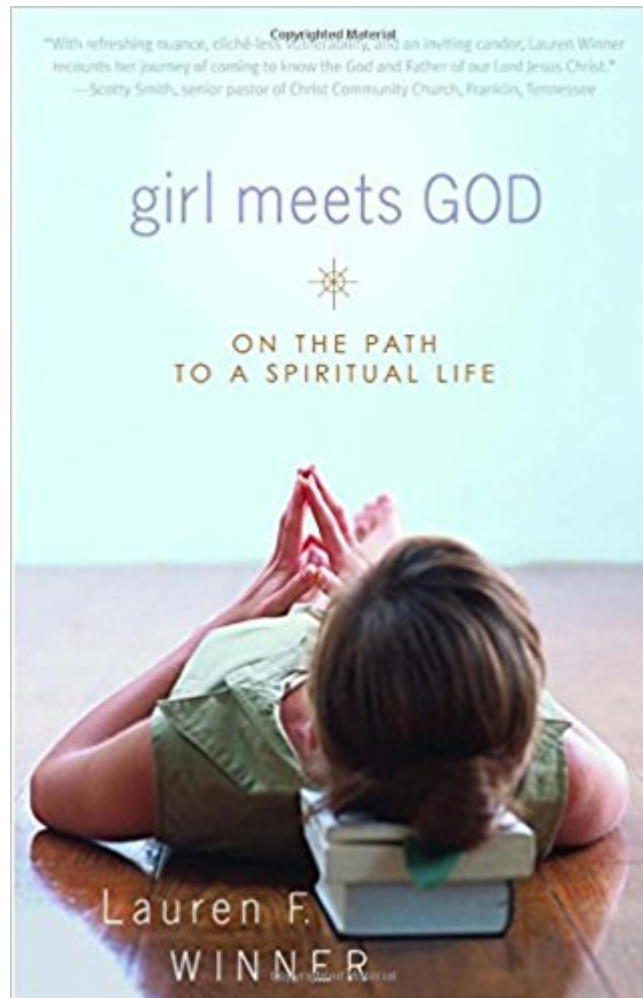




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# Girl Meets God: On The Path To A Spiritual Life



## Synopsis

The child of a Jewish father and a lapsed Southern Baptist mother, Lauren F. Winner chose to become an Orthodox Jew. But even as she was observing Sabbath rituals and studying Jewish law, Lauren was increasingly drawn to Christianity. Courageously leaving what she loved, she eventually converted. In *Girl Meets God*, this appealing woman takes us through a year in her Christian life as she attempts to reconcile both sides of her religious identity. Here readers will find a new literary voice: a spiritual seeker who is both an unconventional thinker and a devoted Christian. The twists and turns of Winner's journey make her the perfect guide to exploring true faith in today's complicated world. Praise for *Girl Meets God*: "A passionate and thoroughly engaging account of a continuing spiritual journey within two profoundly different faiths." • *The New York Times Book Review* "A charming, humorous, and sometimes abrasive recollection of a religious coming-of-age . . . a compelling journey from Judaism to Christianity." • *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* "A book to savor . . . Winner is an all-too-human believer, and the rest of us can see our own struggles, theological and otherwise, in hers." • *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* "[A] memoir, literary and spiritual, sharing Anne Lamott's self-deprecating intensity and Stephen J. Dubner's passion for authenticity . . . Winner's record of her own experiences so far is a page-turning debut by a young writer worth watching." • *Publishers Weekly* (starred review) "[The] narrative's real strength . . . is its addictive readability combined with the author's deep knowledge of, delight in, and nuanced discussion of both Christian and Jewish teachings. . . . Intriguing, absorbing, puzzling, surprisingly sexy, and very smart." • *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Raised by a lapsed Baptist mother and secular Jewish father, Winner feels a drive toward God as powerful as her drives toward books and boys. Twice she has attempted to read her way into religion to Orthodox Judaism her freshman year at Columbia, and then four years later at Cambridge to Anglican Christianity. Twice she has discovered that a religion's actual practitioners may not measure up to its theoretical proponents. (Invariably the boyfriends or their mothers disappoint.) It is easier to say what this book is not than what it is. It is not a conversion memoir: Winner's movement in and out of religious frames, but does not tell, her tale. It is not a defense of either faith (there is something here to offend every reader); and Winner, a doctoral candidate in the history of religion, is in her 20s young for autobiography. Because most chapters, though loosely related to the Christian church year, could stand alone, it resembles a collection of essays; but the ensemble is far too unified to deserve that label. Clearly it is memoir, literary and spiritual, sharing Anne Lamott's self-deprecating intensity and Stephen J. Dubner's passion for authenticity. Though Winner does not often scrutinize her motives, she reveals herself through abundant, concrete and often funny descriptions of her life, inner and outer. Winner's record of her own experience so far is a page-turning debut by a young writer worth watching. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School-This memoir explores the transition from childhood to adulthood in a voice that is often sophisticated and learned, and occasionally naive and almost gossipy, as the author shares with candor her family ties, friendships, and love affairs. Winner is the daughter of a Reform Jewish father and a Southern Baptist mother, neither of whom talked much about God during her early years. She describes growing up in a liberal synagogue and experimenting with body tattoos, even though "-Jewish law forbids tattoos, plain and simple." As a teen, she questioned everything, and her search became inextricably bound to her social and intellectual life. She writes as one would recall pivotal events in life's journey, and not in a linear fashion. After fervently embracing Orthodox Judaism during college, she was drawn to Christianity, each change following much reading and soul-searching. Mentored by an Anglican priest during her years as a graduate student at Cambridge, she eventually took comfort in becoming a "lifestyle evangelist," which she describes as

"-living a good, God-fearing, Gospel-exuding life." Now she is a doctoral student at Columbia. She admits to both a "cherished intellectual snobbery" and to being "faintly embarrassed about the role Jan Karon's Mitford novels played in my conversion." Not a treatise on comparative religion, this is an engaging story of one bright young woman's quest for faith. Molly Connally, Chantilly Regional Library, VA Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you are Christian who wants to know more about your Jewish roots this is one way to explore that. However you'll have to wade through the very self centered author's views. I am very interested in this topic, but found Winner's OCD search for religious meaning ponderous and most of the members of a church book group agreed. In fairness there were some great observations and some humorous anecdotes. On balance though not worth the dig.

The author goes from Reform Judaism to Orthodox Judaism to Christianity. She jumps from one period to another, relating her experiences. With different friends and her parents. While there are some interesting thoughts and new information, I have no idea what is the point of the book. Just one person's path of belief? The end of the book has no conclusion. The most interesting sections are where the author describes how she now looks at certain Biblical passage as a Christian instead of a Jew.

Lauren Winner compares her Jewish upbringing, and her current Christian practices, in the most mundane details of seriously living a faith. Two faith paths have diverged over many centuries, split on the recognition of Jesus as Messiah. Jews worship G-d, Christians worship Jesus. Jews are immersed in a highly disciplined community, a dutiful, vibrant fellowship true to the Torah well into its third millennium. Practice is to Jews what belief is to Christians. Jewish faith everywhere has been sorely tested by anti-Semitism, and that has created a highly resilient, highly intellectual, highly adaptable expression. Jews derive great coherence and compassion from their rituals. This is a very comfortable, non-technical, leisurely story of how Lauren has inhabited two different faiths, both of which she respects.

This book is a quick read and well as an interesting read. I read this book for a church book discussion group and was very glad we chose it. I felt that even though it's about her struggle with Judaism and converting to Christianity, it is so very applicable to me as a Christian who did not

convert from anything. It reminds me of the basics of being a Christian and the struggles that we all face. The reason not for 5 stars is that even though there is a great deal of information from the author about the 2 religions, it was not a challenging book to read - but that's just my preference.

Lauren Winner, a frequent writer for Christianity Today and professor at Duke Divinity School, opens her story to us so that we might have a glimpse of what it means to wrestle honestly with both the Jewish and Christian faith traditions in the postmodern world. I'm deeply impressed with her honesty and tenacity in holding these elements of her life in creative tension: she loves the way Judaism shaped her love for text and ritual and singlemindedness toward God, but she is unafraid to explore why she became drawn to Jesus and Christian theology. I recommend this memoir for those who are interested in understanding a personal account of what draws a person to an intellectually rigorous faith amidst a culture of skepticism.

I think this read highlights some OCD behaviors by the writer, Sprinkled with some overly self preoccupation. The details of extensive reading book after book to quantify what at some point must be "a leap of faith" prove exhausting for the reader. Ms Winner's compulsion to find clarity with accuracy of scriptures coupled by comparisons to Christianity and Judaism go beyond reasonable lengths to satisfy. If you want to learn about their differences and biblical passages then this could be the read for you. By the last chapters I was speed reading it became too tedious. I don't think the author lives up to the title. It's more Girl Cross examines God. I didn't feel by the end of book that she was settled with her conversion. I agree with another reviewer, Lauren made this decision when she was too young. It seems the Jewish defined rules of "convert" (unless the maternal side is Jewish then offspring aren't) provoked her to search an authentic self in Christianity.

I received my copy of "Girl Meets God" yesterday evening, and read it today. I started to read "one chapter"...but as I just closed the back cover, it's apparent that my "one chapter" turned into the whole book. Cleaning the bathrooms wasn't at the top of my desires for today, anyway...I just don't know how to describe this book; thought provoking, convicting, enlightening, elating, educational, humorous, sobering, loud, quiet. And very, very good. I would also recommend going to [...] which is a link where you can listen to an interview with the author. Find the interview at the top of the page, under "Week of March 29, 2009, Segment 1: Reconciling Judaism and Christianity". This interview, which I listened to on my Sirius Radio, was the impetus behind me buying the book. In itself, it is absorbing/intriguing.

Winner has written an intellectual and spiritual examination of her life lived before God. As a girl searching for God and his people, the author reminisces about relationships and theology, working through Orthodox Judaism, and ultimately exploring Christianity. Interesting memoir and exploration in one.

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