


The Holy Secret

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Many today carry a secret: We do not love what we have been commanded to love. We do not love what is holy. Although we might reverence things that are deemed holy- the temple, for example, and the scriptures, and the Sabbath- we do not love them. Not really. Not with our whole souls.

The Holy Secret is the story of a man who learns how to love what matters. As he does, he learns another secret: Love for holiness transforms life itself. His realization of what he had been missing may lead you to some discoveries of your own!

The Holy Secret Details

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Megan says

This book was fairly good. It starts out with ideas and steps to learn to love the scriptures and how to really study and ponder them. Then it goes into insights he has gained from the scriptures. The first part was good. It reminded me of Preach My Gospel by the way it spoke of how to study. I'm not sure if I would recommend this as a book to read because 1. I think Preach My Gospel does a better job at going over study tactics and teaching you to love the scriptures if you really study it. And 2. The rest is just scriptures and his interpretation of them. Reading other's opinions of what scriptures mean when it's not necessarily backed up by the brethren is not the best in my opinion. Because scriptures, and revelations from the scriptures, are very personal and apply to the person receiving the insight specifically. But I would say that the one thing that I did like about this is that it opened up my mind to things to study on my own. It gave me ideas and put questions in my mind as to what I believe about different scriptures. It pushed me to do my own study on gospel topics, and that is why I would still give it a 3 out of 5

Michele says

This book is by the same author of "The Peacegiver." The book is another classic which deserves to be read and reread time and time again. Beautiful! Anyone seeking to live a life of holiness will love this book.

Sofi Carpenter says

I loved this book almost as much as The Peacegiver. I am impressed by the author's ability to teach gospel principles in such an engaging way.

Terri says

While one of the premises of the book is that we should delve into the scriptures and try to get more understanding, I felt like this book clubbed you over the head with the author's ideas instead of allowing you to get your own impressions.

He goes way too far off on language specific words. His explanation of "goodly parents" in 1 Nephi is possible, but I think there are other ways to easily see that Lehi was wealthy (the precious things given to Laman) which don't require twisting words. If you can read another language it is interesting to see how a word is translated. For example, in Chinese the word goodly is translated (big surprise!) "goodly"! It doesn't have ANYTHING to do with being wealthy. There is a completely different word for wealthy in Chinese. In the end, I think the point of reading scriptures is to come closer to God. I don't think that twisting individual word meanings gets you there.

Also, I don't enjoy the novelization of Ferrell's ideas. I wish he'd just write the book as non-fiction and express his ideas in essay form. The story that he built his ideas around was contrived.

To be completely honest, I have to admit I didn't finish the book. I was so annoyed about the scripture twisting, that I didn't read any farther.

Bronson says

First the disclaimer - I'm not normally a fan of LDS Fiction. I think there is enough good non-fiction we don't need to manufacture stories to influence spiritual experiences. That being said I enjoyed this story a lot. He had good information to deliver and wrapped it in a nice story. It was enlightening to read and I've been thinking a lot about it for the past couple weeks. I'd recommend it to any LDS person who feels a little stalled out spiritually.

Kelcey Murdoch says

"If I don't love what is holy in this life", Brother Kishler had said, "then I will not like holiness in the next. My attitude about what is holy here and now tells me where I am heading in the then and there."

I really enjoyed this book. It is a fictional story, but with many wonderful insights about the gospel. The book is divided into three sections, each teaching lessons about how we can love what is holy, specifically, the scriptures, the Sabbath day, and the temple. I loved the ideas given in the book for new ways to study the scriptures and new ways to understand why studying the scriptures, keeping the Sabbath day Holy, and attending the temple are important. The fictional story being told is also touching; a man who has become stagnant in the gospel learns what is again to love what is holy. I definitely teared up a little bit.

Liz says

I am not sure what I think of this book. I read and loved the Peacegiver, and so I expected to love this book too. The story is written in the same way with 2 main characters having a spiritual discussion- one is clearly the teacher with the other as the student. I can see how this setup is necessary for what the author was trying to do with the material he wanted to get across. I will say that with this book and The Peacegiver, they both made me really think and talk about them with others to see what they got from this book. Some of the things he wrote (some interpretation of scriptures and some doctrine) I am trying to wrap my head around it and just not getting it. It may be that my heart just isn't ready for it. Anyhoo, this book has a lot of spiritual ideas to mull over and if you are looking for some material for spiritual and philosophical discussions, this book is a good source!

James says

This book is written for Latter-day Saints. It is a fictional story told about a man who is sitting in church one day listening to a talk given by an older man. He is touched by the talk so much that he decides that he needs to visit the older man and talk to him about it. The relationship between the young man and the older man develops so much during their visit that they decide to visit again and again. Their visits consist of

conversations around scripture study, church attendance, and temple attendance. The author is basically sharing what he has learned in his personal scripture study with the reader. I thought the material was very fascinating. However, after Rachel read the book, she mentioned to me that she didn't appreciate some of the things shared because she would have liked to figure those things out on her own. I guess it just depends on if you want to discover the mysteries of the kingdom on your own or if you want someone to share with you what they think.

carrie says

I liked this book, but not as much as The Peacegiver. I thought it would have more of a story, but it was more like 2 guys discussing the scriptures -- which is not a bad thing, but not much of a story either. There are some definite gems in there, though, that I found quite illuminating and useful.

Cami says

This book has a lot of doctrine, quoting scriptures directly from the Bible and Book of Mormon, and is like going to a series of great CES lectures that are presented through a dialogue of two characters. Topics such as the Sabbath day, temple covenants, the Sacrament prayers, the priesthood, and more are correlated easily in a flow of discussion. I found some of the chapters harder to get into than others and might benefit from rereading the book to further understanding. I found some great insights but also found some things to be very obvious. The author has collected a wealth of scriptural knowledge in this book, and it was very enjoyable to read.

Marcie says

The key 'take-away' of this book for me was that the key to spiritual learning - and really any kind of learning - is to ask 'why' more often. It has helped me to re-invigorate my desire to glean more from the scriptures, the sabbath, and the temple.

The storytelling approach that Ferrell using is helpful in getting that point across though the characters felt a little hard to relate to sometimes.

Sara says

This is actually the second time I have read this book. I have thought of it so much that I had to pick it up and read again. The book talks about how to come to love all that is holy. I have learned so much about the scriptures, the sabbath day, sacrament prayers, and more that I took very copious notes to have in the future. One of these days I will just have to buy this book. It is such a short, quick read too.

Greg says

There is a growing genre of professional and personal development books that seeks to teach fundamental principles of life and living through the medium of a fictional story. Early versions of this type of book were largely forgettable, and even now many that I see in my professional work are not worth the paper they're printed on. However, two that I've read recently, both from The Arbinger Institute, were outstanding. James Ferrell, the author of *The Holy Secret* is from that same Institute, and his book is outstanding. It deserves a prominent place on any LDS bookshelf. Ferrell is also the author of another such book that many have appreciated, titled *The Peacegiver*, which has also been very well received by the LDS community.

The Holy Secret is divided into three parts, though the story seamlessly unites the three parts. The first deals with loving the scriptures, the second with loving the Sabbath, and the third with loving the temple. This book is not the typical, "do this and you'll get that reward" effort. Instead, Ferrell opens the scriptures in a powerful way through the conversation between a good-hearted man and an elderly and wise friend. In the next few paragraphs, I hope to reveal just enough of the contents of the book to entice you to lay your hands on a copy and dive in.

Michael Nowak, one of the two main characters in *The Holy Secret*, is a tithe paying, church going, calling holding decent member of the church who nevertheless harbors a secret that many of us have probably held at one time or another...he doesn't really love holiness, and he doesn't know why. He has begun to feel discouraged because the things that seem important to God seem a little boring and dull to Michael. Of course he is troubled by his own attitude, because he knows it should be different, and yet he doesn't know how to fix it. What follows is his journey through personal revelation and the power of a wise friend to learn to love, first the scriptures, then the Sabbath, and finally the temple. In the process, we're invited into an inspiring study of the scriptures and what they can teach us about loving holiness.

As Ferrell says in his preface, while he is not speaking to any single individual, we as a people, a body of believers, seem to harbor the unfortunate secret that was Michael Nowak's. "Our temples, for example, are not as busy as they would be if we loved being there; the pages of our scriptures are not as worn as they would be if we feasted upon their words; our stores are not as empty or our chapels as filled as they would be if we truly loved the Lord's holy day." In the context of his characters, he offers inspiring counsel.

In the first third of the book, Ferrell begins laying the foundation by addressing how to love the holy scriptures. While I won't go into detail with the other two portions of the book (preferring to leave that to your own discovery), let me tantalize you with some of his counsel from the first part of the book.

Ask questions such as "what" or "why?" In other words, what's the context? What is the meaning of the words? How might the people of that time have understood what was written? Why were certain things selected for inclusion? Why were things noted or said or explained in a particular order? As Ferrell's character notes, "...in our daily lives we don't for a moment presume that the messages around us consist only in what is being said on the surface. We are always asking why – why did they say this thing or that, or why aren't they saying anything at all? And yet we don't typically read the scriptures that way. We read only the words and see only the outward messages. We don't ask the questions that consume us during most of our daily lives."

Look for patterns. We all know that many experiences and events in the scriptures are "types" – that is patterned reflections that foreshadow events to come. Yet I, and perhaps others, have too often missed important patterns in the scriptures that shed light and knowledge if we will but see them. Word patterns,

thematic patterns, structural patterns, similitudes, parallelisms, and so forth. For example, I have come to see the willingness of the 2000 stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon to fight against the Lamanites as a patterned reflection of the Savior's atonement. Their willingness to put themselves in harm's way, and to do for their parents what they could not do for themselves (without putting themselves at risk of eternal damnation) has caused me to reflect more deeply on the atonement. It has also opened my eyes in new ways to how others in around us act in ways that are patterned after the atonement. Missionaries, members of the military, and so forth – I have begun to see others around me in a new light.

Ponder the Savior. As a long time teacher, I have come to believe that the key to effective teaching at any level is fourfold, yet simple: (1) read widely in good books; (2) feast on the scriptures; (3) ponder often; and (4) pray always. Ferrell notes, rightly, the critical importance of the third of my steps to good teaching. Everything in the scriptures is designed to lead us to the Savior, and so one supremely important question we ought to keep constantly in mind is "how does what I am reading right now lead me to Christ?" Ferrell persuasively points out how virtually every scriptural prophet was, in one way or another, a "type" of the Savior himself. As he says, "Christ's mission...is revealed through the parallel lives of many of the scriptural characters who preceded him." Pondering on the Savior as we feast on the scriptures helps us to see how, and opens the Savior's life and atonement up to us in marvelous ways.

Apply to oneself. This last is advice we have heard often, so I won't dwell on it, except to say that our study of the scriptures means little if our learning doesn't lead to personal change. We will continue to learn only insofar as we apply what we learn in our lives, and to the extent that we overcome our own personal "knowing-doing gap," we will grow line upon line, precept upon precept.

As Ferrell's protagonist, Michael Nowak, progresses from revelation to revelation, we see the very real impact that feasting on the scriptures, honoring the Sabbath, and immersing ourselves in the temple can have in the life of one person, and through him or her, many others. In a sense, we "become" Michael Nowak, and (for me, at least), his learning becomes ours. This is a fit continuation of Ferrell's work begun in his highly regarded book, *The Peacegiver*, and one which I recommend to all who love the gospel.

Laura says

Another great life changing, reach inside yourself experience will result from reading this book. I love the Arbinger Institute! Their work has awakened a need within myself to be more Christlike and truly understand what charity means.

I saw somewhere that you can read this book online, probably Deseret Book. I think a new chapter comes out each week. Check out this link for Chapter 1. <http://deseretbook.com/mormon-life/ne...>

Go to this link to read "The Peacegiver", also by James Ferrell, online if you have not yet read this exceptional book. <http://deseretbook.com/authors/author...>

Heather C. says

I wish there were half stars on Goodreads...this would be 2 1/2. Should I feel guilty for giving a book about

church stuff a lowish score? Don't get me wrong, there were life-changing concepts in this story for me. And that is why I read it, so I am thankful for that. But, just like in the author's previous book, *The Peacegiver*, the story that contains the principles is lame and so contrived. Honestly, I would rather that James Ferrell just write out his thoughts in essay (church talk!) form. I would get just as much out of them that way, and would cringe less at the awkward writing.
