



## Never Settle for Normal: The Proven Path to Significance and Happiness

*Jonathan Parnell*

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## We're All Glory-Chasers and Pleasure-Seekers

Every human wants to matter and be happy...as it should be. God made us to resemble and reflect His worth as we enjoy our true identity in Him.

But we too often swap that calling for the trifles of this world, pursuing cheap substitutes to fill the craving of our souls. As Jonathan Parnell puts it, we settle for -stupid normal- over the transcendent, even though this world can never satisfy our hopes and dreams.

In *Never Settle for Normal* Jonathan speaks to the heart of both skeptics and searchers by addressing their deepest longings. With insight and passion, he examines the key tenets of Christian faith--creation, fall, redemption, new creation--and reveals the life-changing glory of the Christian story in a fresh, new light. Discover the personal meaning and gladness you hunger for... and *Never Settle for Normal!*

## Never Settle for Normal: The Proven Path to Significance and Happiness Details

Date : Published July 18th 2017 by Multnomah Books

ISBN : 9781601429063

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Format : Paperback

Genre : Nonfiction, Christian



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## **From Reader Review Never Settle for Normal: The Proven Path to Significance and Happiness for online ebook**

### **Erica says**

He takes us on a theological journey, gently reminding us that answers will not be found in scholarly tomes, or other collections of theories. Moreover, he directs us to a leather-bound itinerary that has captured everything we need to know, from the intricate moments of the world's formation to that apocalyptic moment leading to its end. Parnell shares, with astounding accuracy, what it means to be a Christian in a text that is a conceptually accessible primer to all Christian readers wishing to explore their faith.

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### **Jon Michael says**

Looking back on the book, what Parnell does best is bring us back to reality. The search for significance and happiness consumes us all, and time after time we fall into the "stupid normal." We search for the meaning to life in a decaying world leading us to a place that "pretends that God doesn't exist, that casts a vision devoid of ultimate reality." Parnell presents the only remedy to this futile search, the Gospel, in a clear, concise and straightforward manner. He beautifully juxtaposes the reality of sin and it's very real consequences with the reality of a loving Father God who made a way for us to experience real relationship with Him. He presents Jesus the the real man who was really God who died a real death on the cross and really rose again. His death and resurrection paid our real debt and make real relationship possible through faith wrought in us by the real power of the Holy Spirit. This real faith in Christ as our savior and all-satisfying treasure is the only thing that produces a real hope. And what a hope it is. One day we will be united with Him to be completely satisfied for all eternity. This is the kind of hope that satisfies now, that produces significance and happiness even until it is fully realized. Praise God for this wonderful reminder.

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### **Lovely Loveday says**

I found this book to be very insightful, a really good read. This book will really make you think about life and the future. After reading this book you will feel refreshed and renewed with a more godly purpose and meaning. A true must read.

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### **Sabrina González says**

Very informative and eye opening, GREAT BOOK!!

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### **Reg Rivett says**

"Every man, whatsoever his condition, desires to be happy. There is no man who does not desire this, and

each one desires it with such earnestness that he prefers it to all other things; whoever, in fact, desires other things, desires them for this end alone."

- St. Augustine

No one wants a normal life. Normal is almost a four letter word, a bad word. It's something to be avoided. If we can do anything so that our lives are not a series of the same, we will do it. This aversion to normal comes from a deep seeded feeling, one that is found in all of us: we were made for more.

Where does that compulsion come from? How do we fulfil it? What more were we made for? How do we live a life that is far from normal?

Jonathan Parnell wants to help us with that. With a "proven path to significance and happiness", this lead pastor of Cities Church in Minneapolis wants to see that we are not stuck in a boring, mundane life. Examining the powerful biblical truths and sharing his insights, Parnell will show us how in Jesus life will be anything but normal.

Never again will we need to be unhappy. Never again will we feel unimportant. Never again will we be stuck in a boring life. We can now Never Settle For Normal.

"The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma is the drama."

- Dorothy Sayers

There is a lot that will bother readers about this book; that it isn't about not settling for normal, that it is a salvation message in a book, that Parnell seems to think that joy and happiness are biblical synonyms. But for the astute reader, there will be things that will be so disturbing that they may not pick the book back up again.

Parnell is right that a life grounded in God should be far from normal, but he quickly deviates from that and seems to throw a wrench into any traditional understanding of God and Trinity.

When Parnell talks about the Trinity, it is either in the language supporting a hierarchy, where the Father is loving the Son by way of fellowship of the Spirit (but not anything from Son to Father, or Spirit to anyone), or in ways that reduce the Spirit to an energy between Father and Son. That understanding makes the Spirit a byproduct of Father and Son and not a person in the Trinity.

While I will give it to Parnell (and any other pastor and theologians that try) that putting language to someone as complex as the Triune God, so much more clarity is needed. And if not more clarity, at least a rebuttal to say how you are limited by language or something.

If you are writing a book about how to live a life that is not normal and rooted in God, it is critical that you get the idea of God nailed down somehow. A tall order, I realize, but a faulty, or easily misunderstood portrayal of God is going to lead to a confusing book. Especially when discussing living or moving in the Spirit.

I wish there was more I could say that would uplift Never Settle For Normal. While I applaud his efforts, they seem to fall short. Even his grasp of happiness and joy, not synonyms in a biblical sense, seems to be

slapped together from here and there to make his argument work. That isn't good scholarship. That isn't proper exegesis. That isn't the gospel.

A final thought: any time a spiritual leader starts making definitive statements how to get you, or earn you things from God, run the other way. While Parnell may have discovered and charted the spiritual path to significance and happiness for him, it is not a guarantee for everyone. Such exact and precise statements do not have a place when we are talking about the mystery of God, the salvation he offers, or the life that we are called to in Christ Jesus. Life with God is not a science that can be replicated and repeated. A proven path can be a rut if you are not careful.

"Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ....The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else."

- C. S. Lewis

I agree with Jonathan Parnell that we shouldn't settle for normal, that a life with Christ is an exciting, dynamic journey. But there is so much more going on in Never Settle For Normal that I cannot agree with. The poor language and misunderstanding of the Trinity and role of the Holy Spirit compels me to give this book a 2 out of 5-star rating.

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### **Bethany says**

Jonathan Parnell believes "normal" is something we shouldn't just accept. In his book Never Settle for Normal, readers are encouraged to consider that there is more to life than just the usual and that it isn't wrong to want for more.

After several chapters of chipping away at normal concepts about life, God, and the human appetite for glory, Parnell turns readers over to the Gospel story. He walks through the basic elements of the grandest truth: creation, the fall, sin, Jesus, and Christian hope.

Smattering the story with philosophical insights from the likes of Augustine and C.S. Lewis, Parnell's approach to telling the good news is atypical. He also includes ideas from stories like Moby Dick and movies like Nacho Libre.

Several themes rear their heads occasionally throughout Never Settle for Normal, making it difficult to pinpoint a singular thesis of the book. In the end, normalcy and living beyond it is only loosely related to the main ideas. Some themes include:

- The human bent toward glory-seeking
- Happiness as what everyone wants to attain
- That sin confuses worldview
- We are searchers by nature
- Idols won't really satisfy
- God's story is true and it matters

Examples of the sort of thought-provoking statements Parnell makes include:

“You don’t have an inner champion. You have an inner brokenness that desperately needs to be healed by Jesus.”

“Prominence and popularity are temporary means to satisfy an eternal appetite.”

“Sin is both the act and disposition beneath, before, and after the act.”

“If gospel messengers were meant to merely blast out information, Jesus would have told his church to go make subscribers, not disciples.”

Parnell’s style reads a bit like stream-of-consciousness writing. It’s almost as if he is imagining a conversation as he writes, but readers only hear his side of it.

For those who enjoy casual contemplation and mulling over philosophical concepts in relation to God, the book will likely prompt discussion or lead to personal pondering. Study questions are included in the back of the book for this purpose.

While I personally found *Never Settle for Normal* had little to say about normalcy and what we can do with that concept, readers may find the book valuable for exploring various philosophical topics related to the human tendency to seek happiness and God’s answer through Jesus Christ.

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