



Spiritual Misfit: A Memoir of Uneasy Faith

Michelle DeRusha

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I decided to admit once and for all that I didn't know what I was doing, what I thought, what I believed, even sometimes if I truly believed. I would tell the truth: I wasn't like them; I didn't fit in. I wasn't a proper Christian. I didn't have it all together like they did. Why not, I figured? What in the world did I have to lose?

After twenty years of unbelief, estranged from her childhood faith and ultimately from God, Michelle DeRusha unexpectedly found herself wrestling hard with questions of spirituality—and deeply frustrated by the lack of clear answers.

Until she realized that the questions themselves paved a way for faith.

“Declaring my unbelief,” writes DeRusha, “was the first step; declaring my unbelief allowed me to begin to seek authentically.”

Spiritual Misfit chronicles one woman’s journey toward an understanding that belief and doubt can coexist. This poignant and startlingly candid memoir reveals how being honest about our questions, our fears, and our discomfort with black-and-white definitions of faith can move us toward an authentic and a deepening relationship with God.

Spiritual Misfit: A Memoir of Uneasy Faith Details

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Jen Ferguson says

When I read this passage from Michelle DeRusha's new memoir, Spiritual Misfits, I identified with her so much. She writes:

"When I thought about it, these lake-water images struck me as the perfect metaphor for my tentative floundering toward belief. In matters of spirituality I often assumed that if only I knew for sure, if I firmly grasped the answers to all the questions if I saw clearly how it would all turn out, then I would be okay. I thought if I could see under the surface of that murky water, glimpse what was hidden beneath, my faith would finally be secure, rock solid and steady. On the other hand, my memory of yet another lake experience left me wondering if even that kind of clarity would satisfy." (page 91)

In the end, Michelle realizes just as the murky water was scary, so too, was the water that was so crystal clear she could see absolutely everything. To see both nothing and everything are ends of a spectrum -- the black and the white. And where I think God wants us to live is in the gray, where our lives are punctuated with light that sheds clarity exactly at the moment we need it.

Michelle's whole memoir is testament to this. She doesn't have a Saul/Paul moment of conversion. Hers is step by step, moving from doubt to faith. She lets you in on her own analytical mind, showing us how she regularly clung to her logic as a three year old clings to her favorite lovey. But we also see God gently prying her fingers off, one by one, eventually setting free the lovey, clasping each finger fully onto His, the very definition of love.

And isn't this how faith works? Whether you've been a Christian forever or you are still entertaining the idea that He might be real, there are still worldly ways and worldly things onto which we cling because we just need to know. The fear of the unknown, we think, is too much to bear.

It's by living that we trust, by giving Him opportunities to work in our lives, opening our eyes to seeing His involvement, to feeling His touch. It's there. If only we allow ourselves the time and space to see it. Michelle's life is testament to this.

It's a beautiful, funny, poignant, wrestling life where, no matter what your journey, you will find some common ground on which you can grow.

Anna Whiston-Donaldson says

This book hit upon situations I could relate to, even though our faith journeys have been different. I love how this book affirms that it's okay to doubt! My biggest takeaway from this real, down to earth, book was asking myself, "WHY NOT?" Why not believe? Loved it! This book is gentle, funny, and approachable, and I would not hesitate to recommend it to friends who are wondering what the big deal about Jesus is.

Joanne Viola says

I recently had the opportunity to read “Spiritual Misfit: A Memoir of Uneasy Faith” by Michelle DeRusha. I have been waiting for today – her release day!!! – to share about this book. I have been so blessed in reading her blog posts for the last year that when the chance to read her book became available, I jumped at it.

Recently I was asked this question ... What are the top three reasons I would recommend this book? Here are my reasons:

#3 – This book will make you laugh! Seriously, the woman has the funniest sense of humor. She describes situations and emotions which will not only make you laugh with her but you will laugh at yourself because you will see reflections of yourself in her stories. Michelle makes you realize, there are so many experiences in life which are common to us all. And funny as they are, these experiences still point us to God, revealing Him in ways which make Him all the more tangible in our lives.

#2 – This book will make you cry!! Michelle shares with a transparency which will touch your heart. She lets you into places most of us hold close to ourselves to reveal her own personal struggles. We come to see God has been at work in each of our lives through all things. She shares her skepticism, her shortcomings, and her fragile faith.

And the #1 reason!!! – This book will surely grow your faith and relationship with God. Throughout each page, we discover our search to belong, to fit in, leads us to the profound truth which is this – we have been loved all along. We come to grips with the fact that this journey of faith – well – it is just that ... our journey. For each of us, it will look different. And yet it will look similar.

Michelle’s memoir and journey is transparent, honest and authentic. We all have doubts and questions at various times throughout our lives. I have come to realize these are the very catalysts which God uses to grow us in our faith. He moves us deeper into our awareness of Himself and Who He is. We come to see facets of faith which may have remained hidden had we not questioned. These times become the means by which as Michelle explains,

“...we learn how to seek God every day, in ordinary life, and to learn how to shape my life to reflect him.”
(page 208)

After all, that is truly the goal – to be transformed so that we reflect Him and our lives bring Him glory.

Heidi says

Definitely some lessons here I can learn as someone who struggles with doubt in similar ways herself. I do agree with other reviews on the 3/5 rating, as she is a bit repetitive and could condense things down a bit, but I also agree that her book made me giggle a few times with her witty way of telling stories. It was entertaining, though the repetition caused me to take a while on this book.

On the mainly positive end, hearing her story of redemption in the midst of doubt really encouraged me that God is faithful even when I struggle to believe what He says is true and even when I am a fumbling “misfit.” It really helps to know you’re not alone when you read this book and to know someone has learned and is

learning the same things I am under God.

Overall, a pretty good read, if not a little tedious to get through. But quite encouraging and funny. :)

Thomas says

I'm not really in the intended audience for this memoir. I was drawn in, first by the title, and then by the first chapter, where Michelle DeRusha captures her experience with sin and the confessional in the Catholic church, an experience that was compellingly told and similar to my own early religious training. But after the first chapter, the writing often seems self-consciously engaged in a form of humor I don't connect with well, and sometimes the book seems over-written, over-explained, the humor exaggerated. I almost stopped reading it several times, only to be brought back by some compelling spiritual insight or experience that is described well. I give this three stars knowing I'm not really in the audience for this one. But I can see how many others might find this a delightful and enlightening read. DeRusha has certainly cited some wonderful writers here who helped her in her spiritual journey, and she has with insight shaped some compelling experiences. I love her idea of pointing the Hubble telescope at a region where there seems to be nothing there, only to begin to notice distant galaxies there in the small dark space--as a metaphor for seeing how God works in our lives. At the same time that the ending is over summarized and explained, I share her feeling of being a misfit.

Jessica says

I love everything about this book. She is so genuine. And I think EVERYONE can relate with having doubt in their Christian journey. Sometimes we just have to CHOOSE to have faith. I'm so glad she had the courage to be honest with herself and others and to share her story with the world. She's someone I would want to be friends with.

Wendy Miller says

I've never encountered a book with such an insightful blend of humor and poignancy. I've been waiting to read DeRusha's work in print for years. SPIRITUAL MISFIT exceeded my expectations. By tackling probing questions like can doubt and faith coexist, DeRusha writes a necessary book with a brave and witty voice that is sure to engage many wrestling and "misfit" souls.

I've been enthusiastically recommending SPIRITUAL MISFIT to friends and family. I'm eager to read more from DeRusha!

Krysten says

I liked this book - it went fast and was fun and self-effacing without being as woo-woo as someone like Anne Lamott (whom I also like but whatever). I related to DeRusha's experience with Catholicism and how

her parents never gave her the option not to attend church; I feel like every other story of growing up Christian out there goes like "I stopped going to church at age 12 when I stopped believing" like ok A) you TOLD your parents you stopped believing and B) they just LET you stop going??? I won't delve into the specifics of my experience except to say that it was not. like. that. so it was kind of a relief that DeRusha's childhood was at least somewhat similar.

most of the quotes used within the text were from C.S. Lewis and Kathleen Norris, and I could've used a break from some of that. not a huge deal.

the thing I ACTUALLY had a problem with was how DeRusha recounted several instances in which she did charity work and wrote about the people who met her actions with overt gratitude. I fucking. hate that shit. most of the people you serve are *not* going to thank you and praise you and weep at your feet and smile and laugh and stroke your cheek and act like you saved them because you served them a fucking bowl of soup or something. they are not there to inspire you. tell me the bigger story, about how as Oscar Wilde said, *the best amongst the poor are never grateful*, and how you still pulled something out of your heart to serve, and how maybe you got nothing out of it, and how it was actually really fucking uninspiring, and how you kept going, because it was the right thing to do, and not because it felt good.

Kelle says

I was fortunate to get a pre-read of "Spiritual Misfit" which will become available April 15, 2014. If you have ever questioned whether you are the only person who doesn't know know how to "do it right" when it comes to Christianity, this book is for you. Michelle has a gift for sharing real life, whether it's one of the beautiful moments or whether is one of the very raw, not-so-pretty moments. If you want a taste of her style, go read a few of her blog entries at <http://michellderusha.com/>, and then pre-order this book. You will not be disappointed. :)

Sheila Lagrand says

Many spiritual memoirs seem to be "sanitized" before publication. Our faithful Christian protagonist is victim, survivor, walking faithfully and leaning entirely on God. Right?

The only problem with such an approach is that I can't relate to such a cleaned-up presentation of walking with Jesus. It's hard. It's tricky. We stumble. In a spiritual sense, we all have spinach in our teeth now and then.

Michelle is not afraid to smile big and wide, spiritual "spinach" and all. You need this book. Order it. Now. Really.

Kimberly Coyle says

Tender, funny, and above all well crafted. I loved following Michelle's journey, so different from my own,

but with the same end result. Michelle gives us a living, breathing portrait of what it means to love God and know we are loved by Him too. Written from one spiritual misfit to another, it's impossible not to find a bit of yourself in these pages, regardless of your personal history. My favorite take-away? Keep asking questions. Start with "Why not?"

Laura Hiebenthal says

I loved this book for the author's pure honesty and her humor. I found myself truly laughing out loud at some of the stories from her life. Best of all, those stories are relatable. Sometimes it's easy to think everyone is walking around with a rock-solid faith, while you are secretly questioning your own faith. The author was expecting her faith to arrive in a lightning-bolt moment but instead it came in many small moments over time.

Christine says

One of the best books I have ever read. Could easily be MY memoir. I saw myself on every page. Definitely need to own a copy!!

Karin Fendick says

How many of us find ourselves naked before our Lord, trembling just a bit, scratching our heads, mumbling "I believe Lord, help my unbelief?"

In this close to the bone memoir Michelle shares with brave openness her doubts, fears and growing reliance on a Lord Who asks us to believe what we can not always see.

Some pages left me giggling, others are stained by tears of recognition.

This is a must read for anyone who wants to know themselves and their Lord in a deeper way.

Dawn says

Have you been a Christian long enough to know the Sunday school answer? Everyone knows Jesus is the answer and everything else is wrong. Everyone, that is, except Michelle DeRusha. This girl says what no respectable Christian would about her faith in her spiritual memoir. She is brave enough to say all the things we Christians have thought then promptly dismissed as inappropriate. Michelle stares her uneasy, fragile faith in the eye. With an equally scant measure of defiance pitted against her paltry faith, Michelle plods on in her awkward and jolting relationship to God. She's determined to hammer out her Christianity no matter what it looks like, even if she misses and hits her thumb — or worse, God's — in the process. Her story is both funny and heartfelt, and you might find your own feeble faith in her journey, give or take a few details. This is an uncensored look at what true faith looks like in the raw, yet offers hope and grace to all who

struggle with their faith or yearn to have some.
