



The Reckless Way of Love: Notes on Following Jesus

Dorothy Day

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In this guidebook Dorothy Day offers hard-earned wisdom and practical advice gained through decades of seeking to know Jesus and to follow his example and teachings in her own life.

Unlike larger collections and biographies, which cover her radical views, exceptional deeds, and amazing life story, this book focuses on a more personal dimension of her life: Where did she receive strength to stay true to her God-given calling despite her own doubts and inadequacies and the demands of an activist life? What was the unquenchable wellspring of her deep faith and her love for humanity?

The Reckless Way of Love: Notes on Following Jesus Details

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Cassondra Windwalker says

An intimate glimpse into Dorothy Day's stream of consciousness, this book is a collection of often random sentences and paragraphs on a variety of ideas and questions that informed Day's devotion to God and her daily choices. It took me perhaps an hour or a little more to read through the book, including its introduction and biographical notes. As someone unfamiliar with Day, footnotes with information pertaining to particular people, places, and events to which she refers would have been helpful, as I was scanning Google at the same time as I attempted to decipher her meaning. If these are all of her writings, that is unfortunate. Her radical willingness to devote herself entirely to her beliefs is intriguing and encouraging, and more of her inner mind would be fascinating to explore. If these are not all of her writings, then I would rather have read a more complete collection. Regardless of these caveats, the brief incursion into her philosophy was powerful and engaging, well worth the hour it took. I would best recommend this as an addition to other, more in-depth works on Dorothy Day.

This book was received as a Goodreads Giveaway.

Jackie St Hilaire says

Are we not our brother's and sister's keeper?

One never knows when he/she will be in need of support from another. Often times it is easier for us to give than to receive. It takes humility to ask for help, to ask for prayers, to ask for forgiveness.

Dorothy Day gives us insights of her own spiritual journey of giving and receiving. Of letting go of unnecessary attachments and giving from her substance.

Dorothy shares her own vulnerabilities in following Jesus' path.

Dorothy embraced her humanity, her goodness along with her faults. Removing the log from her own eyes, enabled her to see the soul of the other reflected back to her. No easy task to strip yourself naked and become vulnerable.

"We are all here with each other because we need each other, Those who help and those who are helped".
Kiran Yocom.

Jaci says

This collection of short snippets from Dorothy Day's work provides insight into her spiritual life and a starting point for discussion and thought. Each thematic section can be read separately. Good for Lent.

p.xiv: "We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

p.58: January and February are those months when winter seems interminable and vitality low. In the face of world events, in the face of the mystery of suffering, of evil in the world, it is a good time to read the book of Job, and then to go on reading the Psalms, looking for comfort--that is, strength to endure.

p.67: ...it says somewhere that God's grace comes and goes, with no fault of ours, and when we do not have it, we wait patiently and it returns. I do think manual labor of one kind or another is of help and when I get in states which last, I get to housecleaning, and there is always plenty of that around...and that is some relief.

Coleen says

When I indicate that I am 'finished' with this book, that is really not the case. I will continue to go back to excerpts and chapters that I found inspirational. This is a short book containing 'notes' mostly taken from other writings that Dorothy Day produced throughout her life. I was not [still am not] that familiar with her or her life, but what she has written that has been selected for this book has heartened me and impressed me.

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

Gilbert says

Wow.

What a great book that put together only some of Dorothy Day's writings in a thematic way. I have only read about her in another book, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," but this was a great little summary about how she thought.

I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting some inspiration to be a great Christian, a great person, a courageous light in bleak scenarios. I found this a great daily reading companion rather than speed read through it.

Ally says

I love reading Dorothy Day's thoughts and spiritual musings on various parts of following after Jesus. Although I read this book in bite size pieces--and enjoyed it--I felt like the general flow was a little off. Highly recommend The Long Loneliness first, this book would be best for someone who is already familiar with her story and the Catholic Worker.

Andrea Wren-hardin says

"We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other."

My mother-in-law gave this book- perfect for Lent. I loved it and know that I will re read parts of it over and over again.

L.A. says

Portable inspiration for radical Catholics.

This is a collection of assorted writings and musings from the Catholic Church's most bad-ass, underappreciated woman. Much like Mother Theresa, she gave over her entire life to the poor. Unlike her colleague, however, Day had a wild past, and committed some "sins" that "nice" people would rather not bring up. Thus, if you're Catholic, you either discover Day by accident or not at all.

If you're a leftist, however, her name has probably come up once or twice, and with no "sin" baggage attached either, leaving you free to explore these writings without judgment, if you choose. Though seemingly a paradox, Day saw no conflict between her faith and her politics, and saw the practice of mutual aid as the natural fulfillment of gospel commands.

So, basically, you have to be a Catholic leftist to really appreciate this, or at least a leftist who hasn't been so traumatized by organized religion that you can't handle any talk of the divine. Its pocket-size makes it a better personal gift than a library pick, but if you've already got it, you don't have to weed it; it's sure to offend somebody, and a great library, as we often say around here, has something in it to offend everyone.

Like Day, I'm pretty much a neither-nor / both-and kind of person, so I took a great deal of comfort from these words, even while disagreeing heartily with many of them. Had somebody told me about her sooner, I might very well still be Catholic; as it is, however, I was happy to spend a few quiet hours with a woman who practiced what she preached, took joy in this world, and tried to make it a better place, even as she hoped for something better beyond it.

Bob says

Summary: A collection of Dorothy Day's writings on following Jesus in the ways of faith, love, prayer, life, and community.

One thinks of Dorothy Day as an activist writer and advocate for the poor, running homes of hospitality, communes, and getting arrested even in her seventies. What is less apparent is the deep spirituality that sustained her activism. This book, one of Plough's Spiritual Guides, distills writings from her different books that cumulatively describe the ordinary life of following Jesus among the poor.

The excerpts are organized around five "ways" or themes: of faith, of love, of prayer, of life, and of community.

In the chapters on faith, we encounter both her implicit belief in the mysteries of the faith and the sacraments, and yet her struggle to trust and depend in the welter of daily interactions and work. She writes,

"I suppose it is a grace not to be able to have time to take or derive satisfaction in the work we are doing. In what time I have, my impulse is to self-criticism and examination of conscience, and I am constantly humiliated at my own imperfections and at my halting progress. Perhaps I deceive myself here, too, and excuse my lack of recollection. But I do know how small I am and how little I can do and I beg you, Lord, to help me, for I cannot help myself" (pp. 14-15).

Often, Day's reflections come with pithy challenges. We see the intensity of her love for God and the wonder that God sets his love on the likes of us and then observes, "It is a terrible thought--'we love God as much as the one we love the least'" (p.36). Or she surprises us with her breaks with convention such as when she writes on prayer: "I do not have to retire to my room to pray. It is enough to get out and walk in the wilderness of the streets" (p. 44).

"The way of life" reminds us "never to get discouraged at the slowness of people or results" (p. 63). She writes of deepening perceptions of unworldly justice that does not seek its own, that for a Christian social order, "we must first have Christians" (p.66), and how, apart from the light of Christ, we often do not know ourselves or our secret sins. She writes at length on the indispensable role of suffering in our lives.

The final portion focuses on life in community. Day writes of efforts in community with grittiness and realism. Disappointments. Betrayals. Plain hard work and long hours. Yet even so, she longs for bigger houses, more room for discussions, a library, "a Christ room." She recognizes desperately her need for the presence of God in all the ordinary places. In the end, it is community that addresses our desolation. She concludes, "We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community" (p. 120).

This is the second book in the Spiritual Guides series I've reviewed, the earlier being *The Scandal of Redemption* by Oscar Romero. These are small books only in size. Each is well-edited by Carolyn Kurtz. This, in particular, required culling passages from a number of Day's works along each of the themes into coherent chapters. Eye-catching cover art, end papers, and typography make these delightful books to hold and read.

I found myself often mulling over a single line, such as this one: "We have the greatest weapons in the world, greater than any hydrogen or atom bomb, and they are the weapons of poverty and prayer, fasting and alms, the reckless spending of ourselves in God's service and for his poor" (p.69). I mused again and again what a different face Christians would present to the world if we lived as Day did rather than jockeying for positions and influence and concealing our flawed character rather than exposing it to the grace of God. Reading Day gives me hope that ordinary Christians with all our flaws and struggles may yet walk the ways of faith, hope, and love, offering something beautiful for God and to the world.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received a complimentary review copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. The opinions I have expressed are my own.

Ella says

I had never read any of Dorothy Day's writing before this and this was a lovely, simple introduction to her life of faith. Full of beautiful, short passages, the one thing I wished is that there had been some longer excerpts included or that each quote came with a source (they were listed in the back, but not on each page).

Michelle Kidwell says

The Reckless Way of Love

Notes on Following Jesus

by Dorothy Day

Plough Publishing

Plough Publishing House

Christian , Religion & Spirituality

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I am reviewing a copy of The Reckless Way of Love through Plough Publishing and Netgalley:

This book covers a more personal dimension of her life and faith while larger collections and biographies which cover radical views and exceptional deeds.

Where did she receive the strength to stay true to her calling despite her own doubts and feelings of inadequacy as well as the demands of an activists life?

In this book we learn how she took the examples of Jesus and applied them in our own lives.

I give The Reckless Way of Love five out of five stars!

Happy Reading

David says

A *Chicken Soup for the Soul* for those who find the real *Chicken Soup for the Soul* too sweet to stomach. This one has a lot more vinegar in it. I like vinegar.

The affirmations, when they come, sound like this: "Why should we try to see results? It is enough to keep on in the face of defeat" (p. 76). If sentiments like that don't keep the lights on for you, I can't blame you, but it's reassuring for me to know that people who did a truckload of good in this world spent a great deal of time wrestling with the suspicion that it all really didn't make any difference.

Some of the most enjoyable bits to read are short passages when she writes about ordinary life, like the joy she gets from a park or an infuriating (for me, not Day) episode when a bitter old alcoholic whom Day had previously helped calls the police on her. Each episode seems to have a little point to it, but it's not too overbearingly preachy. I also liked the passage when she talked about the spontaneous displays of friendliness and generosity she saw as a child when living just outside San Francisco at the time of 1906 earthquake, which broke down barriers between neighbors. Why can't we just act like that all the time? Day seems to be asking.

Day appeals to me because I often find it difficult to maintain interest in more conventional books about spirituality, which frequently contain dull but worthy ideas from some still-living professor of theology. Day's go-to quotes about her spiritual experience come not from somebody's sermon, but from *The Stranger*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, or *The Screwtape Letters*. I guess I like this partly due to intellectual vanity, but any spiritual lesson I get should have stunning turn of phrase from great wordsmith, because I have a tiny attention span and also forget things easily.

Day not only wants to down on your knees praying regularly with sincerity and enthusiasm, but she also wants you – especially when you feel exhausted – stick around in the office after you had planned to go home and clean two rooms, so the maid won't have to work so hard that evening. This is not Sunday-only faith for dilettantes. If you're not pushing yourself to do the dullest and least rewarding act for people whom, if they find out what you are doing, are likely to be ungrateful, then you're doing it wrong.

This book is also 130 pages and in a little square format. This is, I guess, to encourage you – even in the age of smart phones – to stuff it into the pocket of your sport jacket, or perhaps your purse. Of course, where I live it's usually too hot to wear a sport jacket and I am much, MUCH too manly to carry a purse. (This? It's a "messenger bag", dammit, and wipe that smirk off your head.)

The book is also mentioned at the end of an entertaining article in the March 2017 edition of *The Atlantic* here. The article is mainly a review of a new biography written by Day's granddaughter Kate Hennessy, Dorothy Day; The World Will Be Saved By Beauty: An Intimate Portrait of Dorothy Day.

Won in a Goodreads giveaway – thanks for the free stuff!

Julia says

For me this was an inspiring, although brief, introduction to the work, faith and life of social activist Dorothy Day. It is a loosely arranged compilation of her writings on faith, work, love, and compassion. I was inspired by her dedication and selflessness and took away many profound insights about our role in reaching out with friendship and patience to those around us. I am looking forward to reading "The Long Loneliness" and reading about Day's life more deeply.

Northpapers says

Sabbath Book #16 for 2018.

I aspire to poverty, but it crushes me so easily. The anxiety and despair and weakness overwhelm me, so I

make concessions. How can one love God enough to be poor, to really be among the poor and to experience faith, hope, and love?

I have not found the answer, at least not in a very thorough way yet. But there is some thought in this book that points in the right direction. I was grateful for Day's wisdom, for her rich reflection on community, for her rejection of superficial answers like self-love and material security.

This collection of her thoughts feels both promising and scattered. It is a collection of excerpts from her work across a fascinating life and journey. It contains tastes of her wisdom, but does not set the table or invite me to the feast.

I'm eager to read her other work, which might be the point of this collection.

Julius McCarter says

Dorothy Day's *The Reckless Way of Love* is a little, appropriately inexpensive book from Plough Publishing that showcases snippets from a wide variety of Day's writings: 141 brief passages, most less than a page long, grouped thematically in sections entitled "A Way of Faith", "A Way of Love", and so on for Prayer, Life, and Community.

Day's writings are normally scattered across a number of publications. That makes the accessibility of this collection even more significant.

Day's vision of Christian simplicity is a vision that needs a wider hearing. And Plough has given the Church a beautiful gift in this little collection, so that that voice may be widely heard.

I received a free copy of this book from Plough Publishing in exchange for my honest review here.
