



# Every Bush Is Burning

*Brandon Clements*

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## **Every Bush Is Burning** Brandon Clements

A gritty story about forgiveness, family, and the sometimes tragically painful sins of the church.

Jack Bennett has a wife, two kids, the perfect job--and the perfect affair. When he is caught and it all comes crashing down, Jack is left with no one to turn to. No friends. No family, except his recovering drug addict of a sister.

On a Sunday morning drive, he sees a homeless man locked out of a church service, banging on the door. He stops and offers the guy a cup of coffee. He asks the man his name, and the guy says Yeshua. As in, Jesus.

Jack's not stupid. This isn't the real Jesus. But with nowhere else to turn, Jack forms an unlikely friendship with this eccentric homeless man--one that will test his idea of truth, faith, love, and forgiveness.

And Jack is completely unprepared for the real-life twists his story is going to take.

Watch the trailer, get a free sampler, and find out more at [www.EveryBushIsBurning.com](http://www.EveryBushIsBurning.com).

About the Author:

Brandon Clements lives in Columbia, SC. He drinks coffee with no cream or sugar, once hit a cow with a truck (the cow lived), and adores his wife Kristi. This is his first novel.

You can find him at [www.BrandonClements.com](http://www.BrandonClements.com) or @brandonclements on Twitter.

Reader Reviews (taken from Amazon reviews):

"Couldn't put the book down, and didn't even begin to guess the twist at the end. An absolutely beautiful story on many levels." -Lorna Johnston

"I can't imagine anyone not remembering this book long after they've come to the last page." -Shelley Waldaia

"Clements' book surprised me. I thought it was one thing, a typical jab at the Christian establishment, and it turned out to be something different, a jab at what it means to be human and to long for love, but to come up short, the kind of jab that makes us all start looking, and maybe finding, that love we had forgotten." -Joe Bunting

## **Every Bush Is Burning Details**

Date : Published October 1st 2011 by Twisted Beam Press

ISBN : 9780983785002

Author : Brandon Clements

Format : Paperback 250 pages

Genre : Christian Fiction, Christian, Fiction, Inspirational

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# From Reader Review Every Bush Is Burning for online ebook

## Courtney says

I like to push myself sometimes & read a book about something of which I'm not fond or familiar. Case in point, Twenty Weeks (but please, let's not bring up that horrible, terrible book). When I first started reading EBIB I was comparing it to The Shack by William Young, a book in which the character spends a weekend with God & all his peeps.

In EBIB, our main character Jack is a not-so-good guy who writes a newspaper column about the hypocrisy of Christians & the church in America. One day he stumbles upon a bum banging on the doors of a church, the same church that threw him out because he wasn't "presentable" enough. We find out that the bum is actually Yeshua, or Jesus, sent to Jack to teach him about the Lord & set Christianity straight. The end of the book, & the identity of Yeshua, is a huge surprise - I actually blurted out loud is bed, "BAAAA!" I honestly didn't see it coming.

I couldn't help but become completely engrossed in the characters. Clements just writes them so realistically. Maybe it's because the entire story is written as a letter from the main character Jack, to a person he's seen many times before in a coffee shop. Everyone is so relatable, the dialogue is so true - not for a moment did I ever stop & think, *NO ONE would say that!*

& it also got me thinking about my own religion. Anytime a book like this can *help* me with something that I've been puzzled about for years, I'm grateful. In Clements' "Note From the Author" at the end of the story, he says he wrote the story knowing there would be a "myriad of you's"; in other words, the recipient of Jack's letter. He goes on to write, "& I hope that it at least, in some small way poked you in the eye, where you will at least have to walk away & think or struggle with something." He made reading about religion & God & Jesus, not so scary for me.

### Favorite Highlights:

"Everyone has given the finger to God, and anyone else in the way of the pursuit to get what they want - the thing they think is better than God and his idea for the world."

"Next, he picked the iPod back up & started searching. 'Oh snap. . . ' he said. . . " (talking about Yeshua, who at this point in the story is Jesus. I LOL'd when I thought about Jesus saying "Oh snap")

"You don't get to pick me and not pick the church."

"Heaven will never be fully on earth because this is still a busted, sinful place."

"Flawed souls can still speak the truth, I've learned."

SO go out & read it! It's a free book in the Kindle store!

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## Jaci says

It touched on some of own insecurities and struggles. But, the gullibility of the characters and the

offensiveness of the father caused more dislike than amusement or reason to change the path of ones life.

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## Cindi says

Christianity has become a hip way to connect with friends. But what happens when Christianity becomes a social club and the messages of forgiveness and compassion aren't carried into the streets the way that Jesus commanded?

*Every Bush Is Burning* by Brandon Clements is one of those books you start reading and think to yourself, "I really don't like this guy," (the main character) but you keep reading because you somehow understand exactly what he's talking about. And what Jack Bennett is talking about is his life; his work, his failing marriage, and his disgust with 'Christianity.'

This is an enjoyable story, even though what the author is saying about the 21st-century American church is often painful to read. But it's painful in the way removing an infected sliver from a finger is painful. It must be done if the infection is to be stopped so the finger can heal. Although some may have trouble with a Jesus who drinks beer and listens to Nine-Inch Nails (this reader wasn't particularly pleased with it), being able to move past these minor details is essential, especially in light of how the story concludes. A look at the bigger picture is needed.

You can read more of this review at <http://www.examiner.com/christian-fic...>

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## Amy says

It was on Twitter a awhile back that I saw a link to a free copy of *Every Bush is Burning* by Brandon Clements. I turned right around and shared the link all over Facebook and Twitter myself, which actually horrified me once I started reading.

I got offended several times throughout the book, and a third of the way in I'd already made up my mind to write a mean Amazon review. I got so ticked off at one point that I decided to slam my Kindle shut (???) and delete this book forever.

But I couldn't.

I don't normally enjoy fictitious books that personify Jesus in unfamiliar ways, especially if those ways portray Him to be far-fetched or edgy or anything less than spotless, blameless, sinless Savior He is. But can I just tell you that I am so thankful I kept reading? SO THANKFUL.

The main character, Jack Bennett, is a broken mess of a guy who's endured unfathomable suffering, but who's also inflicted it. So in other words, he's very relatable and much like you and me. You want to wring his neck because of the choices he makes, yet you find yourself cheering him on and praying he finds the grace he's thirsting for.

But most of all you're throwing your hands up asking what in the world is wrong with us, the Church of today, that we would drive away the very people (like Jack) who need Christ the most?

"I tried to daydream as much as possible during the service, but the visiting preacher, with all his pomp and circumstance and angry diatribes and hellfire, made that difficult. His long bony finger looked like a lightning bolt could jolt out of it at any second." (p. 21)

And then there's Jesus, whose behavior in the story doesn't click at all with the Jesus I know. Even so, I couldn't quit reading. And by the end of the story I'd come to love the characters (except for the ones I hated), and the events in their lives had inspired me to stop judging the sins of others as though my sin is more righteous or something, and to start ministering as part of the true Body of Christ like He's asked us to.

And due to a shocking twist at the end that redeemed the disconcerting parts in every way imaginable, I dang near cried my eyes out and was compelled to forgive some people in my life that have caused me immeasurable pain. How can I accept the free gift of forgiveness and yet not be willing to offer it to those who have hurt me?

My big take-away from this book? Grace is a most precious gift, whether given or received.

There's some cussing of the PG13-rated variety, but if you can handle that, I definitely recommend you give this one a read. I tweeted Brandon Clements after I finished the book and thanked him for blessing me. He tweeted me back and thanked me for finishing. He said he gets so bummed when people stop reading halfway through. Just the thought of that bums me out, too.

So get the book, and read to the end. You won't regret it. It just might change your life, too.

Five stars, plus.

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## Josh says

I'm fascinated by fiction written by Christians - especially pastors. I think the struggle to capture reality under the expectations our culture has for things with the title "Christian" is difficult. People cuss, people get drunk, people have sex, people are broken, relationships are a mess.

It's sad that most Christian story telling can't contain this stuff and if it does, only in the abstract or generalities. The reason it's sad is because the weight of this brokenness, the weight of evil in the world, must be felt so that the beauty and joy of it's redemption can be fully appreciated.

Clements does a pretty good job of capturing this. There's not gratuitous sex or anything, but people cuss, not crudely, but effectively and people drink both sinfully to cope and properly to enjoy it. There is brokenness, there is deep, deep pain of being sinned against, the nauseating pain of destroying people we love with our sin, and the paradoxical indignation that we feel when they don't immediately forgive us and go back to how things used to be. These are great realities to capture and they're capture well in EBIB.

The book is gripping. I read it quickly and found myself moved by it and thinking about it when I wasn't reading it.

That said, the writing is a little indulgent. Lots of tangents for the narrator to get cool points by name dropping underground places around the city or good bands or single origin coffee roasts. It's written as a

letter from the narrator to a stranger (the reader), a regular he sees often in the coffee shop he frequents. So it's got a lot of second person kind of things like questions "Have you ever eaten at The Whig? Best burgers in town. I hope we can go there some time if we become friends." I'm all about using place well in a story and setting stories in real places with real people, but there were a couple points where I thought, "I get it! You're a hipster, you like good beer, good coffee, and good restaurants that people don't know about and you desperately want to be my friend." This is not a deep or central critique or even a critique, more of a personal pet peeve. So maybe I'm being indulgent about somebody else indulgences.

The content of the book is mostly in the conversations that the narrator has with the other character. I won't tell you who the other character is because if I'd known that before reading the book, I probably wouldn't have read it because of my baggage from other Christian books and I want people to read this book. The content of these conversations is delicious: the goodness and holiness of God, the weight of sin, the hope of the cross, the practice of repentance, the importance of community are rich, beautiful truths. It was great to read a book that dealt with reality, dealt with brokenness, and had great, deep theology conveyed humbly, clearly, and applicably. You could cut out some of the informative monologues and have a much shorter book that talks about the gospel, but to have them nestled within a narrative, applying them to the gripping pain and struggles of a character whose flaws you can see and can sympathize with is a great use of story.

A big part of the book is the sins of the church and it's good for these to be addressed. I love The Church, but not for her past but for what she will become and who is developing her (Jesus). Pointing out these sins and evil done by non-Christians under the banner of Christianity should be done, but it should only be done to point to the real issue: Jesus and his death and resurrection. I am not a fan of just being this shoulder shrugging, meebly (I made that word up) Christians that are always apologizing and trying not to rub anyone the wrong. Christians should never (and couldn't really, if they're honest) point to themselves and say "Join us". We should boldly and confidently own up to our sins so that we can display and communicate the joy that comes from the fact that they are forgiven by the blood of Christ.

There is a writing question this book brought up: Is there any other way to write a Christian story with good content without long, didactic conversations between characters? This is the classic "showing verses telling" question that writers of fiction are always wrestling with. Is there a way to show through story some or most of the content instead of just playing telling it to the reader? The feeling of redemption we get when we see Andy on the beach as Red walks up to him in Shawshank Redemption is infinitely more profound than if a voice over or character said "And all that bad stuff was redeemed". But I supposed redemption is in the title of the movie. I want to be clear, writers should write with a purpose, with something to say. But can it be said by the story rather than a character's monologue? I don't know. It's much harder to do it that way and might be less clear. It's something I wrestle with when I write fiction and probably the reason I don't write it that much.

In conclusion, read Every Bush is Burning. It should, as the author hopes, spark good conversations, cause things that we should deal with to bubble to the surface and cause us to grow as people and closer to joy.

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## Rebecca Jo says

A man's life is falling apart, & then he meets someone who tells him they are Jesus.  
is it really?

This stranger, who introduces himself was Yeshua, indeed makes things happen around him for Jack. Giving him advice on how to save his marriage, on how to help his sister, on how to make a become a better man. Against all Jack's instincts, he keeps meeting with Yeshua every week... & how his life is changed.

I was so hooked into this book.  
Was this guy really Jesus?  
if not, who is he?

The books is written in what I call "The Never Ending Story" style... talking straight to you. "you know what I'm talking about since you were there"... that kind of thing.

& Its a strange book that its about a closer relationship with Jesus & an underlying message of forgiveness... but it has side stories of affairs, drinking, cursing... real life I guess you could say... & I guess you could say Jesus is there in every day life. Right?

So not your typical "Jesus" book  
... but I loved it...

Loved the back story of Jack & his sister Sara - loved the friends he makes along the way - love finding out the truth about Yeshua...

I wont give it away here... you'll have to read it for yourself.  
& then, see if you indeed are part of this story too...

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## **Barre says**

It has been a month since I finished this book, and I am STILL talking about it and discussing pieces and parts of it with family and friends. It is a thought-provoking story filled with questions, thoughtful bits of advice, and a touching story that makes you wince, laugh, and feel. I highly recommend this for anyone who has ever thought about their faith, questioned religion, or who wants to think about God from a whole different perspective. It's for believers and non-believers alike. Great read!

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## **Jennifer Westall says**

### **Summary:**

*Jack Bennett has a wife, two kids, the perfect job--and the perfect affair. When he is caught and it all comes crashing down, Jack is left with no one to turn to. No friends. No family, except his recovering drug addict of a sister.*

*On a Sunday morning drive, he sees a homeless man locked out of a church service, banging on the door. He stops and offers the guy a cup of coffee. He asks the man his name, and the guy says Yeshua. As in, Jesus.*

*Jack's not stupid. This isn't the real Jesus. But with nowhere else to turn, Jack forms an unlikely friendship--one that will test his idea of truth, faith, love, and forgiveness. And Jack is completely unprepared for the real-life twists his story is going to take.*

### **My thoughts:**

From the outset, this book intrigued me because of the writing style; it was different, and the author pulled it off well most of the time. The story is written as if it's a letter to a fellow patron of the coffee shop where



Jack is penning his tale, a method I've never read in another novel. Though I'm sure it isn't a new concept, it certainly isn't common, which most people in the business will tell you to stay away from at all costs. Clements does a great job, with only a few sections that seem to go off on unrelated tangents. The only other criticism I have of the writing is that there are moments when Yeshua gets on a high horse and starts preaching, and it comes off as the author preaching a message he wants to get across rather than as a character truly interacting with another. Otherwise, the writing is crisp, and moves the plot along nicely.

The idea of Jesus himself appearing to Bennett was fascinating, and I had mixed feelings about it throughout. But by the end of the novel, my concerns were resolved, and I could look back over the journey of reading this book and honestly say I enjoyed it thoroughly. I also loved that these characters were outside of the traditional characters you typically find in Christian fiction, without being controversial just for the sake of pushing the limits. I found all of these characters to be realistic in nearly all their interactions and dialogue. And I absolutely loved the ending, but I don't want to spoil it for you. Overall, I'd give Every Bush is Burning 4 stars, and I would definitely recommend it to others. I would also recommend it for readers 18 or older (personal taste) for the occasional language and sexual references.

Happy reading!

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## **Mary says**

Jack is leading the perfect life-nice home, nice job, twin boys. But he is also missing something as reflected in his cynicism and the affair that he has. In his job as a newspaper reporter, he writes a very cynical biting commentary on how he is unimpressed with the contributions Christians and churches have made to society. He concludes with a statement from Ghandi, "I like your Christ, but I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ".

The week after his column is published he is on his way to his usual Sunday morning coffee shop stop and sees a sign at a small local church that says, "What if Jack Is Right About Us?" He does a double take and then notices a man standing knocking on the door of the church and the door is not opening. He feels sorry for what appears to a disheveled homeless man and stops to talk to him.

This begins a weekly meeting for coffee with the man who introduces himself as Yeshua, or Jesus. Not for a minute does Jack believe that this is truly Jesus. But he is shocked when this man confronts him about his secret affair and tells him that he needs to repent and ask his wife for forgiveness. He ends up being evicted from his home and banned from his children so since he does not have any friends to turn to he and Yeshua begin an unlikely friendship.

I liked this book because I thought that "Jesus" had a lot of good things to say about what is wrong with the American church. Jack's journey in learning about forgiveness and his experience with meeting some people that truly give him the feeling of being with people who represent "God in skin" make for an interesting read.

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## **Karen says**

Note: This book was a free Kindle download.

Caveat: I would rate this book a PG-13 for language. If that is a litmus test for you, don't read it.

"Every Bush Is Burning" is an interesting book that makes you wonder what is happening at times. There was at least one major plot twist that caught me off guard. Sometimes I really liked the book; at other times it frustrated me. The story centers around Jack who has a pretty decent life, but ruins it by having an extra-marital affair. He meets a homeless man who claims to be Jesus.

The book is full of rich material:

"Sin is essentially narcissism," he went on, "and recent events show that you only have eyes for your own reflection." (p. 67)

"Your marriage to Chloe is a picture—a shadow of the perfect relationship I designed to have with humanity. And your betrayal of her is a picture of the sin of every human being against God. Not some impersonal breaking of the rules—it is a relational betrayal. A knife in the back of God and the perfect existence of his design and presence, just like your affair was a knife in the back of Chloe and the life that she wanted with you. "You have certainly received your fair share of scars from other people's sin, Jack. And for that I am truly sorry. I hate the effects of sin as much as you do, I promise. But you have to own up to the fact that you've given out some scars too." I wrenched at his statement, and my heart sunk as I thought about what I had done to Chloe, to our family." (p. 68)

A very interesting part deals with a retelling of the rich man/poor man story Jesus told. At other times I feel some things were added for shock value which I was sorry to see. Yet issues like cutting, drug use, and sexual abuse are handled with compassion. I think I will remember the characters for a long time.

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## Kevin says

I have to give this book credit for its creativity and honesty. Some many books written to "preach" a message rather than tell a story fail as literature even if they manage to get their point across. Clements starts things out that way, perhaps intentionally, as you feel as if you are reading another one of those encounter the real Jesus book that is only loosely fiction and mostly preaching. But then the lead character Jack begins to find his voice, and the Yeshua character beings to take on an unexpected edge and you feel the fission of potential blasphemy (or you stopped reading offended) and it ends with some well done twists and turns.

Did it get a little preachy at the end? Sure but not enough to ruin what proceeded. For what it is worth, I didn't find the theological aspects all that compelling, nor did the criticisms of the church in America strike me as particularly insightful, instead what I found interesting was the portrayal of believable characters and their emotions, though process and actions under difficult circumstances. In viewing the world through their eyes you can see how often we are stubbornly sabotaging out lives, about how we know what we should do but have a very hard time doing it, and how we long for forgiveness and reconciliation but struggle to offer it to others.

Overall, an interesting and sometimes quite compelling thought experiment that actually works as a story.

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## **Katie says**

I honestly don't know what to say in regards to my review. I liked it, I thought it was 'okay' but I definitely didn't love it, nor did it jolt something inside me to pick up the Bible and unconditionally start following Jesus. I thought it was a good story & showed how forgiveness is supposed to work, how to do God's work, and answers some questions that may be lingering in the back of your mind. I am very much like Jack Bennett - I think a lot of Christians are a bunch of judgemental, all-knowing jerks that I really don't care to associate myself with. The book did show (as I already knew, of course) that there are some good, kind Christians that are truly on this earth to do God's work and to be nice to anyone they meet, regardless of what they look like, what their status is, or what their past looks like. It would be nice to find a church that actually goes out into the community and helps others & really gets involved instead of sitting in a sanctuary listening to a sermon that never really sinks in, just to go on a mission trip once a year. I also find it funny that Jack wants Chloe to forgive him for everything he has done to her and yet he is not willing to forgive the man who became his best friend, but ultimately hurt him very much. I guess we're all human and react to situations differently. I did like the book and am happy I read it; the story did make me think about my own life, questions that I have, and how I could be doing things differently.

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## **Johnny says**

A good read, one that I honestly couldn't put down until I saw how it resolved, and with some well-written twists and turns, I wasn't disappointed.

That said, the overall writing wasn't quite up to the standard of what I'd usually read, the dialogue (especially Jack's) seemed pretty unrealistic, the theology was pretty forced, not to mention I'm not "Reformed" like the author, and the "sins of the Church" angle was a little overdone (maybe another personal thing, I've heard this sermon before). I guess I like my Christian Fiction just a little more nuanced (C.S. Lewis style, which is hardly nuanced at all)... I actually struggled putting this one in the Fiction category altogether.

Still, a worthy effort from a new writer, and one I'd recommend to certain friends. Three out of five stars because of the description of the rating on Goodreads: I "liked it," not "really liked it" nor was it just "ok."

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## **Lew Fulton says**

Bought it on a whim as a cheap Kindle book. Didn't realize its "Christian genre", which I've since discovered it is considered to be, at least on Amazon. Its actually a fairly compelling critique of the Christian church, at least as it exists in the American South.

It was one of the better books I've read in a while. I enjoyed the style, the main character talking to the reader (or so it seems, at least) in a very intimate way - he admits all his foibles, concerns, etc. I have not felt that close to a character in a book in a long time.

The book is certainly a page turner, the plot is interesting with the requisite twists (sometimes I think that since we are all so addicted to plot twists these days, we should have more books without them, to keep us off guard...). Its a very modern, 21st century book with many references to pop culture (especially recent music) and our increasingly wired existence.

But I think what makes it a great book is that it elegantly makes the point that life is hard - and nothing about religion is going to change that. God is not going to cut you a break just because you believe; you won't get any better treatment here on Earth, and there's no point in asking for favors (either through prayer or otherwise). But maybe you'll benefit anyway just from loving God. Like the main character, I'm very much a religious skeptic, but I appreciated this message. Maybe it moved me a tiny bit toward thinking of God a bit more, and in a different way...though not toward adopting Christianity as the medium. Sorry 'bout that...

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## **Renee Meyer says**

### **Riveting**

This book was a page turner for sure. I just want to say that I recommend this book to everyone. Anyone who reads it will find some part of themselves in this story. It evokes so much emotion and thought. You will find yourself agreeing with Jack at times and then wanting to slap him at times too. Either way you can't wait to read more.

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