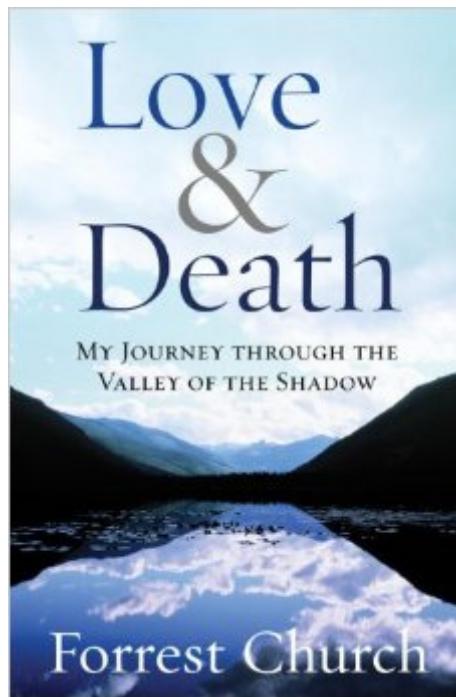


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Love & Death: My Journey Through The Valley Of The Shadow



Synopsis

On February 4, 2008, Forrest Church sent a letter to the members of his congregation, informing them that he had terminal cancer but promising to sum up his thoughts on the topics that had been so pervasive in his work-love and death. The goal of life, Church tells us, "is to live in such a way that our lives will prove worth dying for." This moving book is imbued with ideas and exemplars for achieving that goal.

Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Beacon Press; 59696th edition (August 1, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807072974

ISBN-13: 978-0807072974

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (34 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #92,980 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 inÂ Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Unitarian Universalism #102 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Living > Death & Grief #195 inÂ Books > Self-Help > Death & Grief > Grief & Bereavement

Customer Reviews

If you are a person who reads the obituaries then this book is for you! And not because you have a morbid fascination with death, but most likely as a result of your interest in life. How long did they live? What did they accomplish? How did it end? Was it too soon? This book is about living, or as Rev. Church says, "To live in such a way that our lives will prove worth dying for." Having Church as a spiritual guide is not unlike going on field trip with Mark Twain, with observations such as "A proportional relationship exists between the fear of death and the fear of life" seamlessly sharing space with his great-grandfather's three major food groups (tobacco, baked beans and whiskey). When people tell him proudly that they don't believe in God, he likes to ask them to tell him a little about the God they don't believe in, for he probably doesn't believe in him either. Church has a deft touch whether he's talking about Princess Diana, civilization versus anarchy, sad movies, or Plato. Longtime leading light in the world of Unitarian Universalism, Rev. Church has picked up his pen to tackle many subjects including the Founding Fathers, the Jefferson Bible, freedom from fear,

and liberalism versus fundamentalism, but this journey of the mind, body and soul proves his best and most provocative. Though Church of course says it better: "Life is filled with danger. That's just the way it is. Finally, the Titanic always hits the iceberg. Hence this simple, if imprudent, bit of advice: Before it does, pick up the phone. Pick up the gauntlet. Do whatever it takes. Take a few chances. Dare to live before you die." And I might add, Dare to read this book!

Forrest Church's poignant observations on Love and Death have long been important to my understanding of what life, love, and death are all about. This book provides very meaningful clarity on the subject of love and death possibly because he wrote it within weeks after having been diagnosed with terminal cancer. It is a must read for people who are interested in living a life worth dying for as Forrest has long encouraged. Tom Reece

This is a MUST READ for anyone fearing their own death (and who doesn't?) or dealing with the death of a loved one. Written by a Unitarian Universalist minister dealing with his own impending demise, Forrest Church (son of the late Senator Frank Church of Utah) encourages us to appreciate the fact that we are very blessed to be alive at all, given the amazing series of events leading to our births. Rev. Church acknowledges that, while he doesn't know what - if anything - awaits us after the death of our bodies, he is grateful to be able to simply wonder about it. His writings are drawn from his previous books and many sermons addressing this subject, along with the introspective thoughts arising from his recent diagnosis of terminal cancer. Most importantly, he reminds us that the love that we give and receive in this life is immortal. He urges us to subscribe to the following mantra: Want what you have Do what you can Be who you are

Part I of this short but immensely powerful and provocative book is an autobiographical review of the author's experiences with the death of others, (that each of us can readily identify with in our own personal way) e.g. when as a young boy his 95-year old great-grandfather's dying is "the most natural thing in the world" while a little over a decade later, a roommate's sudden death from pneumonia shocks and enrages him, providing a "turning point in my life." Then, he brings insight to how he "became a minister in a meaningful way" when he conducted his first funeral, or was at the bedside of a dying parishioner, or called to be with people "at times of loss." The death of his father, Senator Frank Church, is a critical turning point as "he taught us how to die ... and, he taught us how to live." Part I ends with his responsibilities as a New York City religious leader in the aftermath of 9/11. Part II begins with his October 2006 diagnosis of terminal cancer. This section collects the

wisdom of all the learning and experience of his years of ministry to focus upon on Life and its meaning, and the "hinges of birth and death." It is marked by an honesty and an ease of expression that takes deep, powerful ideas and makes them readily accessible through felicitous metaphor and a mantra that you will never forget. (It also has the practical gift of an essay on "how to behave" when one is making a hospital visit.) This is a book about death that is filled to the overflowing with life, love and wit. It is the gift of a lifetime.

This book is more about love and life than it is about dying and death. I finished it in two days, and will begin to read it again, more slowly to absorb its wisdom. I have just bought multiple copies to share with people I love. Let Rev. Church guide you in all of our journeys.

I'm not interested in books about religion but this is a work of great philosophy, successfully tackling the age old questions of Why are we here? What do we do? And What happens when we die. A wise and witty must read for the curious life traveler.

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