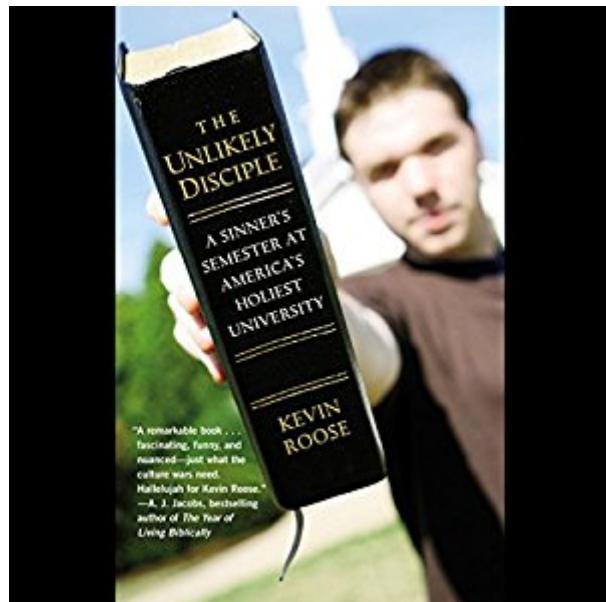


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The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester At America's Holiest University



Synopsis

No drinking. No smoking. No cursing. No dancing. No R-rated movies. Kevin Roose wasn't used to rules like these. As a sophomore at Brown University, he spent his days drinking fair-trade coffee, singing in an a cappella group, and fitting right in with Brown's free-spirited, ultra-liberal student body. But when Roose leaves his Ivy League confines to spend a semester at Liberty University, a conservative Baptist school in Lynchburg, Virginia, obedience is no longer optional. Liberty is the late Reverend Jerry Falwell's "Bible Boot Camp" for young evangelicals, his training ground for the next generation of America's Religious Right. Liberty's ten thousand undergraduates take courses like Evangelism 101, hear from guest speakers like Sean Hannity and Karl Rove, and follow a forty-six-page code of conduct that regulates every aspect of their social lives. Hoping to connect with his evangelical peers, Roose decides to enroll at Liberty as a new transfer student, leaping across the God Divide and chronicling his adventures in this daring report from the front lines of America's culture war. His journey takes him from an evangelical hip-hop concert to choir practice at Falwell's legendary Thomas Road Baptist Church. He experiments with prayer, participates in a spring break mission trip to Daytona Beach (where he learns to preach the gospel to partying coeds), and pays a visit to Every Man's Battle, an on-campus support group for chronic masturbators. He meets pastors' kids, closet doubters, Christian rebels, and conducts what would be the last print interview of Rev. Falwell's life. Hilarious and heartwarming, respectful and thought-provoking, *THE UNLIKELY DISCIPLE* will inspire and entertain believers and nonbelievers alike. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I know a church pastor who sometimes encourages his staff to pretend they are visitors during a Sunday morning service. "Walk into this place like it is the very first time. Don't take anything for granted. Look for proper signage, dÃ©cor and whether or not the bathrooms are clean, consider how the greeters treat you, and observe how difficult it is to find your children's Sunday School Class." The goal is to discover the issues that the church is ignoring because of familiarity, to take care of family dysfunctions obvious to outsiders that perhaps the church has grown tolerant, if not strangely comfortable with. Sometimes it is very helpful to have a new pair of unbiased eyes catch what you may be missing. Organizations and businesses hire people to critique their services or their products. But when a company knows that a consultant is showing up they put their best foot forward. When a restaurant is expecting a food critique for dinner the chef and wait staff perform to a different standard than normal. The best case for unbiased feedback is when you don't know that it is coming. That is why Liberty University should be so appreciative of Kevin Roose's book, "The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University." Kevin, on his own (crazy) initiative, took a semester off from college at (liberal) Brown University to experience an extremely different lifestyle than he'd ever known-right at the heart of fundamentalism- Jerry's Falwell's flagship megachurch, Thomas Road Baptist, and its accompanying university. Instead of viewing evangelical Christianity from the outside the glass, Kevin decided to jump into the fish bowl himself. He actually found that swimming with the fishes didn't kill him.

When I first heard the premise of Kevin Roose's new memoir *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University*, I was immediately intrigued: an Ivy League student from a secular, liberal background plunges himself into the conservative "Bible Boot Camp" world of Liberty University where Evangelism 101 is a core class and a forty-six page code of conduct called "The Liberty Way" governs students' social lives. I wasn't sure to expect, honestly, but I was curious and excited to read his take on the strange world of evangelical America... and very pleasantly surprised by what I found. The concept is compelling, and on top of that, Kevin is a very talented writer. One minute, he's a perceptive journalist, recording observations with a critical eye and sharp wit. The next, he's a storyteller, weaving the narrative with moments of insight and heartfelt reflections on his own spirituality. The ability to strike this balance between intellect and heart is the beauty of *The Unlikely Disciple* and what makes it such an engaging read. Of course, there are criticisms levied at the atmosphere of Liberty, but at the same time, he describes his hallmates in Dorm 22, the students and faculty, and even Dr. Falwell himself with warmth and humanity. There's a reverent

sense of love throughout the book that is refreshing, because it would be all too easy to take the "Christians are weird" route. I loved the stories of the incredibly diverse students, and possibly my favorite story from the book has to be the interview with Dr. Falwell. I never was a Jerry Falwell fan myself, but to read this other side of him - a friendly "religious Willy Wonka" that owned 40 red ties and chugged a Diet Snapple Peach Tea every afternoon - I couldn't help but, well, almost like the guy.

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