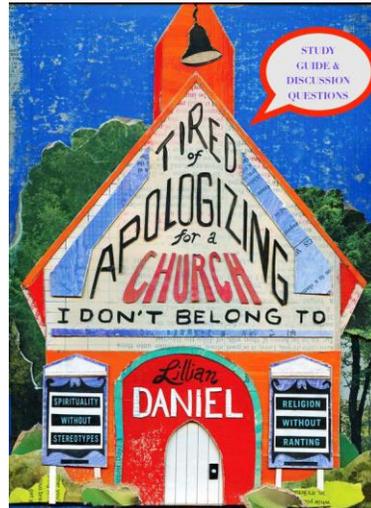


Questions By Chapter:
A Study Guide for
TIRED OF APOLOGIZING FOR A CHURCH I DON'T BELONG TO
by Lillian Daniel 2016



TIRED OF APOLOGIZING FOR A CHURCH I DON'T BELONG TO

QUESTIONS BY CHAPTER

Part I: Spirituality Without Stereotypes

Introductory Quotes, Part 1

Read out loud or take turns reading the poem “The Guest House” and then the quotes on pages 1-2, withholding comments until they have all been read. What strikes you in hearing them?

Chapter 1

Lillian Daniel begins the book with her “multi-faith moment at Marshall’s,” a story about a powerful encounter with a stranger who she wanted to pray for. Have you ever experienced awkwardness and embarrassment about your faith or someone else’s religion?

Chapter 2

Have you ever wanted to apologize? If so, for what? Are there things that religious people should apologize for? Are there things that other people from other religions should apologize for?

“Many Paths, A Parable” is a satirical, exaggerated look at the excesses of open-mindedness and where it leads. How does it set the reader up for what’s coming in Chapter 3?

Chapter 3

Do you recognize yourself in this chapter about being “tongue-tied in a ‘Spiritual But Not Religious’ world?” Do you sometimes think it’s better just not to talk about these things?

Chapter 4

How do you feel about the statement “religion is responsible for all the wars in human history?” Have you ever heard someone say it? Did you respond to them? Would you have something to say to that today?

Chapter 5

- Lillian Daniel divides the Nones into four categories:
- No Way
- No Longer
- Never Have
- Not Yet

Have you ever been in or are you currently in one of the “None” categories? Which one? Why or why not?

Chapter 6

If you have experience with a religious community, imagine what it would feel like to be a None and come into your space during worship. Do you see things differently when you look through their eyes? What would be confusing?

Have you ever been that None, entering into a strange or new worship space? In a worship service, what’s the difference between “poor communication” and “divine mystery?”

Part II: Religion Without Ranting

Introductory Quotes, Part 1

Read out loud or take turns reading the quotes on pages 71-72, withholding comments until they have all been read. What strikes you in hearing them?

Chapter 7

Do you remember the “Christendom years” when American churches were at their high point in terms of attendance? Now that things are different, what feels different to you? Do you look back on those as the “good old days,” or not?

Do you think Christianity’s “perception problem” is better or worse than it was before the US presidential campaign of 2016?

Chapter 8

What does Lillian Daniel mean when she says we should “read responsibly?” If you take a critical eye to scripture, and put it in its historical context, do you end up on a slippery slope where nothing means anything? Do we just get to “pick and choose” what we like and don’t like in a sacred text?

Chapter 9

How were you taught to read the Bible? How do you read the Bible today? Have you ever experienced Fundamentalism? Did you already know it was a relatively recent invention within American Christian history? Or did you assume it went back much further?

Chapter 10

Why wouldn’t a pastor care what people believe? Lillian Daniel sees our obsession with belief as a real problem for churches and people, but what do you think? What role do “core beliefs” play?

What would happen if people talked more openly about the wide range of beliefs they have? Would anyone want to go to a church where no one cares what you believe?

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Chapter 11

Lillian Daniel lays out three categories for the church today: rigorous, reasonable and real. What does she mean by “rigorous?” Is it the same thing as being “rule based?”

Chapter 12

Recalling a conversation about workplace ethics in a Wall Street church where the parishioners did not want to break the poor pastor’s heart with their real life problems. She presses churches and clergy to get “real” in church, but are there limits to this? How real can a clergy person be in a sermon? How much reality do people want?

Lillian Daniel writes about the hymn “Just As I Am” and what it has meant to her at different times in her journey. Is there a song or scripture or religious ritual from your past that you wouldn’t consciously claim today, but you find still brings you some peace or a connection to the divine or says something “real.”

Chapter 13

Lillian Daniel tells a story about the broken vase that her mother kept on the mantle piece, calling it precious. In adulthood, she values that lesson about seeing the beauty in broken things, both in life and in her religious tradition. Where have you seen the beauty in something broken? Was it in someone else? Or are there beautiful broken things inside you?

Chapter 14

Do you get your news in “silos and sound bites” filtered through the people and pundits you already agree with? Or do you often find yourself in meaningful conversations with people you disagree with? Does religious community bring us into contact with a wider mix of people or a narrower one?

Chapter 15

What difference could the practice of worshipping something other than our selves make? Remembering a trip to Nicaragua where she mistakenly thought she was “the power source,”

and was left waving her arms around on a suspension bridge. Lillian Daniel suggests that human beings can be pretty self-centered.

The book ends with a profound experience of God that takes place outside of a church and on street corner in Madison. In the story of the little girl with the empty violin case, does it make a difference that the author has a religious tradition to draw on, or would that experience have meant the same thing to her without it?

A Final Reading of the Quotes

Repeat the exercise of reading the introductory quotes out loud, but this time do all of them from both parts of the book, taking a pause between each one. Move from the poem “The Guest House,” to pages 1-2 and end with pages 71-72. As you hear them all after reading the book, what insights come to you about religion and spirituality?

Which of these quotes will you take with you on your journey? Which will you leave behind?