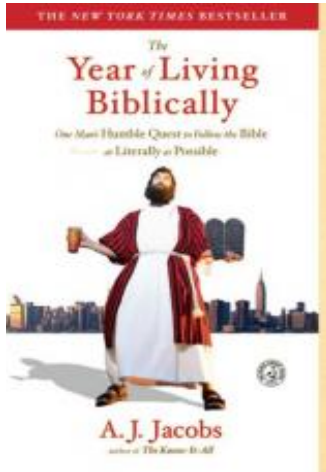

The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible

by



About the Book

A.J. Jacobs embarks on a year long journey to follow the many rules, guidelines, and suggestions he uncovers in the Bible. He tackles not only popular injunctions like the Ten Commandments but obscure and perplexing rules like the ban on wearing clothes made of mixed fibers and the blowing of trumpets on the start of each month. In all, more than 700 rules. Jacobs hopes that his venture into a stringent and literal biblical life will reveal the Bible's enduring truths for modern consumption. With a mix of reverence and irreverence, humor and earnestness, Jacobs plunges us in world where the mundane can easily become a profane or sacred act. Though we may be tempted to judge and dismiss biblical literalism as bizarre and out-of-sync, Jacobs' own wonderment at life's renewed beauty and preciousness cause us to pause; maybe following the Bible to the letter helps us find the transcendent in the routines of daily life. But following the Bible to the letter also has many pitfalls. Jacobs' book is both a personal spiritual journey and an examination of religion in America today. Thou shalt enjoy.

Discussion Guide

1. Why does Jacobs embark on his year long biblical journey? What does he expect to find at its end? How do the questions he seeks to answer evolve as he immerses himself in the project?
2. Identify the formal and informal spiritual guides Jacobs consults during his year of biblical living. Whom do you find most instructive, most challenging to accept, and/or most spiritually compelling? Provide examples for each of your responses.

3. What are Jacobs' primary challenges to living the Bible as literally as possible? How does he attempt to resolve them? Is he successful? Why or why not?
4. Discuss the various religious groups that Jacobs visit during his year. How are they similar and different from each other? What contradictions does Jacobs uncover in their biblical living? What lessons do Jacobs take away from his encounters with these groups?
5. What role does prayer play in Jacobs' yearlong journey? How does his relationship to prayer evolve? What final meaning does he attach to prayer? Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. What specific issues arise as Jacobs shifts from the Old Testament to the New? What implications do they have for his entire biblical living project?
7. What value does Jacobs attach to the idea of surrendering? Why is surrendering such a challenge for Jacobs? Does Jacobs ever surrender? Why or why not?
8. What does Jacobs' relationship with his neighbor, Nancy in 5I, and the circumstances surrounding her death illuminate about Jacobs' biblical quest? How does this particular situation support or challenge Jacobs' conclusions about the limits of literal interpretations of the Bible?
9. What conclusions does Jacobs draw about the Bible, its literal adherents, and the nature of religious activity as a result of his year of living biblically? What is the value of the experience for Jacobs personally? Do you believe Jacobs is transformed by his experience? If so, how is he transformed and how enduring is his transformation? If he is not transformed, why not?
10. What is the value of Jacobs' exploration for you personally? What key lessons or insights will you take away from Jacobs' experiences? How has his journey impacted your perceptions and understanding of the Bible?

Author Bio

n/a

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