

Girl Meets God: A Memoir

by Lauren F. Winner



About the Book

The child of a Jewish father and a lapsed Southern Baptist mother, Lauren F. Winner chose to become an Orthodox Jew. But even as she was observing Sabbath rituals and studying Jewish law, Lauren was increasingly drawn to Christianity. Courageously leaving what she loved, she eventually converted. In **Girl Meets God**, this appealing woman takes us through a year in her Christian life as she attempts to reconcile both sides of her religious identity.

Here readers will find a new literary voice: a spiritual seeker who is both an unconventional thinker and a devoted Christian. The twists and turns of Winner's journey make her the perfect guide to exploring true faith in today's complicated world.

Discussion Guide

1. A major theme in **Girl Meets God** is friendship. Who are some of Lauren's friends, and what role do they play in her spiritual journey? Do friends play a similarly important role in your own life?
2. Fidelity is a motif in **Girl Meets God**. How does Lauren respond to her friend Hannah's infidelity? Why is infidelity such a poignant and pointed topic for her?
3. Two different chapters in this book have the title "Conversion Stories." Why do they have the same title? Do they tell similar or different stories about religious conversion?
4. Lauren's book is structured according to the Jewish and Christian calendars—it is organized around liturgical seasons and holidays like Sukkot and Advent. Why is the book structured this way? What effect does it have on you, the reader?
5. Lauren suggests that "ruptures are the most interesting part of any text, that in the ruptures we learn something new." (p. 8) How is Lauren's story marked by ruptures, and what do we learn from them?
6. Upon converting to Christianity, Lauren gives up all things Jewish—she even says that "trading my Hebrew prayer book for an Episcopal Book of Common Prayer felt exactly like filing for divorce." (p. 9) Is divorce an apt metaphor for Lauren's relationship with Judaism? Does she eventually recover some of her Jewish practice?
7. What is the plot of **Girl Meets God**? Is it a coming-of-age story? A story of a quest? Does it present clear questions at the outset, and, if so, does it offer tidy answers to those questions at the end? When Lauren is a teenager, a woman from her synagogue gives her a poem that instructs "Return with us, return to us, / be

always coming home." (p. 34) Is **Girl Meets God** a story of homecoming?

8. Lauren says that the "very first thing I liked about Christianity, long before it ever occurred to me to go to church or say the creed or call myself a Christian, was the Incarnation." (p. 51) What is appealing to Lauren about the Christian story of the Incarnation?

9. Lauren's story is one of spiritual change and conversion, or making and remaking her spiritual self. In what ways is the story of reinvention a distinctively American story? Have you experienced an analogous remaking or reinvention of self?

10. Geography and place play a central role in Lauren's narrative. To what extent do the landscapes of the American South and New York City shape her experiences?

11. Lauren readily admits to being a bookworm. What role do books and reading play in her spiritual development? How have books been important in your own life?

12. Memoir, as a genre, involves the author presenting a particular self to her audience. To what extent does Lauren suggest she has "arrived" as a Christian? Does she readily admit to spiritual failings, or is she eager to present herself as someone with all the answers?

Author Bio

Lauren F. Winner is the author of numerous books, including *GIRL MEETS GOD* and *MUDHOUSE SABBATH*. She teaches at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. Her articles have appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Books & Culture*, and other periodicals.

Critical Praise

"A book to savor . . . Winner is an all-too-human believer, and the rest of us can see our own struggles, theological and otherwise, in hers."

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