



Sin Bravely: A Joyful Alternative to a Purpose-Driven Life

Mark Ellingsen

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Mark Ellingsen dares you to go ahead and sin bravely! In this refreshing and unique book, he challenges the religious legalism pervasive throughout American evangelicalism today and encourages a new understanding of what it means to be both a Christian and a human being. Equipped with the joyful, rebellious vision of Martin Luther, father of the Protestant reformation, and the latest in neuroscientific research, Ellingsen offers a new approach for healthy living - one opposed to the duty-oriented, selfish and stifling conception of faith that has gained such a strong foothold in contemporary American culture. It is an approach that fully embraces the active role that God's grace plays in each person's life and the fun and freedom one gains from it.

Beginning with the first theological analysis of Rick Warren's brand of Christianity, this book exposes the burdens and narcissism that purpose-driven and duty-bound living encourages, and includes the purveyors of the Prosperity Gospel, taught by such influential preachers like Joel Osteen, in his critique. Ellingsen writes that brave sinners, aware of God's grace in their lives, instead say "no" to narcissism and "yes" to healthy risk-taking that gets beyond selfish desires to the desire to help one another. When people sin bravely, acknowledging that everything done is done in sin with God's saving grace acting upon them, people can learn to recognize God. This awareness leads to freedom and joy, since the pressure is now removed to do and be good. In addition, total dependence on God entails a self-forgetfulness that leads to happiness. The more boldly someone acknowledges their sin, in failing to take credit for the good they have done, the more focused on God the individual becomes. Correspondingly, this self-forgetful lifestyle is a promising counter-cultural alternative to the cultural narcissism, which so dominate in many segments of contemporary American society. This book demonstrates both how and why brave sinning leads to joy, and in so doing offers readers practical advice on living this way.

Ellingsen also cites recent neurobiological findings showing that when people forget themselves in order to focus on bigger projects, the pleasure centers of the brain are stimulated and people become happier and more content. It is this joyous risk-taking that he suggests brings people closer together, closer to God, and closer to a better understanding of themselves. Sin Bravely dares to be that joyful alternative to the purpose driven life.

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