



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

By Kevin Roose

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

By Kevin Roose

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.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #149976 in Books
- Published on: 2010-06-03
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .88" w x 5.25" l, .60 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 324 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In what could be described as religious gonzo journalism, Roose documents his experiences as a student for a semester at Liberty University, the largest Christian fundamentalist university in the United States. Coming from progressive Brown University, the author admits that the transition to Liberty, with its iron-clad attempts at controlling student behavior, came with much anxiety. He trains himself to control his foul language and even begins to pray and study the Bible regularly, much to the bewilderment of his liberal Quaker parents. He suffers his way through a course debunking evolution, but finds enjoyment in a Scripture class. Roose may be young—he's a 19-year-old college sophomore—but he writes like a seasoned veteran and obviously enjoys his work. He quickly makes friends at Liberty, but is naïvely stunned and not a little disgusted by their antigay rhetoric. School founder Rev. Jerry Falwell granted Roose an interview for the student newspaper shortly before the famous evangelical's death in May 2007. "Complicated" is how Roose describes Falwell, which is a good descriptor for his undercover student experience. (*Mar.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Brown University student Roose didn't think of himself as being particularly religious, yet he conceived the novel idea of enrolling at Liberty University, the school Jerry Falwell built, thereby transferring from a school "a notch or two above Sodom and Gomorrah" to the evangelical equivalent of Notre Dame or Brigham Young. His reasons were logical, though curious. To him, a semester at Liberty was like studying abroad. "Here, right in my time zone, was a culture more foreign to me than any European capital." He tells his story entertainingly, as a matter of trying to blend in and not draw too much attention to himself. One hardened habit he had to break was cursing; he even bought a Christian self-help book to tame his tongue. Throughout his time at Liberty, he stayed level-headed, nuanced, keenly observant. He meant to find some gray in the black-and-white world of evangelicalism, and he learned a few things. His stint at Liberty hardly changed the world but did alter his way at looking at it. That's a start. --June Sawyers

Review

"Hallelujah for Kevin Roose. This is a remarkable book. He takes us on a fascinating, funny, nuanced journey that doesn't condescend or make glib judgments. It's just what the culture wars need. If I didn't already have kids, I'd adopt Kevin."

--A.J. Jacobs, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Year Of Living Biblically*

"What happens when a Brown undergrad goes undercover at Liberty University? If he's a writer as insightful and open-minded as Kevin Roose, he ends up learning as much about himself as he does about the evangelical Christians he lives with. *The Unlikely Disciple* provides a funny, compassionate, and revealing look at Jerry Falwell's 'Bible Boot Camp,' and the surprisingly diverse band of true believers who make it their home."

--Tom Perrotta, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Little Children* and *The Abstinence Teacher*

"Kevin Roose has produced a textured, intelligent, even sympathetic, account of his semester at Liberty University. He eschews caricature and the cheap shot in favor of keen observation and trenchant analysis."

THE UNLIKELY DISCIPLE is a book of uncommon wisdom and insight. I recommend it with enthusiasm."

--The Rev. Dr. Randall Balmer, Episcopal Priest and Professor of American Religious History at Barnard College, Columbia University

"[Kevin] tells his story entertainingly...level-headed, nuanced, keenly observant."

--*Booklist*

"Kevin Roose is a delightful writer, and this is a humane book. Read it and I predict you'll have less paranoia, more exposure to 'the other,' and a larger dose of Roose's generous and hopeful faith."

--*Brian McLaren, author of A New Kind of Christian, A Generous Orthodoxy, and Everything Must Change*

"Keenly observed, funny, and compassionate. Kevin Roose parachutes us into a seldom-glimpsed and little understood pocket of America, then guides us through a story of religion and country more resonant than any of us could have imagined."

--*Robert Kurson, New York Times bestselling author of Shadow Divers and Crashing Through*

"This is a brilliant book. Absolutely brilliant. Roose's wisdom, humanity, and love kept me going. And I laughed. A lot."

-- *Rob Bell, founding pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church and bestselling author of Velvet Elvis and Sex God*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jerry Raminez:

The book The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University make you feel enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable considerably more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting strain or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make studying a book The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University for being your habit, you can get considerably more advantages, like add your own capable, increase your knowledge about many or all subjects. It is possible to know everything if you like wide open and read a guide The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science guide or encyclopedia or others. So , how do you think about this book?

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The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University can be one of your starter books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary that could increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to get every word into delight arrangement in writing The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University but doesn't forget the main level, giving the reader the hottest along with based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information may drawn you into new stage of crucial considering.

Rachel Leadbetter:

The book untitled The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University contain a lot of information on the item. The writer explains the girl idea with easy approach. The language is very easy to understand all the people, so do not really worry, you can easy to read the idea. The book was written by famous author. The author will bring you in the new era of literary works. It is possible to read this book because you can continue reading your smart phone, or model, so you can read the book inside anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can start their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice examine.

Tania Arney:

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