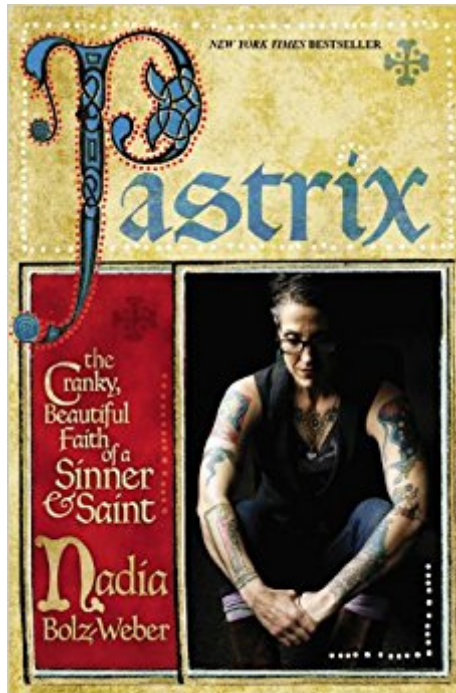




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# Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith Of A Sinner & Saint



## Synopsis

Now a New York Times bestseller, Nadia Bolz-Weber takes no prisoners as she reclaims the term "pastrix"(pronounced "pas-triks," a term used by some Christians who refuse to recognize female pastors) in her messy, beautiful, prayer-and-profanity laden narrative about an unconventional life of faith. Heavily tattooed and loud-mouthed, Nadia, a former stand-up comic, sure as hell didn't consider herself to be religious leader material-until the day she ended up leading a friend's funeral in a smoky downtown comedy club. Surrounded by fellow alcoholics, depressives, and cynics, she realized: These were her people. Maybe she was meant to be their pastor. Using life stories-from living in a hopeful-but-haggard commune of slackers to surviving the wobbly chairs and war stories of a group for recovering alcoholics, from her unusual but undeniable spiritual calling to pastoring a notorious con artist-Nadia uses stunning narrative and poignant honesty to portray a woman who is both deeply faithful and deeply flawed, giving hope to the rest of us along the way. Wildly entertaining and deeply resonant, this is the book for people who hunger for a bit of hope that doesn't come from vapid consumerism or navel-gazing; for women who talk too loud, and guys who love chick flicks; for the gay man who loves Jesus, and won't allow himself to be shunned by the church. In short, this book is for every thinking misfit suspicious of institutionalized religion, but who is still seeking transcendence and mystery.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Bolz-Weber, the Lutheran pastor of Denver's [House for All Sinners and Saints](#), takes

readers on the engaging and accessible journey with those she meets in bars, church conferences, at her local diner, and through breaking news of such events as Hurricane Katrina. As a recovered alcoholic and heavily tattooed with the story of her own foibles and faith, Bolz-Weber is clear-eyed about the personal travails faced by the marginalized and those without faith. Each chapter combines her own painful insights as well as celebratory descriptions of how she learns to overcome spiritual roadblocks. Consequently, the collection offers an excellent opportunity for readers who doubt in themselves, in God, and in their fellow humans to reconsider how their own closed minds may be the one thing they need to change for a better, more stable outlook. A fine and useful meditation on the constant need to doubt, accept, and grow spiritually. --Francisca Goldsmith

--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Engaging and accessible...Bolz-Weber is clear-eyed about the personal travails faced by the marginalized and those without faith." [Booklist](#) "Bolz-Weber has such a distinctive voice and outlook, it's amazing she hasn't written more books. Perhaps it's because she's been too busy living the checkered and fascinating life that is the subject of her theological memoir.... Here's hoping her authentic voice continues to preach in more books." [Publishers Weekly](#) "The amazing thing about Nadia Bolz-Weber is that she manages to take her Christianity into corners of life where the church can be pretty uncomfortable going." [The Daily Beast](#) "Bolz-Weber is a surprisingly vulnerable narrator who pairs personal confessions with beautifully articulated statements of faith." [Christian Century](#) "This is an astonishing book...contagious, honest, captivating...a rare gift...I realize that I'm gushing, but that's what you do when a book inspires and moves and touches you like this one does." [Rob Bell](#), author of *What We Talk About When We Talk About God and Love Wins* "For anyone who is Christian, interested in Christianity, anti-Christian (or anti-Religion), I recommend this book." [Gordon Gano](#), lead singer, *Â Violent Femmes* "Nadia Bolz-Weber is what you'd get if you mixed the DNA of Louis C.K., Joey Ramone and St. Paul. She is by far my favorite tatted-up, cranky pastor ever. Follow her. Not just on Twitter, but wherever her unique mind takes you. What I'm trying to say is: Buy this book." [A. J. Jacobs](#), author of *The Year of Living Biblically* "Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber speaks the truth of our humanity that we too often want to deny. She declares the radical power of God's grace for Jesus' sake that we so often water down rather than daily be drowned in it. Yes, read at your own risk." [Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson](#), ELCA "Funny, raw, and packed with truth, this book is offensive in all the right ways...This book reminded me of why I am a Christian, and I wept with gratitude when I finished it." [Rachel Held Evans](#), blogger, author of *A Year of Biblical*

## Womanhood

I secretly took a peek at an advanced copy of Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber's forthcoming memoir *Pastrix: the Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint*. The illicit peek (I'm not cool enough to have actually received a copy of my own for review) turned into a complete sleep-robbing read-through, so I figured I might as well write a review since, as anti-piracy awareness ads have informed me, I basically stole money straight out of Bolz-Weber's pocket. I don't love memoir. Everyone thinks their own lives are super-interesting just like everyone thinks they're a better than average driver - at least half of us are wrong. There is also a tendency in Christian memoir especially to extract forced lessons from every story as if life was just a series of Aesop's fables and we were all gurus draining experience of the last drop of wisdom. I call bull. This Lutheran rock-star from Denver completely avoids the boredom trap, and mostly avoids the sappy life-lessons trap and turns out a memoir that is really fun to read. It helps that she has led a genuinely unusual life and she spills her guts ruthlessly throughout. Lots of reviewers will caution that she indulges adult language, but I commend it to you for that reason. Here is raw and beautiful humanity. You don't fall in love with Bolz-Weber in spite of her volatile personality, you fall in love with her because of it. The abiding theme of the book is defiance. Her defiance matures over the course of the story, wisely told in thematic rather than chronological order. At the beginning she is all tooth and nail. At the end she is folded arms and a "bring it on" stare. Her journey is about accepting that she does indeed have the right to inhabit her calling, not (again) in spite of who she is, but because of who she is. Another strength of *Pastrix* is that she accomplishes her story of self-affirmation without denigrating people on different paths. This is no conventional "I was a sinner - now I am saved" plotline. She experiments with Wicca and never repents for it. She freely admits the fun she had with alcohol and sex, and while she is now sober and married with kids, she doesn't waste your time with self-recrimination and moralizing. Not every chapter is equally strong and there are times where I felt she tied her stories up just a little too neatly for my tastes. She has a preacher's instinct for trying to draw the gospel out of any text, including the text of her own life. The better chapters, such as the one where she tells the story of trying to help a family after Hurricane Katrina, end messy. She can see what the gospel might be in the circumstances, but she owns her internal conflict and leaves the reader feeling that the end of the story simply hasn't been written yet. That anyone would doubt Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber's calling is astonishing to me, but if you have been made to doubt your own calling hopefully you will read this book and receive a double portion of her defiant spirit. At the very least you will be entertained.

So be forewarned. I have been aware of Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber for several years now. I used to read her blog called Sarcastic Lutheran, and I still read the things that she writes for Christian blogs like Sojourners, and Patheos. From time to time I would Google her name just to see what she was writing or where she was speaking and what others were saying about her in cyberspace. Now, before you get all bothered and scream "dude, you were internet-stalking a pastor?" let me just say that my interest was, and remains, purely socio-theological (and that she wears some serious ink like a boss). Nadia Bolz-Weber is a different sort of Lutheran Pastor. Not because she lives her faith right in your face, because I know many Lutheran Pastors that live it like that (I have lots of Pastor friends). She isn't different because of her gender... lots of the aforementioned Pastor friends of mine are women. No, Pastor Nadia isn't different because of what she preaches, but because of who she was called to preach to. You see, her parishioners tended to be the young; the LGBT; the addicted; the homeless; and the many other ways for people to be broken. This book is about the faith journey of a young woman, simultaneously a sinner and a saint. When I heard that this book was coming out, I was very excited because Nadia is on the leading edge of the emergent church movement within the denomination she belongs to (which happens to be the same denomination that I belong to. Shout out to all of you ELCA Lutherans!!). I wasn't excited about the cool look that Nadia wears, or because she is all inked up like me. I was excited because this woman who has suffered through near-homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, and the scars of her fundamentalist religious upbringing, has a lot to say about grace. In this book, the author has a lot to say about welcoming the outcast and the unloved and the broken. She has a lot to say about forgiveness and the messiness of daily life. She has a lot to say about surviving the darkness and repeatedly being made new. In other words, she had a lot to say about Jesus. No... not the Jesus we see in Christian art store paintings or stained glass... I'm talking about the real and present in-your-face Jesus that throws the truth at you at the most uncomfortable times. I'm talking about the Jesus who gives you the most seemingly inopportune chances to share his grace and his words and teachings with others... especially when it isn't comfortable. This book isn't just about Nadia's faith journey. It could easily be mine or yours... or any number of people that you know. This book is a reminder that we all have all sorts of crap in our lives and that we can get through it with a little help from our friends... and a lot of help from a loving, forgiving God. Oh, and you don't have to be a Lutheran to dig it. As a matter of fact, you don't need to be a Christian at all to dig it. As I said, she has a lot to say about welcoming. This book is well-written, well-paced, sometimes a little gritty, and I am betting that you won't be able to put it down. Read it.

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