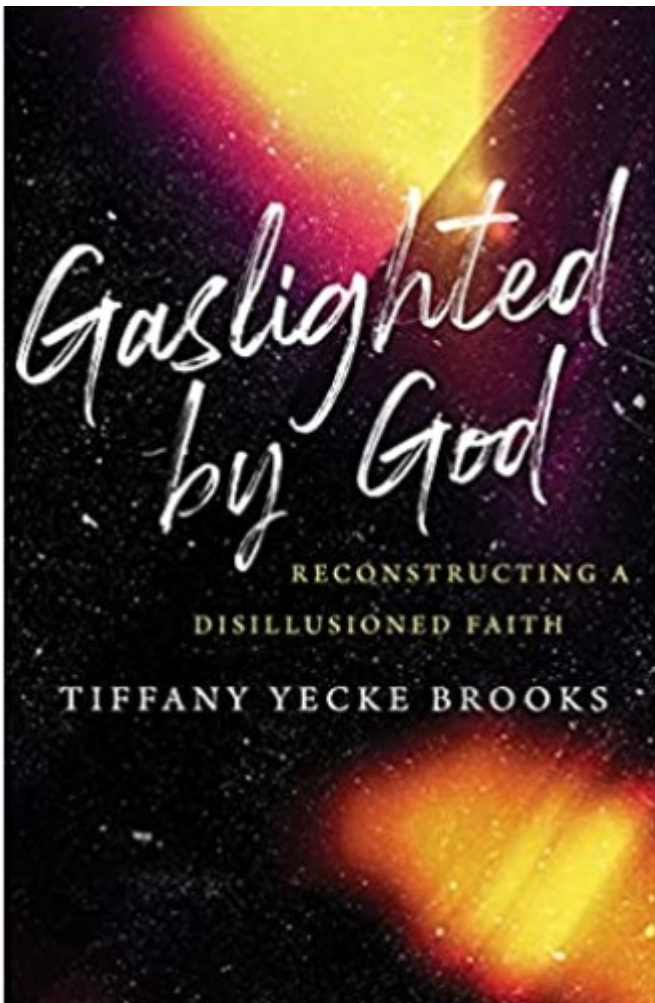


How some churches fail to provide a lifeline

Tiffany Brooks offers much more than just another exvangelical anger manual.

by [Emily McGinley](#) in the [December 2022](#) issue

In Review



Gaslighted by God

Reconstructing a Disillusioned Faith

By Tiffany Yecke Brooks

Eerdmans

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When I first saw its clickbait-worthy title, I was inclined to dismiss *Gaslighted by God* as another book participating in the exvangelical Christian influencer complex. I was fully prepared to read a series of hot takes on all the reasons any intelligent person should leave the church, walk away from organized religion, and take up SoulCycling as their new spiritual practice (but not before buying this book to arm them with all the arguments they would need to remind them of why they were right).

While I wasn't entirely wrong, what I primarily encountered in these pages is a critically engaged and powerfully pastoral series of thoughtful reflections on how the cultures of theologically fragile and fearful churches have inflicted harm on those seeking a lifeline in times of pain, despair, and confusion. Tiffany Yecke Brooks reveals how these churches uncritically teach abusive interpretations of scripture and participate in perpetuating the many forms of systemic oppression we find embedded in just about every aspect of our world—the main difference being that their versions are #blessed.

Brooks does so much more than tell readers (yet again) about why and how the church is failing to be the church or how the message of Jesus is being contorted to serve the comfort of those who don't know what to do with life's unanswerable questions. She gets in close to the pain of our lives and articulates the purpose of Jesus' healing work in the midst of our individual and collective spiritual chaos. She does so with humility, compassion, and an eye toward the purpose of our healing.

She doesn't just name the problems, she dissects them. "We've confused economic principles with religious ones, but our cultural identity is so wrapped up in the two complementing one another that we are unsure of how to untangle them," Brooks writes in a discussion of the transactional view of faith many of us have been taught. According to this reasoning, our prayers, our actions, and our diligent rule following place God in our debt—and obligate God to repay us for our faithfulness in the ways that we have decided are best suited. When we view faith in such a way, we not only superimpose capitalistic formulas over an economy of gift giving, we also miss out on what God might be seeking to do within, through, and around us.

Throughout my ten years of ministry, I have walked marathons of miles and drunk gallons of coffee while hearing about the myriad ways theologically malnourished mindsets not only convince folks that there is no room for them in God's house but also restrict their capacity to imagine what is possible. Brooks invites readers to expand our imaginations. "When we release our faith from the culturally conditioned expectations," she writes, "we give ourselves permission to find the Divine in the ways God wishes to reveal God's self rather than missing God because God did not show up as we imagined."

Gaslighted by God is a rich resource for any spiritual caregiver or leader who is looking for a thought partner to help articulate exactly how people are harmed by Christianity and to assist them as they begin to repair the damage. Brooks demonstrates how to construct a new and sturdier structure for a liberative, transformative, and life-giving faith—one that invites us to bring about a world where all of God's creation can experience the healing, wholeness, and abundant life that Jesus promises.

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[Jon Mathieu](#), the *Century's* audience development editor, engages [Emily McGinley](#) in discussion about her review of *Gaslighted by God* by Tiffany Brooks and about the exvangelical Christian influencer complex.