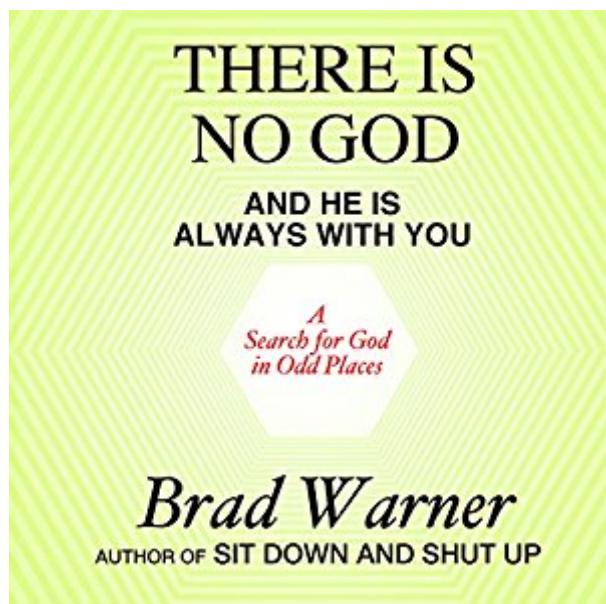


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There Is No God And He Is Always With You: A Search For God In Odd Places



Synopsis

Can you be an atheist and still believe in God? Can you be a true believer and still doubt? Can Zen give us a way past our constant fighting about God? Brad Warner was initially interested in Buddhism because he wanted to find God, but Buddhism is usually thought of as godless. In the three decades since Warner began studying Zen, he has grappled with paradoxical questions about God and managed to come up with some answers. In this fascinating search for a way beyond the usual arguments between fundamentalists and skeptics, Warner offers a profoundly engaging and idiosyncratic take on the ineffable power of the "ground of all being."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Brad Warner has been touting this as his best book, and I agree. It is his most mature book, his best written, and it actually takes up the most daring subject. His last book was about sex, which some people might have thought daring, but this book uses the word God in connection with Zen practice, and that causes people to explode. What he says, basically, is that what we're actually connecting with as we sit zazen is God, though he doesn't use that word in the childish simplistic sense that many people mean by it. In fact, he has searched through religious tradition to find various descriptions of God, and has done a remarkable job of showing how the great mystics in all religions largely agree. His whole religious quest has been a search for God, and he feels that he has found God not just in major openings, though he has had at least one--and describes it beautifully--but in his ordinary moment by moment existence. Sitting zazen has been his means of discovering God. I

completely agree with his central thesis, and though his book was somewhat uneven, as all his books are (any writer who writes so much from his own experience is bound to be that way), I thought the best sections were marvelous. I strongly recommend this book.

I really like this book, but I do have some problems with the way it was written. Some of the chapters are very confusing. He starts on one topic and goes off on a seemingly unrelated anecdote. I kept getting confused at the end of the chapter if he'd gotten back to the original point at all. The tone is also inconsistent. Some parts come off as very "Christianity sucks, Buddhism rocks;" although in the rest of the book it is clear Warner does not hold such a black and white view of Christianity/Judaism/Islam (or Buddhism for that matter). It's not anything major, I just think the book could have used another editing pass. I also have some linguistic quibbles with him about his use of the word 'God,' but in the end it doesn't matter because I agree with him about what God is and what is God. He seems to come at it from having an experience and deciding God is the best word for describing that experience. I come at it from having an experience and thinking 'Wait a minute, that experience is exactly what I thought God was, even though I never imagined anything like that experience.' However, I really like the book, even if I'm not sure it's for everyone. I would caution that while much of it is in Warner's usual clear, accessible language, some of it is a very deep and hard to understand discussion of difficult topics in Buddhist philosophy, like the unity of all things and the fundamental nature of reality. But I think it's a good discussion and one that could be useful to people who have been studying Buddhism/Zen for a while, and are struggling with those issues. There is also a fair bit about God (obviously) and the issues surrounding the belief in God. If you're looking for a different perspective on God it is worth a read as well. For the full review go to [becomingwellread dot com](http://becomingwellread.com).

I admit it: I'm a Brad Warner fan. I don't always understand what he's saying but I respect him and his point of view, even if it challenges mine. I have read all of his books on Buddhism. I appreciate his voice because it is authentic and I can relate. I appreciate hearing about his journey and his struggles with life and Buddhism. It is his books that have caused me to deepen my practice. The subject matter of this book is somewhat provocative. I think I get where he's coming from with the God thing, and maybe I don't yet. It's an open question. But one worth asking and "living" in. Brad asks good questions, presents reasoned arguments, and interesting stories. And it's a relatively easy read, not the sit down and burn your way through as you might an interesting mystery novel, but one that is focused and poignant. Stylistically Brad continues to (I hate this word) "mature": he's

less bombastic but his wry (and very human) humor comes through and I appreciate that. From what I've read Brad might think the same: he says the same things albeit in a more refined way. I actually look forward to re-reading this book (and I got the actual book this time) as my practice continues to develop.

I've read several of Brad Warner's books and have always appreciated his ability to present some of the deepest and most penetrating ways of seeing ourselves and the universe in an accessible, personal, "living and lived" way. He does that very well here. Although his take on Buddhism and Zen may be controversial to some, Brad's description of the experience of what he chooses to call God in the context of Buddhist practice carries more weight than a merely philosophical or theoretical approach. He presents his understanding of God gained through Zen meditation and what might be called a "mystical" (my word) experience of oneness with everything while crossing a stream in Tokyo. He also talks about various topics associated with religious belief in the context of that understanding. As noted above, this is a very personal way of relating understanding, but I think that's perhaps the best way when talking about God. Read the book - whether you end up agreeing with Brad or not, I think you'll find it a valuable experience.

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