Losing My Religion: How I Lost My Faith Reporting on Religion in America—and Found Unexpected Peace by William Lobdell

William Lobdell's journey of faith—and doubt—may be the most compelling spiritual memoir of our time. Lobdell became a born-again Christian in his late 20s when personal problems—including a failed marriage—drove him to his knees in prayer. As a newly minted evangelical, Lobdell—a veteran journalist—noticed that religion wasn't covered well in the mainstream media, and he prayed for the Lord to put him on the religion beat at a major newspaper. In 1998, his prayers were answered when the Los Angeles Times asked him to write about faith.

Yet what happened over the next eight years was a roller-coaster of inspiration, confusion, doubt, and soul-searching as his reporting and
experiences slowly chipped away at his faith. While reporting on hundreds of stories, he witnessed a disturbing gap between the tenets of various religions and the behaviors of the faithful and their leaders. He investigated religious institutions that acted less ethically than corrupt Wall St. firms. He found few differences between the morals of Christians and atheists. As this evidence piled up, he started to fear that God didn't exist. He explored every doubt, every question—until, finally, his faith collapsed. After the paper agreed to reassign him, he wrote a personal essay in the summer of 2007 that became an international sensation for its honest exploration of doubt.

Losing My Religion is a book about life's deepest questions that speaks to everyone: Lobdell understands the longings and satisfactions of the faithful, as well as the unrelenting power of doubt. How he faced that power, and wrestled with it, is must reading for people of faith and nonbelievers alike.

This book is nothing more and nothing less than the honest, raw account of one person's journey of grappling with all of life's contradictions of good and evil in the hopes of finding something that has meaning and brings peace.

As someone who has experienced some of the very same happiness and despair through formal religion, I felt like Lobdell took the words right out of my heart. Throughout the narrative, I found it so easy to understand how and why Lobdell reacted to certain experiences and facts: good, bad, and ugly.

I think the book is written in such a way that even someone with unshakable faith could come to understand the validity of nonbelievers. Doubters or straight-out atheists are often condemned for being selfish, taking the easy way out, or not making enough of an effort to be open to spirituality or conversion. This book makes a powerful case for faith being simply the suspension of intellectual reason that is NOT a matter of choice. Similarly, disbelief is merely a truthful declaration that some altered reality does not exist for a certain person.

Doubters out there, particularly those who once had deep-rooted faith, should find great comfort in the story of this kindred spirit.

I believe ALL practicing religious people should read this book and seriously contemplate what about a church's structure, lack of oversight, and apparent prestige invites corruption, and what can be done to reform this corruption. Efforts MUST be made to establish real congregations that
are not wrought with atrocities, hypocrisies, and irreparable damage to the youngest and most vulnerable of our world. Without TRUE (not band-aid) reform, I cannot see how on earth any religious institution could continue to survive, much less thrive, with any shred of integrity and credibility, now that the truth has come to light.

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