



The Hungering Dark

Frederick Buechner

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These powerful reflections on biblical themes by one of today's most popular religious writers point up the truth that the darkness of doubt is often necessary to provoke a hunger for God. *The Hungering Dark* towers as one of Fredrick Buechner's best statements on contemporary belief challenged by doubt.

Drawing on texts from the Old and New Testaments, *The Hungering Dark* invites us to discover the hidden face of God, the manifestation of his grace, revealed in stillness, in unexpected places, often "through a glass, darkly." It invites us to say yes to "the possibility of God", and to recover "this fantastic hope that the future belongs to God...that holiness will return to our world."

The Hungering Dark Details

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Brett says

A collections of meditations on random pieces of Scripture. I suspect they may be sermons. If you are looking for exposition, you will be disappointed, but if you are looking for interesting insights, good writing, and spiritual encouragement you will find it. The only organization is between two parts: The Search and The Sought. Very quotable. Very good writer.

Siri says

Little essays on theological notions like vocation, identity, grace, fear. Very beautifully written, quite meditative.

Conrad says

Buechner's writing never disappoints - this collection of essays on the darkness of doubt and the hope of the gospel are rich meditations that are perfect with a morning cup of coffee. A great way to start the day.

Brian says

A collection of messages (sermons, essays, etc.) that follow the same theme: doubt. The collection as a whole is hit or miss; the good ones are really powerful, and the bad ones are pretty lame. However the beauty and elegance of his style matched with just how powerful the good essays are make for an overall good read.

Angela says

A good writer has the ability to simply say the truth in a way that I would never have thought to say it, but in a way that makes perfect sense.

That's the way I feel after reading almost any of Buechner's works, and The Hungering Dark is no exception.

One of the last sermons (and therefore fresh in my memory) speaks of the powerlessness of language in comparison to experience:

"If the meaning of life is just a string of theological words, then who cares about it one way or another and what difference does it make and why bother to say the words at all, even if in some sense they are true? But if it is a reality, then words cannot contain it, you can know it only when you experience it, and if life in general has meaning, then every part of live also has meaning and you can experience it perfectly well by watching the feathers fall to the ground or seeing the teacher walk away in silence" (99).

He later prays that "Thy whole creation [...] which though hast made with thy hands in all its beauty, and every creature of this earth whom thou hast given life, all of them shout forth in joy and praise of thee, save only man whose mouth is stopped with words" (103).

Lord, may my mouth not be stopped with words, that I may shout forth in joy and praise.

Buechner ends his title sermon with a plea that resounds with my own heart: "In Christ's name, I commend this madness and this fantastic hope that the future belongs to God no less than the past, that in some way we cannot imagine holiness will return to our world" (125).

Jacque says

In this small volume of essays, Buechner writes about personal and universal spiritual truths in a style evoking John Steinbeck's rich, descriptive prose effortlessly blended with Mark Twain's economic necessity of word. When Buechner expands on an idea, such as using the Biblical story of Noah and the ark to symbolize the relationship of Jesus to His church (and the relationship believers share as the church), every sentence is needed. I have begun praying the prayers Buechner so brilliantly pens at the close of each essay because I cannot find words to illuminate the hungering dark parts of my heart more perfectly than his apt expressions. Frederick Buechner is one of those writers that has been on my "must read" list for months, and I am beyond thrilled to discover a new favorite theologian I plan to read again and again.

Katherine says

So amazingly good and beautifully written. Gosh, what I would give to hear this man preach (aka, speak aloud these words he has written!) Such beautiful images and profound thoughts about humanity and our oneness in our God. If you are thirsty, drink this one.

Kathy Disanto says

Caution! Buechner (pronounced, as he is quick to note, "Beekner") will awaken your heart. He'll point a gentle finger at your selfishness, a trait he freely admits he shares. He'll speak to that hunger inside you and leave you hungry for more. Buechner is, in my limited experience, the human face of our faith. He's gentle. He's humble. He's a poet in prose.

Katy says

A beautiful collection of Buechner's sermons. He has a novelist's way with words and a preacher's heart, and the combination of the two made for a faith-enriching read. I'd love to return to this book someday soon.

Roxane says

A friend recommended this book to me as one I would love. They were right and they were wrong. This was a book of short but deep reflections. Ones that you need to spend time reading and digesting.... Going to back to re-read sentences and enjoying the insights gained. I usually enjoy deep thought stuff (it may be a matter of timing as is everything in life) but can't say I loved it though I am glad I read it.

Barry says

Often intoxicated by his own words. Often shrinks from the certainties bought for us by Christ, preferring instead the safer environs of doubt. So Christ's death is alluded to as "releasing life into the world" in some vague and nebulous way, but he doesn't touch the resurrection because, one suspects, that would mean having to publicly admit that he believes in something he knows is risible to most modern readers.

But on occasion, some acute and beautifully expressed insights.

Thomas (Tom) Baynham says

I had a difficult time getting into the meat of this book, and each time I revisited it, the more difficult it became to refocus, so I just gave up. However, it was great to reconnect with Buechner again.

Laysee says

It is almost impossible to write a review of "The Hungering Dark" that will do it justice. The issues are deep; the discussion is profound and moving; the language is sublime.

Buechner contemplatively expressed the unutterable. He has an exceptional facility with words - incisive, moving, felicitous. His prose which reads like free verse points us to the heart of reality.

In this book, he wrote intelligently and reflectively about the quest for truth ("How do we know whether or not this truth is true?"), the layers or mystery of the self, the essence of eros and agape, happiness versus joy, the search for a worthy vocation, the darkness that is our inevitable lot in life, and finally hope.

Buechner wrote "I know of no time...when the dark is hungrier." In measured observations and arguments he directed our thoughts to the Light that the shepherds glimpsed centuries ago that first Christmas and that continues to transform "the hungering dark".

One of my favorite readings discussed the choice of a vocation: "..the voice that we should listen to most as we choose a vocation is the voice that we might think we should listen to least, and that is the voice of our own gladness. What can we do that makes us gladdest, what can we do that leaves us with the strongest sense of sailing true north and of peace, which is much of what gladness is?"

The second is a delightful chapter on "The Killing of Time" that described an eloquent lesson that was

conducted in silence while Buechner and his students sat and watched a spectacular sun setting.

Each chapter ended with a prayer - words I did not have but was thankful for.

"The Hungering Dark" enlightens and edifies.

Kristin Santiago says

Buechner is one of my favorite authors. He has an amazing ability to look inside the the human soul and ask the questions we all dare to ask, but perhaps we do not have the depth of words to express our search as well as Buechner. His gift is to describe the search and not transgress into easy answers.

He not only invites one to think, but to stand in awe of the Holy One.

Michael Poteet says

Not quite as powerful a collection as "The Magnificent Defeat," but don't miss "The Sign by the Highway" and "The Face in the Sky."

Adam says

I love Buechner's work. As with the majority of his non-fiction books that I've read, he beautifully fuses personal anecdotes with Scripture and movingly simple spiritual insight that comes to mind again and again long after I turn the last page. I could quote the guy incessantly, and I do.

I enjoyed 'The Hungering Dark' primarily because it deals with doubt, that ever-present anathema within those who ascribe to the Christian faith - in short, in one form or another, we all wrestle with doubt, uncertainty, and a lack of words when it comes to Christ, to salvation, to living the life of the Kingdom, to coming to grips with the darkness and pain that is not only inescapable in our own lives but exists as a constant in the world around us. However, we tend to avoid discussing doubt, as if talking about our uncertainties somehow undermines the strength and worth of Christianity itself. Buechner seeks to challenge this preconception, identifying doubt and darkness as impetus for hungering for God. The reality of doubt can drive us toward hope in the very present and impending reality of God's holiness, love, mercy, and grace. In this book, with prayer following every chapter, Buechner stands to the side, hidden slightly among the Vermont trees, reminding us quietly "to not fall in love with the night that covers us", choosing instead to "dream and hunger in the dark" for the light of God.

A wonderful book, as everything I have read by him has been.

Josiah Hatfield says

If I were ever to recommend a book to be used as a "devotional," this would be one of few. Buechner has a way of perceiving a dark and complex world and find ways to point towards hope and beauty and mystery.

He speaks my language. Or, the language I wish I spoke.

Ben Groner III says

In these musings on spiritual matters, Frederick Buechner takes a metaphor or paradox or turn of a phrase and uses them to get to the heart of some matter in truly luminous and profound ways. Philosophical, moving, full of wit and grace, these writings will renew your faith in life, love, the search for truth and meaning, as well as the significance of the doubt and despair and loneliness that are part of our journey as well. Whether talking about Christmas, sunsets, graffiti, sex and sacrifice, John Donne, Noah's face, our own hidden faces, the killing of time, that one wedding at Cana, monkey-gods, communion or hand grenades, Buechner strings together genuine, heart-breaking, beautiful words, and urges us to look at God and life and ourselves from new angles and with fresh eyes.

Caroline says

Buechner #2 and I'm already a better human for having another of his under my belt. As true today as it was when he wrote it in 1969...

"It is fantastic that in a world like ours there should be something in us still that says at least maybe, maybe, to the fantastic possibility of God at all. So, in Christ's name, I commend this madness and this fantastic hope that the future belongs to God no less than the past, that in some way we cannot imagine holiness will return to our world. I know of no time when the world has been riper for its return, when the dark has been hungrier."

Joey Allaire says

An absolutely beautiful reflection on God in our troubled world and how to make our way through this darkness with a god of love by our side. Though some references are outdated, Buechner speaks to the heart of the eternal young
