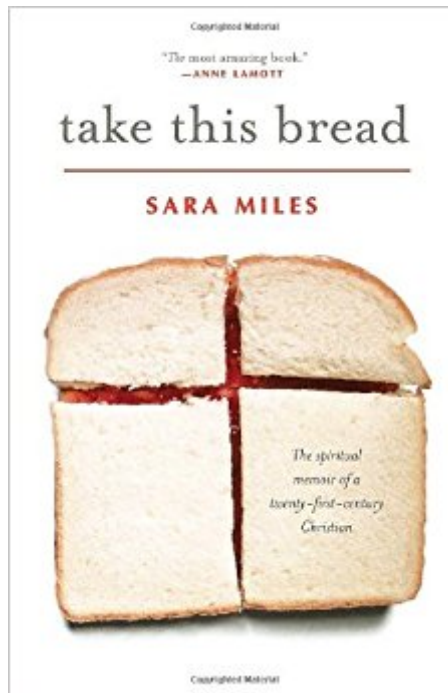




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# Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion



## Synopsis

Early one morning, for no earthly reason, Sara Miles, raised an atheist, wandered into a church, received communion, and found herself transformed—embracing a faith she—,d once scorned. A lesbian left-wing journalist who—,d covered revolutions around the world, Miles didn—,t discover a religion that was about angels or good behavior or piety; her faith centered on real hunger, real food, and real bodies. Before long, she turned the bread she ate at communion into tons of groceries, piled on the church—s altar to be given away. Within a few years, she and the people she served had started nearly a dozen food pantries in the poorest parts of their city. *Take This Bread* is rich with real-life Dickensian characters—church ladies, millionaires, schizophrenics, bishops, and thieves—all blown into Miles—s life by the relentless force of her newfound calling. Here, in this achingly beautiful, passionate book, is the living communion of Christ.

—“The most amazing book.” —Anne Lamott

—“Engaging, funny, and highly entertaining . . . Miles comments, often with great insight, on the ugliness that many people associate with a particular brand of Christianity. Why would any thinking person become a Christian? is one of the questions she addresses, and her answer is also compelling reading.” —Booklist

—“Powerful . . . This book is a gem [and] will remain with you forever.” —The Decatur Daily

—“What Miles learns about faith, about herself and about the gift of giving and receiving graciously are wonderful gifts for the reader.” —National Public Radio

—“[A] joyful memoir . . . advocates big-tent Christianity in the truest sense . . . a story of finding sustenance and passing it on.” —National Catholic Reporter

—“Rigorously honest, *Take This Bread* demonstrates how hard—and how necessary—it is to welcome everyone to the table, without exception.” —San Francisco Chronicle

—“Moving, delightful and significant.” —The Christian Century

Don—,t miss the reading group guide in the back of the book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Where is it written that literary women must move to coastal California (if they don't already live there), become Episcopalians and write conversion memoirs? Miles, like recent memoirists Diana Butler Bass, Nora Gallagher and Lindsey Crittenden, loves Jesus and detests the religious right, though she is also critical of "the sappy, Jesus-and-cookies tone of mild-mannered liberal Christianity." Mild-mannered she is not. Converted at age 46 when she impulsively walked into a church and received communion for the first time, the former war correspondent suddenly understood her life's mission: to feed the hungry. What her parish needed, she decided, was a food pantry—and within a year (and over opposition from some fellow parishioners) she had started one that offered free cereal, fruit and vegetables to hundreds of San Francisco's indigent every Friday. Not willing to turn anyone away, she raised funds and helped set up other food pantries in impoverished areas, occasionally "crossing the line from self-righteous do-gooder to crusading zealot." For Miles, Christianity "wasn't an argument I could win, or even resolve. It wasn't a thesis. It was a mystery that I was finally willing to swallow." Grittier than many religious memoirs, Miles's story is a perceptive account of one woman's wholehearted, activist faith. (Feb. 20)

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--This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

A self-proclaimed blue-state, secular-intellectual, lesbian, left-wing journalist with a strong skeptical streak, Miles was hardly a candidate for Christian conversion. Yet convert she did, wholeheartedly at age 46. For upon her first Communion (in an Episcopal church), everything changed (she still can't fully explain the feelings that arose during her first Communion). She realized that "what I'd been doing with my life all along was what I was meant to do: feed people" and started a food pantry in her gritty San Francisco neighborhood. The journey from skeptical secularist to devout Christian was long, complicated, and often convoluted (her parents were avid atheists), but the story she

makes of it is engaging, funny, and highly entertaining, including many surprises as well as the occasional wrong turn. Incidentally, Miles comments, often with great insight, on the ugliness that many people associate with a particular brand of Christianity. Why would any thinking person become a Christian? is one of the questions she addresses, and her answer is also compelling reading. Ray Olson Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Can you imagine participating in an event without even knowing that it challenges a long held belief and then being radically changed by it? This is what happened to Sara Miles, the atheist, takes communion in a San Francisco Episcopal church. It changes her life, the life of the church, the life of the community and the individual lives of many needy people. If you believe, you will be amazed at the power of God to transform us. You will come to a new understanding of the Lord's Supper. If you don't believe, you will be amazed at the ability of one person to change the world. But you might be prompted to challenge some of your own beliefs. Regardless, it is a powerful read of a well written book.

Sara is a lovely writer, I know, so perhaps the disconnection are mine, but some "pieces" of this offering were "overcooked"--the connections made over and over again--and sometimes it would have been nice to read more about the larger theology/spirituality that served as the basis for her faith development. More ingredients maybe??

I am an Episcopalian, by birth and for nearly my entire 70 years on this planet. I love our church - for it's openness, for it's inclusiveness, for it's use of the 3-legged stool of scripture, tradition and reason, and for the beautiful liturgy that has been around in some form for hundreds of years. I think it a miracle (not literally..more a happy coincidence) that Sara happened upon St. Gregory's church in San Francisco. It is obviously a place she felt welcomed, and eventually able to start her ministry. Not all Episcopal churches, or perhaps any other church, would have been a good fit for her, and I took issue with her judgment of those who formed committees, discussed, and didn't act. Yes, that happens, but there are many, many churches who do significant outreach just not in the form that she believes is most effective. That said, her writing is amazing, her choice of words spoke to me, and this book literally changed the way I experience the Eucharist. I recommend it highly and especially for a book discussion.

I read inspirational books as part of my Lenten routine and this book was recommended to me by a friend. It was one of the best gifts of the year. Sara Miles has written of her conversion and life as a committed Christian in a way that resonated deeply with me and made me look hard at my own spiritual life and practices. Here is truly the story of what we should all strive for, regardless of our faith--or lack thereof--in caring for others in our community most in need rather than just most like ourselves.

Sara miles had NO religious or spiritual education growing up. She stumbled on the church in adulthood, or rather encountered the risen Christ by chance? one Sunday morning in St. Gregory's in San Francisco. Her vision of real church as communion between very different people, even those who disagree and who don't like one another is fresh and she makes her case eloquently.

A confirmed atheist walked into a church attracted by the joyous music and was never the same. An inspirational factual account of the simple act of how taking communion changed a woman's life and led her eventually to become an Episcopal minister and to found food pantries in San Francisco.

It's more than just the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine...it's the food we eat everyday with those we love and those we want to love and those we've yet to love.

This book is a breath of fresh air. Christianity centered around food and feasting with a very hard, real, transparent look at how much we've complicated relationship both vertically (humanity) and horizontally (divinity). I can serve Sara's God with wholeheartedness.

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