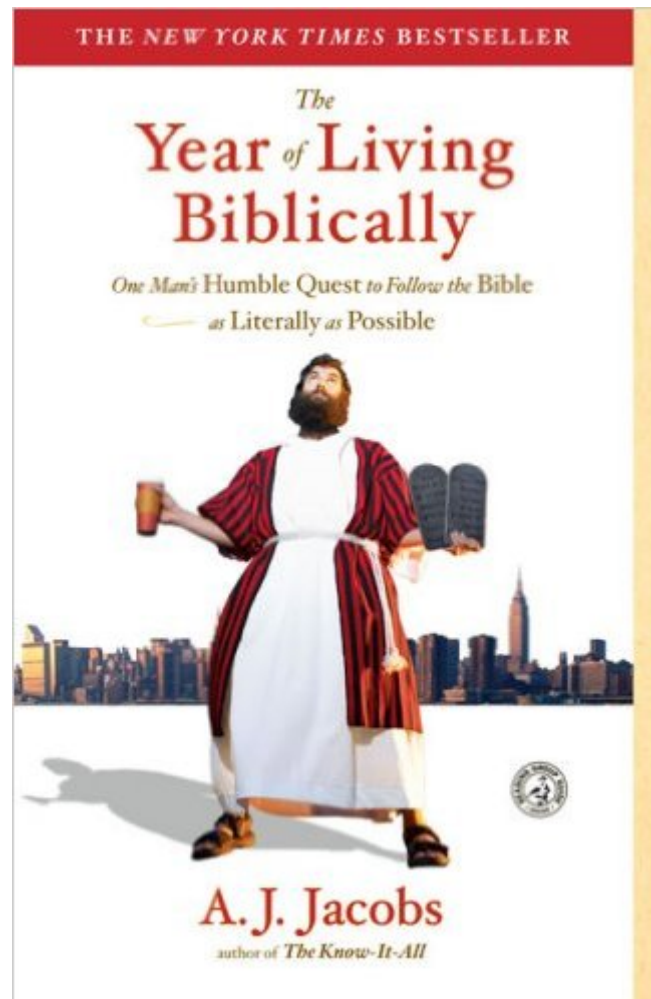


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# The Year Of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest To Follow The Bible As Literally As Possible



## Synopsis

From the bestselling author of *The Know-It-All* comes a fascinating and timely exploration of religion and the Bible. A.J. Jacobs chronicles his hilarious and thoughtful year spent obeying—as literally as possible—the tenets of the Bible. Raised in a secular family but increasingly interested in the relevance of faith in our modern world, A.J. Jacobs decides to dive in headfirst and attempt to obey the Bible as literally as possible for one full year. He vows to follow the Ten Commandments. To be fruitful and multiply. To love his neighbor. But also to obey the hundreds of less publicized rules: to avoid wearing clothes made of mixed fibers; to play a ten-string harp; to stone adulterers. The resulting spiritual journey is at once funny and profound, reverent and irreverent, personal and universal and will make you see history's most influential book with new eyes. Jacobs's quest transforms his life even more radically than the year spent reading the entire *Encyclopedia Britannica* for *The Know-It-All*. His beard grows so unruly that he is regularly mistaken for a member of ZZ Top. He immerses himself in prayer, tends sheep in the Israeli desert, battles idolatry, and tells the absolute truth in all situations—much to his wife's chagrin. Throughout the book, Jacobs also embeds himself in a cross-section of communities that take the Bible literally. He tours a Kentucky-based creationist museum and sings hymns with Pennsylvania Amish. He dances with Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn and does Scripture study with Jehovah's Witnesses. He discovers ancient biblical wisdom of startling relevance. And he wrestles with seemingly archaic rules that baffle the twenty-first-century brain. Jacobs's extraordinary undertaking yields unexpected epiphanies and challenges. A book that will charm readers both secular and religious, *The Year of Living Biblically* is part Cliff Notes to the Bible, part memoir, and part look into worlds unimaginable. Thou shalt not be able to put it down.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

How can I rate or judge one person's life story? Only by the way he writes about it. His story is his story, and deserves five stars simply for telling it. But I give this five stars because he wrote about it so compellingly. I had a difficult time setting the book down, always wanting to keep on reading and moving forward and see what he did next. When humorous things happen, he writes about them in a way that led me to chuckle along. Times of seriousness were written poignantly enough to sometimes shed a tear, or feel my heart moved as well. I especially applaud him for including stories about his wife, and how she wasn't always keen on what he was doing, and the difficulties they had while he went on this adventure. And I give him great credit for sticking with his goal for the whole year (and slightly beyond), and not giving up. Jacobs is a wonderful writer! I will definitely be looking for more books by this guy, and will read his previous book. And speaking as a Christian - and an ordained minister at that - I found his spiritual journey, and his insights into Judaism and Christianity as what was basically an outsider, to be very interesting to read about. Some of the things we take for granted or as base assumptions, he didn't know - he had to find out, and he continually showed the courage to go find a scholar, a rabbi, a minister, or other person with the knowledge to help him out. Especially when he found a law to be silly, instead of writing it off, he sought out someone who could explain why it might be there, and what it meant historically and means to some in the context of 21st century earth. I learned things about Christianity and Judaism from him; and also I learned a few things about my own personal faith from him.

Around a year ago, I read my first book by A.J. Jacobs, *The Know-It-All*, a memoir of the author's quest to read the entire Encyclopaedia Britannica. As a follow-up to that top-notch book, he has taken on a shorter but more difficult book, *The Bible*. For a year, Jacobs intended to follow the commandments of the Bible as literally as possible: not just the well-known ones (like "Thou shalt not kill") but the obscure ones as well (such as wearing clothes of mixed fibers). It was to be, as the book title states, *The Year of Living Biblically*. The first problem with undertaking such a task is that there are a lot of different Bibles out there and even more ways to interpret what's in them. While Jacobs seems to rely mostly on the Revised Standard Version, he consults other versions as well. Over the course of the year he will meet with a number of different religious groups and individuals

representing a broad spectrum of interpretations. The nice thing about the Encyclopaedia Britannica was it was pretty straightforward, with little wiggle room for misreading. But in the Bible, almost everything can be read at least two ways. Even the Ten Commandments are subject to multiple interpretations: Does the commandment against killing mean all killing? What about executions? It is this ambiguity that lets the Bible fit almost all agendas. Is the Bible pro- or anti-slavery? What is its views on abortion, homosexuality or the roles of women? As Jacobs finds during the year, there is no true agreement. (And if the Bible has a message that contradicts your ideals, do you reject your ideals or (at least in part) the Bible?)

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