

## *Hear No Evil: My Story of Innocence, Music, and the Holy Ghost*

Author: Matthew Paul Turner  
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*Hear no Evil* is a collage of stories from Matthew Paul Turner's past. A former independent fundamental Baptist (IFB), Turner chronicles his spiritual journey with special attention to the role his love for music played.

As a former IFB myself, I could identify with many of his experiences. I was raised KJV only, and also used my Bible as an autograph book (for the great men of God who I was privileged to hear). One of Turner's memories is particularly relevant to the audience of my blog. Sadly it rings true, to some extent, of my own experience and many others. He recounts:

I didn't study God. I just memorized Scripture verses and practiced Bible trivia. I could have told you the names of the twelve sons of Jacob or offered you a biblically accurate play-by-play of the events that led up to King David sleeping with Bathsheba. I learned facts. I knew a thousand Bible verses by heart, but I couldn't explain why God's story was important to me, personally. (pg. 122)

Clear and extremely well-written, the book makes for easy reading. In a light-hearted manner, with equal parts humor and candor, Turner recounts his escapades expertly. The stories are interesting and to some extent comical.

Unfortunately, Turner's tone is rather disturbing. As I read the book I was struggling to find a point in it all. Some of the stories seemed a bit over the top. Even granting for some authorial exaggeration, some of the scenarios he described stretched the limits of reality. Often the humor seemed self-serving. And Turner spared no punches in his shots of fundamentalists and other wider segments of Christianity.

Several scenes were painted without a clear resolution. What really is Turner's assessment of all of this? Where did he end up on the other end of the story recounted in the book? He was not timid in his insinuations about the state of Christian rock music. A Christian bass player ejects from his group and considers himself agnostic. Turner doesn't try to win him back, rather he empathizes with the pressure the Christian rock industry puts on its performers to remain virgins, albeit only in a "technical sense". Biblical literalists like the stern publisher of CCM (the magazine Turner edited for a while), have an agenda and aren't to be trusted. A gay former worship pastor, who visits his church on Easter Sunday indiscriminately receives Turner's cheerful welcome.

I do want to be careful not to judge the book too harshly. It is a personal recounting of events and nothing more. Perhaps I'm expecting too much from it. The flavor of the book is perhaps best captured in the following excerpt. Speaking of a fellow Amy Grant aficionado and staffer at CCM, Turner says:

The story of Michael's early years is nearly identical to mine. Different parents, different churches, different states, but our experiences were the same. Both of us were raised Independent Fundamental Baptists. When we met people who hadn't heard of our form of Baptist, we told them it was Christian for "scary beyond all reason."

By the time we turned twelve, Michael and I were convinced we knew everything there was to know about God. If that information wasn't already stored in our brains somewhere, our parents had flashcards to help us memorize it. People who told us that God was more or less than what we'd been taught were liars sent by Satan to deceive us. Our teenage years brought questions, college brought doubt, and we spent the better part of our twenties in therapy, trying to reconcile our understandings of God, sex, relationships, and what we believed to be true.

But there was one consistent thread of grace in our lives, a trail we could follow all the way back to

when our memories began: music. Music reminded us that we could trust God even when "his people" failed us.

And at some point, our paths crossed with Amy's music, which gave both of us hope that God wasn't nearly as hateful as we'd been taught. (pg. 200-201)

This book will resonate with many. But some will be emboldened by it to continue along a trajectory outside of confessional Christianity and orthodox faith. The book is good reading, but must be read with a discerning eye.

My thanks go out Waterbrook Multnomah publishers for providing me a copy of the book through their Blogging for Books program.

***Matthew Paul Turner** is a blogger, speaker, and author of Churched: One Kid's Journey Toward God Despite a Holy Mess, The Christian Culture Survival Guide, and several other popular books. Turner attended Nashville's Belmont University, where he received a BBA in music business, and is the former editor of CCM magazine. Turner has written for Relevant, HomeLife, Christian Single, and other magazines. He and his wife, Jessica, have one son and live in Nashville. Visit his Web site: [www.matthewpaulturner.com](http://www.matthewpaulturner.com).*

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