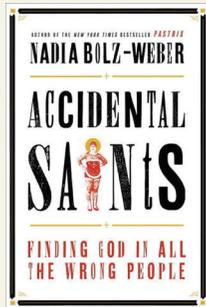


# In Reading Groups

Book Discussion Guide from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

by Jacque Stouffer



## *Accidental Saints: Finding God in All the Wrong People*

by Nadia Bolz-Weber

Tattooed, angry and profane, this former standup comic turned pastor stubbornly resists the God she feels called to serve. But as Bolz-Weber lives and worships alongside “accidental saints,” she is swept into first-hand encounters with God’s grace.

*Accidental Saints*, from the beginning, will likely not be what you usually find in the “Christian” genre. The chapter titles are peppered with swear words, as are the chapters themselves. But Nadia Bolz-Weber is real, and the honesty with which she tells her stories is challenging and compelling. Two chapters in, I was squirming, crying, and eager to read more. I’m convinced we’re all accidental saints – in desperate need of God’s grace and the forgiveness of each other.

### Chapter 1

- “On All Saints’ Sunday, I am faced with sticky ambiguities around saints who were bad and sinners who were good.” (6) How have you reconciled these types of ambiguities in your own relationships and encounters?
- “What makes us the saints of God is not our ability to be saintly but rather God’s ability to work through sinners.” (7) How have the saints you’ve known been accidental?
- On page 9, Nadia provides a list of moments when her spirituality is most active. What moments would you add? Which of hers can you relate to?

### Chapter 2

- How does your ego provide insulation for the secrets you carry?
- Does letting down that insulation make you feel closer to God or further away?
- How did you feel when you read Caitlin’s response to Nadia’s confession? Was that the absolution Nadia needed and wanted?
- Do you look at the cross as a ‘substitutionary atonement’ or a ‘blessed exchange’?

### Chapter 3

- How can ‘confessing our crippling inconsistencies’ help others?

- “Never once did Jesus scan the room for the best example of holy living and send that person out to tell others about him.” (30) Do you, like Nadia, find that confusing?

### Chapter 4

- What is your Nineveh? What weakness of yours can God use?
- How has God used someone to get your attention?
- When have you been ‘where the math doesn’t add up’ (39) and known you were on Holy Ground?

### Chapter 5

- Why is it our tendency to feel self-important when we help people?

### Chapter 6

- Where and when did you first hear of the rapture? How did it affect you?
- How did religion instill fear in you in the past? Does it still?
- What do you think of Nadia’s thought that “...having an unknowing brain allows us to be taken unaware by the grace of God.”? (58)

### Chapter 7

- Is thinking about Mary as an accidental saint a new thought for you?

### Chapter 8

- How hard is it for us to place Herod in our nativity scenes? Does Nadia's narrative make you want to start trying?

### Chapter 9

- What is your demon, and which of God's messages does it not want you to hear?

### Chapter 10

- When have you experienced help coming from unexpected places? What was your first reaction?
- What adjective, when used to describe you, would you consider to be the absolute worst – and why?

### Chapter 12

- How did you feel after reading this statement: "The uncool parts of us are exactly what Jesus invites to sit and eat around his table."? (125)

### Chapter 13

- Nadia suggests that 'we aren't punished for our sins as much as we are punished by our sins.' (130) How and when have you found this to be true?

### Chapter 15

- Do you agree with Nadia when she says "I wonder if that is what faith is: risking an openness to something bigger than ourselves?" (149) When, if ever, have you experienced this for yourself?

### Chapter 16

- What do you mean when you say 'Lord, have mercy'?

### Chapter 17

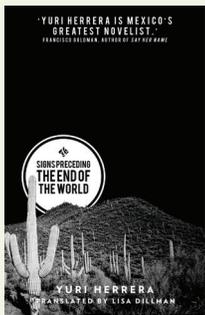
- What does Christian community mean to you?
- How hard is it to feel like you have the 'authority to remind each other of the gospel' – and to act on that authority?

### Chapter 18

- When have you felt the sting of real grace?
- Can you relate to "I need the very thing that I will do everything I can to avoid needing."? (180)

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## NEXT MONTH



### *Signs Preceding the End of the World*

by Yuri Herrera

(translated from Spanish by Lisa Dillman)

Traversing the lonely territory between the United States and Mexico is Makina, who knows only too well how to survive in a violent, macho world. Leaving behind her life in Mexico to search for her brother, she is smuggled into the USA carrying a pair of secret messages – one from her mother and one from the Mexican underworld.