

Book Summary: **Angry Conversations with God.** Susan Isaacs (2009)

The faith journey can often involve confronting painful issues from our past. One book I found useful while writing about “emotionally-healthy” spirituality is **Angry Conversations with God.** Susan Isaacs is a writer and comedian, and follower of Jesus. Susan chronicles her rocky relationship with the Almighty in a cuttngly insightful memoir about her "middle-class white girl's Dark Night of the Soul". She introduces herself by saying:

*"I was raised Lutheran: Bible-believing, Jesus-loving Lutheran. But as an adult I tried everything: Pentecostals, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Rock 'n' Roll Slackers 4 Jesus, Actors for Yahweh. Then I said, 'Screw it' and became a drunk and a slut. Well, a Lutheran slut - I slept with only two guys. Then I got sober and into AA, where they said I could pick whatever god I wanted. But I didn't pick God; God picked me.*

*I've known Him as long as I can remember."*

When aspiring actress Susan finds herself loveless, jobless, and feeling utterly disillusioned with God, she goes to her church friends for help. One of them tries to reassure her by saying that relationship with God is like a love story, a 'sacred romance' where God pursues us, commits to us and brings purpose and meaning to our lives. Susan's snarky response to such sentimentalism was that "if God is my husband, then we need marriage counselling".

The line was meant as a throwaway, but the idea grows on her, so she decides to find a marriage counsellor to hear her out. Rudy is a former pastor on the way to being a licensed therapist, and just the right person to work with Susan in what turns out to be a quirky but very insightful therapeutic journey, an original take on talking to God. Susan presents the therapy sessions as a memoir, a fictionalised conversation crafted to present truths she discovered about herself, her family and God, over many months with Rudy. By arguing back and forth with God (and sometimes Jesus) she identifies how her father's anger, her mother's passivity and her (many) pastors' eccentricities have contributed to her feelings that God has abandoned her. "*Susan casts herself as the neglected wife and God as the deadbeat spouse, while skewering American Churchianity. But soon she must admit the god in her head is not the real one. Is she willing to love the real God, "for better or worse?"*

This book gave me heaps of laughs, but also some amazing insights. It reassured me that God does indeed love me and have my best interests at heart. Best I think is its conviction that God can and does use our imperfect families and defective faith communities to teach and transform us.

We can Break the Power of the Past.

Vivian Coleman 2012.

