

Embracing Small Beginnings: My Journey from Chaos to Clarity

Endorsements

Each day, we are invited to gain life wisdom through living. While many of Michelle's circumstances and experiences might be unique to her story, her thoughts and processes can find place in our lives, as well. And God's presence and words are meant to ring in our ears, too. Thank you, Michelle, for putting down on paper what has been woven into your very being.

Marilyn Peters – beloved ragamuffin child of God

Beautiful vulnerability! I celebrate Michelle and the realization of a dream to write this book. What an accomplishment! What a story! Deep and serious. Light and silly. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all shared our stories and were seen and known like Michelle by her dear friend, Mama, from The Land of Transformation? Michelle says, "This book isn't for everyone." I disagree.

Jimm Derksen, Vice President of the Soul Care Institute

In the tradition of Saint Augustine of Hippo's Confessions, Michelle Martin has made herself vulnerable and exposed through writing that is part memoir, prayer, psychology, and raw conversations with her own soul. She grapples with her "physical uniqueness" that at one time would have been characterized as a crippling handicap instead of marking her as "differently abled" with "super powers." Her journey of self-discovery follows both Road to Emmaus "ohs" and Road to Damascus "Ahhs." Traveling mercies, dear reader.

John Helt, author of *Lydia Hosto Niebuhr: The Buried History of an Evangelical Matriarch*

In reference to our spiritual journeys, we often say that we move from clarity to clarity. Michelle's story turns from hardship to hardship. Her transparency in sharing about these difficulties is refreshing. This unflinching look at childhood, relationships, grief, and the church will have you questioning how your actions, or inactions, ripple into the world. You may resonate with some experiences, you may be offended by others... and rightly so! I have been challenged to assess my impact on the world, and you will be too.

Timothy Zehr - Spiritual Director, Associate Pastor at Sunnyside Mennonite Church

Martin gives fair warning in her introduction that she is about to take the reader on a journey and that this journey might prove disturbing to some readers. But what a journey it is. Emotional vulnerability and honesty in telling a life story describe Martin's book in a nutshell. Exploring themes like shame, guilt and personal agency, the author leads the reader into emotional and theological reflection. I love how she openly explores the differences between shame and guilt within the framework of Western and Jewish theology. Through narration and reflection, Martin demonstrates remarkable insights into her inner life, powerfully introspective, without the self-focus that can make such a gift self-centered. Touching on doubts, mental health, marriage, and grief, she also delves into Christian Nationalism, American history (yes the ugly bits as well), bad church experiences, and

COVID. Martin navigates the minefield of dearly guarded beliefs with a dignity and honesty that is refreshing and endearing.

Leon Miller - Pastor, counselor, one acquainted with grief