

Way of Love: Recovering the Heart of Christianity

By Norman Wirzba

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The pioneering scholar and author of *Food and Faith* and *Living the Sabbath* asserts that Christianity has slid off its rightful foundation, arguing that the faith only makes sense and can only be expressed in a healthy way if it seen as based on love, with a mission of training others in the way of love.

It’s often said that God is love, yet his message of compassion and caring for others is often overshadowed by the battles dividing us politically, culturally, and religiously. Why does Christianity matter if it isn’t about love? asks Duke University professor of Theology and Ecology Norman Wirzba.

The Way of Love invites readers to experience Christianity that is centered on love. Extensive theological training cannot replace the way of love that transforms and connects each of us to God and the faith, Wirzba contends. Interweaving illuminating testimonials, historical references, and Scripture, he reveals how love allows us to move into the fullness of life; when we do not love we lose our faith. “To fail to love,” he reminds us, “is to lose God.”

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Editorial Review

Review
“A winsome, accessible presentation of love in Christian thought. Wirzba rightly focuses on this theological conviction as the single most important dimension of Christianity and calls Christians back from far less constructive versions of their faith. Highly recommended.” (David P. Gushee, author of *Changing Our Minds*)

“Wirzba reminds us that the Christian faith should be training us to love. But he also inspires, cajoles, and provokes us to live this out. If you want to love better--and who doesn’t?--this is the book for you.” (Tony Jones, author of *Did God Kill Jesus?*)

“Love is one of the most hackneyed and trivialized words in our language. Wirzba wants to rescue this essential word from the dust bin of the everyday and restore it to usefulness. Connecting love and the hope of heaven, he provides a most satisfying and convincing conclusion.” (Eugene Peterson, author of *The Pastor*)

“Wirzba takes a holistic and earthy approach to finding the purpose and core of Christianity. There is a level of depth here. Wirzba especially endorses a theology that is ecologically sensitive without being eco-centric-a nuanced but important difference. A thoughtful exposition on love and its reverberations throughout creation.” (Kirkus Review)

“This hopeful book will serve Christians as a loving reminder of Jesus’s original message.” (Publishers Weekly)

“Argues that for Christianity to be taken seriously, it’s vital that Christianity’s heart be rediscovered, and that heart is love. . . . Wirzba insists that Christianity is not a catalog of beliefs but a demanding (indeed, impossible without forgiveness and grace) way of life. This is a timely reminder.” (Faith Matters)

“Duke University Divinity School professor Norman Wirzba brings us back to the original message of the New Testament when he begins by asking, ‘Why does Christianity matter if it isn’t about love?’” (*Mountain Times*)

“*Way of Love: Recovering the Heart of Christianity* invites readers to experience Christianity that is centered on love. Interweaving illuminating testimonials, historical references, and Scripture, he reveals how love allows us to move into the fullness of life; when we do not love we lose our faith.” (The Square)

“This is a heartfelt dissertation, grounded in common sense, the teachings of both the Old and New Testaments, and Wirzba’s personal story of growth as a loving Christian.” (Spirit Connection New York)

“Wirzba is not telling us something new but telling us the ‘old, old, story’ again in a new and refreshing way. . . . This book may move the complacent and comfort the wounded.” (#POPChrist)

“Norman Wirzba presents a captivating vision for the Christian life. Wirzba interweaves stories of real people trying to model this difficult love to a very broken world. He challenge(s) all of us to think deeply about love.” (The Englewood Review of Books)

“Norman Wirzba has written an introduction to Christian faith that I can give to a thoughtful person who’s genuinely struggling with how to make sense of their life. These people are asking good questions--questions that *Way of Love* answers not only with clarity but also with power.” (Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, author of *Strangers at My Door*)

“No book review will be able to adequately cover all the richness and insights that can be found in *The Way of Love*, but hopefully this will be an encouragement to pick the book up and read it for yourself.” (Resurrecting Orthodoxy blog)

“With a healthy dose of wisdom, clear thinking, and imagination, Wirzba plows ahead breathing new life into the teachings of both Scripture and the faith. . . .Wirzba [makes] evident the way of love that is taught by God to be showered upon all creation.” (For All It's Worth)

From the Back Cover

· A Burundian Tutsi woman who witnesses the murder of her village by Hutus raises the twenty-seven Tutsi and Hutu orphans left behind.

· A community garden manager in the mountains of North Carolina experiences grace when she welcomes a vegetable thief to work in the garden alongside her.

· A young woman struggling to support the child she had after her rape inspires the founding of a nonprofit dedicated to supporting women in poverty.

· A college professor embraced by a local congregation discovers healing and joy while dying of cancer.

What these stories have in common is that they are wonderful models for not only inspiring us but for explaining what Christianity is really about. Norman Wirzba contends that Christianity can only be explained and justified if it is seen as a “way of love.” The primary purpose of the church, he argues, is to train, equip, and grow its members in the ways of love. When Christians forget this centering purpose, things begin to collapse. Through stories drawn from today’s world as well as from church history and the Bible, Wirzba illustrates how our fractured world can be healed by making love central to the Christian faith.

If the church hopes to have a vibrant future, it needs to reject fear, purity, and power as its guiding principles and rediscover the very center of its message: to love.

Why Is Christianity Failing?

When people think about Christianity, “love” is often not the first thing that comes to mind. According to Duke University professor Norman Wirzba, this is the central problem that plagues the Christian faith today. In Way of Love he invites readers to rediscover the heart of Christianity as a training regimen for how to love. This is the path that leads to the truly “abundant life” Jesus promised his followers, a path whereby both individuals and the whole world can flourish.

“In these pages, Norman Wirzba reminds us that Christianity’s focal point is a vision of God’s love that creates, sustains, and redeems the world. *Way of Love* is a gift.”—from the Foreword by Diana Butler Bass, author of *Grounded*

“Love is one of the most hackneyed and trivialized words in our language. Wirzba wants to rescue this essential word from the dustbin of the everyday and restore it to usefulness. Connecting love and the hope of heaven, he provides a most satisfying and convincing conclusion.”—Eugene H. Peterson, author of *The*

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About the Author

NORMAN WIRZBA is a professor of theology and ecology at Duke University Divinity School and a pioneer of scholarly work on religion, philosophy, ecology, and agrarianism. He is also the author of *Way of Love*, *Food and Faith*, *Living the Sabbath*, *The Paradise of God*, and *From Nature to Creation*. He lives near Hillsborough, North Carolina.

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