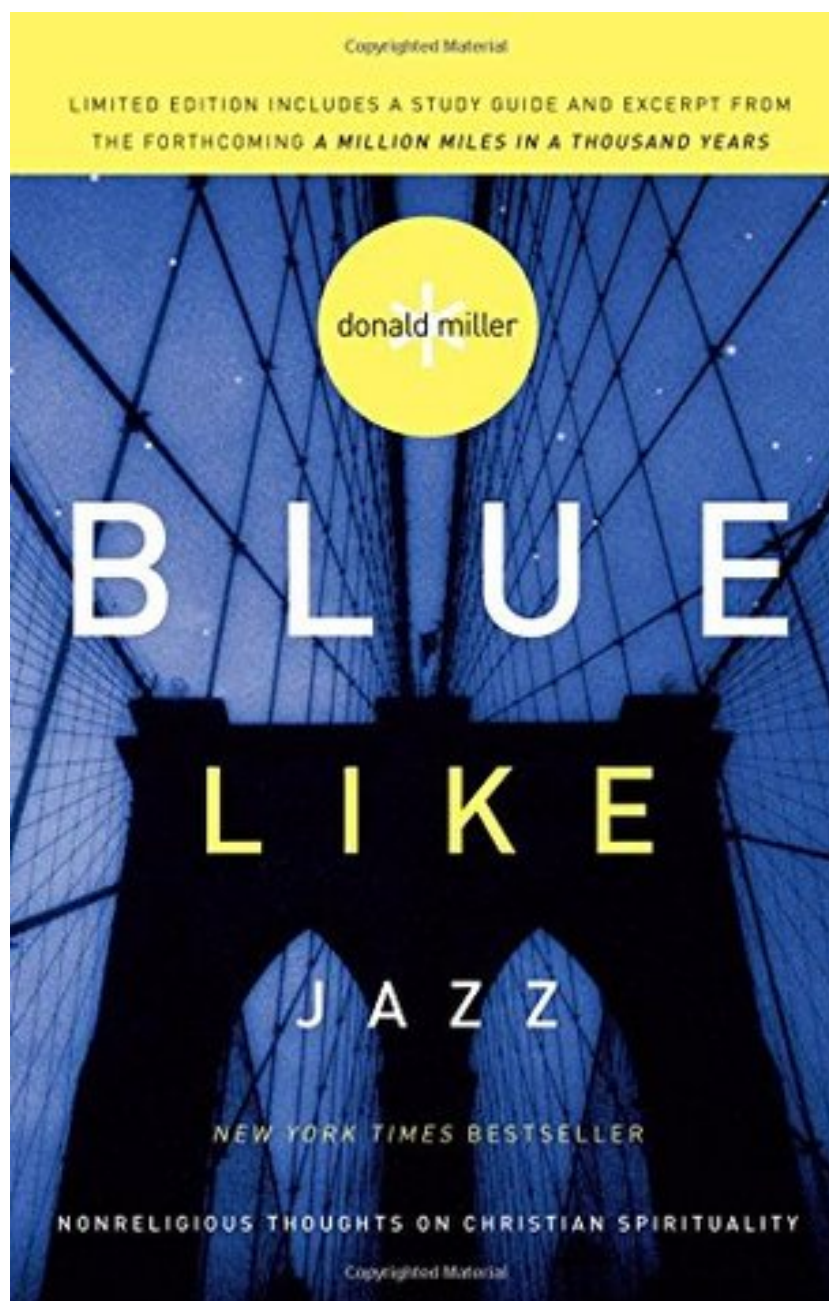


# Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality Book PDF Download



**By:**  
**Donald Miller**

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## What people Say:

### Seth T.

I thought of several different ways in which to begin this review - several witty comparisons that would surely catch the reader's attention. But that was a month and a half ago. See, I started reading

on the 20th of July and it is now the 4th of October. I have four pages left and I'm not sure I have the strength to continue.

For you see:

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is wearying. Endlessly self-amused and self-absorbed, he seems to want nothing so much as to be hip, cool, edgy (despite his own protests that hip, edgy, and cool are vanities and wastes of time and energy). And if four years of highschool taught me anything, it is that everyone with a heart is thoroughly and deeply embarrassed when the Very Not Cool Guy walks in and tries to be cool. Think: The Offspring's "Pretty Fly for a White Guy."

The thing is: Christianity cannot be cool. There is no reason non-believers should see Christianity as anything even on the same plane as Cool. Christianity says and believes terrifying things about the non-believer. Forget the homosexuals a minute - Christianity says that the friendly, tax-paying, socially-active, community-leading paragon of virtue who doesn't bow the knee to Christ is horribly sinful and an actual enemy of God. No matter how kind and cool they are. For Christianity to become cool, it has to stop having anything to do with Christ and his message. Maybe Donald Miller wants that. It kinda seems like it, but who can say - since he's not that great at expressing anything beyond his own meandering and fleeting feelings on matters.

About two-thirds into the book, a friend (who won't receive and identity via nickname, such as Tony the Beat Poet or Andrew the Protester) ask me what kind of a book it was. I had a hard time describing it at first. Then I realized:

## Tabby

I wish that reviewers on this site would review books for what they are meant to be and not insist that they be something else. "Blue Like Jazz" is not meant to be a deep theological treatise. If you thought it was supposed to be, then of course it doesn't compare to Augustine or C.S. Lewis. Miller's book is instead meant as a memoir of one man's walk with God, his struggles along the way, and what he's learned from them. I enjoyed this read a lot because I related to many of his struggles. Whil

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Yes, Jesus does say to love him with "all your mind." Yes, I think it's great for people to read theological classics. But I hope that along the way, we don't forget that Jesus does say to love him with "all your heart." The heart is the seat of our emotions and it's also where we keep the things dearest to us. I think it's important for Christians to cultivate that sense of the awe and grandeur of God, and also to cultivate a deep and affectionate love for Christ. If we don't have those things, how will our lives reflect the love that Christ has shown for us?

One of the saddest things for me is to see people who continue to outwardly live "good" lives, but who have lost their passion for the things of God. I know we all go through dry seasons where sometimes all we can do is put one foot in front of the other, and I have sympathy for that, but I hope that's not the place we stay. I think we ought to be striving to maintain closeness to God as much as we can, and do our utmost to keep Him in the center of our hearts, souls and minds.

## Greg

On Easter evening in 1999 my friend Mike (I'm so tempted to call him Mike the Goth or fill him with some hyperbolic characteristics that would make him sound cooler than any person could really be, but I won't succumb to Miller's influence) were hanging out at an almost empty coffee shop in town when two guys about our age approached us. At the time I was finely attuned to when someone was making an approach to hawk Jesus, in upstate New York it happened fairly often (more on this a little later), in New York City it doesn't happen in the same way. Now this skill set can pick out someone making an approach asking for spare change.

I don't know what Mike was wearing, probably something all black, or black with military pants. I know that I was wearing my Amebix t-shirt that had a guy crucified on the front, and 'No Gods, No Masters' on the back. I wore it because I was a shit who liked to passively get a rise out of people, and it was Easter--or Zombie Day as I had wittingly started calling the earlier in the day when Mike and I were heading to a store meeting at Kinko's.

So anyway there we were, and these two guys approach us, and the one starts talking to us, making small talk, and I go into shutdown mode, knowing what is coming. Mike keeps answering the guys questions. The other guy who isn't doing much of the talking looks like he is about to explode with excitement, he just wants to say something, and after a minute or two he just blurts out, "Hey, what do you think of Jesus?" I say nothing. Mike starts blurting out Crass lyrics like "I am no feeble Christ not me, he hangs in glib delight..." and "Jesus died for his own sins not mine". Mike seems to be enjoying himself, the Christians seem to be enjoying themselves in some perverse way, and I'm really fucking embarrassed. I will them away but my powers of mind control are absent because by some occult means they end up taking a seat at our table. We talk to them for the next hour. Well Mike talks to them, I sometimes give one word answers to a question if I'm asked directly, but I just stare at my coffee cup and listen.

To make a boring story shorter, they all talked, and they tried to get us to sign up for the eternal Jesus plan of salvation insurance, Mike had some fun with them, and every few minutes they would all start kind of talking like normal people, until usually the excitable one would once again shot back with some kind of Jesus thing.

A week or so later, maybe more, but not much more, Mike and I were back at the same coffee shop (where we were everyday at some point), and the guy who didn't talk about Jesus quite so much in the conversation showed up and asked if he could join us. We all talked, I was a little more involved in the conversation, and the Jesus guy (sorry I don't remember his name) turned out to be a pretty decent guy, and didn't really talk about Jesus at all.

A couple of more times the decent Jesus guy showed up and asked to join us and then sat and talked with us for an hour or so. I didn't mind if he showed up, he was actually a fairly interesting guy, and he was a Christian, but kind of in the same way that I was a vegetarian at the time. I really

cared about not eating or wearing animals and if asked I'd talk about why I felt that way, but I never felt the need to ask someone eating a hamburger if they knew they were eating a cow. I'd like it if everyone stopped eating meat, but I wasn't going to preach to someone, they would do what they liked. He was kind of the same way, he never pushed Jesus on us in these conversations.

Instead we found out that he was part of this group called Word of Life, which is a Christian all year camp / school for kids to be trained to be evangelical missionaries. The group itself I hold in very low regard, but this particular guy was just a normal individual without a pathological need to share and convert (he may have gotten that part erased from himself over time). He lived at this place, and part of each day he studied the bible and was trained to go out and spread the word of Jesus, and the other half of the day he skateboarded. Seriously, he skateboarded and worked on getting better at this Bible boot camp in order to 'infiltrate' the skateboarding youth culture that hadn't been to receptive to the good word so far.

I kind of think of Donald Miller as this guy.

As an aside, one of the other battle tactics of the Word of Life was to bring young girls to Saratoga Springs on a Friday or Saturday Evening in nice weather and unleash them from their vans on Broadway. Lots of people are out on the main drag of town in nice weather, and Saratoga is a kind of artsy town, and one of the only towns with a vibrant downtown that people come to, so these girls would be unleashed on the streets to convert people to Christ. On a particular Friday evening I was sitting on a planter in front of a coffee shop that had recently banned me from their premises, reading the brand new collection of short stories by David Foster Wallace

, when the live action show I'll call

## Ben

This book was recommended to me by MyFleshSingsOut, who is a very religious goodreads friend. He is a Jerry Falwell loving, hardcore, right wing conservative. He believes the entire old testament word for word:

of it is allegorical to MyFleshSingsOut. He doesn't even believe in evolution. You've probably run into him before. He goes around this site trying to save souls.

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Knowing that I struggle with my belief and that I'm not nearly as religious as him, but more spiritual, than say, the average goodreader, he advised I give this book a shot.

And I'm pretty glad I did.

It's not a very deep or penetrating book. If you're looking for the deeper questions of science and the existence of God, or musings on morality, this is not the place to turn. Donald Miller was no Dostoevsky, nor was he as analytical as I would've liked. I do not recommend this book for non Christians.

The tone is very informal. He's just one of the guys talking to you. He's young too, like just-turned thirty or something. And it shows, not only in his lack of probing depth, but in his annoying need to be cool all the time. He constantly goes out of his way to show that he's not like other Christians, because, you see, he's been there and done that. He drives a motorcycle and has hung with hippies, and he hates Pat Buchanan. He even drinks and goes to parties. You see, he's cool. And if you forget how cool he is, don't worry, because he'll remind you time and again.

Yet, there are some advantages to Miller's frank, informal narration. He's brutally honest about his shortcomings, he's entertaining, his prose makes for easy reading, and he

## Lyn

Great book, I really like Miller as an author. I loved the scene at the Reed College bacchanal where Miller and his Christian friends offered the reverse confessional, brilliant!

Even for the non-religious, this book may restore a little faith in humanity.

If you find that your faith is somewhat unconventional, this may be a good book for you.