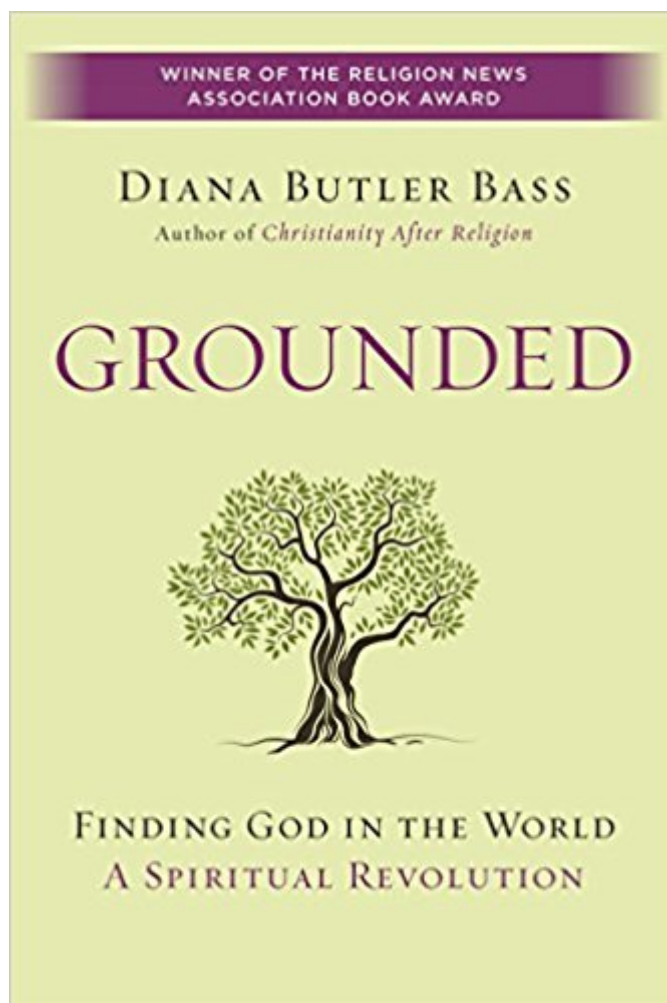


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# Grounded: Finding God In The World-A Spiritual Revolution



## Synopsis

Winner of the RNA Book Award, Nautilus Award, and Wilbur Award. This special paperback edition includes a 40-day devotional that pairs passages from *Grounded* with prayers and reflections, ideal for use during the Lenten season or any season of reflection. The headlines are clear: religion is on the decline in America as many people leave behind traditional religious practices. Diana Butler Bass, leading commentator on religion, politics, and culture, follows up her acclaimed book *Christianity After Religion* by arguing that what appears to be a decline actually signals a major transformation in how people understand and experience God. The distant God of conventional religion has given way to a more intimate sense of the sacred that is with us in the world. This shift, from a vertical understanding of God to a God found on the horizons of nature and human community, is at the heart of a spiritual revolution that surrounds us — and that is challenging not only religious institutions but political and social ones as well. *Grounded* explores this cultural turn as Bass unpacks how people are finding new spiritual ground by discovering and embracing God everywhere in the world around us — in the soil, the water, the sky, in our homes and neighborhoods, and in the global commons. Faith is no longer a matter of mountaintop experience or institutional practice; instead, people are connecting with God through the environment in which we live. *Grounded* guides readers through our contemporary spiritual habitat as it points out and pays attention to the ways in which people experience a God who animates creation and community. Bass brings her understanding of the latest research and studies and her deep knowledge of history and theology to *Grounded*. She cites news, trends, data, and pop culture, weaves in spiritual texts and ancient traditions, and pulls it all together through stories of her own and others' spiritual journeys. *Grounded* observes and reports a radical change in the way many people understand God and how they practice faith. In doing so, Bass invites readers to join this emerging spiritual revolution, find a revitalized expression of faith, and change the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“With her usual blend of plain-talking and sharp insight, Diana Butler Bass brings into focus the usually fuzzy realm of the spiritual but not religious, providing a much-needed guidebook for... the often-perplexing but growing turn away from organized religion.” (Religious Newswriters Association) “I’ve been grateful for Bass’s sharp mind, but upon finishing *Grounded*, I found myself in love with her mystical heart and gorgeous storytelling. We need to believe that God is with us, in dirt and water and suffering and homes and neighborhoods. God is definitely in this book.” (Glennon Doyle Melton, author of *Carry On, Warrior*) “Provocative and well-researched, *Grounded* is an admirable contribution to the understanding of contemporary American Christianity, which is in constant needs of reformation. May the church listen.” (National Catholic Reporter) “A profound and literary book.” (Christian Century) “Bass’s credentials... frequently help bridge the gap between those who practice Christianity and those who research it. What makes her an unusual voice among commentators in American religion right now is that she’s a proponent of hopeful religion.” | *Grounded* champions a return to nature and an embrace of hospitality.” (Religion News Service) “In her excellent treatise, [Bass] declares the current state of religion as not dying but transforming.” | Bass’s biblical and effusive style, always mixing the personal with the political and scriptural, finds a deeper, more profound register in this latest book.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) “*Grounded* is a wise and beautiful book. It is, in fact and in places, almost an anthem to the sacred unity of the physical and the spiritual in the formation of human faith and in the maturation of the human soul.” (Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Great Emergence*) “In *Grounded*, Diana Butler Bass brings theology back down to earth. She writes about the environment and about the church in a way that makes sense, feels authentic, and doesn’t put you to sleep. A stunning book that will open up new conversations in the church and beyond.” (Shane Claiborne, author of *The Irresistible Revolution*) “I absolutely love this book. I’ve long respected Diana Butler Bass for her intelligent, academic approach to the religious conversation, and never more so than in the pages of this book. *Grounded* made me love

this beautiful world more deeply, and made God's presence more visible everywhere I looked. (Shauna Niequist, author of *Savor and Bread & Wine*) "An absolutely gorgeously written book about real faith in the real world. (James Martin, SJ, author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*) "In this lyrical, mystical, and spiritual book, Bass has made an important contribution by beautifully explaining a broader and more inclusive understanding of God that can be embraced by the spiritually independents (spiritual but not religious) and also by those rooted in one of the world's religions. (Spirituality and Practice) "There is nothing worse than sleeping through a revolution," Bass says. Her new book will not only help you wake up. It will equip you to be an enthusiastic participant in what I believe is the deepest and most important movement taking shape in our lifetime. (Brian D. McLaren, speaker, activist, and author of *A New Kind of Christianity*) "The reversing of engines that Diana Butler Bass describes in *Grounded* was first announced by Jesus himself, of course. How strange that it should seem so new and even revolutionary 2,000 years later. (Richard Rohr, O.F.M., Center for Action and Contemplation) "Diana Butler Bass's thoughtful mandate amounts not so much to a dismissal of the church, but a summons to renewal that can be both faithful and contemporary. Her accent champions a connectedness to the actual context in which we live. (Walter Brueggemann, Columbia Theological Seminary) "Americans search for the divine is alive and well, although it looks different than it has in the past. In *Grounded*, Bass investigates the spiritual lives of contemporary believers, questioning what happens when people expand their search for God beyond church buildings to the world around them. (Deseret News) "With one part mysticism, one part theology, and one part ecology, each chapter takes us from a theologically sound understanding of the sacred nature of the natural world to a mystical understanding of tending that world, then to sections on real crises in our world, ecologically and economically. (Clarion Journal) "Bass digs her fingers into the soil of our surroundings to unearth a new way of looking at spirituality and our place within our increasingly global neighborhood. A deeply theological book, but also a practical one; causes one to ponder the spiritual implications of farmers' markets in altogether new ways. (Booklist) "Beginning with earth (dirt), air (sky) and water Bass weaves an engaging story of interconnectedness ending in the revelation of the divine in the here and now. I thoroughly enjoyed the texture and twists of insights opening the stunning truth of emerging faith in our midst. (Sister Simone Campbell, author of *A Nun on a Bus*) "Bass blends anecdotes from her own experience with incisive social commentary and interviews with people committed to making a

difference in their communities. *Grounded: Finding God in the World* is a thoughtful examination of the current trend toward social engagement and practical spirituality. *Shelf Awareness* (Shelf Awareness) "Although her ideas are revolutionary, the book is well grounded. Spiritual directors and other contemplatives will find themselves at home in Bass's descriptions of experiencing the presence of God in everyday encounters in the world as well as the unexpectedly numinous in nature or sacred places." (Presence Journal)

Diana Butler Bass is the author of eight books on American religion, including *Christianity After Religion*, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, and *A People's History of Christianity*. She holds a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Duke University, has taught at the college and graduate level, and is currently an independent scholar. She was a columnist for the New York Times Syndicate, and blogs for the Huffington Post and the Washington Post on issues of religion, spirituality, and culture. Bass is a popular speaker at conferences, colleges and universities, and churches across North America. She lives in Alexandria, Virginia, with her husband, daughter, and dog. Her website is [dianabutlerbass.com](http://dianabutlerbass.com) and she can be followed on Twitter at @dianabutlerbass.

Step 1: Buy Diana Butler Bass's new book *Grounded: Finding God in the World*. Step 2: Buy Kleenex. I'll be honest: I'm having an unexpectedly emotional reaction to this book. I can't seem to get more than a handful of pages without my eyes inexplicably leaking. One minute I'm reading this gorgeous and profound prose and then next minute the pages are splattered with tear drops. There are two possible explanations for this. Either I might need to see a therapist, or Bass's book really is a spiritual revolution. Honestly, I think it's the latter. Because it's not a sad and weepy book. It doesn't pull on emotional heartstrings with cheap schmaltz. It's just that sometimes the soul responds to deep beauty and deep truth in ways words cannot express but the body, in its unappreciated wisdom, can. Clearly, *Grounded* touched something deep within me that has long been dormant and buried. For me, it has been an awakening. And that's what makes the book so difficult to review. It's hard to review a book that is so fundamentally undoing me and remaking me. It's hard to review a book that is renewing my soul. I can't review a spiritual awakening. But I can share what it was like to read it. The book is divided into two parts • the natural world and the human world, but both are maps for our modern world

and our modern spirituality. Each chapter is artfully constructed, evocative, and profoundly insightful. In fact, it can be difficult to finish a chapter in one sitting because Bass, quietly and unobtrusively, invites readers to ponder, to meditate, and to reflect on God, themselves, and the world. I frequently had to put down the book and allow an insight or an image to fill me, to wash over me, to change me. But the insights aren't bombastically presented or hyperbolically argued. Instead, they are whispered. In her chapter on Sky, Bass invites us to ponder the God found in the heavens and in the sunset not as a moment of easy, saccharine spirituality, but as a moment speaking deeply to the heart of our humanity, of our experiences with God. Contrary to what some commentators might suggest, looking to the heavens and finding God is as primal an urge as it might be. It is no simple feat any more, particularly in the modern, scientific world. Bass artfully adjusts our understanding of God in the sky not as God far above the world, but of God at the horizon, just beyond what we can see. God at the edge, the edge of the visible world, the horizon of mystery. She continues: "When I think of the far-off qualities of God, I no longer think 'up'; instead, I consider God beyond the horizon, just beyond the place where the sky meets the ground. The Spirit calls our gaze outward, to lift our eyes to the edge. The spiritual revolution is the shift from the vertical God to God-with-us. Dirt and water are understandable and tangible, icons of earthy sacredness. But we need the sky to remind us that no matter how close God is, God is still the one who hovers at the horizon." In many ways, the book is particularly the early chapters about the earth and ecology was like being given permission to fall in love with what I've always loved. It was like renewing my vows with the same excitement as my wedding day but with none of the naivety. In a way, that's probably the best way I can describe this book. It's the work of someone who has often written from a place of necessary critical distance, allowing a writer like Bass to observe, to assess, and to advise. But in *Grounded*, Bass seems to make a turn toward Paul Ricoeur's "second naivete," where beyond the rational criticism, "we wish to be called again." Bass's book offers a stunning path to be called again, not as believers seeking salvation, but as mystics, poets, and humans seeking integration, beauty, and wholeness. In our modern world, we have become so familiar with imprisoning faith in our intellect through deconstruction, demythologization, and rational, critical distance that reading *Grounded* offers the needed reminder and invitation to experience again faith, God, and each other. It is such a wise, nuanced book, culling insight from Christian history, modern science, and observation. But there's also an urgency to

her wisdom and insight. While inviting reflection, it is not a purely contemplative book, where we turn over a piece of the earth or an element of humanity to ponder. Rather, Bass sets her insights against the very real crises and needs of our time, giving us a theological frame for meaningful, faithful, and sustained engagement. After reading her chapter on Water, one has the urge to join the cause to save oceans, rivers, and watersheds not because one is a good liberal or because of one's politics, but because of how holy the water really is, because how connected my tradition is to the water, because God is in that water. Before Grounded, I had never have thought the riparian zone of a river could be such a profound icon of God. Or that genealogy was a sacred practice. Or that home repair shows revealed deep spiritual longings. Ultimately, it is a book about unity, a book that envisions God beyond the sacred and beyond the secular. Bass's book reached into my soul, pulled it out, hung it on the line for fresh air, and then gave it back to me smelling of the earth and the rain and humanity • holy things, in other words. I know this isn't the most traditional book review. But this isn't your typical book. It is a spiritual revolution. Just remember to bring Kleenex.

Born a country girl in a small town I am well aware of what she is talking about. Have had big gardens, canned and frozen a lot. The horizontal love and relationship with God and others is something with which I have always been aware. She has not written anything that has startled me as a new and revolutionary life choice. There is some info and some stats that I found interesting. The book was a bit long and I found she repeated a lot. However, she is trying to teach/open up something (different for many) and a good "teacher" needs to repeat so the message sinks in. We will probably review and discuss the book this fall at my church. It will be interesting to see what people have to say and the message they have found. She has put a tremendous amount of effort into research etc. for this book.

If we could step down and away from the culture wars and attend to the elemental properties of our creation and sustenance, we might be able to find a way forward out of the echo chambers of our ideologies. This book is an elegant reflection on a contemporary lens all of us--religious, spiritual, both or neither--can employ to once again be grounded as human and spiritual beings. God is waiting for us--at eye level.

Sometimes when authors try to branch out from their normal style, they simply try too hard to pull it

off, and it comes across in their writing - This is NOT the case with this book! Diana has smoothly and eloquently transitioned from objective analysis to subjective story telling. It is refreshing to hear from an even more passionate and vulnerable side of her experience. This book is a call to an experiential form of faith that is much more vital, vibrant, and organic than more formulaic approaches to Christian life and thought. It invites us to allow our experience to inform our theology, rather to allow our theology to dictate our experience. If you are looking for a way to give language to your own and others' experience of the divine in the midst of the messiness of life, this book hits the spot.

I am a minister and have quoted this book and used stories in it for several sermons. Sometimes I have used it on regular Sundays, but it was also very helpful on the Sunday when our diocese asked us to preach on climate change or the environment. There is an incredible amount of material in this book for personal reflection and group discussion. I love Diana Bass' personal stories and theological reflection, both of which help the reader reflect on his or her own journey and to marvel at the presence of God all around. I hope to use it in a book group soon. Highly recommend!

Rare is the writing that is at once poetic and profoundly accessible. Even more rare is the writing that is at once relevant and engaging and about religion/spirituality/God. This book is the rarest of gems: It is all of that and more. For those who have made the journey away from the ancient religious traditions into a more fulfilling spiritual communion, "Grounded" is an echo of what was heard and a map of the frontier explored. For those beginning the journey, or yearning to find what's missing, "Grounded" is a gentle guide. Whether you're yearning, starting, or well traveled, you will be enlightened and moved by this book. The reading will be slow, but only because of the many times you will stop to let the writing soak in, the many times you will stop to contemplate, and the many times will stop to reach for a tissue to wipe your eyes. Something new is emerging in our spiritual lives, and "Grounded" gives us insight into what that something is. Genuinely, it is a thing of beauty.

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