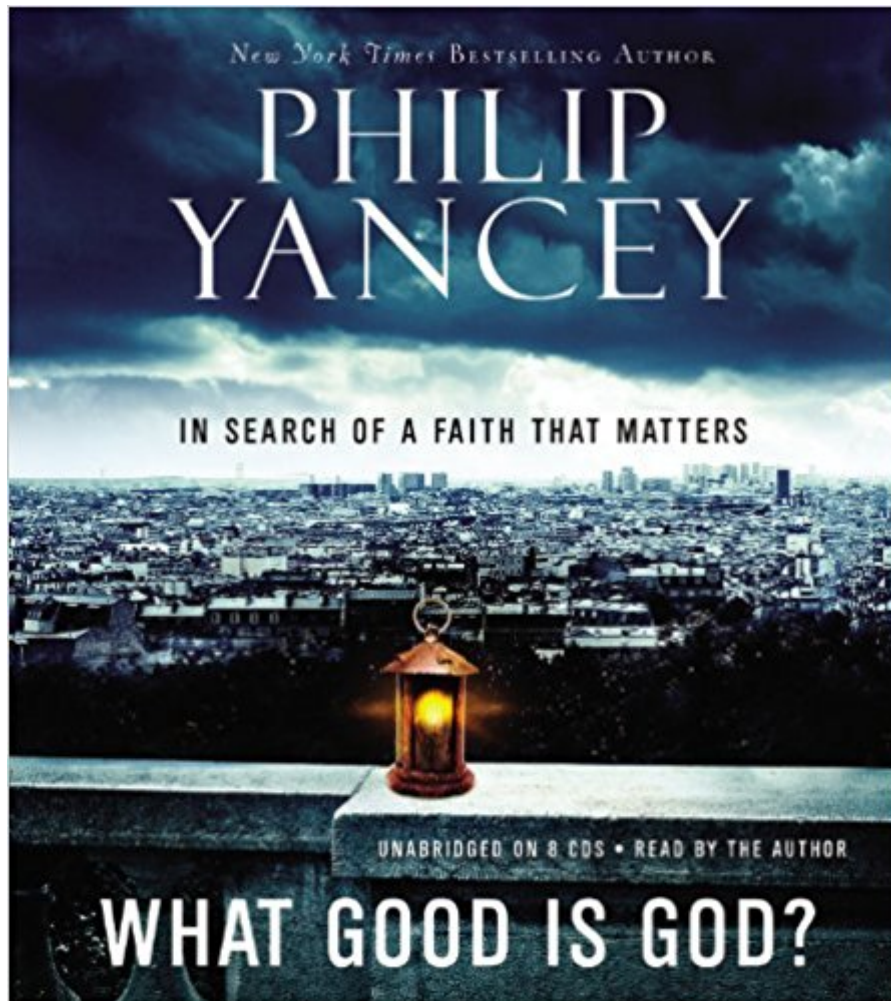


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# What Good Is God?: In Search Of A Faith That Matters



## Synopsis

Journalist and spiritual seeker Philip Yancey has always struggled with the most basic questions of the Christian faith. The question he tackles in **WHAT GOOD IS GOD?** concerns the practical value of belief in God. His search for the answer to this question took him to some amazing settings around the world: Mumbai, India when the firing started during the terrorist attacks; at the motel where Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated; on the Virginia Tech campus soon after the massacre; an AA convention; and even to a conference for women in prostitution. At each of the 10 places he visited, his preparation for the visit and exactly what he said to the people he met each provided evidence that faith really does work when what we believe is severely tested. **WHAT GOOD IS GOD?** tells the story of Philip's journey--the background, the preparation, the presentations themselves. Here is a story of grace for armchair travelers, spiritual seekers, and those in desperate need of assurance that their faith really matters.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Phillip Yancey is one of the most influential writers in the Evangelical world today. "I write books for myself," he says on his blog, "searching for a loving, gracious God." Yancey writes about God's grace instead of the God he feared because of the hellfire and brimstone preaching he received from what he calls a "toxic church." Yancey brings us a new format in his book, *What Good is God*. He takes us on a global trek to ten distinct groups of people to determine if the faith he writes about holds up through the tough issues he encounters in the "refiner's fire of oppression, violence, and plague." We see underground Christians in China, the horrific lives of those thrown into prostitution,

recovering alcoholics in Chicago and life on campus in a 1960s Bible College. The idea for the book came to him while on an airplane. After his book tour in India was bumped because of the terror in Mumbai in 2008, Yancey instead spoke to a small group in an Indian church. His theme: How do we find comfort in the midst of disaster and suffering? During his quest, Yancey, the journalist observed with a practiced eye while Yancey, the believer, probed his soul for answers. His sojourns through the dark places of our planet and its broken people are metaphors for his own spiritual journey. The message of *What Good Is God?* echoes that of a pastor preaching from a passage in Romans following the Virginia Tech campus massacre. "Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." The design of the book was refreshing. Effective illustrations precede each chapter. The poignant cover shows a small lantern perched high above an unnamed modern city.

Philip Yancey fans don't really need reviews to convince them to read Philip's next book. They know the wisdom that awaits them and they tend to follow each new volume as it appears. So, this review is geared in particular to first-time readers and people newly curious about Philip's popularity as a writer. One major distinction is that Philip is first and foremost a journalist. Yes, he's a very popular evangelical speaker and online writer. In fact, this new book is assembled from 10 visits he has made around the world in recent years, primarily as an invited speaker. But his professional training and the bulk of his career is as a journalist. That means his toolbox as a writer opens up, first, to explore and investigate his subjects before he writes. Many best-selling evangelical authors are preachers or are the heads of nonprofit organizations--and they are writing out of their own accumulated wisdom about the world. They are delivering their popular books to us as their reflections from the pulpit or the director's office. Philip begins down in the grassroots. He opens that journalist's toolbox and explores life on the ground. His books come to us out of the experiences of many real people. This book differs from some of his earlier journalistic books in that it's not a single focused inquiry. For example, his very fine book, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?*, is a wide-ranging investigation of the experience of prayer. It's one book; one huge topic. In *"What Good Is God?"* the single topic is the world itself in this opening decade of the third millennium of Christianity.

Though I had heard of Philip Yancey, bestselling author, journalist and speaker, several times in the past, this was the first book (of his twenty-some books) that I had the opportunity to read. *WHAT GOOD IS GOD?* follows in the steps of several of Mr. Yancey's previous offerings and poses a question that concerns the practical value of belief in God: Does faith really matter? This simple

question, though the answer isn't an easy find, takes the author to some of the most fascinating places one individual could go: from the massacre at Virginia Tech to the terror that encircled the streets of Mumbai; from the underground faith in China to the church at risk in the Middle East; from a conference full of professional sex workers to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in Chicago. I particularly enjoyed the format of the book. The author pulled off the extraordinary task of drawing the reader into ten earlier (and amazingly unique) experiences and propelled them from his past and into our present. He draws us in to the places he visited - as if we are standing directly in the midst of the chaos erupting in Mumbai, India in 2008 or experiencing firsthand the tragedy and the pain that embodied those involved in the massacre at Virginia Tech in 2007 - and gives us, the reader, a chance to hear exactly what he said to the people he met during these difficult times. I believe you will, as I did, walk away with a clearer understanding of how faith in action works and how grace, when displayed on large and small scales alike, can be presented beautifully, as Mr. Yancey puts it, even in the hands of God's people.

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