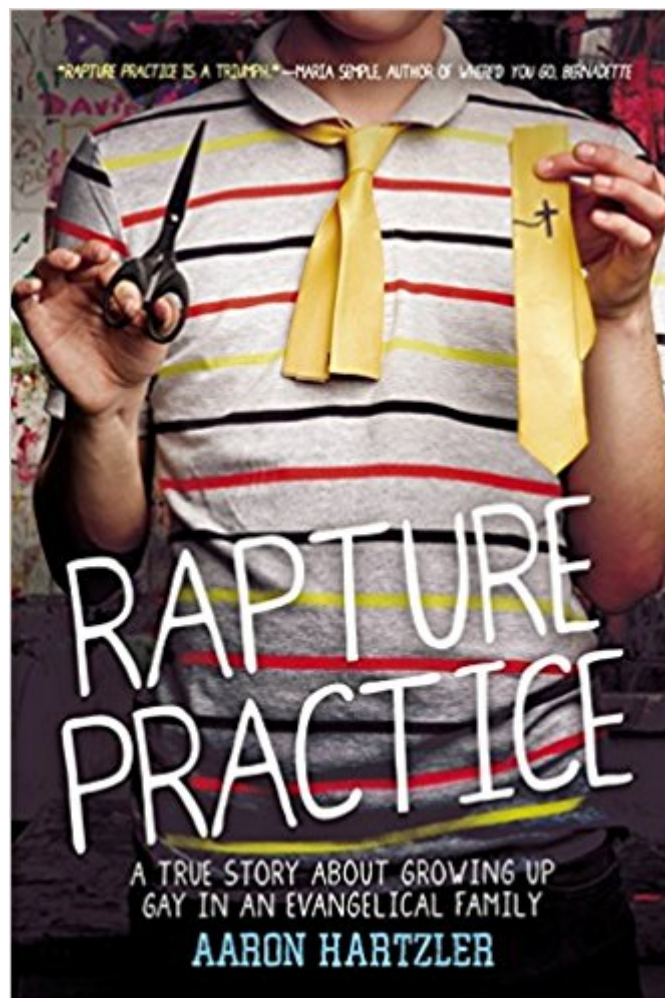




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Rapture Practice: A True Story About Growing Up Gay In An Evangelical Family



Synopsis

A true story about finding salvation in the strangest places. Aaron Hartzler grew up in a home where he was taught that at any moment the Rapture could happen. That Jesus might come down in the twinkling of an eye and scoop Aaron and his family up to heaven. As a kid, Aaron was thrilled by the idea that every moment of every day might be his last one on planet Earth. But as Aaron turns sixteen, he finds himself more attached to his earthly life and curious about all the things his family forsakes for the Lord. He begins to realize he doesn't want the Rapture to happen just yet--not before he sees his first movie, stars in the school play, or has his first kiss. Eventually Aaron makes the plunge from conflicted do-gooder to full-fledged teen rebel. Whether he's sneaking out, making out, or playing hymns with a hangover, Aaron learns a few lessons that can't be found in the Bible. He discovers that the best friends aren't always the ones your mom and dad approve of, and the tricky part about believing is that no one can do it for you. In this funny and heartfelt coming-of-age memoir, debut author Aaron Hartzler recalls his teenage journey to find the person he is without losing the family that loves him. It's a story about losing your faith and finding your place and your own truth--which is always stranger than fiction.

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up-Hartzler grew up in an Evangelical Christian home, where he was taught that the Rapture might happen any minute. As he grew into his teen years, he began to question this belief and to be drawn to more worldly things-movies, rock music, plays, literature, and kissing. To a secular audience, Hartzler's parents' rules about whom he can befriend and how he can live his life may

come across as draconian, but the author is open and fair about how they lived their beliefs and how they always loved him, even as their rules drove him away. Hartzler is honest about his sexual encounters with girls (and boys) and about underage drinking that happened at parties he attended. His memoir is appealing because of his honesty, and forthrightness. When writing about Evangelical Christians, he never takes on a condescending tone. He shows where his own questions led him, even as he shows how his parents saw things very differently than he did. His style is clear and lively, and he makes readers see how the questioning of his faith began, and how it grew. Readers will want to spend time with Hartzler to find out how he became true to himself and what choices he made on that journey. --Geri Diorio, Ridgefield Library, CT

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Jesus is coming back. That's what Aaron's family believes, and as a boy, so does he. But by the end of this memoir, Aaron isn't sure of much, other than he wants the freedom to be himself. Heartfelt and humorous, this book introduces Aaron; his strict but devoted parents; his grandmother, whose love is unconditional; and the classmates at his Christian schools, instrumental in shaping him. Hartzler writes with a keen eye for detail, whether it's the early scene in which his grandfather crochets (while he makes pot holders) or the description of what it feels like to make out with a girl for the first time. He is equally sure-footed describing his inner turmoil as he does the opposite of what's expected of him, all while maintaining the good-boy facade. One of the best things, however, is how lovingly Hartzler portrays his parents, even as they anger him. Aaron's attraction to other boys is hinted at, but one has to read the acknowledgments to find out more. Readers will hope for a sequel to learn how his family dealt with the news of his sexuality. Grades 8-12. --Ilene Cooper

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I pre-ordered this book after reading an interview with the author a week or two before it was released. His situation seemed so similar to what I experienced growing up in the same general part of the country during the same general time period (our ages are less than five years apart), with parents who were very similar to the author's. When the ebook automatically and unexpectedly arrived at midnight on the April 9 release date, I thought I'd read a chapter or two before going to bed. Instead, I read about 150 pages, and have now finished the entire 390-page book in just two days. The author's writing is spare and beautiful; very matter-of-fact yet strangely insightful. I also

very much enjoyed his witty take on practices and beliefs that I recall very clearly from my childhood and adolescence. And I suspect that readers who don't share this common background will nevertheless find the book worthwhile and useful in understanding a certain way of living (or being raised) that is really quite odd and inexplicable. My only complaint, and it's a slight one, is that the book ends too early in the author's life (high school graduation). I'd like to know how the story continues -- how the character at the end of the story became the author who could write this tender, reflective autobiography. So, the author should write a sequel. I'd also love to know what his parents think of the book (will they read it? discuss it with him?).

Aaron Hartzler grew up in an extremely conservative Christian family that did not have a tv, go to movies or listen to music. Even contemporary Christian rock because "you can't mix God's words with the Devil's beat." However, as he gets older he begins to question these beliefs. He begins to love rock music because it makes him feel happy and he can't understand how that can be a sin. Aaron participates in church services, teaches Good News children's group, acts in his Christian private school's elaborately staged dramas all the while questioning the logic of his parents' strongest held beliefs, but ultimately finding his own way to peace and understanding with his family. All this is presented in a humorous (I can't count how many times I laughed out loud.) and sincere way to become one of the best memoir of "finding religion" that I have ever read. I also grew up in a religious Christian family and though my parents, thankfully, weren't so strict, I have often come into contact with people who believe in the ways of Aaron's parents and school administration. I could so identify with Aaron because his reaction to so much of what he saw in his life was my reaction. I often felt I was reading a more articulate version of my experience. The book is extremely well written for someone who doesn't have a background in writing (He's an actor and musician), but he manages to express so much of what I felt as a teenager in an engaging and intelligent way. I had and to this day, have many of the same questions that Aaron grappled with: if God knows every decision we will make before we are born, then why give us free will, if Jesus turned water to wine, then why is it not allowed to drink a glass of wine, how can a serial killer who asks for salvation days before execution make it into heaven while a good person in the jungles of Africa who didn't have the luck to hear about the Gospel won't make it into heaven to name a few. Aaron didn't really have anyone to whom he could turn to ask questions. Aaron, today an out homosexual as far as I have been able to understand in the book's press, grapples with sexual identity, although that is more or less only hinted at in this book. I get the feeling that that will be the subject of a sequel to this book. I would be very interested in reading this story and how his family accepted this. I would recommend

this book to teens and adults alike, religious and non-religious because it is such a well written journey of faith. Even though Aaron ultimately rejects his parents' version of Christianity, he is never bitter or derisive.

I read this book for book club and it wouldn't normally be a book I would choose. It ended up being okay. I guess I thought it would be more about his coming out to his family. But it was more about his experience growing up being gay in his hyper Christian family and not knowing it at the time. So definitely don't read this if you are looking for a coming out story because it is not in there. Still a pretty funny read. It was entertaining. I would absolutely read a sequel to this book if he wrote one about his coming out experience.

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