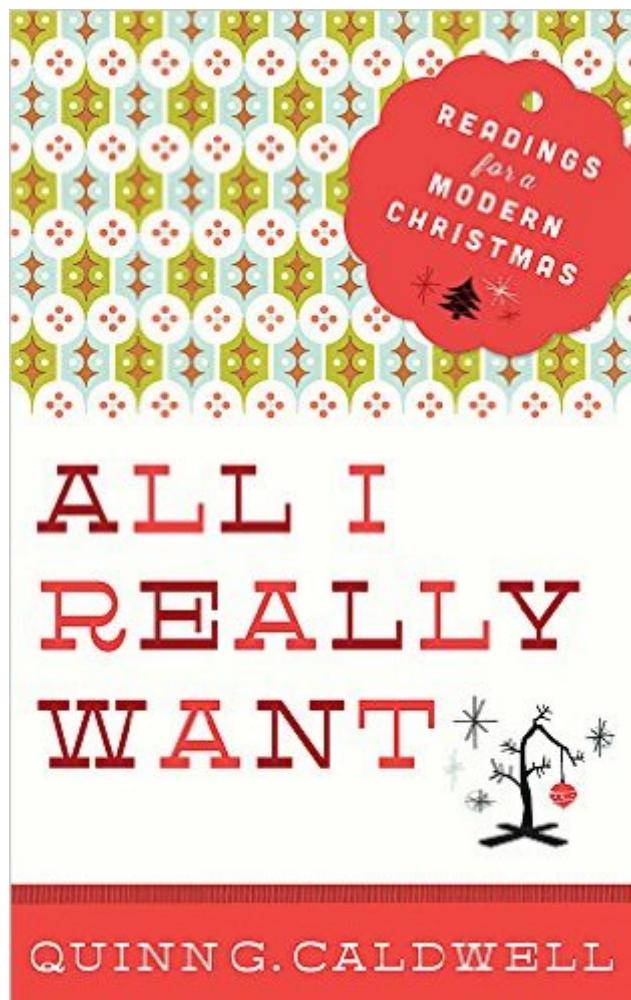


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# All I Really Want: Readings For A Modern Christmas



## Synopsis

Sometimes the happiest and holiest time of the year is also the hardest for people to enjoy. These daily readings offer the skeptic, the over-committed the opportunity to make room--perhaps just enough room for God to show up. The weeks leading up to Christmas can spark a strong spiritual longing for more. Although it may never be articulated, we sense beneath those longings is a yearning for an experience of God. These brief writings address the challenges and realities of the season and include a simple action, ritual or meditation designed to gently steer the reader toward the deeper meaning that underlies the season. Smart, witty, edgy--"and always hopeful"--readings by Quinn Caldwell include a brief prayer for each morning and evening during the entire Christmas season. This book takes seriously the modern person's hunger for meaning and import in a season that feels increasingly frivolous. Includes a calendar with one easy task to do each day.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a remarkable new Advent companion with 2 page readings for each morning and evening from December 1st through January 6th--a small book that is realistic for the bedside table, the coffee table, or a cubicle desk. But it's unlike any other Advent devotional I've seen. Written with humor, grace, and a generous, welcoming faith, this book names the goodness of the season in a faithful, but not syrupy/sentimental way. (When was the last time you read that an author thinks something is "as cheesy as a bag of Doritos"?) Unlike so many other books for Advent, it's not about making a dutiful pilgrimage through the season's familiar Biblical texts--it's an attempt to name the familiar experiences and emotions of the Christmas season, and find God's mysterious presence there. It also includes a week at a time calendar with concrete acts you might include in your day,

including listening to particular music, cooking, reading online...even (gasp!) making love as a way to mark the season. For Christians who can handle faith that isn't exclusively Rated G, who may or may not be part of a church but who look for a closer connection to Jesus and to God's love at Christmas. A great gift for that son or daughter who isn't into organized religion just now but still gets teary at "Amazing Grace."

Caldwell has a wonderfully new take on a very familiar idea--how to get more out of the Christmas season without adding more pointless stuff to it. Full of wit, charm, and downright hilarity, this book will take a spot next to the Muppet Christmas Carol and a candle lit Silent Night as a trinity of musts for my holiday season. It can be tricky to find meaningful material that is sincere without being sappy and emotionally moving without being manipulative. All I Really Want nails it.

This isn't your traditional Advent guide at all. This is for the person who considers himself or herself Christian but may not be a member of a church. It's for the modern generation and isn't the old staid approach at all. It's vibrant and joyful. Above all, this is advent reading for you who might not usually seriously observe the season.

I am pretty conflicted about how to review this book. Parts of it were pretty well written and interesting, especially right around Christmas and New Year's. Parts of it read more like notes for what the author meant to come back and finish later. If the author had included some personal experiences and presented it as his own journey through Advent I probably would have loved it. As a devotional, something to focus the mind into a prayerful meditation, it missed the mark for me. I do think that God enjoys us to the fullest, even in our undies or when we have boogers, but I found the tone just too irreverent. It's like the difference between me enjoying my kids' antics and not appreciating when they yell in my face. You can't have a devotional that's not all about God, really. And you can't have a personal book that lacks personal experiences. Frankly I was bummed out by parts of it. Probably the only thing that stood out about the book was the (sadly controversial) idea that two people who love each other, want to build each other up and build a life together is consistent with the Lord's command that we should love one another, no matter what kind of underwear the two people wear.

This is a great book to go with your Advent calendar. There are readings for morning and evening. They begin December 1 and end January 6. A perfect book to read when you first wake up or right

before you go to buy. It has humor, faith and it talks about how good the season is. It isn't overly mushy so you don't have to worry about "heavy-handed" reading at all. It's also quite funny. The humor hooks you and keeps you wanting to come back for more. It avoids being overly religious but does bring up God, His word and his aura around us. There is also a calendar that gives suggestions about what you can do during the holiday season to make it more special. This book is well worth picking up.

Can't say enough good things about this book. Made me laugh, cry and truly contemplate the season in a way I haven't done before. Bought it for my entire spiritual group and we took the journey together. Made it even more special. I don't know the author. I grew up in the United Church of Christ. This made me want to revisit my roots.

The format of this book is really well thought out and designed to help readers take very necessary pauses during the holiday season. There is a calendar for each week which include simple tasks to bring intentionality. Here are a few examples: Day 1-Go get your Advent calendar. Start opening! Day 2-Open the next door on your calendar. Stare at the others with longing. Don't cheat. Day 3-Put a star in your room that you can see in the dark. Fall asleep staring at it. Day 4-Call somebody fun and make plans for a favorite Christmas tradition: to bake a cookie, to sing, a carol, to trim a tree. Day 5-Call somebody and say something rare and important to them. I really like the calendar tasks. They add a deeper dimension to the holidays and nudge the reader towards being more relational. There are 25 morning and evening readings for the Christmas season, which the church often calls Advent. Each include a Scripture, the author's thoughts/reflections, and a prayer. There are an additional 12 readings for immediately following Christmas, which the church refers to as Christmastide. This means that altogether getting through this book in the format it is written will take five weeks and two days. It isn't at all hard to make these daily readings part of an already busy routine as they are fairly short and to the point. My disappointment comes with the author's thoughts and reflections. Some of them I like. Others, not so much. There are some that stray from my belief system entirely. A few are laced with sarcasm. I didn't experience this initially. I had to dig further into the readings before the cringing began. While I like the format of this book and find some of the readings touching, there are too many that I would have to skip over, for me to recommend this book to other Christians.

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