

10 DUMB THINGS SMART CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

is my latest book in the spiritual formation category. It was finally released today (that's author speak for the long wait between finishing a manuscript and finally seeing it released to the public). I think you will find it to be a careful and approachable look at ten of the most dangerous spiritual urban legends of our day.

I call these dumb ideas spiritual urban legends because like all urban legends, they're widely believed and quickly passed on by otherwise smart people who hear them, think it makes sense, and then pass it on without checking the facts – in this case, checking to see what the Bible actually says about these issues.

But unlike the typical urban legend, spiritual urban legends are dangerous to our spiritual health. They don't just misrepresent the facts, they set us up for profound disappointment and disillusionment with God when he doesn't come through on a promise he never made.

Here is a list of the big ten. See if you don't agree with me that lots of us have come to think and believe these things – so much so that calling them dumb ideas is a bit of a fashion (and friendship) risk.

- 1. Faith Can Fix Anything**
- 2. Forgiving Means Forgetting**
- 3. A Godly Home Guarantees Godly Kids**
- 4. God Has A Blueprint For My Life**
- 5. Christians Shouldn't Judge**
- 6. Everything Happens For A Reason**
- 7. Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide**
- 8. God Brings Good Luck**
- 9. A Valley Means A Wrong Turn**
- 10. Dead People Go To A Better Place**

1. Faith Can Fix Anything

John's faith and Susan's cancer – Why positive thinking can't change anything - The big problem with faith in faith - How the English language mucks up everything - How faith sometimes makes things worse - One story you can bet the kids in Sunday school will never hear - The one thing faith can always fix - What a geographical moron and a GPS have in common with a life of faith

2. Forgiving Means Forgetting

Four goofy ideas about forgiveness - The myth of a forgetful God - The two realms of forgiveness - Are justice and forgiveness mutually exclusive? - The strange math of score keeping—why it is nearly always inaccurate - The power of a good mirror - Something for Calvinists and Arminians to fight about - The prayer of Permission - Why you might want to take a sin walk—and how God will meet you there

3. A Godly Home Guarantees Godly Kids

Why Don and Sharon hate it when their friends pull out the pictures - Mike and Rhonda's head-in-the-sand optimism - The one promise lots of parents count on that isn't really a promise—and why it doesn't say what most people think it says - How B. F. Skinner snuck into our churches - Mitch's foolish pride - How Ten Rules for Raising Godly Kids became Three Suggestions for Surviving Parenthood - Why bad kids often make great adults

4. God Has a Blueprint for My Life

Why does the search for God's will feel like an Easter egg hunt? - Why a blueprint is a bad metaphor for God's will—and why a game plan is a great metaphor for God's will - Is there a reason why the New Testament ignores the kind of decisions we typically stress over? - Why God doesn't do consulting, and what happens when we think he does - How obedience makes everything (even some pretty lousy decisions) better

5. Christians Shouldn't Judge

How to get your non-Christians friends to quote the Bible - Why "Do not judge" doesn't mean what most people think it means - When and how the idea of tolerance changed from "You have the right to be wrong" into "Nobody is wrong" - Log-in-eye disease - Did God really forget to put some important stuff in the Bible? - Why it's a bad idea to judge non-Christians by Christian standards - Are judgment and grace incompatible?

6. Everything Happens for a Reason

Nancy's cancer ; Happy talk and other stupid things people say - How Romans 8:28 became the most misunderstood and misquoted verse in the Bible - Two conditions most people don't seem to notice - Are self-inflicted wounds God's doing? - Why Murphy matters - Can a bad thing be a good thing? - Why we might want Jesus to wait a while before coming back - The power in a path called obedience

7. Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide

The one type of person I've never been able to help - The musings of a tax dodger - A Jiminy Cricket code of ethics—why so many people trust it and why that's not a smart thing to do - How our conscience is more like a thermostat than a thermometer - Blind spots and bad software -

What heart disease does to our conscience - The one thing everyone's conscience does with unerring accuracy

8. God Brings Good Luck

Why I worry when someone angles to be last in line - Tim's rather "unusual" choice of words - The high price of unrealistic and unfounded promises - Job's wife and Asaph's journal ; Eddie Haskell Christians—do they really think God is stupid? - Do we? - Why it's never a good idea to judge a king's banquet by the finger food - One cliché that's not only wrong but flat-out absurd - Why an abundant life might not be so abundant

9. A Valley Means a Wrong Turn

Why my Dark Years had nothing to do with a wrong turn. - How extended valleys can make our friends' advice nearly worthless - Three simple but profound fog-cutting questions - The kind of valley we never want to leave prematurely - Shortcuts we don't want to take, even if they work - The day a bunch of guys with iron chariots proved to be stronger than a bunch of guys with God on their side - What to do when God says, "Get someone else to help you"

10. Dead People Go to a Better Place

How to start a mini riot - The truth about wicked Uncle Ernie - Funeral assurances and the frantic search for a nod-to-God - Blame Jesus - The myth behind the myth - A rather testy e-mail - How and when did obedience become an extra-credit assignment? - Why Mickey Cohen couldn't be a Christian gangster - The big difference between struggling and setting up camp - The one tell-tale sign of whether or not we love God