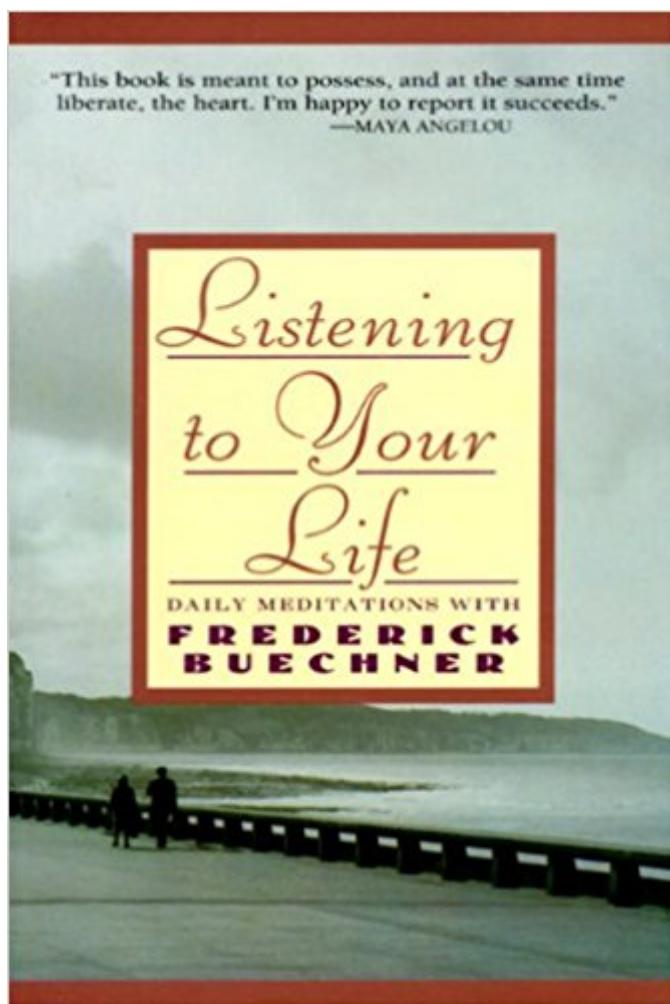


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# Listening To Your Life: Daily Meditations With Frederick Buechner



## **Synopsis**

Daily meditations taken from the works of an acclaimed novelist, essayist, and preacher who has articulated what he sees with a freshness and clarity and energy that hails our stultified imaginations.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Daily meditations taken from the works of an acclaimed novelist, essayist, and preacher who "has articulated what he sees with a freshness and clarity and energy that hails our stultified imaginations."--The New York Times Book Review

Frederick Buechner, author of more than thirty works of fiction and nonfiction, is an ordained Presbyterian minister. He has been a finalist for both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award and was honored by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His most recent work is *Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABCs of Faith*.

I will admit, at first I didn't like this devotional. I started in the middle of the year, and the first several devotional entries I had read seemed unrelated to Christianity. They were well-written, and intelligently spoken, mind you, but it almost seemed like one of those intellectual devotionals. And I tend to be very picky about devotionals. Watered-down, Christian Lite devotionals either bore me to tears or are so disconnected from a real life that they become useless. So, after those initial

devotional entries, I will confess, the devotional happened to fall under my bedside and I actually forgot about it. The other day, I was cleaning, discovered it beneath my bed, and read the daily entry, and loved it. Then a few days later, I got one of those "intellectually written but seemingly unrelated to Christianity" entries. I gave this a lot of thought and it can be viewed in at least two ways:1. The devotional entries, being taken from Buechner's writings, are sometimes taken out of a larger context that, placed as they are within the devotional, lose some of the depth of their meaning. This makes the devotional appear inconsistent and somewhat awkward. Sometimes you get a devotional about the Christian life, sometimes you hear about Buechner waiting to get his hair cut, reading a magazine article about such-and-such a person, and the event just ends without being connected to a larger principle or meaning.or2. This is a devotional about a human being, and his life, as a Christian. Do we always think about Christianity and Christian principles every waking hour of every day? Of course not, unless you're obsessive. This is about Buechner engaging his life with intent, and living the Christian intentional life with depth. Sometimes Buechner talks about Christianity, and sometimes about something else, but it's always well written and thoughtful. I get the vibe that I'm reading a really great blog. The other devotional I read alongside this one is Henri Nouwen's "Bread for the Journey," and then I feel like between these two, I get some really great food for thought with my morning coffee. And to be honest, I really struggled with giving it five stars or four stars. The entries that are about Christianity are five star entries, hands down. They are excellent and real, sometimes gritty and always honest. But there are just some entries that leave me scratching my head, because I just don't understand why they're in a devotional, and I feel that should be worth the subtraction of one star. The reason why I decided not to rate this four stars is because even those entries that leave me scratching my head have such wonderful prose, that I enjoy studying them for their literary value, even if I might not particularly get a life lesson from it. Either that, or I'm a softy and an optimist, and when in doubt, I assume the best about someone else. Either way, I recommend this devotional.

To quote Maya Angelou, "This book is meant to possess, and at the same time liberate, the heart". I agree that it does exactly that. I was not familiar with Buechner's works until recently when I became the organist in a Presbyterian Church and the pastor frequently quoted him. I thought I'd start out small, with a book of daily meditations and then move on to his larger works if I enjoyed the smaller works. This is a compilation of quotes from many of Buechner's works, one for each day of the year. Unlike many daily meditations, Buechner's words do not tell you what to think or believe. They inspire you to think on your own, many times very differently from what you might expect. They

challenge, encourage, and give you pause. Some are very brief, less than half a page; others cover almost two pages. Some are very funny, like the one about Zaccheus. I have started reading them to my husband every morning. It's a good way to 'jump start' the day. My husband actually picked the book up and read it straight through before I had a chance to get to it. I occasionally flip through the book and just read whatever I come to, usually in the middle of the day when I have a moment to myself. I am never disappointed, finding something each time that brings new awareness of God's immanence. I would highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to search his/her soul to new depths.

This had daily selections from Buechner books. I find that many people quote Buechner, but maybe fewer actually read him. These selections give the reader a chance to read a small selection that is taken from his various books. It's written in the format of a daily devotion book. Some of the passages won't make sense to someone who hasn't read Buechner, such as one that talks specifically about a character from one of his fiction works. That's a minor issue as often someone can get the gist of what's being said. I've had students borrow my copy in order to do an on-the-spot devotional reading. I've rebound mine two or three times because I use it so much. It looks ragged now, but I've added a spiral binding to it now and it holds together. That's to say that not only do I like it, there is enough room to cut off the binding and add a plastic binding without messing with the margins.

I'm buying this to give to friends now - Buechner has a fresh approach to how we live our lives as Christians from his many writings, and he inspires me to ponder everyday life with new purpose. Words are well chosen - wonderful examples - paints vivid pictures with his language. He is one of my new "favorites" !

This is a wonderful book to read one piece each day, as it was designed to be read. I appreciate Buechner's writing, his theology. This is a great sampling of many of his other books, which I must try to get my hands on now. Each day's offering in "Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations" stands alone well and provides food for thought to start the day with.

I have really liked other of Buechner's non-fiction, so supportive of searchers. I got this because I like to read something brief each day (my only consistent spiritual "discipline"). Many selections were well-chosen, but too many were lifted from fiction which supposes one has read it. Although I

could still get a little something out of it, I found it irritating that one needed such a context for it to really understand. I wish that Buechner would have himself written a daily devotional, since there are too few that have the depth and inclusiveness of his writing. I gave it three stars not because of Buechner but because of the choices of passages.

I love this book. It's nice to just open and read a passage when I have a sliver of time. (I have small children.) His writing is poetic. He explores possibilities rather than doing that know-it-all thing that I find in so much Christian writing.

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