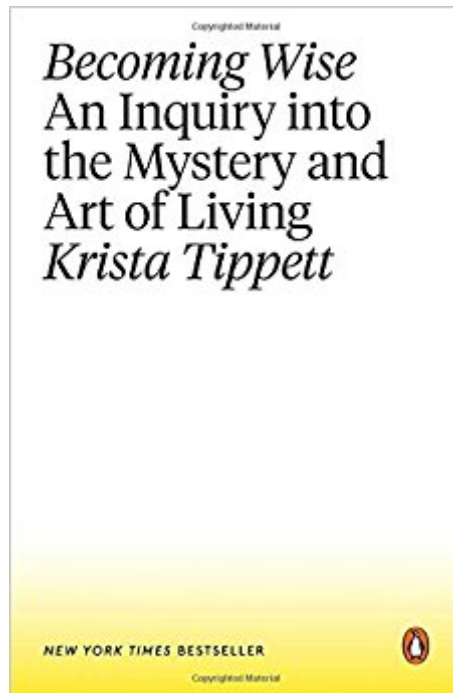




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Becoming Wise: An Inquiry Into The Mystery And Art Of Living



Synopsis

"I'm not sure there's such a thing as the cultural 'center,' nor that it's very interesting if it exists. But left of center and right of center, in the expansive middle and heart of our life together, most of us have some questions left alongside our answers, some curiosity alongside our convictions. This book is for people who want to take up the great questions of our time with imagination and courage, to nurture new realities in the spaces we inhabit, and to do so expectantly and with joy." In *Becoming Wise*, Krista Tippett has created a master class in living for a fractured world. Fracture, she says, is not the whole story of our time. The enduring question of what it means to be human has become inextricable from the challenge of who we are to one another. She insists on the possibility of personal depth and common life for this century, nurtured by science and "spiritual technologies" with civility and love as muscular public practice. And, accompanied by a cross-disciplinary dream team of a teaching faculty, she shows us how. "Krista Tippett [is] a modern-day Simone Weil. . . . *Becoming Wise* is a tremendously vitalizing read in its totality—a wellspring of nuance and dimension amid our Flatland of artificial polarities, touching on every significant aspect of human life with great gentleness and a firm grasp of human goodness."—Maria Popova, *Brain Pickings*

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Customer Reviews

"If you measure the worth of a book by the volume of scribbles you pen in the margins, the stars emphatically drawn, and the sentences underlined, Krista Tippett's *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*—a compendium of wisdom, at once intimate

and expansive. It stands a serious shot of emerging both splattered and cherished. Tippet, the Peabody Award-winning radio host and National Humanities Medalist, is a master of what she terms "generous listening," an act "powered by curiosity, and a willingness to be surprised, to let go of assumptions and take in ambiguity." Chicago Tribune "Most of us can only dream of the dinner parties Krista Tippet could put together. We're lucky, then, that her new book is the next best thing to an invitation to sit down, make ourselves at home and prepare for a mind-expanding exploration of what it means to be human... Not light reading, but inspiring reading, for those willing to pull up a chair." Minneapolis Star Tribune "Becoming Wise challenges all forms of dogma, in science, politics and philosophy as well as religion, and it affirms the holiness of the body and the glory of the inquiring mind. While our dominant media suggest that humans are incorrigibly selfish and greedy and cruel, Tippet and her conversation partners demonstrate that the longing to lead a good life, a moral life, remains powerful and pervasive in our day." Washington Post "This is not just a selection of greatest hits. Instead, rooted in Tippet's own keen insight, she provides an interlocking frame based on five themes: words, the body, love, faith, and hope. With dips into Tippet's childhood and early career, readers are embraced by her own struggle, vulnerability, and thirst for meaning. As researcher and TED-talk phenom Brené Brown told Tippet, "Hope is a function of struggle." Tippet's striving here is the grist for creative genius. Publishers Weekly (starred review) "A thoughtful examination of what it means to be fully human and aware, open eyed in the face of 'the darkness that is woven ineluctably into the light of life.'" Shepherd Express "We need Krista Tippet's voice and wisdom now more than ever. She has elevated the art of listening and the practice of being present in a way that is both accessible and soulful. Becoming Wise is what I've been waiting for from Krista - the opportunity to learn from her and her experiences. This is brilliant thinking, beautiful storytelling, and practical insight. You won't forget what you read here." - Brené Brown, Ph.D., New York Times bestselling author of *Rising Strong* "Krista Tippet's ecumenical generosity speaks both to high moral standards and to diverse ways of conceptualizing and achieving them. Her trade has been listening, and from that listening has emerged a deep understanding of the mind and the heart and the curious bridges between them." This is a book about kindness and forgiveness and the insight that is contingent on abandoning monolithic paradigms. Becoming Wise is an ambitious title, but in culling the wisdom of others, Tippet achieves a distinct and lovely wisdom of her own.

Andrew Solomon – “A thoughtful chronicle of spiritual discovery. A hopeful consideration of the human potential for enlightenment.”

• Kirkus Reviews – “I am a great admirer of Krista Tippett, who has spent years using her mind as a gentle but probing research tool into the beautiful, perilous, mysterious realm of the human soul. With this book, she has gathered all her years of learning and listening to create a masterpiece of philosophical and spiritual reflection. About halfway through the book, I stopped flagging pages and highlighting passages when I realized I was highlighting nearly every word. This entire book is filled with things I never want to forget. The only remedy will be to keep it near me, always.”

• Elizabeth Gilbert – “After over a decade doing in-depth interviews and accumulating spiritual knowledge on her popular podcast *On Being*, Krista Tippett pulls from that well of conversations to reconstruct her trail of investigation into the nature of wisdom. She tells her own life journey—her Oklahoma upbringing, her wide-eyed years in divided Cold War Germany, her decision to attend Yale divinity school—alongside the spiritual evolution that came while hosting the podcast. Pulling together and going beyond the accumulated knowledge of her interviews, Tippett’s book is an incantatory trip into the paradoxical and profound.”

• Publishers Weekly (staff pick) – “Krista Tippett has tirelessly reminded us of the perennial challenge, depth and complexity of the spiritual quest. At this pivotal moment in history, when on all sides religion is being so flagrantly abused, this marvellous book will inspire, excite and reinvigorate the reader.”

• Karen Armstrong – “Krista Tippett is one of America’s ablest listeners, and in this book she assembles many of the people she has listened to and uses their example, and her own, to show us how many surprising and idiosyncratic paths still remain towards what even the most secular among us can agree should still be called enlightenment.”

• Adam Gopnik – “When President Obama gave Krista Tippett the coveted National Humanities Medal, he praised her for thoughtfully delving into the mysteries of human existence. This book is yet another piece of evidence of the truth behind those words. Grounded in Tippett’s life of conversation, the book offers more, much more than a chronicle of her award-winning public radio program, *On Being*. In *Becoming Wise*, Tippett not only gives us the voices of the remarkable people with whom she’s conversed on-air. She speaks her own voice as well, a voice informed by her lifelong search for truth and meaning. Wisdom is a communal creation. Tippett is rare in her ability to host a far-flung community of luminaries, listeners and readers, who together uncover the wisdom that lies within and between us.”

• Parker J. Palmer, author of *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, *The Courage to Teach*, *A Hidden Wholeness*,

and Let Your Life Speak From the Hardcover edition.

Krista Tippett is a Peabody Award-winning broadcaster and New York Times bestselling author. In 2014, she received the National Humanities Medal at the White House for "thoughtfully delving into the mysteries of human existence." She is the host of the public radio program and podcast On Being and Curator of the Civil Conversations Project (civilconversationsproject.org).

I'm not sure what I like best about Krista Tippett: her finely-tuned ability to ask just the right question in just the right way at just the right time, her capacity for synthesizing complex ideas and making them accessible to commoners like myself, or her extraordinary ability to capture her thoughts (and those of others) through the written and spoken word. She truly is a modern sage and I feel lucky to have discovered her through her On Being podcast. I enjoyed this book so much I bought a hard copy and an audio copy (so I could listen to her unique and beautiful delivery of the material). This is the kind of book I need to read and re-read in order to deepen my appreciation for the wisdom it contains. What an incredible work from an incredible woman. Thank you for the gift of this book, Ms. Tippett. I'm buying copies for those of my friends who enjoy plumbing the depths of the human soul and contemplating the important questions in life. After all, what else is there?

As others have already mentioned, this is very thoughtful and profound contribution. Tippett addresses how we interact with ourselves, each other, and the universe, if not more. The book is infused with nods to her personal journal, which makes the book so much more real and enjoyable. If there's any message, it's that we need to listen more: listen to ourselves, our hearts, and those with whom we strongly disagree. Ultimately, I think this book is about hope for us, as people and tribes, and societies. No surprise HOPE is her last chapter. Even though her radio program, On Being, is not this way, I worried that this book would be too much about God or an effort to proselytize in some way. It is not either of those things. It's a mature, honest, lived perspective on what wisdom is, where it comes from, and what it can mean for us. Scientists, skeptics, and nonbelievers will find a great deal to relate to in this book. If I have any critique, it's that Tippet bases her vision and effort on the great people of the world: the scientists, religious persons, and leaders of all sorts. It's no surprise that their work and words inspire. But Tippett pays little attention to the despots, the true criminals, and those who choose ignorance over thought (perhaps a large proportion?). She nods to her abusive parents, but seems to let them off the hook. I have to wonder what she'd write if she were down in the trenches facing the lesser of our collective angels. There is

wisdom in such places and experiences, too. Wisdom of equal import, I think. That said, the book is super, a must read, a must gift

Perhaps, like me, you've listened to *On Being* on your local NPR station or by podcast for years. Perhaps you listen not only to the gracefully edited version of the program but also to the messier, more intimate, unedited versions. If so, you will love this book. Perhaps you've never heard of the author or her program but, like Solomon of old, you yearn to be wise. You too will find this book a refreshing stream in the desert. Krista Tippett knows the power of a good first sentence. She has commented on how arrested she was by John O'Donohue's "It's strange to be here." Or Reinhold Niebuhr's "Man is his own most vexing problem." Her own first sentence reads, "I'm a person who listens for a living." She begins with "I," not with a more distant journalistic third person voice. The felicitous phrase "listens for a living" refers to far more than her job. It announces that she has a calling, one that involves living itself, and that she is seeking "voices not shouting to be heard." The search for wisdom can't be separated from the search for self-awareness. The subject and the seeker are one in this case. Like both of Tippett's other books, this one is an example of what Michelle Herman calls "stealth memoir." ([...]) It is "An Inquiry" as the subtitle states into "Mystery and the Art of Living." It is also an inquiry into a process of understanding ideas in relationship to human beings who explore them and, at their best, embody them. The gerund "Becoming" (like "Being" in the title of the radio program) can't be separated from Krista Tippett herself. Pursuing wisdom in public over the course of the last twelve years could be an overwhelming and confusing experience. After interviewing hundreds of people, reading not only their books but digesting other interviews and videos in preparation for conversation, the author might be forgiven if she never stepped back long enough to look at the whole. How does she make sense of all of it? By choosing five themes: words, flesh, love, faith, and hope. Anyone with a passing knowledge of the Bible will hear echoes of the prologue to the Gospel of John ("The Word became flesh. . .") and the famous "love chapter" I Corinthians 13. However, since these chapters are containers for people of many faiths and of no faith, these words describe no narrow orthodoxy but expand capaciously to fit all of the above. Each chapter includes large sections of interviews excerpted from the online transcripts of *On Being* interviews. Again, this could feel cumbersome or repetitive to readers. What prevents that from happening, however, is the personal story of the author doing with her readers what she asks her subjects to do in radio interviews: reflect on how they themselves make meaning, starting with the very first question, "what was the spiritual or religious background of your childhood?"

As a lover of the memoir genre quite aware of the

accusations critics have made against it, narcissism leading the way. For that reason, I love *stealth memoir*, the kind that doesn't announce itself and is quiet. The kind that includes both the author and the reader but provides what Parker Palmer would call a "third thing," a subject much greater than either, a subject big enough to inspire the kind of humility, curiosity, and resilience that leads to wisdom. The memoir sections inside this book illustrate one of the most profound truths about wisdom: it can't be grasped. It's never once and done. It can't be extracted or abstracted indefinitely. Like the relationship between grandfather and granddaughter and father and daughter, it keeps moving, changing, and growing. And it ends with hope.

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