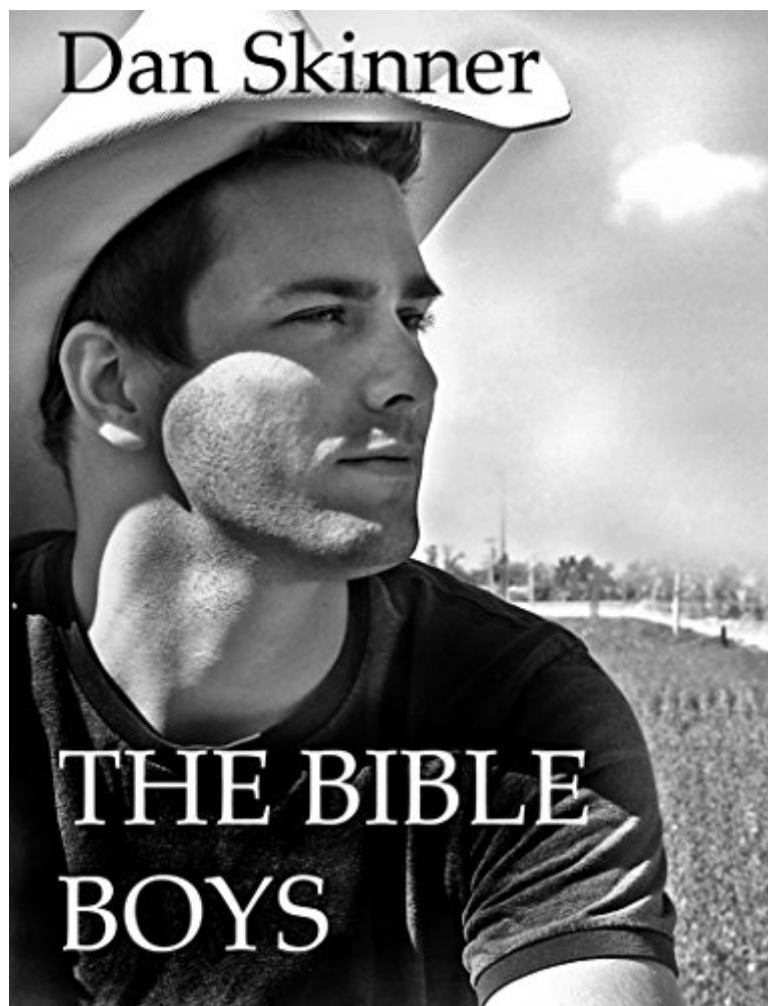


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The Bible Boys



Synopsis

A Sin. An Abomination. Teenagers Caleb and Matthew had been told by the radical fundamentalist church that dominated their families' lives that a love like theirs—between two boys—was unnatural and forbidden. That it would damn them forever. The religion controlled their families like puppets, watched their every move, made keeping a secret almost impossible. They had only one chance to be together...and it would be a daring one right under the noses of the very people who would condemn them... The Bible Boys By Dan Skinner

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Customer Reviews

This was a short, sweet, story with characters who came of age at the same time I did. Born in 1954 into a very restrictive, cold and punishing family, Matthew lives a sheltered, cloistered, life with no personal privacy or joy. Matthew is even shunned by the church members and clergy in his close knit church community because they sense he is somehow different. His life is extremely lonely and

unhappy. Meeting a newcomer to his church, which is more of a cult than a typical church, he becomes more aware of how the rest of the world lives and functions and he falls in love. The narrative truly paints a picture of the naiveté and heartache of a young man trapped in a time and place not of his choosing. When the door of his heart opens, the door of his closet can't be too far behind. This is a tender love story that makes you hope for all young people who might be trapped in stifling and soul crushing situations that they, too, might find a way out. Thank you, Mr. Skinner for another fine read.

Another Dan Skinner book that made me uncomfortable. Another Dan Skinner book that I love. Instead of reviewing the parts that made me uncomfortable I'll concentrate on what I loved. One word: Caleb! Every step Caleb took towards earning Matt's trust was well thought out. He cultivated their friendship by taking Matt under his wing. He had a way of making Matt feel comfortable while the rest of the Bible Boys and the pastors ostracized him relentlessly. And when Caleb voiced his opinions on the church and their hateful teachings, he was showing Matt it was ok to disagree with those in authority, validating Matt's feelings that Matt had never expressed to anyone. Most importantly Caleb showed Matt a whole new world that encompassed all forms of love. He revealed what the world could be by sharing his history of the love he experienced in his own life. This is the part that I loved. This is the part where I wept. I wept for the love that Matt never experienced but more importantly I wept for the love that Caleb gave to him and the love that Matt was able to experience, enjoy and then share. Even though this book was short, it was just long enough for my heart to melt. I love this author.

Review also posted on Back Porch Reader blog and goodreads. The beauty of books is that they give us a framework to imagine another way of life and to walk, for a little while, in a different pair of shoes. Even shoes that aren't so comfortable. I love Dan's writing more and more with every book of his I read. Thanks to Dan's skill as a storyteller, I was able to put on some extraordinarily uncomfortable shoes and imagine life in a different era and in such a strict household and church, and in a school where I didn't, and couldn't, fit in no matter how hard I tried. This was both painful and powerful. It made my heart hurt but it also gave me hope. It was also a beautiful and timeless coming of age story of accepting one's true self, embracing those differences, breaking out of the molds set by the world around us, questioning authority, and the blossoming of first love. I wasn't ready for the book to end. I wanted the next chapters where Matthew and Caleb took their next

steps together and the promise that theirs was a Happily Ever After. I'm a greedy reader...I didn't want to put my imagination to work to come up with that HEA on my own.

it creates heroes. I think everyone needs a Caleb to escape from a hellish life. Or, at least, have a Caleb to help him make the decision to take the necessary steps to quit that life. I love the books of Dan Skinner. The language is wonderful, there are so many phrases I printed out as quotes, hanging above my desk. Also the incredibly good discovery here of how your body works, and what on earth is that body part suddenly doing sticking up in the air and not wanting to go down? These descriptions aren't just any hot descriptions, no, it's far more, it's what we all experienced (if you have such a thing sticking up, that is) at one point in our life. It's recognition.

The Bible Boys touched a nerve as I was reading it. I recognize this type of church, been subjected to those narrow views and witnessed the hypocrisy first hand. I felt angry and sad for the main character, Matthew. Matthew has never known anything but the church and its restrictive teachings. His parents have drunk the cool-aid and force Matthew to toe the line or feel the effects of Proverbs 13:24. To make matters worse, Matthew is not handsome, no, he is pretty and being pretty in this particular environment just makes matters that much worse. Matthew knows he is different in other ways too and he must keep these feelings hidden at all costs. When Caleb and his family join Matthews church, he can't help but sneak glances at the new boy but seeing as how Caleb seems to fit in with The Bible Boys (the churches boys youth group) he keeps his distance as he does with the rest of the congregation. It is just safer that way. The Bible Boys is more than a cautionary tale about radical fundamentalist beliefs and their effect on those who they see as different. It is also a coming of age tale, about discovering ones sexuality, and finding love and hope for a better life when you least expect it. I enjoyed this book as I have enjoyed all of Dan Skinner's books. He elicits a variety of emotions from me with each story he writes. The ending of the story alluded to a better life for Matthew and felt hopeful, but I still had questions and wanted more. I will admit that this is probably due to my inquisitive nature, although I suspect it is more to do with the talented author that was able to pull me deeply into his story and make me care for his characters.

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