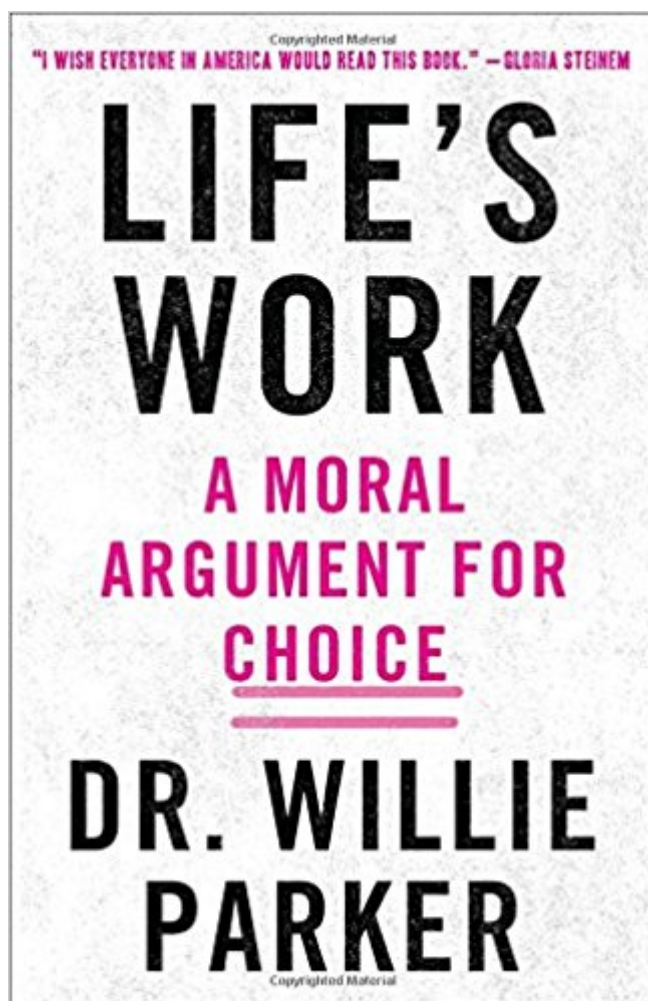


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Life's Work: A Moral Argument For Choice



Synopsis

In *Life's Work*, an outspoken, Christian reproductive justice advocate and abortion provider (one of the few doctors to provide such services to women in Mississippi and Alabama) pulls from his personal and professional journeys as well as the scientific training he received as a doctor to reveal how he came to believe, unequivocally, that helping women in need, without judgment, is precisely the Christian thing to do. Dr. Willie Parker grew up in the Deep South, lived in a Christian household, and converted to an even more fundamentalist form of Christianity as a young man. But upon reading an interpretation of the Good Samaritan in a sermon by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he realized that in order to be a true Christian, he must show compassion for all women regardless of their needs. In 2009, he stopped practicing obstetrics to focus entirely on providing safe abortions for the women who need help the most—often women in poverty and women of color—and in the hot bed of the pro-choice debate: the South. He soon thereafter traded in his private practice and his penthouse apartment in Hawaii for the life of an itinerant abortion provider, focusing most recently on women in the Deep South. In *Life's Work*, Dr. Willie Parker tells a deeply personal and thought-provoking narrative that illuminates the complex societal, political, religious, and personal realities of abortion in the United States from the unique perspective of someone who performs them and defends the right to do so every day. He also looks at how a new wave of anti-abortion activism, aimed at making incremental changes in laws and regulations state by state, are slowly chipping away at the rights of women to control their own lives. In revealing his daily battle against mandatory waiting periods and bogus rules governing the width of hallways, Dr. Parker uncovers the growing number of strings attached to the right to choose and makes a powerful Christian case for championing reproductive rights.

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Customer Reviews

"Life's Work is a vivid and companionable memoir of a remarkable life." (The New Yorker) "the most crucial text we have on the subject of choice" read Dr. Parker's book cover to cover and then pass it on, so that we're all prepared for the next moral argument with grace and power. (Lena Dunham for Lenny Letter) "Uniquely informed, extraordinarily empathic, and faith-deepened. At [the] crossroads, Parker determined that the truly Christian thing to do regarding unwanted pregnancy is to give women the help they need." (Booklist, STARRED review) Parker writes from a place without judgment, and his voice resonates with compassion that is far too often lacking in discussions of abortion. A thought-provoking read of many sides of the issue. (Library Journal, Starred Review) "At Planned Parenthood, our motto is 'care, no matter what'; words that might as well have been written with Dr. Willie Parker in mind. At a moment when reproductive health and rights are under attack like never before, Dr. Parker's book is a beacon of hope and a call to action. In it, he transcends politics and cliché to show readers the world through the eyes of a doctor who approaches his work with humility, compassion, and defiance. Life's Work is inspiring, surprising, and very much needed. This book will change lives." (Cecile Richards, President of Planned Parenthood Federation of America) "It says something deep about Life's Work and its author, Dr. Willie Parker, that you learn first not about him, but the women he serves as patients. As a poor southern boy who became a great doctor, he shows us how race and sex bias limit and kill, how possible it is to undo that bias with kindness, and how Christianity might actually include women. I wish everyone in America would read this book." (Gloria Steinem) "[A] compelling memoir a must-read for policymakers, reproductive-rights activists and anyone who's had trouble articulating their support for a woman's right to choose." (Ms. Magazine) "Dr. Willie Parker shares with readers in his powerful and insightful memoir, Life's Work, that 'the abortion clinic is a woman's world.' With keen insight and passion, he allows us to see that world through the eyes of a compassionate, caring male doctor—one who loves justice, who cares about female agency, who embraces gender equality, who believes women should have access to reproductive justice, and that includes abortion. Whether you are pro-choice or pro-life, this is a book that everyone

should read. It offers us a clear and compassionate understanding of what all women and girls face as we claim our right to make decisions about our bodies. — bell hooks, author of *All About Love: New Visions and Feminism is for Everybody*) — “Dr. Willie Parker’s compassion and respect for his patients, as well as his profound commitment to social justice, shine through this beautifully written memoir. This book puts to rest the notion that a deeply held religious faith is incompatible with a staunch support for legal and accessible abortion. *Life’s Work* will be an eye-opener for those not familiar with the fortitude required to be an abortion provider in the contemporary United States, especially in the South. — For those already committed to reproductive justice, Dr. Parker’s account of his journey will serve as a much-needed source of renewed inspiration, as this beleaguered field faces new challenges in the Trump era. — (Carole Joffe, author, *Dispatches from the Abortion Wars: The Costs of Fanaticism to Doctors, Patients and the Rest of Us*; professor, Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health, University of California, San Francisco.) — “Dr. Parker’s story is a wonderful account of how his belief and faith in both God and in humanity has led him to provide abortion: a medical service that is chastised by some as the evil. He explains in the most compelling way how, inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s telling of the story of the Good Samaritan, he has felt unable to turn away from women in need of help. Dr. Parker is a hero of our movement and, as a truly compassionate Christian advocate of women’s choice. I challenge everyone who believes that abortion doctors must be evil and immoral, or self-interested and profiteering, or privileged and exploitative, to read this book. Dr. Parker speaks from his heart and his words can’t fail to touch the heart of every reader. — (Ann Furedi, author of *The Moral Case for Abortion* and CEO of British Pregnancy Advisory Service.) “Valuable as both moral testimonial and as a medical memoir and sure to inspire heat as well as light.” (Kirkus Reviews) — “A bold stance on the moral imperative for safe and legal abortion. — (Color Lines)” “[An] imperative memoir... Parker refuses to cede the moral ground, making an impassioned case rooted in science, history, and theology for the sanctity of a woman’s autonomy over her own body.” (O Magazine) — “His book provides the language [doctors have] been searching for. — (Slate)

Dr. Willie Parker sits on the board of institutions at the forefront of the fight for reproductive justice, including as the chair-elect of the board of Physicians for Reproductive Health. He is the recipient of Planned Parenthood’s Margaret Sanger Award, an honor also bestowed upon Hillary Clinton and Jane Fonda, and appeared on *Ebony*’s Power 100 list. He has been featured

widely for his work, including in Slate, Jezebel, Cosmopolitan, NPR's Morning Edition, Salon, and more. While a fascinating profile on Dr. Parker in Esquire sparked national interest in 2014, he is now the subject of Trapped (Trilogy Films), a documentary about the legal battle to keep abortion clinics in the South open.

I Enjoyed this book thoroughly ! I am biased as I am pro-choice, but I was so glad to hear from a provider of color in the South. We have so few of these, and we need to hear from them and support them. I cried at some parts, and felt inspired during reading many stories. I felt so frustrated to hear that some religious extremist still feel that terrorist words and actions are the way to change peoples minds. I hope people who read this will understand how difficult a plight women have seeking abortion care which is their right to do.

Tough Read for Pro Lifers If you are a pro choice this will simply reinforce your beliefs. If pro life then it might seem oxymoronic that a physician could claim to be a Christian from a fundamentalist background and also be a abortion provider. That is what makes it a good book for the lifers to read. The book is short on science, short on philosophical argument, and short on Biblical quotes. (Which by the way for the lifers out there the Bible despite all the rhetoric is amazingly quiet about a subject that seems to define the Evangelical mvnt.) What Dr Parker does is approach the subject from the viewpoint of the woman seeking an abortion. Her, needs, her fears, her aspirations, her wishes, her health, etc. These are sorely neglected in the pro life rhetoric that I keep hearing. It so seems that the label pro birth rather than pro life would be much more appropriate. The woman that is pregnant appears to be merely the carrier of the "life" they want to protect. Her needs and values need to be brought into the discussion and this book does a good job of doing so.

Dr. Willie Parker lives his faith through the compassionate care he provides for women. His religious faith, his intellect, and his skill as a doctor all join together in his work.

Bought this for a friend. She loves it!

Excellent -- every legislator who wants to legislate women's bodies should have to read this book!

The clarity of Dr. Parker's words are a revelation.

What a powerful, amazing book. Dr. Parker has so eloquently written all I have felt as a health care provider and so much more. During these troubled times he makes the case for caring for all who need it with only kindness and compassion, and absent all judgement or shaming. Thank you, Dr. Parker. I will be recommending your book to all of my colleagues, and will gift my copy to my young adult daughter.

Just started reading this. Nice that there are people out there helping people that can't help themselves.

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