



Sober Mercies: How Love Caught Up with a Christian Drunk

Heather Harpham Kopp

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Where do you turn for hope when you already have the answer--but the answer isn't working?

As a long-time Christian, Heather Kopp never expected to become an out-of-control alcoholic who kept private stashes of booze all over the place--tucked behind books in her study, zipped into a special compartment in her oversized purse, at the back of her closet stuffed inside her boots.

Even as her career and marriage teetered on the brink, Kopp couldn't get a grip, desperately hiding the true extent of her drinking from the rest of the world--her husband included. During the day she wrote books about God and prayer and family. At night she'd locked herself in her bathroom to guzzle chardonnay.

For her, as for many Christians who struggle with addiction, overwhelming shame and confusion only made things worse. Why wasn't her faith enough to save her? Why didn't repentance, Bible reading and prayer work? Where was God?

Meanwhile, as she watched in horror, her grown son descended into his own nightmare of drugs and alcohol. She feared for his life, yet she couldn't stop drinking long enough to help him--or find a way out for herself.

Until the day everything changed.

Engaging, funny and bracingly honest, Kopp shares her remarkable journey into darkness...and back to the light again. Her story reveals the unique challenges and spiritual conundrums Christians face when they become ensnared in an addiction, and the redemption that's possible when we finally reach the end of ourselves.

If you love Jesus but shop too much, drink too much, eat too much, crush on men who aren't your husband, or otherwise fixate on doing things you hate but can't stop doing, **SOBER MERCIES** is for you.

As you follow Kopp's sincere, stumbling journey toward freedom and a deeply satisfying relationship with God, you'll find renewed hope--and practical steps of recovery--for your own journey.

Sober Mercies: How Love Caught Up with a Christian Drunk Details

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From Reader Review Sober Mercies: How Love Caught Up with a Christian Drunk for online ebook

Judith says

I don't know why I am fascinated with stories of addiction, but I am not alone as clearly they are very popular. I think if the story is well-written, as this one was, we feel such a strong sense of identification with people whose addictions rule their lives because we can see ourselves " there but for the grace of God, go I. . " While not addicted to any specific substance, I think most of us feel that too frequently our weaknesses of any kind are more in control of our lives than we would chose.

This author is delightful. While I usually run as fast as I can to get away from Christians who advertise their beliefs, I found this author so real and painfully human that her Christianity was just part of her wardrobe. She went to such great lengths to hide her alcoholism from all the people in her life who were so obviously aware of it. Some of it is very funny, like the time she bought a bunch of wine to hide from her husband and then had to go buy a bigger purse to carry it in, racing through the mall before he picked her up. She has a self-depracatory sense of humor and is very conscious of how self-righteous she was as a Christian, assuming that there was no problem she couldn't pray her way out of.

As a reader I found myself cheering her on. She is a person you want to succeed and I truly hope she still is.

Martha Thompson says

Heather Kopp could not be more open and honest about her journey from active alcoholic to her now joy filled and beautiful life as an alcoholic in recovery. This is a book of guidance for those suffering and the people who love them, but most of all it's a book about hope and the power of real faith.

Sarah says

I read this book in a day because I needed to read this book in a day. I got this book on the exact day, at the exact moment I needed to. And that was after everything from thunderstorms to raging inconsolable toddlers kept me from it. I have never doubted that God loves me and takes care of me and actively participates in my life. Books like this just make it glaringly, incontrovertibly obvious. Recommended for drunks, Christians, Christian drunks, Christian drunks whose middle name is Christians and have toddlers that won't go to sleep when mama is doing her best to stay sober.

Katherine Jones says

This brave, honest and wise memoir offers hope to Christians who discover that faith alone isn't always enough to save them from unhealthy habits. "Where do you turn for hope," Heather writes, "when you already have the answer, but it isn't working?" With startling honesty, she dives courageously into this highly charged question and delivers the answers she's discovered.

Sober Mercies is a well-crafted story in three parts. Parts 1 and 2 are sad and fascinating and so gripping you can hardly look away. Part 3, though, is where the real crux and power lie. With vibrant language, Heather talks frankly about everything from her hypocrisy (as she sat in on an intervention with her addicted son, for instance, while herself a secret, raging alcoholic) to sober sex. She brings you inside the skin of an alcoholic, exposing you to the horror, helplessness and apparent hopelessness of that particular hell.

Though I finished it in a matter of days, Sober Mercies isn't a quick read. I found myself pausing often to read and reread passages to allow their sobering impact sink in. I savored the countless aha moments, including this one:

“...if I was ever going to experience the kind of ongoing spiritual transformation I so desperately wanted, I would have to learn the difference between ascribing to a set of Christian beliefs that had no power to change me, and clinging daily to an experience of God's love and grace that could.”

And this: “If I wanted to learn how to live again, I needed to learn how to love people.”

Ah! Who among us doesn't need to learn that?

My own hope is that Sober Mercies finds a wider audience than merely alcoholics or those in recovery. I'd love to see Heather's story open doors to honest conversation in Christian circles, showing how to get real about so many of the problems that plague us. Depression. Mental illness. Eating disorders. Addictions to food, pornography, lust, gambling, materialism. Problems we typically look to faith to cure, and then despair when it fails to deliver.

We all have our issues. What Heather Kopp reveals in Sober Mercies is that it's impossible to talk about wholeness and healing without talking about grace. And that's very good news—no matter who you are.

Thanks to Hachette/Jericho Books for providing me a free copy to review. All opinions are mine.

Rich says

I have read thousands of books over the last 50 years, many of them very good, a few superb. And I have read more intently many in the last two years. I pay particular attention to books now because I have written several reviews, but even more so, because those that I write about affect me personally. But two books stand apart from all the others. Aside from the Bible, these two books have profoundly affected me, and in several different ways.

Emily Cook wrote *Weak and Loved*, and I had the privilege of reading a preview copy and writing a review. Her writing was gripping, realistic, and compelling. I read it in one day, literally spending 10 hours reading. As a parent I agonized with her in the long, unknown future of her daughter. I rejoiced with her in the answer to prayers, far beyond the miracle of Aggie, to the miracle of God working in Emily's heart.

And now Heather has written the second stand-out book. The writing is on par with Emily's, the story is just as riveting. But this one is so much closer to home for me. I am still reeling from the emotional impact (I may not be able to write about that for a while). I didn't expect this; but it is probably the highest compliment I can pay to Heather. As I read, I marked several places, “this is right on target” —not for her, but me! I began thinking how many quotes are so pertinent to me. Half way through I gave up, because there

were too many quotes to remember. As the days go by I will post a few of these quotes; they are too good not to share.

By opening her life to us as she relived the pain, struggle, hurt, anger, and more, she opened my heart for some needed searching and examining in some long forgotten recesses where I still struggle. Her Christian training had given her a sense of grace and all the intellectual support for understanding it. But her alcoholism exposed her need for grace in a different, more profound way. Not an intellectual appreciation, but experiencing God's grace at the deepest level, the bottom of the barrel (or bottle in her case).

She faced the double challenge of her own addiction, and that of her son. Either would be overwhelming for most people, but combined, it was not only a vicious cycle, it was one that seemed to offer no hope. And yet God's grace...

On a larger scale, her life story needs to be heard by those "comfortable" with church as usual. An encounter with God's grace is life-changing, not just a one time event, but a daily life-changing encounter. That is the whole point of Paul's letter to the Galatians!

Jesus "came to seek and save the lost"(Luke 19:10)— the lonely, the messy, the broken, the hurting, the outsiders, the victims, the volunteers (you need to read the book to catch that reference), the addict, the addict's family, the forgotten...

At the end I wanted to hug Dave and Heather and the rest of the family. To celebrate, to walk with them, to learn from them. But even more, I want to hug those who suffer or struggle, people who need that kind of hug. A hug that reassures of God's life-changing grace. They need someone to love them unconditionally. They need God's grace in its fullness, just as Heather does, just as I do.

Thank you, Heather, for such an important book—to me, and I am sure, to many others.

Charles says

I felt the story was self absorbed and lack depth about the recovery process. I was puzzled by a woman who has credentials as a Christian author did not clearly present the fundamentals of faith in Christ. If you have personal addiction issues I would recommend reading this and forming your own opinion.

Jack Kooyman says

I couldn't put it down once I started reading it. Heather's story of addiction to and recovery from alcohol is one that I think could benefit most, if not all, Christians who are struggling with their own brokenness and/or addictions. Heather tells her story in a way that I think most of us who struggle with some form of addiction or brokenness will appreciate. While her story is one of hope, it is not one without continuing challenges and struggles. Heather is a real person with real struggles who shares her true self in such a way that I think can encourage others to be more honest about their own struggles and brokenness and need for healing without fear or concern about being judged by fellow Christians. I was inspired and encouraged by Heather's story to be more open and honest with others about my own struggles and how God is healing and restoring me.

Joy Matteson says

Wow. I have never read a book on sobriety that was so difficult to put down. I so admire anyone's willingness to write about their personal journeys on the path to freedom from addiction, and Heather Kopp's story is no exception. She gets really real before her readers, including how difficult it is to be a Christian who is an addict; we set ourselves up for failure many a time. I really appreciated her distinction between sinful compulsions in a disease like alcoholism and sin itself. I dare you to put this book down--it will prove hard to do!

Brad Flynn says

I enjoyed the author's writing ability. The author communicates easily and not too wordy, well written. I was hoping for more on Jesus and his teachings of salvation through him alone. I know a lot of people will read this book, and I thought it could've been a better evangelist tool. That being said, I loved her honesty and her wit. I enjoyed the details of her battle with alcohol as they matched up with mine. I too am a Christian, and I sin with alcohol. My heart though is alarmed to the clear teachings that we can't continue in sin and still be called a Christian. This is where I struggle to see heather's honest confession and grace. But she says she has grace and I perhaps need to know God's desire is for us to repent, and He will give grace and mercy to do so...SO I love the book, was hesitant in some areas, but found it helpful and easy and spoke to me in times of my own addiction.

Debby says

Working in the recovery community, I noticed a direct spiritual connection with the 12 Steps to God but often, those in the church didn't get it. They didn't get addiction or understand the principles of the 12 Steps. Sober Mercies merges the church with the 12 Step community in a way that makes it clear there are no sides, or that we are on the same side: hope. Hope found in God through the 12 Steps of AA. Heather Kopp tells her story with honest clarity. She doesn't gloss over the ugly parts or lament over not being able to "pray away" the disease of addiction.

I've given away several copies of this book to help bring about an understanding of addiction from both perspectives: the church insider and the 12 Step community.

Emily Cook says

We all have little temptations.

We have certain pet temptations: tiny ones, ones we don't really hate.

They won't land us in jail, and they're normal, if not almost cute. They are temptations we can handle, mostly, and if we give in to them, it's just to a point, just a little.

Imagine your pet temptation, the one you have mostly tamed.

Then, imagine if it got exponentially stronger. Imagine if it collaborated with your biology, your circumstances, and what's left of your sinful nature.

Imagine if that sweet little pet waged all-out war on your soul.

Would you be able to stand?

I don't often imagine these things, to be honest. I know I am a sinner, and I know I am saved by God's grace in Jesus, so why worry about the rest?

And then I read this story of a Christian woman and her struggle with alcoholism. And to be honest, it scared me.

I think I underestimate our enemy. I underestimate the devil and my sinful flesh, and I forget how desperately I need God's grace and help at every moment.

But (praise be to God!) he does give that help, and nothing, not even addiction or any of our little pets-gone-wild, can separate us from his love.

I will refrain from sharing my favorite quotes from the book, because I hope that you will read the entire thing. Please, read it. Whether you have been touched by addiction personally or not, you will find something for you in this book.

This book took my heart and broke it, filled it with compassion and love, and made me rejoice again at the love of God for sinners.

Add this one to your summer reading list.

Adam says

Absolutely incredible. Heather speaks truth unflinchingly with a humor and grace most authors dream of. Sober Mercies isn't just for alcoholics, or Christian addicts. It's for anyone who wants to know more about redemption, forgiveness, grace, and hope. This book will touch your soul.

Kaori says

Oddly enough with how much I read this has been the first book about a journey to sobriety that I have read, and I am coming up on my two year mark in less than two weeks. This book seemed so fitting. What a relief to hear my story told from somebody else's view. I remember why I loved going to meetings, the realization that you are not so very dark and special in your sick addiction, you are all the same, sharing different versions of the same story. It's an immediate camaraderie and love for one another that only another alcoholic can ever understand. This book reminds me that I share my journey with millions of people every single day. That the struggles I still come across are not just my own, but all of ours. Brilliant.

Jenny Covey story says

Honest.

I find myself thinking of her story even long after I've read the book.

Debbie says

One of the best quotes from this book - a reference to her sobriety support group - (page 82):

"You'd think a close-knit community like this would feel at least vaguely familiar to me, that it might be reminiscent of church in some way, or of small groups I'd been part of. But the particular brand of love and loyalty that seemed to flow so easily here wasn't like anything I'd ever experienced, inside or outside of church.

But how could this be? How could a bunch of addicts and alcoholics manage to succeed at creating the kind of intimate fellowship so many of my Christian groups had tried to achieve and failed?

Many months would pass before I understood that people bond more deeply over shared brokenness than they do over shared beliefs."

And one more - (page 143):

"Regardless of when or where it started, I had mistaken a belief-based faith for an experience-based faith. I'd been on a prideful intellectual journey aimed at being right about God instead of on a desperate soul journey aimed at being real with God."
