



God Is Stranger: Finding God In Unexpected Places

Available December 5, 2017

\$18, 352 pages, paperback

978-0-8308-4532-3

“God keeps showing up where we least expect him. To know that is to live.”

“Has God become as familiar and forgettable as a fridge magnet? That’s the danger Krish Kandiah faces up to in this wonderfully readable and very challenging book. Bible stories come to life as Krish tells them afresh, richly illustrated with personal experience and social relevance, and in each case the living God turns up—strange, dangerous, and, like Aslan, not safe but good. Read it and be prepared, as he says, to ‘replace a simplistic, domesticated, anemic, fridge magnet understanding of God with a more fierce, awe-inspiring, and majestic God that is true to the Bible and big enough for the whole of our lives.’”

— **Christopher J. H. Wright**, Langham Partnership

“In this xenophobic age of open vilification toward outsiders, Krish Kandiah presents us with the provocative idea that God often comes to us as a stranger. This is such an important book, reminding us that xenophobia is not only irrational, it is sinful. God’s concern is for the least, the lost, and the left out, and so should ours.”

— **Michael Frost**, Morling College, Sydney

“For many years, Christians have felt at home in the world. The result of that way of life was the presumption that we knew what we meant when we said ‘God.’ Drawing on often-ignored passages in the Bible, Kandiah helps us recover how odd the God we worship as Christians turns out to be. It seems God shows up even as a Jewish peasant. Such a God can scare the hell out of us, but I guess that’s the point. So read this book as a challenge to our domesticated imaginations.”

— **Stanley Hauerwas**

“If there’s ever such a thing as a timely book, *God Is Stranger* is it. In a world and culture today where fear is the dominant currency, Krish Kandiah invites us back to the Scriptures to tell us about a God who invites his people to choose faith, hope, and love over fear. Because of who God is, the church is called to seek justice, love kindness, walk humbly, feed the poor, cloth the naked, speak up for the voiceless, welcome the refugee, embrace the orphans, fight for the rights of vulnerable, and welcome the stranger. This is an important discipleship book!”

— **Eugene Cho**, author of *Overrated*

“Krish Kandiah reminds us of a simple truth with as many consequences as there are stars in the night sky: God keeps showing up where we least expect him. To know that is to live.”

— **Mark Galli**, editor in chief, *Christianity Today*

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ENDORSEMENTS

“You have no accidental people in your life. Whether family, friends, or total strangers, everyone in your story is there by the providence of God. Christians, then, should be the last people crippled by fear of unexpected people or places. This book will help equip you to love the strangers around you as Jesus does.”

– **Russell Moore**, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

“In this profound and challenging book, Krish Kandiah calls us to think again about how we view strangers, reminding us of the many times that God appears in the Bible as a stranger in such a way that turns the world upside down. Be warned, this book could seriously affect your view of yourself, the world, and God – and I highly recommend it to you!”

– **Paula R. Gooder**, theologian in residence, Bible Society

“*God Is Stranger* will help readers better know a gospel that is truly good news. Krish Kandiah is someone with theological depth and experience living out his faith in the real world. Krish has been an encouragement to me as a friend and exemplar, and I believe he will inspire a generation of Christians to serve a God who loves each person – including the stranger.”

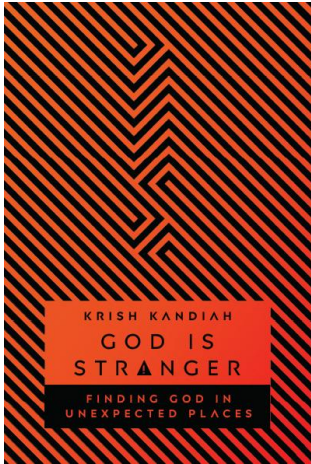
– **Michael Wear**, author of *Reclaiming Hope*

“In *God Is Stranger*, Krish Kandiah asks us to lean in to the passages of Scripture that challenge our perception of what it looks like when God shows up. As the global refugee crisis marches on, it is imperative for the church to embrace God’s heart for the aliens, outcasts, and exiles. This is a profoundly important book for such a time as this.”

– **Brian Fikkert**, coauthor of *When Helping Hurts*

“My friend Krish Kandiah’s new book is not only needed ‘for such a time as this,’ it’s one that will help reshape some of our thoughts and feelings toward others and allow us to see strangers more with the eyes of God. Many thanks to Krish for this encouraging book!”

– **Mac Powell**, singer and songwriter



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Rediscovering God as a Stranger

When I returned home to my safe, semi-detached, centrally heated, digitally connected house in the UK, I could not shake this idea from my mind. It was not that the treasured Bible verses I had grown up loving so fondly were untrue; it was just that the rest of the Bible suddenly seemed a lot more relevant. Not just for a family in fragile circumstances, fleeing ISIS and the bombing campaign of President Assad, but also for the rest of the world, faced with these strange and terrible times.

It was time for me to rediscover the stranger parts of my Bible. The parts lurking between the highlighted sections. The black-and-white verses. The angry parts. The eccentric parts. The politically incorrect parts. The forgotten parts. The horrific stories of executions, displacement, genocide, and depression – stories that sadly reflect much of the world today. Although I had always believed them to be just as inspired as the safe, cozy parts of Scripture, I had been inclined to avoid them for the same reason I often turn the television off when I hear the words “Viewers may find some scenes distressing.” Some truths had seemed unnecessary to dwell on, just too disturbing for my otherwise peaceful, comfortable life. But now it was time to face up to them.

It was time to look at what I had long considered to be the “lowlights” of the Bible. And as I read those passages, it turned out that I had indeed been missing something – that it was precisely in these places that God turned up, although often unannounced, uninvited, and unrecognized. Suddenly I came across countless passages that talked about God being unpredictable, unfathomable, uncontainable, untamable. He is ineffable, sublime, mysterious, awesome. He is beyond compare and beyond description and beyond analogy. God tells us quite clearly, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (Isaiah 55:8). Had I been so keen to know God my Father, Lord, Friend, and Savior that I had missed the Bible’s consistent teaching that God is also other, higher, stranger?

As I explored the more difficult passages of Scripture, I discovered an unlikely narrative arc flowing through the whole one that challenged me, that undid some of my most cherished prejudices and made me question the parts of the Bible I thought I knew so well. This narrative that spans the centuries and crosses continents contains a thread of deliberate strangeness. It is full of misery but also full of mystery, packed with the weird but also somehow weirdly wonderful. Through the more perplexing, stranger stories and more difficult incidents related in the Bible, I discovered a God who cannot be fully pinned down, explained, or predicted. Traveling the inhospitable terrain of much of the Old Testament, I discovered there was much to learn about the hospitality of God. In the more fearsome passages, where God turns up as a stranger, I began to hear his offer of an opportunity too good to turn down.

— Taken from the introduction

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Krish Kandiah (PhD, Kings College London) is the founder and director of Home for Good, a UK charity finding homes for foster children and young refugees, and the vice president of Tearfund, a Christian relief and development agency. He is an international speaker, teaches regularly at Regent College and Portland Seminary, and is the author of several books, including *Paradoxology* and *Home for Good*. Previously he was president of London School of Theology, and he has worked with students in the UK with UCCF and in Albania with IFES.

What if we were wrong about God all along?

Many of us call God our Father, Lord, Friend, and Savior. But what if we miss the other parts of God—a God who is other, higher, stranger—by viewing him this way? What do we lose when we overlook the parts of the Bible that show a God who cannot be pinned down, explained, or predicted?

In *God Is Stranger*, Krish Kandiah tackles these types of questions by using the strange, uncomfortable, and even troubling parts of the Bible to reveal the deeper spiritual nature of an awe-inspiring, magnificent, majestic, and true-to-the-Bible God.

To investigate the nature of a stranger God, Kandiah unravels questions found in the most difficult passages of the Bible, including the following:

- Where is God when we struggle? Where can we find him—both in our faith and in the Bible—when things are going wrong in our lives and in the world?
- Have we made assumptions about God and misled ourselves along the way?
- How can we truly know God if we skip over the uncomfortable parts of the Bible? What can we find when we encounter a God we are unfamiliar with?
- How should we, as guests in God's universe, make sense of a God who does not do things in the way we want or expect?
- How can we step out of our biblical comfort zone and glean some truths from the stranger, less familiar Bible stories?
- How can pursuing a stranger God be liberating and spark a hunger to know God better?
- How can we find faith in a radical, unpredictable God?
- Is the very act of wrestling to know an uncontainable God vital for life in a complex, tragic, and mysterious world?
- What if it is in the difficult parts of the Bible that God is most clearly revealed?
- Can we find a deeper fulfillment in God and in our faith by facing our fears and embracing a stranger God?

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