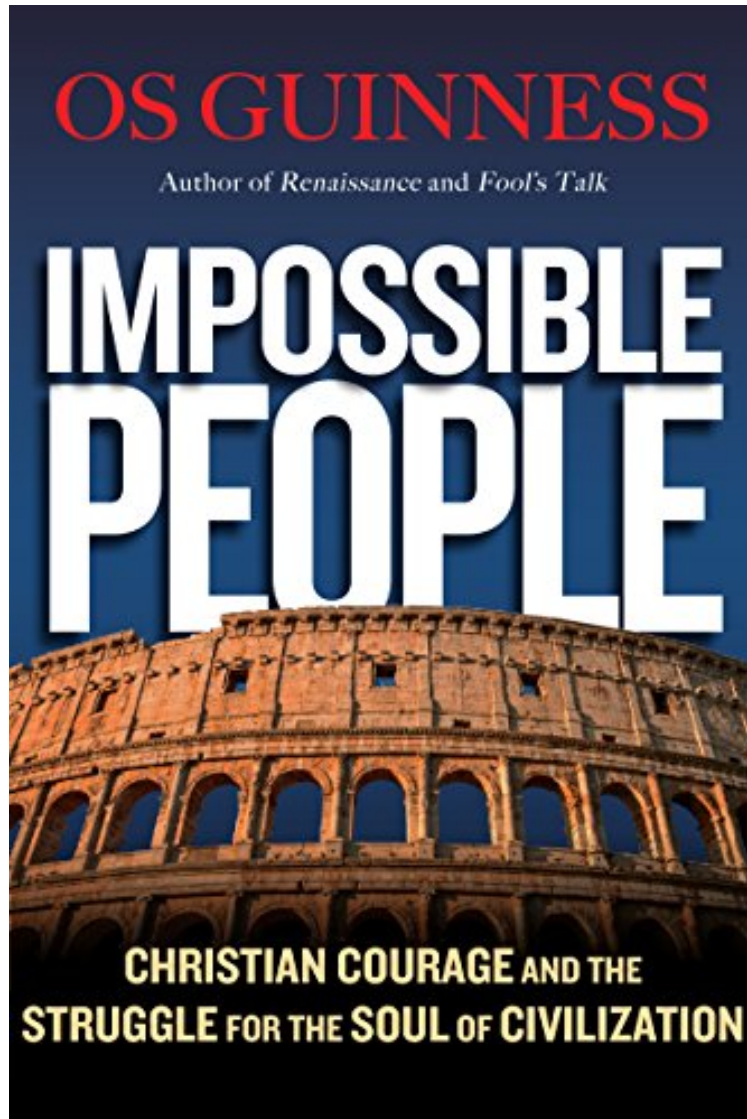


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# Impossible People: Christian Courage and the Struggle for the Soul of Civilization

*Os Guinness*

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**Os Guinness : Impossible People: Christian Courage and the Struggle for the Soul of Civilization** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Impossible People: Christian Courage and the Struggle for the Soul of Civilization:

35 of 35 people found the following review helpful. Each book just keeps getting better and betterBy Philip FennellOnce again, Os Guinness gives clear indication why he is so highly respected by significant numbers of people

from across the social and political spectrum. Each book just keeps getting better and better. Written as a companion volume to his earlier work (*Renaissance*), it expands the theme, but also has a more somber tone, *Holding no illusions concerning the precarious direction in which Western Civilization (and the world) are veering*, it is a serious challenge to all who love the truth, beauty and hope of human flourishing that the West has sought to embody for several centuries now. But it is especially a strong prophetic urging to Christians who hold to the historic, orthodox faith to stand strong in recovering the Gospel and proclaiming it in a winsome, informed and compassionate manner. And much of it focuses on the titanic responsibility of the Church in the world's current lead society, the United States. He employs a metaphor that is very apropos for America. Having willfully severed our the roots our Founders planted, we have become a cut-flower civilization and the extended consequences of that should be obvious by his choice of terms. As always, Dr. Guinness' eloquence, wit and insight are seasoned by his humility, grace, candor and his unswerving commitment to Christ and His Gospel. This has been his fifth book in the last few years (*Free Peoples' Suicide*, *Global Public Square*, *Renaissance*, *Fools' Talk* and now *Impossible People*). And, as I said, his prolific pen just keeps getting better and more prescient. I certainly hope it is not the last time he lifts it to exhort us. I very highly recommend it!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Awesome book! Os Guinness does write very intellectually though

By Andrew Bettencourt  
Awesome book! Os Guinness does write very intellectually though, so it may be well over a few readers' heads including this one's at times. However, I do really like the broader topics and themes he discusses as well as the examples that he narrows in on. Definitely tackles quite a few challenges of Christians in the coming years specifically in how to relate and challenge in an ever evolving and near combative public sector, learning how to love atheists well even as we also debate them well, and learning how to work broadly across the body of Christ rather than remaining divided. He specifically has some great advice on overcoming the challenges of generationalism. I really liked it and read it fairly quickly.

20 of 20 people found the following review helpful. Standing Up for Biblical Truth

By Dr Conrade Yap  
When Os Guinness writes, it is always a challenge not simply to sit down and read but to rise up and do something. Filled with biblical conviction and a faithful desire to be obedient to God's calling, Guinness harnesses his years of experience and knowledge of our culture to raise a battle cry for Christians to take their stand. There are four major challenges not only to the Christian faith but to Western civilization. First, the challenge of being weakened. The Judeo-Christian faith has been weakened and overrun by secularism and modernity. Second, the challenge of internal splits which has two post-Christian forces that threaten to move society toward nihilism on one side and extreme humanism on the other side. Third, the challenge of two major external forces. With a weakened Christian perspective, Western civilization becomes more vulnerable to aggressive secularism and radical Islam. Fourth, the need for courage and bold witness in the light of such obstacles. Can Christians rise up to these challenges? Guinness compares this present challenging age to the first three centuries clash with the Caesars and the sixteenth Century threats from the Ottomans. He coins the "four infamous S factors" as Secularism; Secularization; Separationism; and Statism. In order to survive against the grand showdown, we need to take a leaf from history. Be reminded about how Daniel and his friends stood up against the idolatry of Nebuchadnezzar; how the early Christians would rather die than deny their faith; and how Athanasius fought the heretics of old. The tragedy of many mainstream WWII German Christians is how easily they cave in to the political ambitions of Hitler. Will the West today commit a similar error of omission? Instead of reforming from within, many are becoming more accepting of the outside world, even compromising their biblical principles. Guinness's earlier book, *Renaissance* describes the response of Christians regardless of the challenges. This companion book reverses it by focusing on the challenges and how Christians must face up boldly or be washed over. Courage and conviction are needed to be the impossible people that we have been called to be. Of the new world, Guinness looks at the changing face of Islam; the shape of China; and the impact of secularism in the West. He laments at the following three distortions of postmodernism: Pick and Choose World: From respect for authority to reveling in personal preferences Private World: Faith is Private but publicly irrelevant World Without Windows: Shift from Supernatural to Secular

He reminds us that the world we live in is more spiritual than we may think. Without acknowledging the presence of evil spirits, we are poised to let our guard down. We confuse idolatry with nationalism. We erroneously believe in the utopia of unity based on humanism. From observations about relativity, secular thought, and flaws of present western society, Guinness leaves his harshest criticisms to the evangelical group, or people who call themselves Bible-believing Christians. He laments the lack of sacrificial living and the wholesale acceptance of liberal ideas and unbiblical points of view. While atheists and secularists are dead set and convinced about the irrelevance of religion, the same cannot be said for the Christian at large. Like a frog swimming in the warming waters of postmodern environment, the Church is in danger of being cooked by the heat of various idols and gods that have occupied the altar of the Christian community. This lack of conviction about one's belief is itself a problem. Moreover, Western society is spiraling downward. Roughly, the framework for reading this book is: 1) Understand the Challenges; 2) Pray for Divine Assistance; 3) Call to Stand and be Counted. Guinness states and describes the external climate affecting society and the Church today. With particular concern for the Church, he observes that old problems are appearing in new clothes. The challenges of paganism and heresies of the past are reappearing in the forms of aggressive atheism and dismissive secularism. With the displacement of the Christian worldview; the deteriorating regard for the Church;

and the diminishing influence of Christianity; the problems can only get worse. The only way forward is to stand up to be counted for God. This does not mean militant behaviour or radical campaigns. It simply means returning to the conviction of biblical principles. It is a call for Christians to get back to the truth for themselves. After all, if they are not convinced or convicted about the gospel and relevance of Christianity, they will not be able to be of much influence in this world. If the salt is not salty and the light hidden under the pillow, what good is salt and light? If we, no matter how small and how insignificant in society at present, if we are willing to be that mustard seed of faith, God can indeed help us grow. It is a call for us to be right with God. Guinness provides several tools for us to use. First, discernment and wisdom are needed to help us engage with the world and especially the arena of spiritual warfare. Only when we recognize there is a war will we be willing to arm ourselves to be ready in defense and if needed to fight in enemy territory. Second, we need to be discerning of the ideas and when we have a grasp of the history of ideas, we will be better equipped to question the ideas' validity and truth. Third, there is the need to grasp the discipline of knowledge to become a more thoughtful Christian community. We cannot let secularists and atheistic humanists grab all the attention about what it means to be a thinking community. We must offer a Christian perspective readily and widely. We must come back to the Bible and be re-ignited with what it means to be witnesses for Christ in our society. For Western society, with Christians increasingly being marginalized, we must stand up to be counted. This means being renewed from the inside out. Guinness's call is not about taking up physical arms or getting engaged physically in the politics or institutions of the world. It is more spiritual in nature. We need a renewal of the mind to see things from God's perspective, to share God's truth widely and with conviction. We need the transformation of the heart to rid ourselves from the idols creeping into the Church. It is a call to be the impossible people that we have been called to be. Impossible as far as the world is concerned, but possible when God is in charge. Some readers may be a little uncomfortable with the strong stance taken by Guinness. Some may even accuse him of fear mongering or beating a straw man. If we do so, we must consistently apply such sentiments to the liberal thoughts and radical secularism happening all over society. Just ask who is being marginalized right now. From the school classroom to the public politics, religious thoughts are increasingly pushed to the personal private domains, protected in part by the freedom of religion act. Even then, this freedom of religion and faith have limits, especially when it comes face to face with the institutional powers of secularism and humanism. I think this book is more about a wake-up call for Christians to come out of their slumber. It is a rousing effort to remind us that we need to be faithful to God's Word. As long as we maintain that faithfulness, as long as we are bold to proclaim the truth as laid out in the Word of God, we can become the people to stand against the ills of society and in doing so, declare the righteousness of God's kingdom come. It is not mean to wrest power or gain influence in politics of social domains. It is still very much a spiritual warfare. Os Guinness is a respected speaker and keen observer of the intersections of faith and society. He is a prolific author of books like *The Call*, *Dining With the Devil*, *The Gravedigger File*, and *No God but God*. He is one of the few voices who consistently urges the Church to bring stay true to biblical truths. Rating: 4.75 stars of 5. conrade This book is provided to me courtesy of IVP Books and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. All opinions offered above are mine unless otherwise stated or implied.

The church in the West is at a critical moment. While the gospel is exploding throughout the global south, Western civilization faces militant assaults from aggressive secularism and radical Islam. Will the church resist the seductive shaping power of advanced modernity? More than ever, Christians must resist the negative cultural forces of our day with fortitude and winsomeness. What is needed is followers of Christ who are willing to face reality without flinching and respond with a faithfulness that is unwavering. Os Guinness describes these Christians as "impossible people," those who have "hearts that can melt with compassion, but with faces like flint and backbones of steel who are unmanipulable, unbribable, undeterrable and unclubbable, without ever losing the gentleness, the mercy, the grace and the compassion of our Lord." Few accounts of the challenge of today are more realistic, and few calls to Christian courage are more timely, resolute and hopeful. Guinness argues that we must engage secularism and atheism in new ways, confronting competing ideas with discernment and fresh articulation of the faith. Christians are called to be impossible people, full of courage and mercy in challenging times.

"The prolific Os Guinness, always with his finger on the pulse of our Western societies, considers the current state of our civilization, its fraying at the edges now more deeply tearing toward the center, and how Christians can and must be salt and light in this newly loosed menagerie. . . . Guinness lays out why we must enter this fray with the right tools, and also provides insight on how to use them." (Christian Renewal, August 24, 2016) "His comprehensive grasp of history, philosophy, science, culture, and religion will give serious thinkers many hours of reflection. Guinness recommends solutions and he challenges believers to courageous action in defense of Christianity." (John Bernstein, Christian Market, August 2016) "With his unique blend of incisive clarity and prophetic vision, Os Guinness has written a book that will challenge, encourage, and awaken us to live wholeheartedly for Christ in this 'grand clarifying moment.' I recommend Impossible People as a book for such a time as this." (Amy Orr-Ewing, director, The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics) "Every time I sit down to read the prophetic words of Os Guinness, I feel my spine

strengthen and my mind perk up. His clear writing and earned wisdom bring both courage and uncertainty; for while we can't predict where our culture will head, we can rely on the truth that guides and emboldens every generation to meet the moment for which we've been called." (Gabe Lyons, founder of Q, author of Good Faith)"Os Guinness is a prophet. Hear him." (Eric Metaxas, New York Times bestselling author of Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy)"This remarkable book helps us to clearly see how Western modernity is trying to replace Christian faith with a progressive secularism. It is a timely wake-up call for the church to stand firm against this fatal challenge. I urge every Christian leader to read it." (Mouneer Anis, primate of the Anglican Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East)"I read everything Os Guinness writes because he always challenges my thinking and enlarges my perspective. Impossible People may be his most important work. Read it, then buy five copies for friends and discuss it together. The message is that important. This could be the most important book you read this year." (Rick Warren, pastor, Saddleback Church, author of The Purpose Driven Life)About the AuthorOs Guinness (DPhil, Oxford) is the author or editor of more than thirty books, including Fool's Talk, Renaissance, The Global Public Square, A Free People's Suicide, Unspeakable, The Call, Time for Truth and The Case for Civility. A frequent speaker and prominent social critic, he has addressed audiences worldwide from the British House of Commons to the U.S. Congress to the St. Petersburg Parliament. He founded the Trinity Forum and served as senior fellow there for fifteen years. Born in China to missionary parents, he is the great-great-great-grandson of Arthur Guinness, the Dublin brewer. After witnessing the climax of the Chinese revolution in 1949, he was expelled with many other foreigners in 1951 and returned to England where he was educated and served as a freelance reporter with the BBC. Since coming to the U.S. in 1984, he has been a guest scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Studies and a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution. He was the lead drafter of the Williamsburg Charter, celebrating the First Amendment, and has also been senior fellow at the EastWest Institute in New York, where he drafted the Charter for Religious Freedom. He also co-authored the public school curriculum Living With Our Deepest Differences. Guinness has had a lifelong passion to make sense of our extraordinary modern world and to stand between the worlds of scholarship and ordinary life, helping each to understand the other - particularly when advanced modern life touches on the profound issues of faith. He lives with his wife, Jenny, in McLean, Virginia, near Washington, D.C.