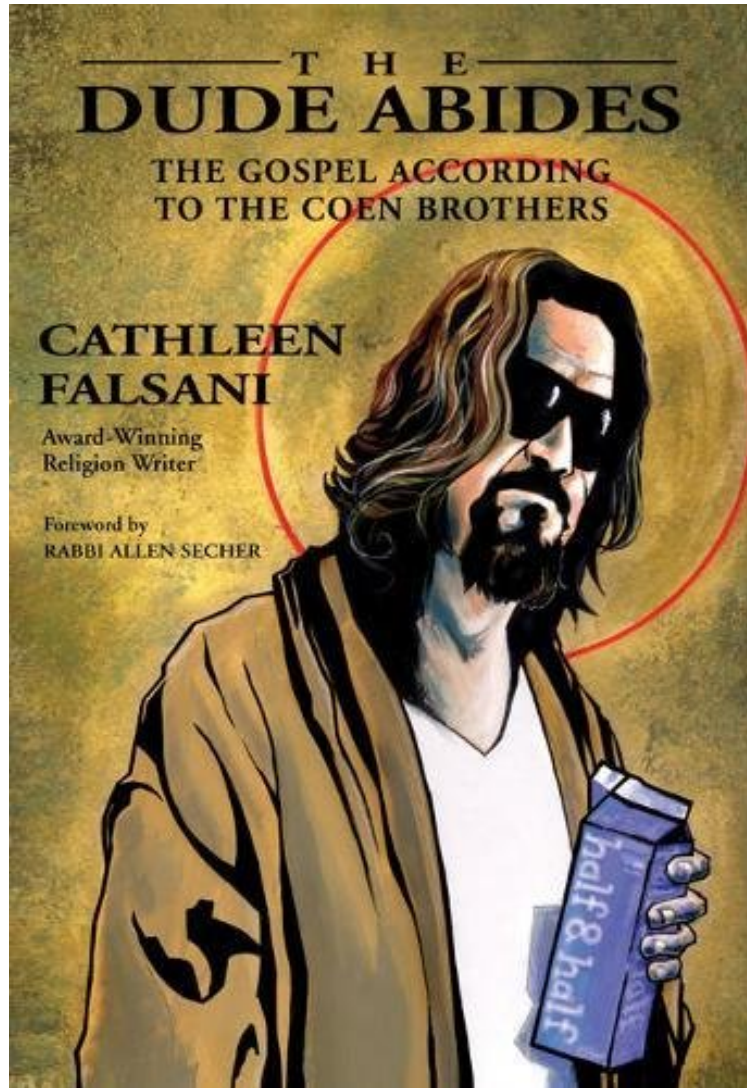


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## The Dude Abides: The Gospel According to the Coen Brothers

*Cathleen Falsani*

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**Cathleen Falsani : The Dude Abides: The Gospel According to the Coen Brothers** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Dude Abides: The Gospel According to the Coen Brothers:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Don't Waste Your Time By Jonathan Busch I was so excited to read this book. I'm actually working on an essay regarding the same topic, religious themes in the work of the Coen Bros. and I wanted to use this book as a baseline to work from. Unfortunately, it is almost completely useless in when it comes to analysis or criticism. The chapters consist of plot summaries of each film (as if you'd be reading this book if

you hadn't seen the movies) and then a 2-3 paragraph conclusion that purports to reveal the "moral of the story." The only two movies the author seems to put any real thought into are *The Big Lebowski* and *Fargo*. It seems like she may have only seen some of the others once or twice and really has nothing to say about them. To whittle a Coen Bros. movie down to a supposed moral is over-simplistic in and of itself. But to attempt sum up the point of such complex films in less than one page, without referencing specific quotes or scenes or reviews, is just outrageous. Then there are the little annoyances. For example, the author refers to the three washer-women in 'O Brother Where Art Thou' as Homer's muses when they are clearly meant to represent the sirens. Errors like this make it difficult to take the rest of the book seriously. The author seems to have done minimal research and doesn't even offer any unique insight into most of the films. The thesis seems to be "These films contain religious themes" and not much beyond that. If I got a first-year English student's literary critique of a book or film, and they spent 90% of the paper giving me a plot summary, I would hand the paper back and have them do it again. That's essentially what this book does. I am very disappointed. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. What a colossal disappointment! The book is nothing but lengthy plot summaries ... By Jim What a colossal disappointment! The book is nothing but lengthy plot summaries followed by short "Moral of the Story" paragraphs which, in my view, completely misinterpret the message of the films. The author is clearly confused between her religious beliefs, reality, and the intended meaning of the brothers. A disservice to two of the great filmmakers of our day. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. *The Dude and the Coen Brothers Abide* By Civil War Librarian *The Dude Abides: The Gospel According to the Coen Brothers*, Cathleen Falsani, Zondervan Publishers, 240 pages, illustrations, filmography, appendix, paperback, \$14.99. In the 1980s after viewing the first two Coen Brothers films, 'Blood Simple' and 'Raising Arizona', I had my eyes wide open to fact that these two guys well understood film making, plotting, and existential ethics cast in a Judeo-Christian mold. An avid reader of works by Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandlers, Ross MacDonald, and James M. Caine, I longed for Hollywood to get the noir detective genre right, again. Chicago Sun-Times religion journalist Cathleen Falsani immerses herself in the 14 films of Joel and Ethan Coen and asks spiritual and religious questions of the films. Does the Coen brothers' dark humor, verbal slapstick comedy, grim judgments and bleak contexts offer an avenue to the deeper issues of death, betrayal, greed, loyalty in an environment in which God appears to be absent? Do the Coen brothers' film characters show the dire consequences of their choices? Are the filmmakers' complex themes clearly presented so their notions of morality are apparent? Falsani states that these films are not overtly religious, but the films do successfully convey the Coen brothers' spiritual insights into the human condition. She discusses each of the Coen brothers' films, from their debut, 'Blood Simple' (1984), through 'A Serious Man' (2009). Falsani's chapters contain a plot summary and concludes with a discussion of what lessons the film offers. These sections are entitled 'The Moral of the Story'. She is adept at offering a nuanced analysis of pop culture, Judeo-Christian heritage, and the art of storytelling. 'The Dude Abides: The Gospel According to the Coen Brothers' is accessible to those who have seen all the brothers' films, twice. Ranging from iconoclastic comedies such as 'Raising Arizona' and 'The Big Lebowski' to an unblinking examination of the nature of evil in 'No Country for Old Men', the Coen brothers have created moral universe in which some of life's essential questions are asked--if not always answered. So how do the Coen brothers understand the meaning of life, the possibility of enlightenment, the nature of truth and enduring love? Falsani examines the films, her own personal experiences, her spirituality, and the intersection of the Coen brothers media and her own journalistic profession of asking questions and getting answers.

Whether you've seen only a couple or every single one of their fourteen films enough times to quote them by heart, you know Joel and Ethan Coen make movies like no one else in cinema. The Oscar-winning Coen brothers quirky and enduring films are rich with meaning much of it hidden just beneath the surface, gems of spiritual and existential insight waiting to be excavated. Join award-winning religion columnist Cathleen Falsani as she explores the deeper truths found in these engrossing movies. Falsani examines each of the Coen brothers films, from their debut, *Blood Simple*, to their latest, *A Serious Man*. Ranging from iconoclastic comedies such as *Raising Arizona* and *The Big Lebowski* to an unblinking treatise on the nature of evil in *No Country for Old Men*, the Coen brothers have created moral universes in which some of life's essential questions are asked if not always answered. These queries run the gamut from the meaning of life and enlightenment, to the fundamental nature of truth and love. There is seemingly no question the Coen brothers are afraid to tackle, either with a wink and a smile or brutal honesty (and sometimes both). As Falsani examines the soul of the movies, she weaves her own experiences, impressions, and cultural and spiritual analysis with a journalist's keen eye for investigation and a film lover's passion for the cultural medium. By turns thought-provoking and entertaining, you'll come away with a new admiration for these sometimes bizarre, always clever, and unmistakably virtuoso filmmakers and their films.

From Publishers Weekly It must be true that God can be found even in the quirkiest of places. Chicago Sun-Times religion journalist Falsani mined the 14 films (since 1984) of Joel and Ethan Coen to find God and to articulate their spiritual and religious questions and challenges. The Coen brothers have a reputation for injecting a lot of dark humor into their movies, but as the author illustrates, the comedy is an avenue to deeper issues. Death, betrayal, greed, the

seeming absence of God and the dire consequences of one's choices are the complex themes expertly handled by the filmmakers. Falsani does not posit that these films are overtly religious, but she does successfully convey their spiritual insights about the human condition. Each chapter provides a movie plot summary and concludes with an insightful segment dubbed The Moral of the Story. Falsani is an expert at pop culture analysis and her love for the celluloid arts shines forth brightly--her interpretations are nuanced and sophisticated without being pretentious. Film lovers, whether religious or not, will be pleased. (Oct.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. It must be true that God can be found even in the quirkiest of places. Chicago Sun-Times religion journalist Falsani mined the 14 films (since 1984) of Joel and Ethan Coen to find God and to articulate their spiritual and religious questions and challenges. The Coen brothers have a reputation for injecting a lot of dark humor into their movies, but as the author illustrates, the comedy is an avenue to deeper issues. Death, betrayal, greed, the seeming absence of God and the dire consequences of one's choices are the complex themes expertly handled by the filmmakers. Falsani does not posit that these films are overtly religious, but she does successfully convey their spiritual insights about the human condition. Each chapter provides a movie plot summary and concludes with an insightful segment dubbed The Moral of the Story. Falsani is an expert at pop culture analysis and her love for the celluloid arts shines forth brightly--her interpretations are nuanced and sophisticated without being pretentious. Film lovers, whether religious or not, will be pleased. (Oct.) -- Publishers Weekly

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