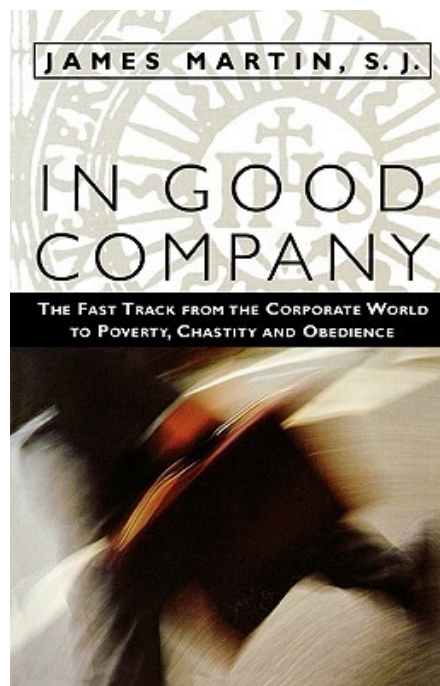




In Good Company: The Fast Track from the Corporate World to Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience

James Martin

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"In Good Company" is the story of one young man's remarkable journey from corporate America to the Society of Jesus, the world's largest Catholic religious order for men. Martin leads readers from his Catholic childhood through his rapid success and ultimate dissatisfaction with the business world to his novitiate and profession of vows of a Jesuit.

In Good Company: The Fast Track from the Corporate World to Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience Details

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From Reader Review In Good Company: The Fast Track from the Corporate World to Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience for online ebook

Karen says

This was a fun and quick read, however it was not a spiritually moving book. Fr. James Martin wrote this book when he was in his 2nd year toward becoming a Jesuit priest, a process that takes 10 years. Even he comments on his lack of knowledge that long ago in the forward to this new edition.

Martin relates how his understanding of religion ended quite early in his life. After his confirmation he no longer attended his school's religion program, which ended if I could recall correctly in 3rd grade. His parents were not very religious and his knowledge was quite superficial.

He did well in school and he also did well in business school. He expected to have a long career in business and finance. He talks lengthily about his time at GE, and talks about the ways in which he felt overworked and abused by the system he believed in. This time of turmoil left him wanting more.

Always a mass goer, he began to try to reconcile his work life with his spiritual life. He definitely found Thomas Merton's The Seven Storey Mountain formative, but when he could no longer ignore a strong pull to the priesthood, he could not answer the simplest questions about what he believed or about God. He grew more determined to become a priest and surprised everyone at GE when he quit work to begin his studies even before he was accepted into the Jesuits. He shares this arduous training, his aversion to the people and situations he is assigned during his first year, and his learning to accept and understand.

Since I have been to Eastern Point Retreat Center a number of times, I could relate to and visualize the scene and the surroundings. Although the dormitory area has been remodeled since his early days, I doubt much has changed at all.

This is worth reading in order to appreciate how God will call you no matter how you try to ignore the voice.

Martin says

I'm a big fan of James Martin. I actually bought this book to pass along to a friend who was struggling with a few really big decisions in his life and what could be a bigger decision than joining a religious order! James Martin, now Father James, a Jesuit priest, takes you through his journey from Graduate school and life in finance at General Electric (GE) through the discernment process of becoming a Catholic priest. Fr. Martin does not really take you through much of the famed Ignatious Spirituality in this book since most of it takes place in the period leading up to his decision to the religious life. I never did give this book to my friend as I thought he would miss the big issues and get bogged down in religion but if you are a fan of James Martin and curious about what drew an up and coming GE employee into the priesthood, this is a fun ride.

Lisa Thibault says

For believers or not, this is an awesome book about one man's journey to find a purpose in life and

happiness. The author discovered that money, wealth, title, and comforts are not what God wanted him to have in life, and his personal experience of finding that purpose is enriching to (re)discovering my own. Easy, light-hearted, fun read too.

Amy says

Highly readable, quite entertaining memoir of Martin's career in business at GE and then his first two years as a Jesuit postulant. As Martin himself says in the Introduction from a vantage point of 8 years later, it's not a very reflective book. In enjoyed it anyway.

Emilia P says

Wasn't going to read this, but passed it browsing.

Really good look at a Jesuit life, as well as the active soul-deadness of the corporate world, and that the little things are what make life worthwhile. Sort of a primer for Jesuit's Guide to Everything, but more personal, and that made a bit better. Practical! Meaningful! Worthwhile even for the non-Catholic! hooray!

Patrick says

This is a story about a yuppie who hated his job in GE Capital and subsequently received a calling to become a Jesuit. I think this is an excellent humorous read about the Grace of God that showered on him and his subsequent calling, as well as, the gritty realities including the negatives areas of entering into the Jesuit order.

James seemed to be stuck in the proverbial "rat race" in which he was living to work like so many unhappy people in this world, he was just working without doing what he was meant to do. To me, he seemed to be more of a people's person rather than someone who belonged to corporate America. Thus, he portrayed corporate America as filled with Machiavellian types.

In his career at GE, he was part of the downsizing in the early 80's. At that point, people still thought they had job security for life. That is, if one was loyal to a company, that person can work for that company for life. Although it did provide security, it also could lead to inefficiency for the company and perhaps contributed to employees living to a mediocre life. That is, these people are doing their job just for job security sake and not because they are really good at it. In away, the way it is today is perhaps better for both employers and employees both understand that they are only have a partnership if the employees do the best job possible. For the employees, this ensures that they do the things that they are meant to do instead of mindless job that may pay the bills but is not their calling.

James Martin learns that the saints were possible role models in his quest for searching God. Whereas Jesus is the paragon of perfection, the saints share in our imperfection with the desire to be more perfect in order to unify with God. For example, Ignatius of Loyola was a sinner who founded the Jesuits who at their core represent contemplatives in action or practical mystics.

In the second part of the book, he describes the hardships he faced as a novice in the order. For example, he had to get over his aversion to sick people and work in long-term disability facility. Since he really could not

help these people, he learned the value of humility thus allowing him to be closer to God by being dependent on him. I for one understand this lesson but I would not want to be a doctor in a hospice care or long-term disability facility because at our core doctors want to be able to heal thus my affinity for EM. If I had to be a doctor who cared for people with chronic diseases, I would opt to be in the biotech/pharma industry because in those industries there is room for an ultimate cure. Other negatives for being in a novitiate includes absolute Obedience meaning doing things that the director wants exactly to the T and being treated like children.

The other vows which include the vow of Poverty means people having complete trust in God because you have nothing of your own. The vow of Chastity on the other hand means one cannot have an exclusive relationship because the exclusivity belongs to God and thus ones love has to be shared to everyone.

Rachel says

This is a beautiful book. Martin is a skilled, natural storyteller. He is honest and down-to-earth about his own spiritual experiences.

Edward says

Interesting story that we can relate to-walk off the job in corporate America for something more meaningful. I do have some questions whether this works for all of us. But definitely opens you eyes.

Antony Paul says

With God nothing is impossible

Great writing by Fr Jim Martin SJ. As a proud Jesuit school and college student, I appreciate the sacrifices of all the Jesuit brothers and fathers who taught me.

Lauren says

I was assigned this book to read for an Intro to World Religions class at my college, so I didn't pick it up voluntarily. One could certainly say that I had my doubts at first about reading this novel. Though I don't consider myself a particularly-religious person, I was raised Catholic and therefore had to attend many years of religious education as a child. My experiences there (and political differences with the church) led me to believe that if I asked curious, intellectual questions, or raised doubts about belief in God, I would be yelled at. Thus, knowing that "In Good Company" was going to be a "Christian" book, I couldn't help but groan

inwardly. My professor assigned us part of the novel to read, not the entire text, but before I knew it, I had read extra chapters and suddenly wanted to finish the whole thing! For me, James Martin's novel addressed many of my own doubts and concerns, as well as answering many questions about the lives of religious devotees that many of us would be afraid to ask in person. I think this is a testament to not only Martin's skill as a writer, but also his open-mindedness.

"In Good Company" is Martin's memoir of how he, having started a career as a businessman, decided instead to become a Jesuit priest. But Martin's novel is much more than simply a story of religious belief. Instead, he is able to connect his experiences to much more universal ideas. I think the scene that won me over was Martin's story of meeting, as a young business student, with his college advisor. He mentions his interest in taking an American Poetry course because it sounds like a pleasant diversion from his many economics classes, and his advisor replies that, "when the interviewing time comes, no one will give a shit about how you did in a poetry course" (14). A college student myself, I had a remarkably similar experience last year when my (now former!) advisor asked me "what the hell are you ever going to do with a Russian Literature major?" It is ideas such as these that elevate Martin's novel for me.

Throughout his time in college, and, later, working for GE, Martin questions America's "system". He writes that, "I realized I had achieved most of [my] goals. But those things simply didn't bring me much satisfaction... what was the point of the work itself? Is this life?" (60). And herein is the universality of Martin's memoir, for I think that everyone has felt this way at some point in his or her life. Martin's answer to the feelings of uselessness in a corporate job is to enter the Jesuits, but he by no means believes that religious experiences like his are the answer for everyone. Instead, he comes to the realization that monetary and spiritual fulfillment are not equivalent. For Martin, the remedy to this problem is to do charitable work-- in hospitals in Jamaica and impoverished schools in New York-- but for others it could be something entirely different. And throughout the course of his memoir, Martin learns not to judge the corporate world so harshly as he initially did (139). The Jesuits teach him that above all else, we are human beings sharing one world. In Martin's words from the Introduction, "I hope that [this book] helps you... to discover your own path... to learn that you, too, are called to do something special in life, to a unique vocation that God has fashioned for you" (xii).

Wanchee Wang says

I met Father James Martin, Jesuit priest and prolific writer, at an author panel and found him to be funny, articulate, and charming. He read from his first book, *In Good Company*, published in 2000. The passage he chose recounts his childhood exposure to Catholicism and his time as an undergraduate business student at the University of Pennsylvania. By his own admission, he "did not come from a very religious family, at least not the kind that considers themselves 'blessed' if a son decides to become a priest." After graduation, he worked at GE for six years before entering the priesthood. The book ends with his taking vows.

Father Martin's story is one about abandoning a promising corporate career for a life of "poverty, chastity, and obedience." He describes his growing disaffection with the business world (he worked at GE when Jack Welch was CEO). Under Mr. Welch's leadership, GE stock soared but the company was a stressful and demanding place to work as managers were pressured to meet their monthly targets. During this time, Father Martin began reading Thomas Merton, and a pull towards the spiritual proved irresistible for him.

In his first two years as a novice, he performed manual labor, visited the sick, and cared for the dying in the slums of Kingston, Jamaica, all of which is detailed with humor and in uncomplicated prose. Because his story is so fascinating, I wanted to know more about how his faith evolved and how he adjusted going from the corporate world to the spiritual. Instead readers are presented with a straightforward re-telling of the

events. In the end, a deeper examination of his personal and emotional life would have enhanced the reading experience.

Nancy Kennedy says

I love memoirs of spiritual journeys, whether into or out of, or arrival at a new faith. Generally, it is the journeys away from faith that are written with more clear-eyed honesty and humor. But Fr. Martin's book is a small gem that breaks that mold.

James Martin ensconces himself in the quintessential American dream: Ivy League education, Wall Street job, New York apartment, urban nightlife. Yet living the dream turns out to be soul-deadening. He just can't shake the feeling that the spiritual life he hangs onto so tenuously -- attending Mass, reading Thomas Merton -- should take center stage of his life.

Finally, he gives in. He explores the many Catholic orders available to him and knocks on the door of the Jesuits. Still, he thinks he might just be crazy. He can't even answer simple questions posed to him: "Who is God for you?", "Who is Jesus for you?" "Another dumb question," he thinks, when he's asked that.

Yet his Jesuit journey brings him through experiences -- retreats, mission work in the Third World, educational work with urban youth -- that hone his spiritual instincts and enable him at last to arrive at answers for himself. For example, the way he ultimately talks about prayer totally floored me, especially when he practices placing himself mentally in gospel stories as a means of prayer. I've been in and around evangelical Christians all my life and thought I'd heard everything there was to hear about prayer. This concept was totally new and refreshing to me. Note to self: Try it!

Fr. Martin's memoir is shot through with good-natured humor and a wry sense of the ironies of life. The slash-and-burn, get-it-done corporate mentality that he honed at GE battles daily with the thoughtful, laid-back Jesuit mentality. When he arrives in Jamaica to do charity work, he finds his room infested with bees. Martin wants a can of Raid; his superior suggests letting the hive grow larger, until they can knock it down. "Was I, I wondered, being too American or was trying to share my room with bees ridiculous? Maybe I wasn't being accepting enough," he thinks.

Fr. Martin's writing is top-notch and his slow but steady trajectory toward a deeply satisfying spirituality is a joy to read. For other spiritual journeys, you might like Jon Sweeney's *Born Again and Again: Surprising Gifts of a Fundamentalist Childhood*, Mark Curtis Anderson's *Jesus Sound Explosion*, Sue Monk Kidd's *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, William Lobdell's *Losing My Religion*, Mary-Ann Kirkby's *I Am Hutterite*, or Christine Rosen's *My Fundamentalist Education: A Memoir of a Divine Girlhood*.

Chad Houck says

Great read. It kept me wanting more on his vocation & discernment of it.

Really got me thinking about being open to the discernment process when one least expects it and despite the best laid plans

Mare says

This book came to me at a very important time in my life when I needed it the most. Fr Martin's natural gift of storytelling is wonderful as he tells of his experiences in the corporate world of GE and how he got there, to his transformation to a life with a religious order as the Jesuits. He also shares his fait journey along the way which is inspiring. Highly recommend the book for entertaining reading as well and a spiritual uplifting.

Melissa Monette says

This book was exactly what I needed to read at this moment in time. I borrowed this from a good friend and thought it would be a fun read because I really love Fr. James' books, but it was so much more than that. It may be because I am coming to the close of my first year of noviciate myself, or it may be because the book is just so honest, real, authentic and funny, either way it opened my eyes to see a few things very differently. I wish I could meet Fr. Jim to ask him questions and tell him how his book has named so many of the same first year struggles I'm having -- and it makes me feel like I'm normal! I'd also love to tell him that God has spoken to me in so many ways through this book, and others, he's written so many times. Lastly, I'd just love to thank him for being a Jesuit!!!
