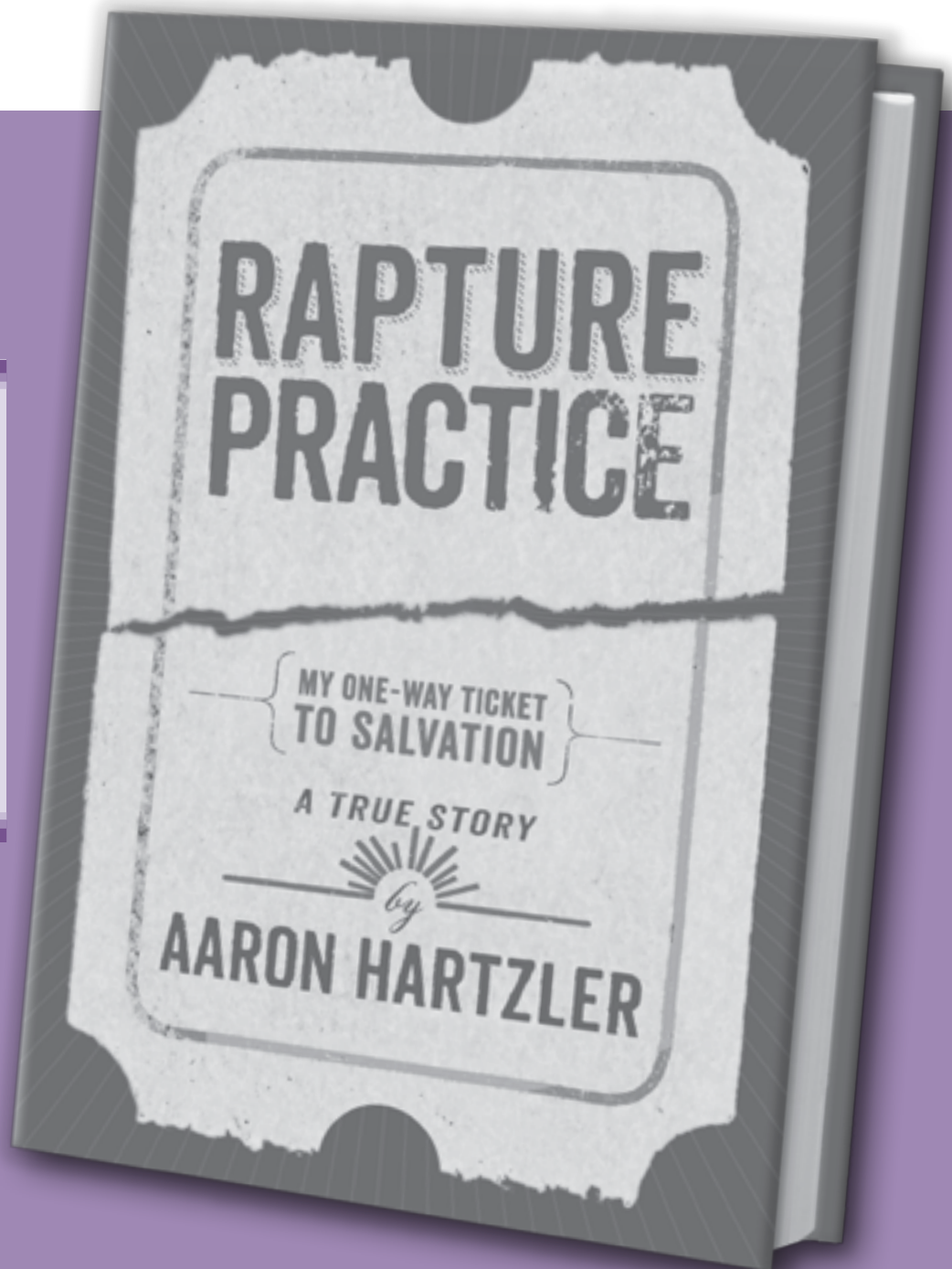


RAPTURE PRACTICE

Curriculum connections

- ❖ Family Life
- ❖ Religion
- ❖ Dating & Sex

Ages: 15 & Up



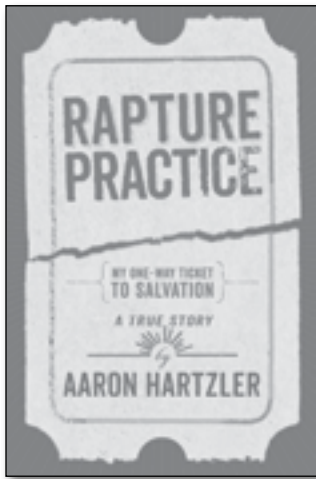
by
AARON HARTZLER

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the Rapture? How does believing in the Rapture shape the everyday lives of the Hartzlers? If you knew the end of the world was at hand, would you change the way you lived? If so, how?
2. Aaron's parents try to strictly limit their children's exposure to popular culture. Why is that such a difficult task? How do they believe that popular culture undermines religious values? Do you agree?
3. Both Aaron and his father share a love for acting, but they use their dramatic skills very differently. What is the purpose of theater for Aaron's dad? What is it for Aaron?
4. As a little boy in his grandmother's house, Aaron realizes that "other people love Jesus in lots of different ways and have different rules about right and wrong" (page 29). How does this insight deepen for him over time?
5. When does Mr. Hartzler's behavior publicly embarrass Aaron? When does Aaron's behavior publicly embarrass his father? Why?
6. Aaron's parents won't tolerate rebellion from their children. Why? To them, what is the difference between rebellion and disagreement? How do you see the difference?
7. Examine the various punishments Aaron receives from his parents. Were they always fair? Were they effective? Do you think Aaron would have more obedient if his parents had been more forgiving?
8. Discuss Aaron's relationships with the women in his family. How does that compare to the relationships he has with the men in his family?
9. "Do you think I'm corrupting you, Hartzler?" Bradley asks (page 202). Do you think he is corrupting Aaron? If so, how? Do you think Bradley's parents are a positive or a negative influence on Aaron? Why?
10. Aaron makes out with Megan but his relationship with Bradley is much more important to him. Does Bradley fully understand Aaron's feelings? Does Aaron? When he is watching a video in his Bible class, why is so alarmed by the sight of two mind holding hands?
11. By the end of his senior year, Aaron realizes that he no longer shares many of his parents' religious beliefs. "I don't know when it happened—it wasn't any specific moment" (page 364). What were the many smaller moments of doubts that gradually led Aaron to this major revelation?
12. "I have let them see my truth," Aaron says about his parents (page 360). "Not the son I pretend to be, or the son they thought I was, but the son I really am." What is his parents' reaction to Aaron confession? How would this book have been different if their response was anger?



about the book



9780316094658

Aaron Hartzler grew up in a home where he was taught that at any moment, Jesus could come down for the Rapture and scoop him and his family into his arms and carry them to heaven. Every moment of every day, Aaron behaved as if this could be his last moment on earth—even jumping the highest in Good News Club, hoping that if it happened at that very moment, he’d be the first to arrive in Jesus’s arms.

But as Aaron got older, he found more and more of his personality at odds with his family’s creed. He tried to find a way to be himself and still go

by his parents rules; Aaron’s journey from believer to family rebel was a difficult one, especially filled as his family was with such love and support. But ultimately, he had to find a way to honor himself, even if it meant taking a different road from his parents.

Rapture Practice is not just a humorous memoir about growing up in a fundamentalist Christian home, but it also deals with issues of coming-of-age and questioning one’s faith and sexuality while still in this often-difficult environment. *Rapture Practice* examines difficult life experiences through a humorous lens and reminds readers that sometimes life is stranger than fiction, and often in hindsight, just as entertaining.

★ “A hilarious first-of-its-kind story.”—*Kirkus*

about the author



Aaron Hartzler is a writer and actor who grew up in Kansas City. He currently splits his time between Los Angeles and Palm Springs, where he lives with his boyfriend, Nate, and their two dogs, Charlie and Brahms.