



Dig the Zone of Freedom

Richard Byrne

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Dig the Zone of Freedom is a one-of-a-kind Christian musical.

Immense in its scope and vision, *Dig the Zone of Freedom* by Richard Byrne is a unique work with music woven in.

Based around the adventures of the staff and residents at a rehabilitation center, the story is linked by some forty traditional hymns that guide its exposition.

A traveling group made up of reformed addicts and church faculty, the Church Recovery Cafe visits the wonders of the world, both past and present. They see the great pyramids of Egypt, Gibraltar in the Mediterranean, and even the moon, just to name a few. The power and transformative nature of Christianity connects their fantastic outings, and many meaningful, spiritual conversations occur throughout the text.

The musical numbers are quick, dotting the story during moments of action. It's clear from reading the text that it is meant to be performed, with dialogue and songs making up its entirety. Clear and compelling characters form through its illuminating dialogue.

Many interesting questions and philosophical quandaries are addressed throughout the book. They include the usefulness of Christianity, both past and present, which is explored in particular through the locations the group visits. For example, the group stops in Egypt during the time when the pyramids are constructed; against such backgrounds, questions about relying on a higher power during times of bondage are thoroughly explored.

Other looming ideas—like the power of community, the concept of self control, what makes a Christian a Christian, and the meaning of life—are also discussed at length. While each character is religious in some capacity, conversations typically offer several different viewpoints, and the dialogue avoids becoming overly preachy. Language is both concise and vivid, conveying the majesty and wonder of the shifting settings.

The book's musical format is conceptually compelling, but comes without enough establishing details. At times, characters launch into hymns without prompting, and though their songs may relate to the places that the group is visiting or to an activity that they are participating in, connections between the hymn and surrounding dialogue are often weak.

Moves through time and space seem artistic, but aren't always credibly achieved. Characters and locations often shift abruptly, and it can be difficult to follow the story's development as a result, particularly in transitions between chapters. Events are often interrupted by significant tangents that impede the clarity of the text. Some character arcs lose steam at the book's end, making for disappointing interpersonal resolutions.

A compelling message of the importance and dynamism of Christianity, *Dig the Zone of Freedom* is a one-of-a-kind musical.

AMANDA ADAMS (October 11, 2017)

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