

Interview Questions for Rick Hocker

1. Why did you write *Four in the Garden*?

In February 2007, I dreamt I was sitting in a college religion class. The class was discussing a book titled "Four," which presented a world where God had created only one person. The book described the growing relationship between this person and God. When I awoke, I believed God wanted me to write this story about how to have a close relationship with God. I felt compelled to make my dream a reality, and I began to write. Three years prior, I had learned some spiritual lessons from a severe back injury. I saw this book as an opportunity to weave those insights into a story form.

2. Why four and not two in the garden?

I wanted to stay true to the title I had received in my dream. Originally, the "four" represented the sole human plus the three-fold God. After numerous revisions, the story changed to be about the sole human plus three spiritual teachers.

2. What is the book's main theme?

The book is about trusting in God and how that trust transforms us. Trusting in God is not an easy thing to do. So many things get in the way, such as fear or ego.

3. Doesn't blind trust in God require us to abandon our intellect?

The trust I describe in my book isn't blind. One's eyes must be wide open, and one's intellect must be engaged. Trust is a choice. We make that choice when we realize that our own resources are insufficient and we learn that God is trustworthy.

4. What do you hope people will get out of reading your book?

An altered understanding of God. I want people to read about a loving God who desires intimacy with us, a God who is accessible, not a God who is distant, judgmental, or uncaring.

5. Who is your intended audience?

People who are spiritual but not religious. Many people are turned off by religion but still believe in God. I tried to strip out all religion from my book, including loaded religious words, such as God, faith, and sin. The book presents Christian principles, but the main focus is on relationship, not behavior.

6. Do you believe that the mainline church will embrace your book?

That remains to be seen. My book is intentionally thought-provoking. It has already upset people because the God I present doesn't suit their understanding of God. My book challenges assumptions, and people dislike having their spiritual beliefs challenged. I believe that one's beliefs should be challenged from time to time. Re-examination often leads to a stronger belief system. However, those who feel most threatened when challenged are those whose beliefs are least secure

7. Why does it matter to you what people think about God?

Because I believe that some people would fall in love with God if they knew how loving he is. The problem is that people misunderstand God and believe him to be harsh or uncaring. I hope to revise their understanding.

8. What is the book's most unique feature?

It's a spiritual guidebook disguised as a story.

9. How did you gather material for your book?

Most of the life lessons in my book were pulled from my own experience. Many of the insights about God were pulled from my journals. A severe back injury in 2004 taught me much about trusting in God. Those experiences and insights formed the basis of my book, and I wove them into a story.

10. What can you tell us about your back injury?

I injured myself at the gym using an abdominal machine that has been removed from gyms because they are now known to be dangerous. I sprained my abdominal muscles and pulled my spinal column. The pain increased over a few weeks until I could no longer stand or sit for any length of time. At its worst, I was bed-ridden in excruciating pain for six months, followed by a long recovery. Since I couldn't work, my debts piled up. I wrestled with God during that dark time, choosing to believe there was some unrevealed purpose to my ordeal. Looking back, I'm grateful for what I learned about trusting God. The biggest lesson was that God can use any experience to transform us when we entrust that experience to Him. Life may disappoint us, but God's love never disappoints.

11. What is your writing process?

I write in spurts when I have time, usually in the evenings, since I have a full-time day job. Monday nights are my dedicated writing nights. When I'm not writing, I'm thinking about what I will write when I sit down at my laptop. I write whatever section is most vivid to me, so I jump around within the story. That saves me from writer's block, which I don't think I have ever experienced. I edit as I write, though most voices tell me I shouldn't do that. I

can't stand to leave a sloppy sentence as is. I seek out feedback on my writing and welcome honest criticism, although I'm very particular whom I ask for feedback.

12. Who's your favorite author?

I've been enjoying the Flavia de Luce books by Alan Bradley. I have also enjoyed books by Lisa See, Sara Gruen, Vanessa Diffenbaugh, and Diane Setterfield. I love books that have magic realism, such as *Bless Me Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya.

13. Do you plan to write more books?

Yes. I already started my second book. It takes place in modern Missouri, but still has spiritual themes.

14. Where can we buy the book?

At any online bookstores, such as Amazon. Search on "Four in the Garden" under "Books."