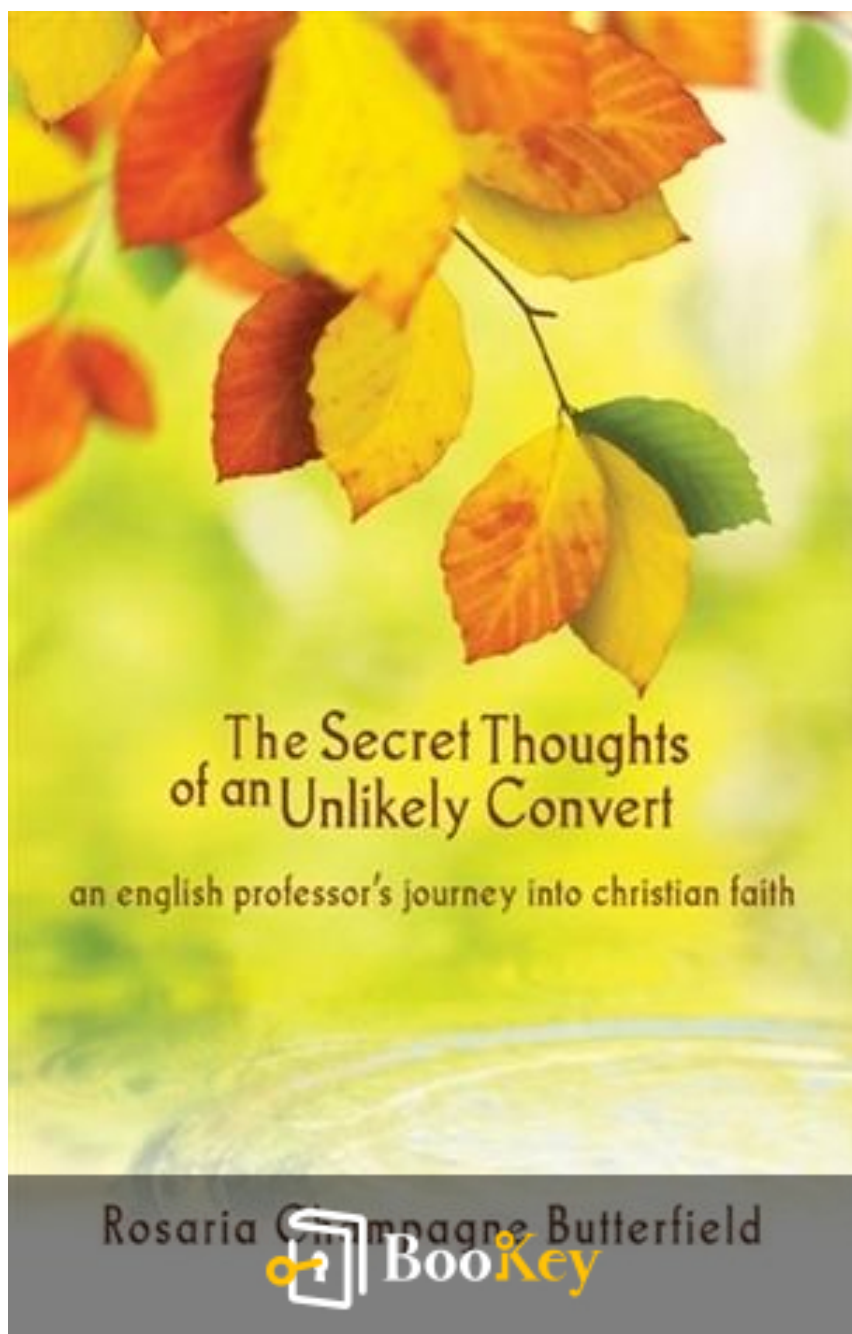


# The Secret Thoughts Of An Unlikely Convert PDF (Limited Copy)

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield



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# **The Secret Thoughts Of An Unlikely Convert**

## **Summary**

A Journey of Faith Amidst Chaos and Transformation.

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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## About the book

In "The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert," Rosaria Champagne Butterfield embarks on an introspective journey that reveals her unexpected transformation from a respected tenured professor and committed community activist to a follower of Christianity. Initially, Rosaria flourished in an environment brimming with liberal values, where she championed causes alongside her partner. Her life revolved around the pursuit of knowledge and social justice, grounded in a worldview that disdained traditional religious beliefs.

However, her carefully constructed beliefs faced a seismic challenge when she began to engage with Christianity—an ideology she had previously critiqued as narrow-minded. This exploration was not driven by a desire for faith but rather a curiosity sparked by personal interactions, notably with a local pastor and his wife, who embodied a different perspective on life and belief. Their warmth and openness coaxed Rosaria into a dialogue that blurred the lines between her preconceived notions and a more profound understanding of faith.

As she navigated this uncharted territory, Rosaria experienced intense personal turmoil, marked by confusion and existential questioning. What began as an intellectual inquiry quickly spiraled into a crisis of identity, forcing her to confront her values and the life she had built. The narrative

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intertwines her reflection on the complexities of conversion and the dissonance that arises when one's foundational beliefs are challenged.

In this deeply personal recounting, Rosaria illustrates the upheaval that often accompanies such profound transformations. She candidly shares her inner struggles—her doubts, fears, and eventual acceptance—mapping out a path that reveals how a seemingly chaotic journey can lead to a deeply reformed character. Ultimately, her transformation evokes a broader conversation about the nature of faith, the power of community, and the courage it takes to embrace change, compelling readers to reflect on the implications of belief in their own lives.

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## About the author

In the chapters that explore Rosaria Champagne Butterfield's journey, readers are introduced to her transformative experience as a former tenured professor of English at Syracuse University, a role that would later serve as a backdrop for her profound conversion to Christianity in 1999.

Initially, Rosaria's life is deeply rooted in the liberal academic environment, where she engages with various social and political ideologies. She is known for her critical thought and strong feminist views, often focusing on LGBTQ+ issues in her scholarly work. This academic persona, however, is to be radically disrupted when she meets a local pastor and his wife, whose invitation to dinner sets off a deep exploration of faith.

As she interacts with this couple, Rosaria finds herself questioning her own beliefs. The ordinary act of sharing meals becomes a transformative experience that opens her heart to new perspectives about God, faith, and the teachings of Christianity. This exploration marks the beginning of her spiritual awakening, wherein scripture and theological discussions replace her prior critiques of traditional religious beliefs.

Her eventual conversion to Christianity signifies not just a personal metamorphosis but also a shift in her life's direction. Following this pivotal moment, Rosaria feels called to not only embrace her faith but to actively

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minister to college students, recognizing the profound impact that mentoring can have in a similar academic landscape she once inhabited. This leads her to Geneva College, where she balances her newfound role as a mentor with her commitments to her family, being a full-time mother and pastor's wife.

In her current life, Rosaria also engages with her past through writing and speaking, aiming to share her experiences and intersect faith with contemporary cultural discussions. Her journey highlights the transformation that can occur when one is open to challenge their beliefs and the richness of community that emerges through vulnerability and authentic relationships. Through her roles, she becomes a voice advocating for understanding and faith in a climate often resistant to such transformations, bridging the gap between academic skepticism and spiritual discovery.

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# Chapter 1 Summary: Conversion and the Gospel of Peace

## Conversion and the Gospel of Peace: Summary

In the chapters titled "Conversion and the Gospel of Peace," Rosaria Butterfield recounts her tumultuous journey to Christianity from 1997 to 2000, a process she describes as akin to "both an abduction and a train wreck." Rather than adhering to conventional narratives of faith, her experience was marked by compelling doubts and unexpected relationships, particularly with Pastor Ken Smith, who played a significant role in her transformation.

At the time of her conversion, Rosaria was an accomplished 36-year-old associate professor deeply entrenched in the lesbian community and committed to activism. Her academic focus on Critical Theory and Queer Theory highlighted her engagement with contemporary social justice issues. However, beneath her strong identification with her community and the validation of her lifestyle, Rosaria began to experience a dissonance with her values and a discomfort within her relationship. This internal conflict prompted her to question the intellectual foundations of both her identity as a lesbian activist and the critiques she faced from Christian perspectives.

Ken Smith's gentle and inquisitive approach provided a refreshing contrast

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to the confrontational attitudes she had often encountered. Their initial meetings fostered a climate of curiosity rather than conflict, inviting Rosaria to explore Christian beliefs without the pressure of immediate conversion. Over two years, with support from Ken and his wife, Floy, she immersed herself in the Bible, discovering a nurturing community that encouraged her exploration without imposing orthodoxy.

As she delved deeper into her spiritual journey, Rosaria confronted significant tensions between her evolving understanding of faith and her existing identity, particularly regarding her same-sex relationship. Engaging with key Christian concepts such as repentance and faith compelled her to critically examine her past and the implications of potentially embracing a Christian identity. This culminated in a pivotal realization that accepting Christianity might require her to fundamentally surrender her previous self.

Faced with the transformative dimensions of her faith journey, Rosaria's experience became an intricate tapestry of struggles, self-reflection, and a burgeoning relationship with God, bolstered by communal support. Despite her fears of losing her previous identity, her newfound faith began to redefine her worldview, significantly impacting her lifestyle and prompting the gradual dissolution of her ties to her past.

Conversion, however, came with challenges. Rosaria was thrust into a period of reevaluation where her social circles, professional aspirations, and

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personal relationships were tested. She grappled with the dichotomy of acceptance within the lesbian community versus the expectations of her new Christian fellowship, leading to a complex interplay of external influences and internal convictions.

In conclusion, Rosaria reflects on her conversion as a deeply transformative and sometimes traumatic journey. It was a chaotic shift that ultimately fostered personal growth and a profound connection to Christ. Her narrative is a powerful testament to the capacity of faith to redefine one's identity and beliefs, revealing that the journey, while fraught with difficulty, can lead to profound and life-altering changes.

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# Chapter 2 Summary: Repentance and the Sin of Sodom

## Summary of Chapter 2: Repentance and the Sin of Sodom

In April 1999, Rosaria Champagne Butterfield experiences a significant calling from Jesus, which is both subtle and overwhelming. This spiritual awakening prompts her to seek deeper understanding and repentance for her sins, particularly pride, which she acknowledges as a foundational issue in her life.

As she reflects on the biblical story of Sodom, Rosaria challenges the conventional focus on homosexuality in its narrative. Delving into the Book of Ezekiel, she discovers that Sodom was primarily judged for its pride, materialism, neglect of the poor, and a general lack of mercy—indicating that homosexuality might be a manifestation of deeper underlying sins rather than the root cause itself. This realization leads her to recognize that pride plays a pivotal role in various sins, including those that have shaped her own identity and relationships.

Rosaria articulates that sin transcends simple categorization, embodying broader behavioral patterns and attitudes. She views sexuality as symptomatic of deeper life conditions, grappling with the implications of pride and societal idleness, while stressing the necessity of mercy and the

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perils of unchecked desires.

Following her conversion, Rosaria undergoes a profound transformation, reevaluating her past relationships in light of her newfound faith. She acknowledges that her previous sexual history, lacking Christ's guidance, was ultimately sinful. This awareness drives her to commit to a life of celibacy and discipline aligned with Christian values.

As she acclimates to her new faith, Rosaria faces challenges around church membership. She confides in her Wiccan housemate about her struggles, recognizing that true community must reflect God's purpose and foster accountability among believers. This leads her to grapple with the meaning of church membership, ultimately understanding it as a covenant with God and a commitment to a faith community rather than merely an organizational affiliation.

Rosaria's academic career becomes increasingly complex as she aligns her scholarship with her Christian worldview while navigating the pressures of a liberal academic environment. This juxtaposition generates both excitement and anxiety about her role as a professor amid her spiritual growth.

Amidst personal upheaval, Rosaria grapples with betrayal when a close friend, R, falters in his faith, leading to a painful separation. This experience intensifies her emotional landscape, steeping her in feelings of loss but also

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renewing her commitment to help others, including a suicidal student, reflecting her growing understanding of God's mercy and grace.

In the aftermath of her trials, Rosaria recognizes God's guidance, leading her to express deeper gratitude for the opportunities for ministry and personal growth that arise through her experiences. She embraces the promises of God that transcend her earthly struggles, ultimately making a pivotal decision to turn away from her past and step into a future filled with faith and purpose, firmly anchored in Christ.

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## **Chapter 3 Summary: The Good Guys: Sanctification and Public Worship**

### **Chapter 3 Summary: The Good Guys: Sanctification and Public Worship**

In this chapter, the author explores her spiritual journey, emphasizing the intertwining of everyday practices with deep faith. After her conversion, she rekindled her love for knitting, which transformed into a form of prayer. Each knitted piece became a tangible record of her spiritual reflections and journey with God, symbolizing her desire to connect the physical act of creation with her spiritual life.

The chapter begins with her move from Syracuse to Beaver Falls. This transition filled her with anxiety, as she packed more knitting supplies than clothing, underscoring her attachment to this creative practice. Upon arriving in Beaver Falls, she was struck by the pervasive religious imagery in the community, which elicited feelings of discomfort and led her to contemplate the true nature of faith and acceptance in such an environment.

Her initial experiences at the local church heightened her sense of isolation. Surrounded by a congregation steeped in familiar traditions and academic discourse, the worship felt foreign and led her on a profound self-reflective journey about her faith and identity. During this time, she found guidance in

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key figures such as Pastor Bruce and Dean Smith. These mentors encouraged her to bridge her past experiences with her developing understanding of Christian life, providing the support she needed to navigate her spiritual path.

Engaging with the community, she participated in a lecture on faith integration, where she shared her testimony. This sparked vibrant discussions among students about sexuality and redemption—a crucial aspect of her journey involving reconciling her identity with her faith. Her openness also led her to invite students to church, nurturing deeper conversations around faith and authenticity within the community.

Amidst these new engagements, the author grappled with her questions regarding Reformed Presbyterian worship traditions, particularly the emphasis on psalm singing. Through her studies and reflections, she discovered the profound relevance of worship practices rooted in scripture, ultimately leading her to appreciate the principle of *\*sola scriptura\**—the belief that scripture alone is the ultimate authority in matters of faith.

The chapter wraps up with her revelation about the theological foundations of worship, which brought her a newfound sense of belonging and purpose. Culminating in her marriage to Kent Butterfield, this union symbolizes her commitment to intertwining her personal and academic pursuits within a framework of grace and biblical truth, allowing her to embrace both her past

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and present on her spiritual journey.

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# **Chapter 4: The Home Front: Marriage, Ministry, and Adoption**

## **The Home Front: Marriage, Ministry, and Adoption**

### **Introduction to Kent Butterfield**

The chapter opens with an intimate introduction to the author's husband, Kent Butterfield, whose calming presence and witty nature serve as the bedrock of their life together. Their marriage, celebrated in a modest ceremony in 2001, sets the stage for a partnership rooted in both ministry and parenting.

### **Changing Perspectives on Marriage**

The author's journey toward a deeper understanding of marriage is scrutinized, revealing her past feminist beliefs that viewed marriage as a form of oppression. However, her union with Kent fundamentally reshapes her view, allowing her to recognize the beauty of a Christ-centered relationship which emphasizes partnership and mutual support.

### **The Wedding and Biblical Significance**

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During their wedding, the couple encountered the profound notion of marriage as a divine institution, with spiritual authority eclipsing societal conventions. The ceremony featured a biblical charge that challenged them both to embody their roles as outlined in scripture, emphasizing the sacredness of their commitment.

### **Biblical Principles of Marriage**

The text explores the biblical principles guiding marriage, portraying it as an interdependent relationship where each partner complements the other. The author reflects on scriptural teachings regarding headship and submission, elaborating on how a wife's submission to her husband is paralleled by a husband's love, mirroring Christ's love for the church.

### **Embracing Family Dynamics**

At the age of 39, the author grapples with her identity as a newly married woman, navigating the complexities of traditional family roles. As she and Kent learn to embody a Christian approach to headship and submission, they forge a resilient partnership that equips them to face various life challenges.

### **Adoption Journey**

Driven by their desire to grow their family, the Butterfields embark on the

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journey of adoption, navigating the intricacies of transracial adoption. The author poignantly recounts the arrivals of their children, the challenges faced during the adoption process, including a disrupted adoption that tests their resolve and faith.

### **Community Ministry and Hospitality**

The Butterfields embrace hospitality, dedicating themselves to ministering to college students and the local community. Their outreach efforts exemplify the importance of building relationships that strengthen faith and enrich their lives.

### **Reflections on Foster Care and Adoption Challenges**

The author sheds light on systemic issues within the foster care system, addressing common misconceptions surrounding adoption. Through real-life encounters, she illuminates societal biases and the emotional toll caused by temporary placements that many children experience.

### **The Complexity of Adoption**

Adoption is portrayed as a journey rich with both loss and the formation of new relationships. The author reflects on her bond with each child, articulating the delicate balance of love and acknowledgment of their past

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traumas, crucial for fostering a healthy family dynamic.

## Spiritual Growth Through Challenges

The family's experiences with children in foster care serve as pivotal

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## Chapter 5 Summary: Homeschooling and Middle Age

In 2012, Rosaria Champagne Butterfield reflects on her life as a homeschooling mother in Purcellville, Virginia. Her narrative captures the vibrancy of her bustling household filled with laughter, chaos from her four children, and the demands of family life, all while her husband manages a government job that adds stress to their daily routines.

Rosaria introduces her family dynamics, focusing on her 18-year-old son, Matt, who serves as a volunteer firefighter and shares responsibilities at home. The family fosters a love for nature and scientific exploration while maintaining a rigorous academic environment. Their educational philosophy promotes cooperative learning, where children actively engage in hands-on experiences, such as studying the natural world and getting involved in local community activities.

The chapter also acknowledges the significant role of extended family in their homeschooling journey. Rosaria's 81-year-old mother offers valuable assistance with her expertise, particularly in subjects like Latin. However, the dynamics are complicated by Rosaria's father's struggle with Alzheimer's, which intertwines the joys of family support with the challenges of caregiving.

Adoption and child advocacy emerge as central themes, emphasizing the

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desire for compassion and understanding within Christian communities. Rosaria draws on the perspective of Russell D. Moore, highlighting the theological importance of adoption in the Christian faith and reflecting on their own experiences with fostering and advocating for vulnerable children.

A transformative moment occurs when the Butterfields decide to foster a group of siblings in distress. After much deliberation and prayer, they welcome a boy named J, who arrives traumatized and initially mute. With the family's love and attention, J begins to flourish, illustrating the healing power of patience and support from those around him. This bittersweet experience sheds light on the complexities and emotional toll of fostering, ultimately leading to the difficult decision to let go for J's greater wellbeing.

As the chapter progresses, Rosaria conveys a hopeful outlook on family and the collective strength of their faith community. The narrative culminates in the joyous news of her husband, Kent, being called to pastor a church. This new opportunity marks a significant turning point for the family, ushering in renewed purpose and expanded avenues for service in their broader community, reinforcing their commitment to faith and familial love.

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