



The Brothers Karamazov: The Greatest Novel Ever Written!

With Jessica Hooten Wilson
Webinar Show Notes

Agenda

- A. Synopsis:** *The Brothers Karamazov* is the greatest novel ever written; it plumbs the depths of the human soul and reveals to us what it means to be made in the image of God, to be imitators of Jesus Christ, to face the horrors of sin and evil in the world, and yet to choose redemptive love. We'll walk through a few of the most famous scenes and passages answering the questions that prick our hearts.
- B. Personal Announcements (5 mins):**
- In 2023, she will publish [*Reading for the Love of God*](#)
 - In 2024, she will publish *The Making of Flannery O'Connor's Unfinished Novel* & a co-edited volume *Who's Afraid of the Liberal Arts?*
- C. Main Goals Tonight (30-35 mins):**
- Who do we imitate?
 - The greatest lie is autonomous authority.
 - The choice is between dying to oneself or becoming enslaved
- D. Q & A to follow (15-20 mins)**



TONIGHT'S OUTLINE

- I. Brief biography of Dostoevsky
- II. The Novel
 - a. 12 installments (serialized)
 - b. Greatest of all his novels
- III. Main Points
 - a. We must choose whom we imitate
 - b. Autonomous authority is the greatest lie
 - c. Choice is between death to self or enslavement to the demonic
- IV. The Dichotomy of the Characters:
 - a. 2 fathers, 2 sons, 2 pathways to life
 - b. Must undergo a death to bear fruit
- V. Ivan
 - a. Student of science
 - b. Rationalist
 - c. Proverbial "Everyman"
- VI. Alyosha
 - a. Named after D's son who died
- b. Means "man of God"
 - c. Often called "angel" by others
- VII. Two Alternative Ways of Being
 - a. Self-made: Book 5: The Grand Inquisitor
 - i. The devil as the model
 - ii. Results in demonic enslavement/delusion
 - iii. Controlling narrative
 - b. The way of imitation: Book 6: The Hagiography of Father Zosima
 - i. Christ as the model
 - ii. Necessitates death to self
 - iii. Self-less retelling
 - iv. Results in resurrection
 - c. Final Analysis: Jesus or the Devil?

Q & A

Some questions that were answered in the webinar

- How do you prepare a class to read *The Brothers Karamazov*? What is important to know beforehand?
- Do you have a favorite translation?



- Can you summarize what Dostoevsky is teaching us through the story of The Grand Inquisitor and the (mis)use of freedom and power and the presence of evil and suffering?
- How do you understand Dmitri's received verdict at the end? Is it a statement on Russia's trajectory in "murdering" Christianity?
- How was this novel lending itself to an intended sequel?
- Do you have any insights on how to guide students through reading Fyodor's often winding and turbulent ramblings?
- How do secular scholars/readers regard the themes in the novel?
- How do you approach the novel from class if you cannot read the whole novel?
- As a socratic discussion, which question did prompt the most discussion in class amongst your students?
- After reading The Brothers Karamazov, what should we read next?

Encore Resources

I. You can find Jessica Hooten Wilson at:

- A. [Personal Website](#)
- B. [Newsletter](#)
- C. [YouTube Channel](#)
 - 1. [The Brothers Karamazov Playlist](#)
- D. [The Scandal of Reading Podcast](#)
- E. [Twitter](#)
- F. By email: jessica.hootenwilson@pepperdine.edu

II. Jessica's Resources

- A. [Books](#)
- B. [Articles & Essays](#)
- C. [Virtual Book Club | The Brothers Karamazov](#)
- D. [Talks & Lectures](#)
- E. [Podcast & Radio Interviews](#)

III. Recommended Reading:

- A. [Giving the Devil His Due](#) by Jessica Hooten Wilson
- B. [The Brothers Karamazov](#) by Fyodor Dostoevsky



- C. [In the First Circle](#) by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn
 - D. [The Master and Margarita](#) by Mihail Bulgakov
 - E. [The Betrothed](#) translated by Michael F. Moore
 - F. [10 Books You Need to Read Before You Graduate College](#)
 - G. [Lectures on Dostoevsky](#) by Joseph Frank
 - H. [The Psychology of Totalitarianism](#) by Mattias Desmet
- IV. **Related Resources:**
- A. [The Moral Imagination Podcast: Literature and Totalitarianism](#)
 - B. [Nietzsche and Nihilism - A Warning to the West](#) | Academy of Ideas
 - C. [Mattias Desmet on Mass Formation and Modern Society](#)