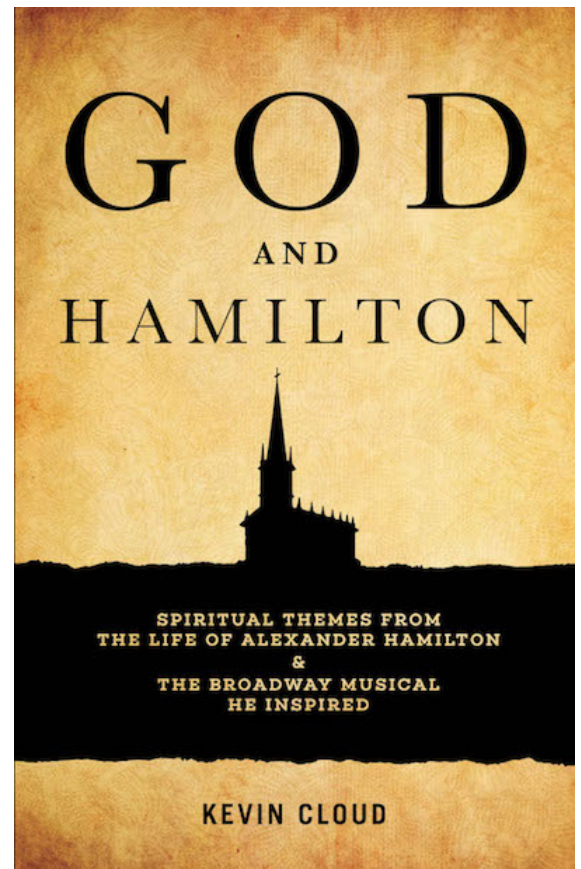


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GOD AND HAMILTON

**SPIRITUAL THEMES FROM THE LIFE OF
ALEXANDER HAMILTON & THE BROADWAY
MUSICAL HE INSPIRED**

KEVIN CLOUD



Alexander Hamilton's transformation from forgotten founding father to cultural icon occurred with breathtaking speed. Lin-Manuel Miranda's unprecedented musical, *Hamilton*, brought this story to the center of our cultural consciousness. Hamilton has reached a level of cultural significance rarely experienced by historical figures or Broadway musicals. The ground-breaking Broadway musical resonates deeply with audiences because it offers a transcendent experience, reminding us of spiritual truths that draw us into the holy presence of God.

God and Hamilton explores the spiritual nature of Alexander Hamilton's story. Hamilton's story represents grace, shame, brokenness, forgiveness, death, and ultimately redemption. The creative intersection of Hamilton's story, the story of Scripture, and the story of our lives will spur imagination and give birth to hope. Readers will experience new insights into the power of these core truths of the spiritual life. Ultimately, readers will be challenged to transform their lives as a response to this deeply spiritual story.

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About the Author

KEVIN CLOUD

Kevin Cloud is a pastor, church planter, and author. He is a lifelong musician (drums, guitar, piano, ukulele, and harmonica) and holds an undergraduate music degree. Kevin will never forget walking out of the Richard Rogers Theatre after seeing *Hamilton* in New York City. He knew that he had experienced something transcendent, something spiritual, something that drew him into the presence of God.

Growing up as an unchurched kid, Kevin received an unexpected call to ministry when he was eighteen years old. He gave his life to this call and has planted four churches in the Kansas City area over the past twenty years. He is driven by his passion to communicate the gospel in creative ways.

Kevin and his wife, Allison, have four sons, Samuel, Benjamin, Andrew, and Levi. They have lived in Kansas City their entire life, and still can't believe the Royals finally won a World Series in 2015.

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What Others Are Saying About **God and Hamilton**

“Cloud’s Christlike compassion turned me inside out and revealed a side of Hamilton I had never thought to explore.”

—**Lauren Boyd, *Hamilton* Broadway Cast**

“In this book, Kevin portrays a wonderful example of how you can draw from contemporary culture to understand how God works with us on our own heroic journeys. I found his emphasis on God’s grace and faithfulness particularly inspiring and think that all who read it will come away with a better understanding of the challenges we all face. I cannot recommend it more highly!”

—**Mike Breen, Founder of 3DM, Author of *Building a Discipling Culture, Covenant and Kingdom, and Family on Mission***

“A bold and creative exploration of the themes in life that matter most. If we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear, we will notice God everywhere. In this beautiful book, Cloud helps us see, listen, and open to the all-consuming love God pours out to us.”

—**Phileena Heuertz, Author of *Pilgrimage of a Soul: Contemplative Spirituality for the Active Life* and Founding Partner of Gravity, a Center for Contemplative Activism**

“How did Alexander Hamilton overcome a tragic and shame-filled childhood? Kevin Cloud celebrates the amazing grace that propelled Hamilton to become a key architect of our fledgling democracy. For all who struggle with doubt, depression, and despair, *God and Hamilton* offers an inspiring way forward. Kevin Cloud’s book made my heart sing!”

—**Craig Detweiler, President of the Seattle School of Theology and Psychology**

“C.S. Lewis once lamented that people too often fail to appreciate the real and serious glory of even the most dull and uninteresting human life; that if we could ever truly glimpse the beauty of a normal everyday person’s story we might actually be tempted to worship them. In *God and Hamilton*, Kevin Cloud offers precisely this kind of appreciative glimpse into the life of Alexander Hamilton. These pastoral reflections upon a life that was anything but dull and uninteresting are sure to inspire. Read this book and catch a new imagination for what it means to be human.”

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—**Tim Suttle, Pastor and Author of *Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture***

“Eliza Hamilton’s commitment to the children of her day was born out of her love for an orphan who changed the course of our nation, and was shaped by her abiding faith. We at Graham are inspired by Eliza’s conviction, strength of character, and loving spirit as we continue to lead the organization she co-founded to care for children growing up in conditions her husband, Alexander, would have found familiar. Kevin Cloud beautifully captures this powerful story that is inspiring the world.”

—**Jess Dannhauser, President and CEO of Graham Windham**

“You’d have to be living under a rock not to know about the Broadway play *Hamilton*. It’s developed an enormous following. I didn’t really know all the spiritual implications of Hamilton’s life though until I read Kevin’s book. My appreciation grew for the musical, but mostly for Hamilton. What a great read!”

—**Ron Edmondson, Pastor and Author of *The Mystical Leader***

“Kevin Cloud has masterfully tapped into the resurgent interest in Alexander Hamilton by crafting a captivating, wholly entertaining, and spiritually insightful book. As a talented, multi-faceted, and gifted visionary, Hamilton continues to connect with our modern society in a unique way. His principled words and actions have long been associated with spiritual guidance. Cloud takes his reader on a fascinating journey, connecting those inspired dots of Hamilton’s life, and marries them with our perception of God in our culture. In doing so, he provides powerful, transformative lessons and tools for our times. A fun and purposeful read indeed.”

—**Dr. Gregory Jantz, Author of *Turning Your Down into Up***

“Hamilton is more than just a musical and has the power to change lives, and in *God and Hamilton* author Kevin Cloud illuminates why a Broadway show affects so many of us deeply and on such a personal level. Kevin skillfully weaves insights about the musical, Alexander Hamilton’s life, and his own experiences and spiritual guidance into a tapestry that not only illustrates the amazing work that Lin-Manuel Miranda created but that also makes you reexamine the life you’re leading. Entertaining and thought-provoking, *God and Hamilton* is a compelling read whether or not you’ve seen the show.”

—**Bryan Barreras, Author of *Where Was the Room Where It Happened?: The Unofficial Hamilton – An American Musical Location Guide***

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“With a pastor’s heart and a mind at work, Kevin Cloud unearths novel and crucial insights at the intersection of Alexander Hamilton’s life and our own. He has also done his homework, grounding his claims in the rich context of the revolutionary era.”

—**T.J. Tomlin, Associate Professor of History, University of Northern Colorado and Author of *A Divinity for All Persuasions***

“This book is a testament to how God can use the arts to transform us. With the heart of a true pastor, Kevin Cloud masterfully weaves together historical details from the lives of Hamilton and his contemporaries, scenes from Lin-Manuel Miranda’s beautiful musical, and contemporary stories of faith. In these pages, Cloud moves easily among the roles of theologian and storyteller, pastor and friend. I loved this book, and think that anyone who has found his or her imagination captured by the life story of Alexander Hamilton will enjoy the way Cloud examines these experiences in light of the stories of the Bible-- from the Psalms to the Gospels to the Revelation.”

—**Katie Savage, Author of *Grace in the Maybe: Instructions on Not Knowing Everything about God***

“Kevin doesn’t take the safe road in life. He jumps in the middle of one of the biggest phenomena in Broadway theater history, *Hamilton*. Kevin jumps head first into this intersection of music and history. He unearths rich and livable connections with Biblical truth. When was the last time you read a book that made you want to see a Broadway show and read the Bible? Kevin manages to do both as he traverses the fascinating textures of both the musical and history about Alexander Hamilton and his relationship with God.”

—**Roy Moran, Author of *Spent Matches***

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Suggested Interview Questions

For Kevin Cloud, author of
God and Hamilton

Spiritual Themes from the Life of Alexander Hamilton & the Broadway Musical He Inspired

Q: Why did you decide to write a book about the spiritual life of Alexander Hamilton?

A: I was fortunate enough to see the musical *Hamilton* on Broadway in the fall of 2016. It absolutely blew me away. I loved the music, the story; everything about the show was amazing. But on a deeper level, I left the theater knowing that I had experienced a transcendent moment. That something happened in that theater that was deeper than just watching a great musical. The story touched on so many different spiritual themes—grace, shame, forgiveness, death, redemption. Watching the story felt like a spiritual experience for me.

After I got home from New York, I immediately bought the biography of Alexander Hamilton by Ron Chernow. I devoured the book (over 800 pages!) and was struck by the Spiritual life that both Alexander and his wife, Eliza, lived. They were both faithful and devout people. The more I thought about the musical and Alexander's life, the more I thought it would be really interesting to dive into each of the themes I experienced through his story and write a book about it.

Q: You make the point in the book that one of the reasons this musical connects so deeply with people is that it is a transcendent experience. Talk more about that.

A: Lin-Manuel Miranda (who wrote *Hamilton*) gave a speech where he talked about how one of his favorite aspects of live theatre is its ability to create transcendent moments. I think that happens over and over again throughout the musical. There are these moments where you are watching the play, and something happens on stage—a betrayal, a moment of forgiveness, a moment of grace—that connects so deeply with the audience that the entire atmosphere

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changes. You feel the presence of an important truth, issue—I would even say, feel the presence of God. Proverbs talks about how “wisdom cries aloud to us in the streets.” I think that in this story, wisdom cries aloud to us from the stage, creates moments where we can experience truth, presence of God.

Rosie O’Donnell, who has seen the show over 15 times, says seeing *Hamilton* is like medicine for her soul; it’s like going to church for her. I think many people have had a similar experience, and I think that is why this show is connecting so deeply with people.

Q: You also talk in the book about how stories have the power to transform us. What do you mean by that?

A: Yeah, so the reason we all love stories so much is that they have the power, if we open ourselves up to them, to change our lives. It’s why we love movies, read novels, go to the theatre. When we see or hear a story performed, it confronts our lives. It challenges us in ways we don’t expect.

One of my favorite stories I’ve come across about *Hamilton* is a story about how Christopher Jackson, who played George Washington in the original Broadway cast, circled the entire cast up before each performance. He would lead the cast in a time of prayer and express his hope that every single person in the theatre—audience, cast members, orchestra—would leave the theatre a better person than they came in. Love that idea; it expresses this hope that art, story, can and does have the power to transform our lives.

Q: Talk about some of the spiritual themes that you discovered in *Hamilton*’s life.

A: The way that the book is structured is each chapter is written around a specific theme from the musical or from *Hamilton*’s life.

The entire foundation of *Hamilton*’s story is one of grace. *Hamilton* was this poor kid living in the Caribbean, and then through the generosity of others he was able to travel to New York to get his education. Everything that *Hamilton* became in this world was built on the foundation of grace.

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His story is also a story of forgiveness. Hamilton experienced incredible triumphs, also gut-wrenching failures in his life. He had a very public affair, the first government sex scandal. His wife, Eliza, is devastated; she burns all the letters she has written to him out of anger and hurt. But over time, she forgives him, one of the most beautiful moments of the entire musical.

Lastly, this is a story of Redemption. Alexander's greatest sense of shame and insecurity came from the fact that he was orphaned at a very young age. After Hamilton dies, his wife Eliza establishes the first private orphanage in New York City. She takes his greatest source of pain and brokenness, and she tries to redeem it, right? It's how the play actually ends, Eliza singing about this orphanage. The organization she started still exists today. Now called Graham Windham, it serves people in need in New York City. Amazing to me; one woman created this organization over 200 years ago, in an effort to bring redemption to her husband's brokenness, an effort that still continues today.

Q: Eliza seems like a central figure in Hamilton's story and in your book. What did you learn about Eliza Hamilton in writing this book?

A: Eliza was such a faithful and devout woman; in some ways, even more so than Alexander. She is such an important part of his story, which Miranda captures beautifully in his musical. There is no way Alexander accomplishes what he accomplished without Eliza by his side. She was this stabilizing, consistent, loving force in his life. On the night before Alexander's duel with Burr, he writes this letter to Eliza, a tender, affectionate note, in which he calls her "best of wives and best of women." See this respect, affection, love Alexander has for his wife.

She lives another 50 years after Alexander is shot in his famous duel and accomplishes so much. She starts orphanage, gives her life to serving orphans in NYC, felt called by God to this work. She really was a faithful and devout woman.

Q: What is your greatest hope for this book?

A: This story, this musical, has deeply impacted my life—reminded me about God's grace in my life, challenged me to forgive others, inspired me to partner with God

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in his task of redeeming all things. This musical has transformed me. Interestingly, that was the prayer Chris Jackson prayed, right?

I think many other people have had this connection with this musical as well, and I hope that this book can help people connect their love for this story to God. That it might help people see this connection that they didn't see before, that this connection might change their lives in some tangible ways.

Also I hope that Lin-Manuel Miranda reads it and decides to hire me to be the spiritual director of the *Hamilton* cast in New York.

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