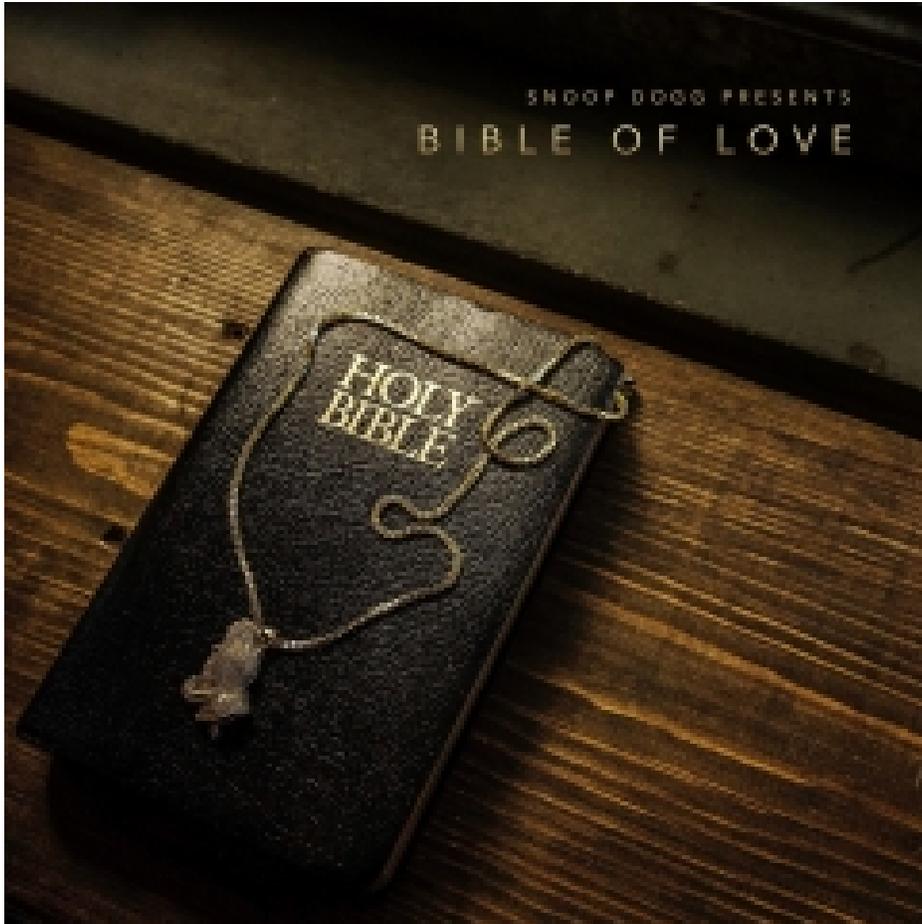


Snoop Dogg: Bible of Love

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Bible of Love is 134 minutes long, Snoop Dogg's voice is on maybe a tenth of it and the whole thing's about Jesus. If that appeals to you, you're either a scarily devoted Snoop fan or one of the 5,000 that bought it in its first week—low numbers by Snoop standards, but enough to get it to #1 on the gospel charts. It's not bad. In fact, it contains some of the most powerful moments in the Doggfather's recent catalog. It's just an extremely niche product, and it's the first release of the rapper's increasingly weird late career longtime fans could be forgiven for skipping. Welcome to Deep Snoop.

Why would Snoop do this? Snoop isn't known as a man of God, and he hops between faiths with Dylan-like frivolity; he was a member of the Nation of Islam around 2009 before his almost-certainly-facetious conversion to Rastafari in 2012. Interviews suggest *Bible of Love* is a cry for sanity in turbulent times, but there's no clear social justice angle besides platitudes about love. It'd be more convincing as a genre experiment if Snoop served as more than just a host. Maybe it's a light-side answer to his porn VHS.

It'll probably be most effective as a primer to gospel. The album's crammed to the gills with guests—some old friends like Daz Dillinger, a few big names like Patti Labelle and Jazze Pha

but mostly artists unknown outside of Christian circles. Recent gospel-rap albums like Kanye's *The Life of Pablo* and Chance the Rapper's *Coloring Book* didn't devote much time to actual gospel artists. This could be Snoop trying to do to gospel what Drake did with grime on *More Life*—using his influence to bolster a niche scene.

It'd be a stretch to call it a Snoop album. You'd be forgiven for forgetting he's even there, so intermittently does he pop up. Its only pervasive artist identity comes from producer Lonny Bereal, best-known as a Busta Rhymes weed carrier, who here proves himself a skilled arranger; he fills the margins with all manner of sympathetic strings and grumbling organs. *Bible of Love* belongs to the guests, most of whom disappear into a blur of soulful singing about Jesus. The most stunning guest turn comes from Patti LaBelle on "When It's All Over;" as the chord changes rise and rise as the song builds to its climax, she invariably lands on whichever note makes the change most devastating.

LaBelle's appearance is one of two moments on *Bible of Love* that blindside us. The other is "Words are Few," the closing and most heavily Snoop-featuring song. Two hours and six minutes in, he's finally talking about weed, except... he's paranoid. For a man who once bragged about smoking 81 blunts a day, that's a brave admission, and as he sits on the beach trying to enjoy his high, he feels a pang of guilt for fucking around with his friends instead of being in church. Snoop's guilt doesn't make the song powerful as much as his vulnerability. He's never sounded more world-weary on record.

Is it worth it to sit through it for these two moments? Again, this is a niche product made for a specific audience. Christian music isn't exactly known for its quality control, and those who prefer the spiritual value of music rather than its aesthetic value might find an album the length of a *Star Wars* movie no problem. The rest of us can skip it, but those brave souls who choose to dive in may find it unexpectedly enlightening and rewarding.