

[PDF] Grace (Eventually): Thoughts On Faith

Anne Lamott - pdf download free book



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Description:

Through Anne Lamott's many books (including six novels, her bestselling parenting memoir, *Operating Instructions*, and her popular guide to writing, *Bird by Bird*) the subject she keeps returning to is her faith, her deeply personal--"erratic," she says--journey in Christianity. Her latest book, *Grace (Eventually)*, is her third collection of her "thoughts on faith," and she took the time to answer a few of our questions.

Questions for Anne Lamott

Amazon.com: This is your third book on faith. How has your perspective changed since you wrote your first one?

Lamott: I wrote my first book on faith when Bill Clinton was president, and I was in a much better mood. I wrote *Plan B* during the run-up to war in Iraq, and the ensuing catastrophe, so I was very angry, but trying to reconcile that pain and hostility to Jesus's insistence that we are made of love, to love, and be loved, to forgive and be forgiven. Some days went better than others. Also, my son Sam was in his early teens, and that was a LOT easier than when he turned 16 and 17, his ages when I was writing the pieces in *Grace (Eventually)*.

In general, I think *Grace (Eventually)* is a less angry book. I like how I'm aging, except that my back hurts more often, my knees crack like twigs when I squat, and my memory fails more frequently, in more public and therefore humiliating ways. But I think I complain less. As my best friend said when she was dying, and I was obsessing about my butt, "You just don't have that kind of time."

Amazon.com: What does grace mean for you? How can we better communicate it to each other?

Lamott: Grace is that extra bit of help when you think you are really doomed; also, not coincidentally, when you have finally run out of good ideas on how to proceed, and on how better to control the people or circumstances that are frustrating or defeating you. I experience Grace as a cool ribbon of fresh air when I feel spiritually claustrophobic. Sometimes I experience it as water-wings, something holding me up when I am afraid that I'm going down, or the tide is carrying me away. I know that Grace meets us wherever we are, but does not leave us where it found us. Sometimes it is so small--a couple of seconds relief here, several extra inches there. I wish it were big and obvious, like sky-writing. Oh, well. Grace is not something I DO, or can chase down; but it is something I can receive, when I stop trying to be in charge.

We communicate grace to one another by holding space for people when they are hurt or terrified, instead of trying to fix them, or manage their emotions for them. We offer ourselves as silent companionship, or gentle listening when someone feels very alone. We get people glasses of water when they are thirsty.

Amazon.com: Many of the essays in *Grace (Eventually)* first appeared in Salon, the online magazine, and that's the way that many readers first found you. How do you see the Internet changing the way people read and write?

Lamott: The Internet makes everything so immediate and spontaneous, which I totally love-- UNLESS it has to do with the immediacy of people's negative response to me. Several of the Salon pieces in *Grace*--for instance, the story about the horrible fight with my son, and the piece about turning the other cheek while being ripped off by The Carpet Guy--generated a couple hundred letters, many of them extremely hostile. Perhaps "spewy" would be a better description. I also sometimes get knee-jerk responses to my mentions of Jesus in my Salon pieces that seem to lump me in the same tradition as Jerry Falwell. But for the most part, I love the populism and egalitarian nature of the Internet: everyone counts the same.

Amazon.com: What stories do people tell you, when they've read your books or know you are a writer?

Lamott: People tell me how relieved they are that I try to tell the truth about how hard it can be to be a mother, or a daughter, or an American in these times. They tell me stories about how awful their own teenagers can be, or how awful they themselves behaved towards their kids or parents; how hard it was to finally be able to adore their mothers, or to forgive their fathers. They tell me

their sobriety dates. They whisper to me that they are Christians, too.

Also, they ask if I am able to read their manuscripts, and the name of my agent, and my e-mail address. They ask if we are going to survive the current political difficulties--and I promise them we are. They ask how old my son is now--17 and a half--and how he is doing, which is fantastically, after some of the hard months I wrote about in *Grace*.

Amazon.com: What lessons do you think you can pass on to others: to your readers, to your son? What lessons does it seem like people have to learn for themselves?

Lamott: All I have to offer is my own truth, my own experience, strength and hope. I can pass on the tool of a God Box, and how for 20 years I have been putting tiny notes in mine and promising God I will keep my sticky fingers off the controls until I hear God's wisdom: sometimes I get an answer because the phone rings, or the mail comes, but at any rate, during every single terrible problem and tragedy, I have been given enough guidance and stamina and even humor to bear up, and be transformed, for the good. I always tell Sam that if you want to make God laugh, tell Her your plans. I tell Sam that if he listens to his best thinking, he will suffer: and to listen to his heart instead, to listen in the silence, and to seek wise counsel.

Amazon.com: You've written nearly a dozen books (including an incredibly popular guide to writing): does writing get any easier? Does it get harder?

Lamott: In a very important way, writing gets easier, because I've been doing it full time now for thirty-plus years, and just as you would get better and better if you practiced your scales on a piano, I've gotten better, and can try harder and harder pieces. But writing is always hard. It does not come naturally to me at all. I sit down at the same time every day, which lets my subconscious realize it's time to get to work. I give myself very short assignments, and let myself write really terrible first drafts. But I grapple with the exact same problems every writer does, which is having equal proportions of self-loathing and grandiosity. I sort of live by the Nike ads: Just Do It. So I sit down. I show up. I do it by pre-arrangement with myself, because I know I'll feel sad and terrible if I shirk on that days writing. I do it as a debt of honor, to myself, and to whatever it is that has given me this gift of being able to tell stories, and to make people laugh. Laughter is carbonated holiness. Other people's good writing is medicine for me, and I hope mine is too, for my readers.

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From Publishers Weekly It would be easy to mistake this book for more of the same. Like Lamott's earlier spiritual nonfiction, *Traveling Mercies* and *Plan B*, it's a collection of essays, mostly previously published. The three books have strikingly similar covers and nearly identical subtitles. The familiar topics are here—Mom; her son, illness; death; addictions; Jesus; Republicans—as is the zany attitude. Not that repetitiveness matters; Lamott's faithful fans would line up to buy her shopping lists. But these recent essays show a new mellowness: "I don't hate anyone right now, not even George W. Bush. This may seem an impossibility, but it is true, and indicates the presence of grace or dementia, or both." With gentle wisdom refining her signature humor, Lamott explores helpfulness, decency, love and especially forgiveness. She explains the change: "Sometimes I act just as juvenile as I ever did, but as I get older, I do it for shorter periods of time. I find my way back to the path sooner, where there is always one last resort: get a glass of water and call a friend." Here's hoping that grace eventually persuades this older, wiser Lamott that her next nonfiction book should be wholly original. (Mar. 20)

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