

~How I was nurtured into a heart-focused community

We are all awakening to the pain of realizing I can't control my world the way I thought I could. Stuck with unresolved issues whose symptoms I'm trying to fix, all without the help of anyone else...***What if*** there were a place so safe that the worst of me could be known and I'd discover that I'd be loved, not less, but more in the telling of it?

The objective is not to create communities appearing to have sin under control-but for leaders to nurture a safe and real enough place where people can come out of hiding and let others into their sin and failure. There, sin loses power, and we can be healed-trusting Christ's redemption, forgiveness and repentance. It's messy but utterly healthy. Those who live in it become free. ...And as they learn to receive love...they sin less.

Jesus 27-Alive, clean, fearless, no pretense. 4 years later, walked out of seminary-w/the full *appearance* of godliness.

Preparing for ministry-found myself trying to appear pastoral, wise, together, godly...Pretending to like things I didn't and not like things I still did. Afraid to admit struggles in my marriage. Afraid to talk about wrong thoughts and feelings I still had.

John 13:34

Love is the process of meeting needs

We were all created with limitations

When we bluff like we have none-we never get loved

When we wear a mask-only our mask gets loved

Read-Romans 6:14

Grace is the absolute and unforced favor gained by Christ's death and resurrection, allowing God to be completely for us and endlessly in love with us, apart from anything we must prove. Grace is an actual realm, a way of life in, which we no longer strive for acceptance. We mature, heal and are released into His intentions by trusting that Jesus and all His power is fused into us, creating an entirely new person; Christ in me.

Grace is not to free us from obeying the heart of God. Grace is the nutrient-rich soil that seeds of truth drop into, so they're not choked by the self-condemnation of failure. Instead, no longer afraid of God's disgust, we can obey God from the heart rather than from compliance. And we grow into a beautiful, healthy tree, giving shade and safety to others.

Grace-122x NT. (/you can't say it except in Scottish or Irish)

2nd Timothy 2:1-“My son, be strong in the **grace** that's in Christ. **Acts 20:32**-“I commend you to God/to the Word of His grace, **which is able to build you up.** **Heb. 4:16**-“Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may **find grace to help in time of need.** **Rm 5:2**-We have peace w/God thru our Lord Jesus Christ thru whom also we've obtained our introduction by faith **into this grace in which we stand.**

Grace ignites the power of my new identity in Christ
Grace neutralizes sin's power by freeing me from the Law
Grace trades in my anemic strength for His power (a new me)
Grace takes away the weariness of bluffing adequacy

Grace destroys abandonment, rejection, condemnation
Grace says you're accepted, loved, enjoyed always
Grace says He is never disgusted or angry with you
Grace pours the blood of Jesus over every offense
Grace puts a robe of Christ's righteousness on upon me/in me
Grace says, as the Father loves me, so also I love you
Grace says I'll never give up on you, grow tired of you
Grace says you're a new creation, a categorically new creature,
Your old life is over. It and it's shame has no claims on you.
Grace says my love has no gradations. No matter what you do I
 Cannot love you more and I will not love you less.
Grace allows me a blamelessness that can allow me to receive
 criticism and correction without it defining me.

New Testament Gamble

Stumbled into **heartfocused environment of grace/trust**. Came to wow 'em w/my preaching. They loved me/endured me/ gently environment pulled me from a **doctrine of performance/buck-up epistemology**/replaced it with new identity, grace, love, joy, no condemnation, freedom, trust, safety, vulnerability/ playfulness

1989-Pps. 151-154 On My Worst Day

That theological shift is allowing me-to no longer hide *To trust others w/me *To accept God's never ashamed of what's really trust about me presently *To rest in my new identity/the Spirit's power to grow me up from the inside out *To cultivate authentic, vulnerable relationships.

What if we courageously began to nurture relationships/heart focused communities *Where godliness is not based on appearances of how many wrong things you do not do. *Where we applaud exposure/don't reject those failing. *Where the environment is safe enough for me to try out my faith instead of bluffing it. Where the goal is not that anything gets fixed, but that nothing has to be hidden *Where we learn how to love rather than attempting to manage our sin?

I'm an answer to such a question

- *I've learned acceptance, humility, trust
- *I've learned heartfelt obedience over compliance
- *Able to work harder in grace than by other motivations
- *I've worked through horribly hard stuff w/out having to run
- *I've learned to trust the power of this new life in me
- *I'm no longer hidden-I don't wear a mask
- *I'm able to offer freedom for others not to hide
- *I'm able to help free others to Jesus
- *No longer trying to impress you w/the appearance of godliness

What if I was real? What if I let myself be known? Not just transparent appearing with no intention to let anyone help. But really known. But, see, well, I remember old girlfriends.. God-“John, I already know. I will not leave. I cannot love you anymore than I do/I will not ever love you less. I'll be your safety net in your exposure.”

What if you really knew about me?

***That** I really didn't relate to or enjoy most of the Christian music available the first 15 years of my faith?

I really do like Tom Waits, Amos Lee, Bruce Cockburn, Justin Vernon, Jason Isabell, Mindy Smith, John Hiatt, Bob Dylan, Ellis Paul, David Ramirez, Foy Vance, JJ Grey/Mofro, Pat Metheny, Lauren Daigle, Little Feat!

***That** I get really uncomfortable in Christian bookstores.

***That** I'd rather visit hand lotion boutiques w/my wife than Home Depot with the guys.

***I'm** fragile/not strong - gifted in mercy, not ruling

***I don't** pray as much or the way you might think I should

***That** sometimes I'm faithless, with incredible fear

***That** I can hurt my wife, make her feel stupid

***At** parties in the communities I helped start, I can feel alone

***Nearly** every morning-I burn all the ships in the harbor

***I have neuropathy**-sometimes I just want to go to heaven

***In 5th grade**-I got violated

Would I be less godly? Used to think so...But the godly are those who believe God. **Period!** Not those who keep from doing enough wrong things. The godly=those who trust Him w/ them.

Would others find me to be less godly?

Just the opposite has been my experience.../so the chameleon who spent a lifetime pretending he was someone else so he'd be accepted/loved is gradually learning to believe He is loved and accepted fully. /like the Velveteen Rabbit...he's becoming real.

End to the Two Roads Talk