

God's Grace: My Experience

Shared by Boyd Johnson

Sunday, March 12 at Plymouth Church Worship Service



I was 12 years old and having a spiritual crisis. I had gone to church every Sunday since I could remember. My father was the minister of our New England congregational church, and every Sunday I was there in the wooden pews, looking up at my father and listening to his words.

Then one Sunday it happened. I don't know why, but I just started to question. Everything. How could Jesus really be the Messiah? How could he really come down from heaven, take human form, die on a cross, and then rise again? It all seemed impossible. I just couldn't sign on the dotted line.

Early one morning I summoned the courage to confront my father. I remember walking into his office. It was still dark, and his desk, on the far side of the room from where I stood in the doorway, was piled high with his papers and files. I walked across the length of the room, as my father looked up from his work and caught my eye. Nervously, I blurted out my confession, something like: "I don't think I buy that Jesus is actually the son of God!"

And before even a moment passed, my father's calm words came back: "I understand. I often feel that way." He reached up over his head, brought down a book, and handed it to me. "This has helped me over the years," he said. The book was called the "Christian Agnostic."

I don't remember understanding too much about the book. (I'm frankly not sure it was appropriate for a 12-year-old.) But my father's willingness to admit his doubts, to concede that even he -- someone who had devoted his entire life to Christian ministry -- had questions about his faith, quieted my fears.

As I look back, I now realize that I experienced God's presence that morning, hearing it was okay to not be sure, okay to not always have the answers. Over the years, that small offering of God's grace has made all the difference.

I'm not 12 years old any more. My faith is stronger, but maybe like some of you the fog of self-doubt rolls in and out of my life. At 49 years old -- the same age my father was that morning -- I struggle with many questions: Am I doing enough as a father? Am I doing enough as a husband, as a sibling, as a son? Am I making the right choices?

But amidst my struggle, I find constant, comforting reminders of God's presence all around me. Walking and laughing with a child on the way to school, noticing a colleague and friend lingering in the doorway because they sense you want to talk a little longer, really holding and squeezing the hand of a partner with whom you're sharing your life.

They don't answer all the questions, for sure. But sometimes, if I stand still long enough to notice them, these small offerings of God's grace are magnified enough to clear away the fog.

And that makes all the difference.