

Anne Lamott: A Worthy Traveling Companion

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“It’s funny: I always imagined when I was a kid that adults had some kind of inner toolbox, full of shiny tools: the saw of discernment, the hammer of wisdom, the sandpaper of patience. Then when I grew up I found that life handed you these rusty bent old tools – friendship, prayer, conscience, honesty – and said, Do the best you can with these, they will have to do. And mostly, against all odds, they’re enough.” ~ Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*

I discovered Anne Lamott decades ago through her book *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Promoted as a book on how to be a writer, *Bird by Bird* is more the gospel of how to live with genuine curiosity and commitment. Her instruction to pump out those “sh*##y first drafts” gave me permission to be a stinky writer on the way to writing something that might tell me how I really feel about life.

In 1999 I read Lamott’s *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*. I laughed and cried my way from page to page as she described how she replaced drugs and alcohol with Jesus and chocolate. I was overjoyed to have found a spiritual teacher who bounced off of the mystery of God with skepticism softened by humor.

I have followed Lamott as her thoughts on faith have evolved. In each new book she shares a ripening sense of wonder and compassion for herself and for the world. She offers a virtual hug as she forgives anyone, herself included, who creates messes through the tragedy and comedy of the human experience.

With each new book, Lamott provides a model for how to be more serene and mellow without giving up hope or courage. Her words help me blunt the sharp edges of anger and disappointment so that I practice how to love more than rage, pray more than argue.

<https://bookshop.org/books/traveling-mercies-some-thoughts-on-faith/9780385496094>