

CLEAR VISION

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Grappling with God Preview | My Introduction to Grace



Mrs. Henderson was a spiritual mother to me. I had met her through a Christian youth group I joined in high school called Young Life, where kids my age got together to have fun and share fellowship. I was awkward at first at the Young Life gatherings, unsure of myself or whether I fit in, but my experience was of being welcomed just as I was. The adult leaders, too, seemed genuinely pleased that I had come and were visibly and vocally happy when I returned a second and then a third time, and finally became a regular. Being part of Young Life did not magically wash away all the hurt and pain I had inside, but it opened me up to looking at my life as more than just football, which had been the only real connection I had with others in high school.

*This is an excerpt from the second chapter of my soon to be released book, **Grappling with God: The Battle for Authentic Faith**. This book details the process of personal transformation practiced at the [Center for Christian Life Enrichment](#). The chapter emphasizes how grace is both the foundation for and safe haven within which we can do the work of personal transformation.*

As I immersed myself in Young Life—going to every meeting, participating in small groups, and attending Bible study—I got to know Mrs. Henderson, who was one of the leaders. She had a large family with five kids, including a daughter about my age. From the beginning, I was accepted as “one of the family” by Mrs. Henderson.

Although I was aware that Patsy had feelings for me, I considered us to be just friends. After high school, Patsy and I attended different colleges, and she began a career as a semi-professional singer. While home from college one weekend, I

was invited to attend one of Patsy’s concerts. Afterwards, she invited me back to her house. Patsy made it seem as if there were going to be other people there. When I got to the house, however, Patsy and I were alone. Pretty soon things were getting hot and heavy between us. Then Mrs. Henderson walked in.

The moment Mrs. Henderson looked at me, I felt like a dog that had jumped the fence. I was the one guy who was allowed to be in her house at any time, and I had violated that trust. “Get out of here, right now!” Mrs. Henderson yelled. I was surrounded by shame.

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I tore out of there as fast as I could. I got in my car and drove back to school, all the while kicking myself for how stupid I had been. My whole life to that point had been spent avoiding circumstances that could get me into trouble. It wasn't that I was so virtuous; I just wanted to appear good and not get caught doing anything wrong so people wouldn't be mad at me or think less of me. Now I was up to my neck in hot water with Mrs. Henderson.

After a sleepless night, I called Mrs. Henderson the next morning and told her I needed to talk with her.

"I would love to talk with you," she told me. When I pulled into the driveway, Mrs. Henderson opened the front door to her house and greeted me. As I approached, my tears flowed; I couldn't say anything other than how sorry I was. Putting her arms around me, Mrs. Henderson assured me she understood what happened. All was well, and our relationship was restored.

Here was an experience unlike anything that had ever happened to me before. Here was forgiveness and acceptance in spite of the fact that I had violated the trust of someone

whose opinion of me mattered very much. Here was love that was not dependent on being good or compliant— Here was **grace**.

CLE is a community built on grace. It is because of the grace we share that we are able to see the truth about ourselves and learn how to share it responsibly with others. The **counseling and therapy** we offer is not religious or dogmatic—it reflects the genuineness and authenticity of Christ. Come share in life transforming relationships in a community founded upon genuineness and grace.

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May 13th-15th, 2011

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May 21st, 2011

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Tips For More Meaningful Conversations

By: Jonathan Noto



Ask questions that encourage exploration: To have a meaningful conversation is to unearth something important that would not have come about naturally. What

better way to that than asking questions that encourage someone to stop and think? Rather than taking the conversation where you **think** its going, leave a little room and trust that the other person will take it where it **needs** to go. If there's a question you think you might know the answer to, it won't be as fruitful as the question you couldn't guess the answer to. Say things like "tell me more" that challenge the other person to take whatever they're talking about one step deeper.

What's not being said? Really meaningful conversations happen in a context that is safe enough to discuss all the things that are going on that aren't being talked about. Perhaps a friend shuts down when you bring up a certain subject. Maybe your brother laughs something off that you think could be really hurtful. We're given two options when we sense something occurring in a relationship that isn't being talked about: **Avoid or engage.** Avoidance is tempting because it seems safer on first glance. But do you want a friend that is going to sweep things under the rug just to avoid causing ripples? A true friend shares what is true and doesn't keep silent.

Mutuality! How does it feel when a friend is asking you about deeply personal and vulnerable aspects of your life, but refuses to share anything about their personal life? It's untrustworthy and generally leads to clamming up pretty quickly! **Mutuality means having some skin in the game.** I create trust for you when I share about my own experiences and reactions. I invest in others when I become mutual with them in their risks, fears, and vulnerability. Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians that "In your relationships with one another, **have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage" (Phil 2:5). Even Jesus, the Son of God practiced mutuality with the people he interacted with! True healing occurs in mutual relationships – not in a top-down sense of authority.

Like this article? Read more of Johnny's articles at his blog -

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