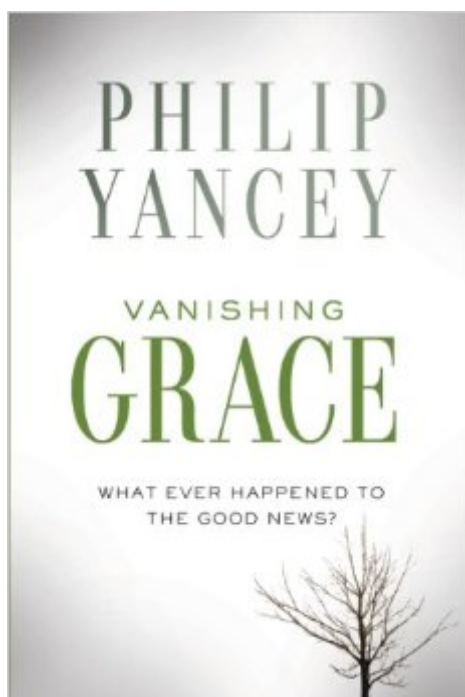


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Vanishing Grace: What Ever Happened To The Good News?



Synopsis

“Why does the church stir up such negative feelings?” Philip Yancey has been asking this all his life as a journalist. His perennial question is more relevant now than ever: in a twenty-year span starting in the mid-nineties, research shows that favorable opinions of Christianity have plummeted drastically—and opinions of Evangelicals have taken even deeper dives. The end of the politics-oriented Evangelicalism that was so dominant in the second half of the 20th century is a strong example that we are living in a post-Christian culture. Yet while the opinions about Christianity are dropping, interest in spirituality is rising. Why the disconnect? Why are so many asking, “What’s so good about the Good News?” Yancey’s writing has focused on the search for honest faith that makes a difference for a world in pain. In his landmark book *What’s So Amazing about Grace* he issued a call for Christians to be as grace-filled in their behavior as they are in declaring their beliefs. But people inside and outside the church are still thirsty for grace. What the church lacked in its heyday is now exactly what it needs to recover to thrive. Grace can bring together Christianity and our post-Christian culture, inviting outsiders as well as insiders to take a deep second look at why our faith matters and about what could reignite its appeal to future generations. How can Christians offer grace in a way that is compelling to a jaded society? And how can they make a difference in a world that cries out in need? Yancey aims this book at Christian readers, showing them how Christians have lost respect, influence, and reputation in a newly post-Christian culture. “Why do they hate us so much?” mystified Americans ask about the rest of the world. A similar question applies to evangelicals in America. Yancey explores what may have contributed to hostility toward Evangelicals, especially in their mixing of faith and politics instead of embracing more grace-filled ways of presenting the gospel. He offers illuminating stories of how faith can be expressed in ways that disarm even the most cynical critics. Then he explores what is Good News and what is worth preserving in a culture that thinks it has rejected Christian faith.

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Customer Reviews

I read *What's So Amazing About Grace (WSAAG)* about 7 years ago. It is one of the best books I have ever read. Period. In it Yancey described real life examples of what grace is and what it isn't. It's a book I reference when I need a reminder of what grace looks like and I quote from it to others. I would've liked the sequel to be more of the same, but *Vanishing Grace* is a sober look at the breakdown of grace in our churches, which has been happening in the time since *WSAAG* was published. About one year ago I had a little meltdown. After reading the bible for many years and going to church frequently, I felt lost. I had been attending church to learn how to live as a faithful Christian, but I was not becoming a better follower of Jesus. In fact, when I noticed the effects of church on me and my children, I started rejecting what I had absorbed. My church did a great job with its church family and we learned a lot about doctrine, but when I read the NT, I saw Jesus serving the oppressed and poor and hanging out with all kinds of people who would probably not be welcome at my church. The more I thought about it, the sadder I became. We were not hearing the Good News and passing it on, but we did pass judgment, we did keep company with people just like us and we did identify sin as a problem that comes with a hierarchy. During that meltdown, I remembered that there are only two greatest commandments so I looked them up again and I was overwhelmed with hope. These two commandments are so simple and clear. Then sadly, I realized that our church was failing to demonstrate how to love our neighbors as ourselves. I was nearly convinced that the answer for me was outside the church walls. I tell you this story because my experience, as it turns out, is similar to that of many, many people who have turned away from churches. Those of us who are leaving have not been hearing enough about grace. And we don't like it. In reading *Vanishing Grace*, I felt like Yancey was sharing his wisdom directly with me. With his blend of optimism and realism, he was renewing my hope in his conversational, warm tone. So, a week ago, as I was explaining my meltdown to a friend who is an elder, I told her we need more grace and that she could read about it in *WSAAG*. I can't give up my copy, so promised to order a book for her. As I was ordering it, I saw that Yancey had just published this brand new book. With

only one review I ordered it, and it is the wake-up call that we all needed to hear. I will now be buying this for a few elders who are interested in reviving our weary (long story) church. In this book, Yancey tells us the bad news of declining church attendance in the US and Europe and cites many surveys and statistics on changes through the centuries. He also includes many real life examples and suggestions on how to build back up to having grace-filled lives and churches. The book has given me hope and renewed energy that I will pour into a church that will share God's grace in abundance.***Mr. Yancey, you have my deepest gratitude and thanks. With your divinely inspired keystrokes you ARE an activist and an agent of change in the best sort of way. Without your words, I would feel too much like a rebel to tell the hard truth and to initiate some graceful conversations for change. Now I can use your research as evidence that we need to do much more to model Jesus, and because of your books, we will know what that looks like. God bless you!

If you've already read 'What's So Amazing About Grace', you will have already experienced a good taste of what this book is like. It is filled with stories about Phil's life experiences with other people, and stories and observations about the Christian church today. There are many interesting, shocking, and sad commentaries given on the state of Christianity. There is a lot of good food for thought. What I like about this book is that it really digs into an on-the-ground investigation as to how Christians are failing at showing grace (as the book's title would suggest). He looks at how to actually put skin on the idea of grace instead of just being a Christian buzzword that we can define and talk about all day but never really practise. That's great for people like me who tend to love abstract ideas but get scared of getting off my butt and out of my comfort zone. While it's fine, and even good to write a book looking at the nitty-gritties of grace in the everyday, I wish Phil would stop and lay out a biblical explanation of what grace actually is and what it isn't. There are a lot of books digging deep into what grace is, so it's fine that this book tackles the topic from a different, and important angle. Perhaps I just didn't read it carefully enough, but I'm left wondering if Yancey's view of grace is that we show grace by never telling anyone they are wrong. It's a tough issue because the way we often go about trying to 'fix' people with Jesus can cause a lot of harm. Jesus hung out with a lot of outcasts and offended people with his associations. However, he also had a lot of hard things to say to people, albeit usually to the religious. Thankfully God can use all of our feeble, imperfect attempts to point people to Jesus. There is no one way to share the Gospel. It takes patience. Love. Humility. Courage. A sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. To my understanding, what people need to hear is basically "God loves you, He's holy and you're not. You're in trouble. The good news is that Jesus died for you. Trust him and you get his righteous record on your

account. What I feel is lacking in Yancey's view of grace is the bad news that makes the good news so good. I'm sure there are reasons for the weight of his focus, as he's seen a lot of abuses of angry and most ungracious Christians. I wonder if perhaps in response he is falling off of the other side of the horse. Is grace about loving and accepting people for who they are? Yes. Is that all? No. It's more. All in all, it's an interesting book, and I'd recommend reading at least one of his books about grace. There is much to be learned and appreciated in these books, but I'd be hesitant to use them as a go-to resource for how to show grace. I view this book more as a challenging observation/report on Christians and grace rather than a manual about how to do grace well. As with any book, let scripture be your final authority and weigh everything said through a biblical lens. If you do that with this book, I think you can come away from this book blessed. I received a complimentary review copy of this book courtesy of Booklook Bloggers.

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