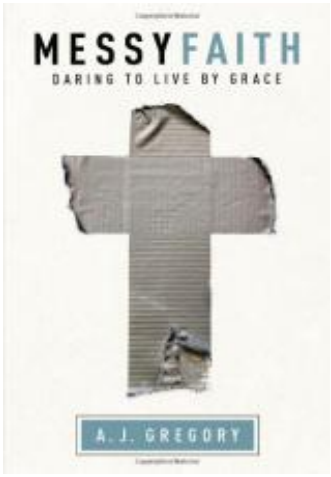
Messy Faith: Daring to Live by Grace

by A. J. Gregory



About the Book

While most of us trudge toward the cross with the best intentions, at times our lives just don?t pan out the way we?ve planned. **Messy Faith** addresses the muddled adventure that we call ?working out our salvation.? It is being sure and unsure, whole and broken, warring, losing, and winning. It is being right and being wrong and having no clue, but believing anyway. And it is trusting in God to perfect the final product of our flawed, human lives.

Discussion Guide

1. AJ talks about her brand-new wrist tattoo that says ?trust?. Her tattoo seems to indicate a core truth she wants to hold on to, despite the messiness of her faith journey. Do you consider your personal spiritual journey messy? Why or why not?

2. The author shares that her ten-year battle with an eating disorder let to a variety of destructive habits and behaviors. Was God on her side, even through her many slip-ups?

3. How did the attractive blonde woman AJ met in a church pew make Christianity more appealing to AJ? Do you know anyone who seems to completely at ease and honest with themselves in their spiritual journey, despite their weaknesses? How do they make you feel?

4. When talking about prayer, AJ says author and speaker Brennan Manning suggested that God is just happy, beaming ear to holy ear, that we?re spending time with him. Do you think God was happy to hear from AJ while she was smoking and drinking, or after a one-night stand? Why might these be some of the best times to turn to God in prayer?

5. What are the differences between judging and calling someone out on their destructive behavior in love? Do you have a relationship like AJ shares with her sister, Vivien, where someone consistently speaks truth to you? How does

welcoming truth-tellers into our lives benefit us?

6. At the end of Chapter 6, AJ says ?We really must be satisfied with [God?s] presence alone- whether or not we feel it- as we wait on the ?taking care of? part.? Do you believe it?s possible to find hope and satisfaction in God?s presence even when your circumstances look dim? In what ways have you personally found a greater connection to God during rough times?

7. Do you agree with the quote found on page 142 from Saint John of the Cross: ?Attachment to a hurt arising from a past event blocks the inflow of hope into our lives.? How might letting go of an offense restore equilibrium and hope in our spirits?

8. ?God is knocking, ringing our doorbell, and looking through our living room window. But we are working more late hours at the office, getting stoned in the backyard, hiding under our bedcovers, or doing laundry, pretending everything is OK? (p. 177). When we need him most, why do we as humans turn to everyone but God? How might we change our patterns to start looking to God as our source instead?

9. On page 191, AJ talks about Mother Teresa?s ?dark night of the soul.? How did you feel when you first heard this devoted servant of God had struggled so deeply with doubts for roughly 50 years? How does Mother Teresa?s example keep us moving on and believing while on our own imperfect journeys of faith?

10. On a scale of 1 to 10, share with the group how ?messy? you feel your journey has been. (1 been not messy at all, and 10 being very messy.) Read the last paragraph of the book together as a group. Dream a bit together: ?How might God?s beauty seep through the holes of your faith as each of us continues on our journeys??

Author Bio

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