

My faith follows fairly orthodox reformed theology. Scripture, experience, community, tradition and the Holy Spirit help guide my understanding and beliefs. But I want to expand on two points. First and foremost we are created for relationship. God created us in God's image to be in relationship with God and to be in relationship with one another. It is how we experience joy and love and wholeness and intimacy, whether through casual acquaintances, faithful friends or committed partners. We allow ourselves to be truly known in relationship, casting off pretense and experiencing that agape love that is God, and comes from God. We are made for relationship, and it is in loving our family, our partners, our spouses, our friends, our neighbors, our enemies, the suffering and the strangers that we live out God's vision for the world, which we also call the Kingdom of God.

The second central tenet of my faith is that grace is what makes all of this possible. Growing up a Baptist, one of the central foundations of faith was that you must choose God. As a child this felt powerful and personal to make my decision to be a follower of Christ. And while this decision-making theology has its strengths, for the life of faith is a decision we make daily, the older I got the less fit I felt to be a follower of Christ. The more I became aware of my own brokenness and flaws, the more I saw how deeply the systemic sin in this world went, and how impossible it was to extricate myself from it. Even if I wanted to "choose" Christ's way, I felt utterly incapable and unfit for the task. This is where the reformed understanding of grace lifted me up and put me back on the path. We are not perfect. In this world of brokenness we are incapable of doing something that does not have complicated ramifications. But God loves us; God is with us and for us, and God does not expect us to be perfect, but instead uses our weaknesses towards the good of all things. This grace that God gave me freed me of the burdens I carried. It empowered me to seek out where the Holy Spirit was already at work in people's lives, and where my brokenness instead could become a blessing. This is the grace that led me to a variety of ministries. God doesn't need me to be perfect. God needs me to be present. And through this ministry and this understanding of grace and love, I have seen God doing amazing things.