

Reflections on

A More Christlike God

by Amber Hamilton

I grew up in a Christian home. My parents used to be on staff with a parachurch ministry to youth, and my dad now leads the men's ministry at a church in Baltimore.

This past year brought such immense suffering to our family (my husband and I have four boys) that it shattered everything I have ever known or thought about God.

Over the past three years my body has basically fallen apart. I have had three surgeries, including a disk replacement in my neck, and I have developed chronic migraines.

A year ago this September I looked at my husband and said, "I don't believe in God anymore. I don't know how I can. He has abandoned me in my darkest hours. I cannot believe a loving God would do that 'for His glory.' If he did, he has a self-esteem problem and I don't want to be a part of it."

This was the message I had inherited growing up—that God caused suffering so we could show others how steadfast in our faith we were and then people would say, "Wow! That's amazing! God is so good!"

What? I abandoned my post as a Christian. It was a devastating break-up but I didn't know how to stay in that place of belief anymore.

Over the coming months as I continued to deal with daily

debilitating migraines, I couldn't shake the reality that there was a God. And it dawned on me one day that even if I didn't believe in God, that didn't change my circumstances. It just left me

with no hope. So, I began a very slow journey back to God, knowing that I couldn't go back to my Evangelical faith as I had known it before.

That's when I stumbled upon



Brad Jersak's *A More Christlike God* through an interview he did with Peter Enns. It couldn't have come at better time.

It has been, hands down, the most influential book in my life, ever.

His overarching theme is that Jesus is everything God wanted to say to us and Jesus was, without exception, the most loving, inclusive, radical person who ever lived. Brad talks about how God is never the cause of our suffering, but rather, our suffering is rooted in the evil of this world.

And Jesus suffers *right alongside of us*. In my darkest moments, he had not abandoned me. He wept with me in the dark, in the hospital, when I couldn't pick up my baby because my arms were weak from the pain. He was there, weeping with me.

And then, the most beautiful part was that God began to transform my heart with his love. Not in a cliché way but in a real and tangible way. My view and understanding of the mystery of the Divine that we call God exploded. God is so much bigger than we have ever imagined. He loves us much more

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than we can ever believe. And I believe there is a place at the table for every one of us—no matter what.

I still deal with the migraines on a daily basis. They aren't as debilitating as they once were and I have amazing doctors. God hasn't yet healed me from this illness. But he has changed me and opened my eyes to a much bigger understanding of Him—one with

adequate space for my pain and suffering. One with more than enough space for us all to come and be loved

and accepted—no matter what.

All that to say, I am so grateful for this book and even the journey that brought it about. It has brought refreshment to my soul and in Brad's words, "I don't hate God anymore."

Brad, thank you for sharing your journey and what you have learned. □

Amber Hamilton lives in Virginia Beach, VI. She and husband Mike have four boys. Amber lives at the beach, where she loves to bury her toes in the sand whenever possible. She enjoys playing the guitar, singing and yoga.

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