



At the Table Philip Yancey

Discover the Word is excited to introduce and welcome author Philip Yancey to the table for a new series titled – *Grace Dispensers*. To help introduce Mr. Yancey to you and your listeners, here is a short Q&A interview. (Fun fact: Philip answered these questions in Brazil!)

- **Tell us a bit about yourself and your family. Where do you call home?**

I've lived in three main places. I grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. After getting married, my wife, Janet, and I moved north to Chicago, where we lived for some twenty years. I worked there as a journalist, editing *Campus Life* magazine until I felt a prod toward a more personal, meditative kind of writing. So we moved to Colorado, to a town in the foothills west of Denver that makes an ideal location for an introverted writer. Plus, living at that altitude (7200 feet) keeps us healthy. We have no children, and these days Janet travels with me on several international trips a year, visiting countries where my books are published.

- **We are talking about “grace dispensers” this week. How would you define this unique word pairing?**

We live in a world that ranks people according to race, good looks, intelligence, wealth, and success, a world that operates by the law of karma: you hurt me, I hurt you back. In contrast, a grace dispenser follows Jesus' style of turning everything upside down. Jesus sought out the poor, the losers, the social outcasts, the suffering—in other words, the *undeserving*, a prerequisite for grace. Love your *enemies* Jesus commanded. Why? So that we can demonstrate something of what God is like, Who causes the sun to shine and rain to fall on sinners and righteous alike. I sometimes say that the world runs by *gravity*, a set of inflexible laws, whereas God's kingdom runs by grace. We Christians are called to dispense to a thirsty world that great gift of living water we have received.

- **Why do you think it's important to study the Old Testament? What advice do you have for someone who's just beginning to study the Old Testament?**

There would be several reasons to study the Old Testament: (1) It contains about 75% of the Word of God. (2) The Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus and the apostles and the New Testament writers, and they constantly quote it or appeal to it. So, the more we understand the Old Testament, the better we will understand the New Testament. (3) The usefulness of the Old Testament is evident in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. For that context, “all Scripture” would have been a reference to the Old Testament. Look at all the things this passage says the Old Testament is good for! One of the best ways to begin is simply to begin reading the Old Testament. It would be good to have a Bible dictionary nearby or a Bible handbook as a quick resource should any questions arise.

- **What advice would you give to someone that is discovering faith on their own terms vs. their parents, spouse, friends, community, etc...?**

There is no one answer, as so much depends on personality. My own faith has been formed mainly through reading mentors like C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, Henri Nouwen, Jürgen Moltmann. I'm an introvert, and emerged from a church background suspicious of authoritative speakers. I feel safer with the written word. Yet other Christians find nourishment in small groups, within a close community. The author Richard Rohr describes a pattern many of us go through, from Order that we receive in our youth, to a period of Disorder, which may take the form of rebellion or doubt, and finally to a place of Re-order. I went through that pattern. It's important to remember that we're all in partial stages until the journey has been completed.

- **How can people connect with you and learn more? Do you have a website, blog, book, etc?**

My blog and listing of published books can be found on my website (philipyancey.com). You can also find me on Facebook.