



# The Smiling Maven

Grace for Grace (John 1:16)

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## What About This Maven? I Don't Know!

In the world, in the church, in my own life, I really don't know what's going on. Jesus is Coming Soon! That's for sure. Jesus is the Messiah—That's for sure. He rose from the dead—that's for sure. He is gracious and kind—That's for sure. Beyond that I really don't know very much.

In 1999 my wife Sandy suddenly and unexpectedly suffered a massive heart attack. After lingering on life support for two weeks she departed to that "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns<sup>1</sup>". Prior to the heart attack, Sandy appeared to have no major medical problems. The attending cardiologist suspected that Sandy had been living with a undetected congenital problem for all of her life. While Sandy was in the emergency room, she told the doctor that she had previously experienced similar pains once before, but they had gone away. The massive heart attack had occurred after a smaller untreated heart attack.

All this could lead to a lot of second guessing, on my part, on Sandy's part, on

the Lord's part etc. etc. Why didn't she question the first chest pains? Did I fail as a husband in not making sure that her health was checked? We had been praying, wanting to follow, and wanting to hear from the Lord; couldn't he have given us a leading concerning her heart? Did we miss it? Yet any attempt to second guess these circumstances leads me to the same place—I don't know. I just don't know! And most likely I don't need to know. Some "deeper" level of comfort has come as I have abandoned myself to not knowing, to not having to know.

Often believers in the Messiah are puffed up with their spiritual understanding. True spiritual understanding is balanced in the reality of the difficulties of this earthly life. Things don't always seem to line up. In A Grief Observed, the well respected Christian writer, C.S. Lewis expressed his heart when he was suffering from the loss of his wife. He states "if you talk to me about the consolation of religion, I shall suspect that you do not under-

stand.<sup>3</sup>" Do you hear what this powerful apologist (Christian defender of the faith) is saying. When it comes to tsouris (grieving, troubles, heartache) our religious jargon, technocratic spiritual language, and pithy statements can easily be outside the realm of true concerned compassion.

Those individuals that were the most comforting and helpful to me in my darkest hours and days were also those who honestly didn't have any deep answers, and didn't attempted to give any answers. We could shrug our shoulders together, and know together that we didn't know.

This has become a rallying point in my life. Jesus is the Messiah. He died for our sins. He rose from the dead and is coming again. Beyond that, I don't know. I don't know what I think that I might know. I can't really explain much, and that's okay. I am learning to live in the grace of "I don't know".



## Why the "Smiling Maven"?

'Maven: a person who has special knowledge or experience; expert {Yiddish meyvyn < Hebrew מבין}.'<sup>3</sup> 'An expert or connoisseur; someone with profound knowledge of a subject.'<sup>4</sup> A maven is someone that you go to with a question (on a particular subject) in the expectation that he will have an answer. In practice a maven is often well-versed in a number of subjects. To consider oneself as a maven may be an indicator of pride. I have some experience and expertise in a number of areas, a jack of all trades and master (or maven) of none. Yet there is one thing that I am increasingly convinced to excel in. It is an area that I believe the Lord

wants me to become a maven. That subject or topic is grace.

The Apostle Paul told Timothy "Be strong in the grace that is in Messiah Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1). There are many good definitions of grace, of God's grace. Here is one that I believe is an excellent working definition: the smiling face of God's favor. When God chose to send His son, the Messiah Jesus, to die for fallen humanity – He was not frowning upon us, he was smiling upon us.

There is a connection between grace in our lives and our capacity to smile. I don't claim to smile enough. I am not sure that I could consider myself an ex-

pert on grace. Yet, I have experienced that the Lord is gracious. He has smiled upon me. In my darkest, my most unfaithful, my most run awayish, rebellious, complaining attitude, Jesus has been gracious to me. By his graciousness to me, I can see God's desire for this Jewish boy from New York to become a smiling expert on God incredible grace. To be, a smiling maven for the true smiling maven (master) of the universe.

1. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

2. C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (Harper Collins. 1961) P. 25

3. *American Heritage Dictionary* (Houghton Mifflin Company 1985)

4. *Yourdictionary.com*

