Denial Is My Spiritual Practice (And Other Failures of Faith)

Each time I start at a new ministry, I set a plan in place that when I first arrive in my office, I will close my door, open my Bible, read a passage, and then pray for fifteen minutes, followed by journaling. My mentor in the ordination process told me she did this to center herself every day.

Each time I have tried to keep with this practice, I have failed miserably. I think I lasted three weeks when I began at my current ministry.

Failure is a part of our spiritual life. We fall short, we fail to live up to the ideals of others, and frankly, some of those standards just don’t make sense.

*Denial is My Spiritual Practice (and Other Failures of Faith) by* Rachel G. Hackenberg and Martha Spong is the interwoven tales of two clergywomen and their failures. Through these stories, the authors reflect on grace and healing that they have found by acknowledging that sometimes what we have been taught, what works for other believers, just doesn’t work for us. Sometimes we hold ourselves to impossible standards, whether they be the lofty wedding vows we recite, or the b.s. assurances others tell us that God won’t give us more than we can handle.

As I read through the book, there were stories I related to, times where I found myself nodding, times where I rolled my eyes along with the authors, and times where I laughed out loud (I, too, have failed the labyrinth, and yet I still try, every time).

What *Denial* teaches us is that through our experiences—the bad, the ugly, the frustrating and the uncertainty—God’s grace is still abundant, and through Biblical reflection, we find the psalmists and the disciples were also much like us—attempting to believe, asking God to help in our unbelief.

This is the sort of book I’d give as a gift to someone I know on the long and winding road—not necessarily going through the worst things in their life, but someone who might be wondering when the good will finally show up after a series of wrong turns. It’s a good book to have on the shelf to turn to when things just aren’t where we hope they would be; a reminder that we’re not alone, and we can still find healing and hope along the journey.