

God's Faithfulness

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"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever."

Psalm 118:29



God's faithfulness amazes me.

He has been faithful to me for all my life, and it is so obvious.

My family didn't know much about God but He knew us. When I was young, he put us in a neighborhood with a family who had a daughter my age, and she invited me to their church. I wasn't seeking to know God then, but He used that church and the friends I made there to protect me from choices I'm sure I would have otherwise made. The activities at the church – and there were many - gave me a place to escape when life at home was painful.

In my senior year of high school, I turned my back on the good things about the church and about God, and sought other ways to have fun. Even then, the God I didn't want protected me. I realize now how vulnerable and stupid and miserable I was. In my desperation, I cried out to the God I wasn't sure was there. And He heard me. He orchestrated my mom meeting a lady who talked very pointedly and clearly to her about Jesus and His gift of eternal life. It's funny, I wasn't looking for eternal life; I was looking for help in my life on earth, but the answers came through the truth about God loving me enough to send Jesus to pay for my sins. I had always known Jesus was necessary for salvation but I didn't know that He was enough. Because I had my own definition of sin and its categories, I never considered myself a sinner. For some reason, in all my searching and questioning everything I had known for the answers to how to live a happy life, I still believed the Bible was true and trustworthy. But I had never seen or believed the truths about being a sinner and the consequences of that and the salvation that was offered to me as a gift. I'm very grateful to God and to the people He used to show me how great His love is.

Because my family life was so painful and hard, I swore I would never get married. God, in His unfailing faithfulness, had other plans. I got married at 19 and I'm still married to that man at 67! God has shown His faithfulness to me and to us in very great measure through those years. We were faithful members of churches in different places where we lived but most of them were like country clubs with Jesus thrown in. You didn't dare admit you had problems because nobody else looked like they had problems, and they surely didn't talk about having issues they struggled with. Looking like the perfect Christian family was the goal. We wanted, and desperately needed, help but were afraid to tell anybody. I have told my kids so many times, "If you need help, find somebody who can help you even if you have to look diligently and pay for that help." I wish I had done that. I am grateful that God led us to a church where we found people who needed God as much as we did. We grew in grace there and the growth continues.

I was sure I knew God but I didn't have a clue how to live a life connected to Him and in a way that was continually loving God and learning from Him. I thought there was a formula to follow. Do this and this and this, and don't do this and this and this, and you'll be all right. Looking back, I see that I loved the good news that God had shown to us but I didn't love God or seek Him with my whole heart. Every regret I have in life is rooted in that fact. I didn't know how to live a life that sought God and His glory and I made so many mistakes for so many years. God was faithful to me even then. In my desperation, I cried out to God. It felt like I was calling out to Him in almost the same way I did when I was a teenager and wasn't even sure God was there. I remember telling Him that I needed Him to be bigger than I ever knew He was. I needed more than formulas and pithy sayings and platitudes. I needed God to love me and hold me and heal my broken heart. His faithfulness to me was evident. He put my heart back together so that I had a whole heart with which to love Him.

How are things different? I know I don't know all the answers. I'm amazed at how God keeps showing me and teaching me every day that He loves me unconditionally. There is nothing I can do to make God love me more and there is nothing I can do to make God love me less. There's a hymn I used to sing and thought it applied only to those who don't know about God's salvation, but these words applied to me through so much of my Christian life:

“Mercy there was great, and *grace was free*;
Pardon there was multiplied to me;
There my burdened soul found *liberty*
At Calvary.”

I had come to Jesus as a 17-year-old and found pardon for my sin, but it took me years to understand that I need God's mercy continuously to live a life that's dependent on His grace. A heart that knows it can't live a Christian life on its own no matter how sincerely it wants to.

I'm so thankful for God's unfailing grace.