
Faith Sharing

In worship Sunday we sang the hymn “The Summons” by John Bell. It reminded me of my own faith journey.

I grew up as the third daughter of a Lutheran pastor so I knew about God, the Bible, the church, faith, prayer. However, I seemed to hear only about the God with expectations of what I should do as a Christian. I did not want to do it! But I did what I was required to do with anger and resentment. You see, I felt unwanted by my father as I was the third daughter rather than a son. I believed I was a mistake, one I could not change. It was a truth to me, never discussed with anyone, confirmed for me internally by all that my father did or said.

In college I fell in love with a Lutheran seminarian and believed I would be happy as he was so different from my father. But I continued to carry my belief about me, battling depression daily. I did what was required of me as a “Christian” and now as a “Christian pastor’s wife,” but I was angry about doing it or guilty if I did not. I prayed to an “Emergency God” in times of crisis but then went on alone. However, when we were told that our 18-year-old daughter was addicted to alcohol, I was too grief-stricken, overwhelmed, and bewildered to do more than weep. In my desperation I sought the counsel of those who had experience dealing with addictions of loved ones.

It was in my search for help for my daughter that I connected with God. I was told that I could not deal with this alone but that God would help me. It was suggested that the way to start was to begin each day with prayer. I began to do that tentatively. I laid a small devotional book on top of the alarm clock to remember to read it and pray. One day I heard with my heart when someone shared that God loves all that was created and not only that but God creates intentionally. Thus began my journey of Christian transformation that I continue to travel.

Tentatively I began to pray daily and could recognize when I had neglected to pray. I wanted to be with people who were willing to talk to me about their doubts and fears, their journey of prayer and coming to know God. I discovered it was easier to pray when I took time to read the Bible as well. I asked God to guide me and help me make decisions and choices. My prayers were pretty centered on my own pain and confusion, but that was okay. I was not as fearful when I prayed. I found myself taking steps to give myself care, to take risks, to talk to others about what was happening to me.

Not that much has changed in my life since then but everything has changed. Slowly and with back sliding and then renewal I have learned to place seven faith practices into my daily living – pray, worship, study, encourage, serve, invite and give. What changed initially for me was an unwillingness to trudge alone and a determination to do the faith practices in response to what God had done for me. And God changed the rest. I was transformed so that I have come to

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WANT to do these faith practices and have a tremendous discord within me signaling me whenever I wander off this path.

I have come to know joy, love, and confidence in myself to use the gifts I have. In response to God touching me personally, I have discovered the joy of WANTING to give of myself, my treasures and time with increasing generosity. I WANT to pray, worship, read the Bible, be with other Christians to share my faith and learn from them, serve, and trust that God will see to the things I have to have and help me to not desire the things I don't really need. I have come to peace with my father though he died in 1964 and I can now recognize his qualities and accept his human limitations as my father. In the last 10 years I have grown close to my oldest daughter and had the indescribable joy a year ago of supporting her through labor, delivery and the first two months of her first child at age 39. It is still amazing to me how over the past 20 years God has formed and shaped me, called me to do many tasks I could never have imagined doing. And still God calls me to do more. The transformation unfolds daily as I faithfully practice my faith.

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