



Seasons In Time

ENCOUNTERING GOD FACE TO FACE...
IN OUR BRIEF JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE

Life Season I: My Childhood Years (Sheila's Story)

"Chosen of God"...Even as a Child

It was a warm July morning in the small Southern town where I grew up as a girl. There was nothing I enjoyed more as a 10-year-old than a trip into town for a visit to my favorite store...the Dime Store or affectionately known as the "5 & 10." There was something so very neat about the sound of the old squeaky wooden floors in that store and the smells of so many items on the shelves. Nothing was barely over ten cents, so I had the pick of everything that caught my attention when I came skipping through the door with my long ash-blond hair blowing in the summer breeze. But in order to get into town from my home, I had to walk by the old church building where I attended Sunday school and church services with my family. Every time I passed the church, I felt a "pulling" on my heart to walk in and talk with God...even though it wasn't Sunday. Finally, one day I decided to do just that...walk in and deal with the curiosity that had gripped at my heart. I pushed on the big white double doors and discovered they were unlocked. *As I stepped through the tiny foyer into the sanctuary, I felt the presence of the Lord so strong that I didn't want to leave.* Hiding away in the quietness and the stillness of the sanctuary and stained glass windows, I discovered a new and exciting experience in my heart...I could talk with God in this place. I found myself going inside that empty church many times to see if He would speak back to me. *Something was happening...something different that I couldn't quite understand. I began to sense that even as a child I was chosen for a very special purpose.* I never really shared with my parents or siblings what I was feeling. For me it was a very private thing between God and me. In Him, I had discovered a newfound friend and a place to bring all my hurts, disappointments, desires and dreams. *Little could I imagine the amazing ministry the Lord had in store for me...not only me, but also for the man I would meet and marry 15 years later.*



There is no age limit for the call of God on a person's life. To Jeremiah the Lord proclaimed, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5). To John the Baptist the angel declared, "he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). The Lord spoke to Samuel when he was just a boy and revealed His secret counsel (1 Sam. 3:1-11). Even the Apostle Paul was set apart from his mother's womb (Gal 1:15). *So it was with me. Look what happened later in life from my quiet encounters with God:*

As I stepped into the pulpit, I felt the undeniable presence of the Lord just as I had as a child nearly six decades ago. Only now it was much stronger and immensely more mature. As my eyes scanned the room filled with ladies, my heart filled with love, compassion and wondrous words from God for them. It was easy and very natural for me to stand boldly and testify of God's grace in their lives as the spiritual gift of the Word of Knowledge flowed through me. As I looked into the faces in the room, I knew the hunger in their hearts for God. I could sense His words for them...words of restoration and hope being gently spoken to my heart. Over the years, I've learned to just "lean in" to God and trust Him. He would never fail me. He never had. Even 57 years after my first encounter with God, He continually writes His love upon my heart to remind me of who He is in my life. I recognize that the prophetic gift flowing through me isn't mine at all. It is God's gift at work for the edification of others. I've learned that God's gift in me brings life, hope, encouragement, love and stability when spoken in a timely manner. *As my husband and I minister together in churches, I often recall that old empty church where I would commune with God. For this purpose His Spirit began calling me even as a child. Had I not responded, I would never have been a recipient of His amazing gift for others.* Being filled to overflowing with the love of Christ brings refreshment when I'm ministering to God's people. I've learned that when I am overcome by His Presence, I am immersed in His love (Eph. 3:16-21).

Next: More Stories From My Childhood - *Why I Learned to Love Myself*

