



Seasons In Time

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

Life Season I: My Childhood Years (Continued)

Faith – As the Twig Is Bent, So Grows the Tree

I'm an Atheist! I don't believe in God, much less some foolish myth about a savior named Jesus. "Religion is just for the weak-minded," dad used to tell us boys. "Trust in yourselves! There is no God who will be able to help you. It's up to you to make it in the world." That's how I grew up as a child and that's how I raised my children. We never went to church and we never prayed to God. *As far as I was concerned, nothing...absolutely nothing...could ever make me believe there is a God!*

Allah will be well-pleased with you, my daughter." Those were the last words I heard before I strapped explosives on my body. Growing up in the family of militant Muslims, we honestly believed we would be given a special place in Jannah, the Islamic Paradise, for killing unbelievers. I desperately wanted to please my father, but I couldn't understand how this would glorify Allah. *Nevertheless, I calmly walked into the marketplace filled with men, women and children, pressed the button and waited for paradise.*

My eyes flooded with soft tears as I walked up to the altar and stood beside the pastor and the small basin of water. "Do you believe in God and the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior?" asked the pastor. "Yes," I confidently answered. "Do you desire in your heart to be baptized?" My voice grew stronger as I replied, "Yes!" With parental pride and joyful tears, mother and dad looked on while the pastor sprinkled water on my head. *Little did my parents, or I, know what would happen to me after that. But God did!*



"As the Twig Is Bent, So Grows the Tree." This is a profound truism for raising children. But here's a more profound reality: **GOD CAN STRAIGHTEN A BENT TREE!** It's true that a child's faith is founded on their parent's belief. But God is infinitely greater than parental teachings. *Look what happened to these people during "Kairos" Moments. Only God can open hardened hearts and change lives (Acts 9:1-22).*

The surgeon's eyes filled with compassion as he walked into the room. "I'm sorry, we did everything we could. Your son's life is in the hands of the Lord now." My legs grew weak as I stared through the doctor. His words, "In the hands of the Lord," shook me to the core. As a child, I never believed in God, but our little son lay dying and I couldn't help him. With tearful words, I blurted out, "If there is a God in heaven, I need You now!" Quietly I sunk to my knees and prayed. Two days later, my son was sitting up and eating. *The God I had rejected visited us in our darkest hour. For that, our family will follow Him forever.*

When I pressed the detonator on the explosives, nothing happened! I was about to press it again when suddenly I was overwhelmed by what I was doing. I just stood there and cried. Just then, someone saw what was happening and wrestled me to the ground. I was only eight years old when I was taken into custody and placed in an orphanage. It was not until later that I learned that a great Christian evangelist was in that crowd. "Could it be," I thought, "That his God protected him from me? If so, then I must know his Jesus!"

After I was baptized, I was the same ten-year old little boy that I was before...running, playing and getting into all the trouble that boys get into. But three years later while attending church with my parents, my soul was gripped by the title of the old Scottish preacher's sermon, "Long Distance Is Calling! Will You Answer the Phone?" In my young heart, I quietly replied, "Yes, I will!" Twenty years later that "long distance call" came through loud and clear. *God apprehended my heart; I enrolled in seminary; and I entered into pastoral ministry. Though my parents never fully understood what happened to me, I did!*

Next: Life Season II: The World of Teenagers - *The Dance of Identity*

