

St. Patrick's Day

When I was in high school, my mom left the house for work about an hour before my sister and I went to school. My dad worked during the night and was usually still asleep at that time. One morning, as I was getting ready to leave, I noticed that my Dad was awake, whistling, and looking like he was ready to go somewhere. He appeared to have a specific destination in mind.

I asked my dad about his deviation from his normal routine. He planned on visiting his parents. That was very strange. I hadn't heard my parents talking about this. Visits with my grandparents were scheduled approximately two weeks to a month in advance. Punctuality was expected. It was never a possibility that you could arrive sometime in the morning or afternoon. It was like an appointment. You arrived during the expected time frame. Anything more than ten minutes late or early needed a good explanation.

I asked my dad if he had called. Answering with a "no," he didn't seem worried about breaking social etiquette rules that he had followed for over twenty years. Instead, he said that he thought he would surprise them. Surprise them? He was surprising the whole family! He didn't even tell my mom. I thought my dad was acting weird. To me, it didn't seem like a good idea. I was pretty sure that he was going to get "in trouble."

My sister and I went to school. My dad left for his unannounced visit. I'm told that during the hour's drive to his parents' house, my dad started to cry uncontrollably. He pulled over to the side of the road until he composed himself enough to safely continue. When he arrived at my grandparents' home, he found that his dad had died while putting on his boots.

Something prompted my dad to wake up and to do something that went against the norm and, to a degree, involved personal risk. I sensed no hesitation in him. It was as if he didn't need to call my grandparents and ask permission because he had been called by a higher power. The Holy Spirit guided him. Any logical thinking would have interfered. A physical call would have probably resulted in discouragement because of the short notice. From my grandma's limited perspective, there would be no reason for such an impromptu visit. Painful as it was, he could comfort his mother in her time of great loss because of his automatic response to "go surprise them."

We need to follow the Holy Spirit's tug. It is a gift from God to be able to feel the connection that goes beyond our understanding. It is not logical or of this physical world. It is, however, very real. Being led by the Holy Spirit might be referred to as "listening to one's heart" or "having a feeling." I remember a powerful and humbling story my dad shared with me. It helped to explain how he learned about God.

Around 1960, my dad was in 9th grade at Newark Jr. High School. He wanted God to prove Himself to be real. He thought of a deal so that God could prove His existence. If my dad faithfully trained very hard in track for about one year, God would prove His existence to my dad by putting him on the front page of the Newark newspaper. It would have been very unlikely for this to happen. Making the front page of the sports section would have been a feat, but it would have still been within the realm of possibilities if my dad would have performed flawlessly. My dad was realistic and believed that the only way for him to be recognized on the front page was through an extreme performance and God's influence. Looking back, the "deal" sounds foolishly bold, conditional, and egotistical for a teen talking to the creator of the universe. Nevertheless, these were the terms in my dad's mind.

The big meet approached. Coaches in the area knew that my dad had the fastest times and was expected to win. A day or two before the upcoming race, my dad

demonstrated to other students in a shop class how to safely use a power tool. In the process, he accidentally cut off two of his own fingertips. Rushed to the hospital, a doctor was able to stitch his wounds. In disbelief, my dad still had hopes of competing. He wanted God to be real. How was God supposed to prove that He was real if he didn't even run the race?

The Newark newspaper came out. On the front page, an article described an unfortunate accident that left a Jr. High track star unable to compete. Dad was fully convinced. God is real! Some might argue that God was cruel. God is supposed to be good. How can losing two fingertips and missing an important race be good things? These are questions for those with limited knowledge.

Notice the difference between the teen who tried to put conditions on God compared to the man twenty-five years later who jumps up from a dead sleep to follow the Spirit without questioning. My dad learned an important lesson he wanted me to know too. Laughing heartily at his own younger self as he shared his experience with me, he exclaimed, "Do not test the Lord your God!"

I have included the second part of this story even though I personally wasn't alive to witness it because I observed the effect of the experience through my dad's beliefs and actions. When faced with disappointment and hardship, he grew closer to God. God's ways are always higher than our ways because He can see how all the puzzle pieces fit together.

For some, it may be difficult to believe that God cares about one person's feelings or needs living in the world in the present day. Now, try to imagine the needs of more than seven billion people at the same time. Some may argue that God only intervened in people's lives thousands of years ago. This is not true! God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He can help cross the sea on dry land, organize front page news, and deliver coal. People need to know about God's

involvement in “current events.” Use your pain and joy to tell others about the one true living God. We can do this through our personal testimonies.