

The No. 1 Way You Can Look Like Your Heavenly Father

Sometimes it's so obvious.

The eyes. The hair color. The dimple on the left cheek.

They come in smaller packages, but some children look just like their fathers. It's right there for everyone to see. From the ambling way of walking, to drawn out vowels when they talk—it's even in the facial expressions and the little nondescript attributes that make a person so unique.

Many times, a father's DNA is extremely evident in his child. But it's more than just genetics. The actual process of raising a child gives the youngster a front-row seat to absorb a father's character, behavior and subtle mannerisms.

Jesus was no exception.

Of all who have ever walked the earth, Jesus knew the Father. He was intimately acquainted with the Lord God gracious and communed with Him regularly, even seeking time away from His disciples and ministry in order to spend time with the God He knew so well.

Seeing Him as more than just the God of Israel—as many in Israel thought of Him—Jesus' relationship with His Father brought a radically new dimension of understanding to the Israelites. Like a tint on a painting or a filter on a photo, Jesus highlighted a different aspect of God's nature—one that is crucial to our relationship with Him and His plan for redemption. Jesus knew God as a *Father*.

Though many during Jesus' time had a view of God that likened Him to a "harsh taskmaster," Jesus desired to show the true nature of His Father, the God who has never been ashamed about

making known His heart for His creation.

When Jesus taught parables about a woman rejoicing over a lost coin and the prodigal son, He revealed a kind father who joyfully reclaims His most precious possessions and forgives the harshest of insults. More than just a story, Jesus was teaching about His Father, the Ancient of Days, who loves to lavish His goodness on His creation.

Many today still don't know the Father. Often He is seen through rules and regulations, a list of dos and don'ts, or even misunderstandings of other's experiences or the perspective of the sin-ridden world.

But this is the same view many had in Jesus' day, causing Him to unashamedly declare to His disciples, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father."

We see the kindness of the Father in Jesus. We see the patience of the Father in Jesus. We see the forgiveness of the Father in Jesus.

As our slain lamb, good teacher and gracious friend, Jesus readily displayed the true nature of the Father.

He also displayed the fruit of His relationship with His Father.

Perfectly secure and strong, vulnerable and yet trusting, Jesus displayed the outworking of His healthy relationship with His Father in times of prayer and through His submission to the plan of the cross, freely able to say "not My will, but Yours be done."

His confidence remained unshakeable, settled, in the Father of lights.

Despite the physical discomfort that led to sweat drops of blood, the lack of emotional support from friends and the looming reality of humiliation and execution, the only

begotten Son of the Father said yes. He agreed to a punishment He did not deserve in order to enact the greatest rescue plan of all time with the highest price of all time—His life.

In this relationship, we see freedom, love, trust and the power of agreement that has yielded fruit that remains.

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29).

“He says, ‘It is a light thing that you should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make you a light to the nations so that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Isa. 49:6).

Through Jesus we see and receive what is possible in our relationship with God, the Father. We enter into unhindered access to holy, holy, holy God, the uncreated Supreme Being, presiding over creation. We get to come to the Ancient of Days as His children. Free from shame, free from fear of reprisal, we can approach the throne of grace with the boldness of well-loved family members who are always welcomed into His presence.

As children, we will always be in the place to hear the Lord whisper those soothing words to our souls, “Come closer.”

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8).

Through Jesus, we see the heart and desire of God for us to be with Him, and we’re free to experience that desire daily, to know there’s more and enter into the more He has always desired us to experience. But Jesus has also opened the way for every believer to reveal His nature to those He’s placed around us, to allow His love to not just penetrate our hearts,

but to flow through us.

As we encounter His heart, we remain free to share what He's given us from a place of wholeness, strength, and vulnerability. It's in this place that the broken, the hurting, and the overlooked souls can come and receive a greater understanding of God's true nature—not rumors, myths or misunderstandings. It's in this place, as we pour out our lives as living epistles, that others will see the small glints of light of the Father's nature and goodness as they glimpse the changes He's made within us.

The moments in which we choose to walk out the Sermon on the Mount we can be certain that our family heritage is evident. When we choose to love, forgive and bless, or when we hold our hands open in surrender, silencing the rising accusations from the costly reality of being in God's family, we too are able to say, "Not my will, Father, but Yours be done" and know He is being glorified.

It's in these often inconvenient moments, both harrowing and grating, scary and thrilling that something amazing happens—that family resemblance becomes even more obvious, and others in this generation look, and they, too, see the Father.
{eoa}

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Celebrating Creation With Your Child or Grandchild

Continue to celebrate the resurrection. Jesus gave us eternal life and opened the gates of heaven. April is a time to celebrate the earth God made and all of creation. Look around for signs of new life as spring comes into bloom and rejoice with planting seeds.

With each sign of spring, chat about how God uses it to reveal His creation and power. Read Romans 1:20 that tells us nature is a witness to God's existence.

- Look for creepy, crawling bugs. The Bible talks about learning from the ants that work hard and store food for the winter in Proverbs 30:25.
- Check out the trees and watch for the leaves to open. Find out how to be like a well-watered tree in Psalm 1.
- Look for blossoms on trees and buds on flowers. Daffodils and tulips are among the first flowers each spring. Talk about how we can blossom and read Psalm 72:16.
- Rejoice when you see new babies or new baby animals. Read Romans 6:4 and talk about new life and the value of every life.
- Find caterpillars that later will change into butterflies. Or maybe you will see a butterfly. If there's water nearby, look for tadpoles. If you find any, return every few days to see them change into frogs. The change reminds us that God changes us too. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 about God changing us.
- Plant some seeds and watch them grow. Read about the patience of farmers as they wait for seeds to sprout and grow, in James 5:7-8. Cut off a corner of the seed packet and use it as a bookmark to remind you that you are growing too.

- Look at pretty spring flowers. Read Matthew 6:28-30 when Jesus talks about the beauty of the lily and how God cares for us. {eoa}

Karen Whiting, an author, speaker and former television host, has a book all about Advent called *Christmas is Coming! But Waiting is Hard: Family Activities and Devotions for Advent*.

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Press Through to Victory With God's Persistent Power

The enemy is bearing down hard against you, and you feel that you can't continue on. Now is not the time to lay your spiritual weapons down, but to pick up your shield of faith and fight all the harder. Remind yourself with the sword of the Spirit that our Lord is not uncaring; He understands what we are up against. Hebrews 4:15 identifies the reason why, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who was in every sense tempted like we are, yet without sin."

His healing Word declares that when I am weak, He remains strong in me (see 2 Cor. 12:10). Isaiah 40:29 affirms this promise, "He gives power to the faint, and to those who have no might He increases strength." Zechariah 4:6 educates me on how this is possible, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of Hosts." He assures me in Philippians 4:13 that "I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me." I can overcome this seemingly impossible moment in my life and heal, too, in Jesus' name.

Let's pray.

Father God, I come to you and confess that I feel weak, and doubt and unbelief seem to be getting the upper hand on me now. But I know that I know, this battle is not won in my own strength or power, but in Your victory for me. I thank You for Your promise that says yes, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." And I glory in Your supernatural strength to overcome this attack of the evil one.

In Your precious name I pray, amen. {eoa}

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the *Destiny Image* author of *DARE to Believe*, *Greater Than Magic* and *The Healing Creed*. Visit her at .

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How You Can Age Gracefully and Biblically All at Once

Is it possible to age gracefully? What does that even mean?

I've been thinking recently about aging. It may have something to do with the fact that I've reached another milestone birthday. In a culture that worships youth, I wonder how long it will be before I become a living relic of a bygone era—someone merely tolerated by younger people. Then I wonder if the future is now.

It doesn't help that I find myself saying many of the things that once caused me to roll my eyes when my mother said them decades ago. Things I had determined never to repeat. Sigh. Never say never.

I've known people who have modeled what it is to *not* age with grace. Many had health issues and painful life experiences. Their response was to grow more cranky and unhappy with each passing year.

I've also had some wonderful role models who exemplified how to age with grace. People who determined their circumstances would not drag them down. Instead, they kept looking up. Up toward heaven. Toward their Savior. Toward the gift of each new day, despite their difficulties. And I hope I've learned something from each of them.

The pages of the Bible are also filled with positive role models—people who aged gracefully. Here are six people I want to be like when I grow up.

▪ **Enoch**

Enoch's secret to aging gracefully was to "walk with God" (Gen. 5:22, 24). I love the word picture of walking with God. To walk with someone means you don't run ahead, and you don't lag behind. That's how I want to live: walking with God.

▪ **Moses**

Age is not an obstacle to God's call on our life. Moses was 80 years old when God called him to lead Israel out of Egyptian slavery. What an encouragement it is to know that regardless of what the calendar says, God can still use me. We also read that Moses was more humble than anyone else (Num. 12:3). Hmm—availability and humility: a combination I need to cultivate!

▪ **Caleb**

Caleb was one of the 12 spies sent by Moses to spy out the promised land and bring back a report. He stood with Joshua when the other 10 spies sowed seeds of doubt among the people. Forty-five years later, at the mature age of 85, Caleb requested a portion of the land that would be especially

difficult to conquer—a land of “fortified cities” (Josh. 14:12). He was successful because he “followed the Lord God of Israel fully” (Joshua 14:14b, NASB). Someone willing to stand against the crowd who follows God fully: that’s who I want to grow up to be.

▪ **Elizabeth**

Elizabeth was the wife of a priest. She was unable to conceive, a disgrace among women at that time. But despite her disappointment and her advanced age (Luke 1:6-7), she was described as righteous in God’s sight. And God chose her to be the mother of the one who would herald the coming of Christ. What a woman! I want to age gracefully like Elizabeth—someone who trusts God despite the disappointments of life.

▪ **Simeon**

Although we’re not told Simeon’s age, it appears he was an older man. We can conclude this because the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Christ (Luke 2:26). He was then content to leave this life, having seen the one who had been promised. I very much want to be like Simeon—someone who is sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and follows His leading.

▪ **Anna**

At 84 years old, Anna had been widowed for an estimated 60-plus years. She spent her life serving and worshipping at the temple “night and day” with fasting and prayer. When she heard Simeon’s pronouncement, she thanked God and spread the word to all who would listen that the Messiah had been born (Luke 2:38). I want to be like Anna as I age: someone who lives to serve and worship. Someone who lives with an attitude of gratitude. And someone who can’t stop talking about Jesus.

As the calendar pages turn and birthdays come and go, who are your role models for aging gracefully? {eoa}

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Why You Should Keep Running Toward Your Healing

The winner of the race is not sitting down on the sidelines. This person is not hidden from view, asleep, or complaining because the race is so difficult, but actively running. And the people watching knows this person is running. This person is the leader of the pack and is being highlighted to show others how to run their race successfully, how to run through and past that finish line to victory.

Do you not know that all those who run in a race run, but one receives the prize? So run, that you may obtain it. Everyone who strives for the prize exercises self-control in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. So, therefore, I run, not with uncertainty. So I fight, not as one who beats the air. But I bring and keep my body under subjection, lest when preaching to others I myself should be disqualified (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

What is the victory you need? For many of you, it is physical healing. Then you need to learn how to activate your faith and run your race all the way through the finish line—the manifestation of that healing and beyond.

You need to stay focused on the goal and not be sidetracked by the voices of the doubters sitting on the sidelines, encouraging you to fail. Yes, in the Christian world, there are those who have aligned themselves with the team of Doubting Thomas. Don't listen to them.

You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little yeast leavens the whole batch. I have confidence in you through the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But he who is troubling you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is (Gal. 5:7-10).

There are also other evil spectators, demons, and they come in the form of lying spirits whispering lies of doubt, unbelief and failure. They will even dress themselves as angels of light and disguise their voices to tell you they are a messenger sent by God. They declare evil lies such as, "God sent me to tell you He is not going to heal you. Instead, He is going to take you home now." This is a lie to stop you from completing your race, because you have all these spectators watching you to find out if what you've been saying, "According to Isaiah 53:5, I am already healed in the name of Jesus" is true. Why the lies? To destroy your witness, and those who have been supporting you, and many others too.

Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed (Isa. 53:4-5).

You be faithful and complete your race. And your race is not finished until the manifestation takes place, and then there is a time of rejoicing. But it doesn't end there; you need to run past that finish line and start to testify of God's glorious manifestation in your life and lead others to His

glory as well.

Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may be blameless and harmless, sons of God, without fault, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine as lights in the world. Hold forth the word of life that I may rejoice on the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain (Phil. 2:14-16).

So the next time you start to feel discouraged in your race, stir up that gift of faith within you and remind yourself that this race is not just all about you, but you have many spectators—good and bad—who need your witness of a faithful God who loves them and not only is able to heal, but desires them to receive their healing by faith.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and I have kept the faith.” {eoa}

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The Deut. 30:19 Promise That Brought This Woman Life

Eating is something we have to do every day in order to provide fuel for our very human bodies. Because it's so mundane, it gets to be something we do without thinking. We don't eat by conscious rational choices; we eat with our own selfish interests as the motive. We deny ourselves nothing

(see Luke 9:23).

Growing up in a Christian home, I knew the “rules” very well: Don’t smoke or drink, don’t do drugs, don’t go to parties, don’t hang around with people who do those things. My dad added: Don’t go to movie theaters, don’t wear shorts or pants and don’t wear makeup or jewelry.

With all those don’ts, there seemed to be only two things we could do—go to church and eat, whatever, whenever and however much we wanted. I figured even God must not count calories or care how much we eat. Every Christian I knew enjoyed the benefits of the desserts, casseroles, sugar-filled salads, fried chicken, mashed potatoes and hot rolls at a church dinner

Food Became a Gray Area

It became a nebulous, gray area to me, one without specifics and with what felt like great rewards. That is, until I gained up to 430 pounds and a doctor told me I had five years to live. That was almost 20 years ago.

That’s when I began to understand God’s freedom means I am free to follow Him. He gave me a multiple-choice question with only two possible answers. Then, He went a step further and gave me the answer.

“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!” (Deut. 30:19).

Choosing Life

When I chose life, I knew that meant I had to listen to what He’d told me years ago. I had to stop eating things made with sugar and flour and start eating more lean meats, fruits and

vegetables.

The next verse told me how to follow the choice I made. "You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying Him, and committing yourself firmly to Him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the Lord, you will live long in the land the Lord swore to give you" (Deut. 30:20).

There is no gray area with God. There is either follow what He says or don't. He always gives us the choice, though, and then rewards that choice with the closeness of His presence.

"When God fulfills your longings, sweetness fills your soul. But the wicked refuse to turn from darkness to see their desires come to pass" (Prov. 13:19, TPT).

Remember, there are no gray areas with God. Our choices will reap consequences, either positive or negative.

I chose to follow Him, and I'm so glad I did. Today, I've lost over 250 pounds simply by eating what I know He wants me to eat and abstaining from or fasting the foods that I had allowed to become addictive in my life.

It's easy and hard at the same time, but oh, so worth it.
{eoa}

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How Spending Time With God Can Transform You—And Your Neighbor

I could tell as soon as I pulled up to the gas station, that she was distraught and feeling completely hopeless. She looked like I did that night I found a \$ error in the checkbook, *not* in our favor, and Matt came home and found me curled up in a fetal position on the living room floor.

She was standing right behind the cement barrier where I parked, and I could see her eyes moving with the question, *What am I going to do? What am I going to do?*

So I had that first great thought, *Oh no, are you going to want me to help her, Lord?* Because, you know, as Paul says, “There is nothing good in me, that is, in my sinful nature” (see Romans 7:18, NIV). But I did a quick repent (I’ve been working on this, like being quick to go in for the rebound).

I walked up to the lady, who looked to be maybe in her late '50s, with a large purse hanging from her shoulder, long hair and desperate eyes.

“Are you OK?” I asked.

She answered quietly, and I couldn’t hear, so I leaned in and gently put my hand under her elbow. “What was that?”

“I just missed my ride,” she said. Tears were close to the surface.

“Where do you need to go?” I asked. She needed to get to a street that was close to my school, so I offered her a ride on

my way and told her I just needed to run into the gas station for Skittles first. (Bingo day at school, and my son said I only have to give candy often to achieve best-teacher-ever status.)

Anyway, she trusted me enough to get in my car for a ride, and we drove a few miles to get her where she needed to go. I was getting ready to teach my students that “Dios está de nuestra parte” (“God is for us,” from Rom. 8:31), so I shared that simple word with her—that God saw her and was looking out for her and that He brought me by just to care for her.

That’s a happy story, but what I really want you to know is that I had just been spending time with the Lord that morning, and I’ve been reading through a book by Dallas Willard, called *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. It’s a rich and unique look at Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. I had been chewing on what Dallas Willard wrote:

In the morning we cannot yet know who our neighbor will be that day. The condition of our hearts will determine who along our path turns out to be our neighbor, and our faith in God will largely determine whom we have strength enough to make our neighbor.

As soon as I dropped the nice lady off where she needed to go, I thought about how God had prepared my mind and heart for that surprise need. That very morning, He put the idea of being neighborly on my mind and an encouraging word on my lips.

Makes me think of the good Samaritan in the Bible.

Why was he good day? Why did he see the wounded man differently than those who had passed by him? Why did he stop his trip and make sacrifices for a stranger?

Something powerful has to be going on in our hearts and minds

in order for us to be good. I know there's nothing good in me, left to my own devices, so I go to the Father hungry and needy every morning, hoping to be changed and never disappointed.

So this isn't a story about a lady who needed help. It's a story about our desperate need to be with God, to learn and grow and pray and listen to him every single morning before we start our day. Because we don't know what's coming, and we need preparation.

Are you spending time with the Father every morning? No guilt trip if you're not, just a gentle nudge to make this a beautiful, life-changing habit. {eoa}

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Your Secret Supernatural Weapon to Smash the Enemy's Warfare

The battle is raging, in the natural the odds are not in your favor, but does this mean you are defeated? No, it does not. Now is not the time to give up, but the time to pick up the sword of the Spirit and wield it in your favor. "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). The sword of the Spirit is the spoken Word of God. And you have to take up the Scriptures and speak them aloud until they produce what you have need of.

Do you allow Satan the last word in a battle? If so, don't. Words have the power to produce life or death. It's important to override the enemy's report of defeat and death with words

of faith, life, and victory. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov. 18:21).

If you receive a bad medical report filled with death and doom, override it with spoken words of faith. Say aloud, "I shall not die, but I shall live and declare the works of the Lord" (Ps. 118:17).

If they say, "There is no hope." You turn the situation around and speak forth, "Then I am in right standing for a miracle. According to Matthew 19:26, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Is this craziness? No, it's faith talk, and it is pleasing to the Father. And if you will work it, it will produce life and healing every time. But you must be consistent. And only speak God's healing promises over yourself. Do not speak about the death report. Speak God's report that decrees, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that lives in you" (Rom. 8:11).

The vocabulary of faith defies the natural realm of understanding. And it is a supernatural weapon given to us to use for God's glory in our lives. And if and when we do wield this weapon of faith and decree life in place of death, healing instead of sickness and strength over weakness, the manifestation of our much desired miracle will manifest. {eoa}

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the author of *DARE to Believe*, *Greater Than Magic* and *The Healing Creed*. Visit her at .

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The 1 John 4:19 Truth Your Teen Needs to Know

For youth leaders, the presence of Jesus is the most powerful “tool” in the youth ministry “toolbox.” It connects to one of the deepest desires of the human heart: the longing for nearness to God without shame.

Young believers long for the assurance of something deeper than being “saved” by God; they long for the assurance that God enjoys them as well. “I believe God *loves* me,” I’ve heard many students assert, tentatively. Then they add, “But does He *like* me?”

Unfortunately, there often is a huge disparity between these two seemingly similar ideas.

For many Christian teenagers, love means “unconditional forgiveness” when they sin or make a mistake. Somewhere in their mind, they know that “Jesus paid the price” to forgive them of their sins. Usually this is what caused them to respond to the message of the gospel in the first place. But they often believe God loves them because He *has* to. Love is who He is and what He does. But His love has nothing to do with them. God loves them because He is love, not because they are lovable.

As they grope for understanding about this heavenly Father who loves them enough to save them from hell, forgive their sins and help them make life work, the question remains: “Does He like who I am?”

Our teens may know experientially what it’s like to deal with someone who *loves* them, but can struggle to relate to someone

who likes them. They often have to cope with angry, weak, broken and at times (in their view) irrational parents. They struggle with whether or not their fickle friends like them. They feel they have to project a false self, because if their friends discovered who they really are and what they are really like, they would hate them. And at times, they experience how unenjoyable they are to their parents, friends and even themselves. So they subsequently project these negative dynamics in their personal relationships onto their relationship with God.

When teens try to gravitate toward others who project confidence, they discover those people feel as insecure and fearful as they do.

As youth leaders, we need to know that real confidence is found in the presence of Jesus. His presence reveals to us—and to young people—not only the reality that Jesus forgives sins because of the cross, but also why He chose the cross in the first place. This is the secret every teenager (and youth worker!) deeply desires to know: Jesus went to the cross because He loves each of us individually—and everyone He loves, He likes!

Even in their insecurity, fear, weakness and immaturity, Jesus likes teens. When they step into His presence, they find that He is gentle with them in their failures, and He enjoys them even in their weakness and immaturity. The truth of 1 John 4:19 draws them: “We love Him because He first loved us.”

As teens enter into and experience Jesus’ presence, not only do they find Him lovable and unconditionally loving, but they also discover the love He puts inside of them creates a huge dose of confidence to love themselves and those around them.

The fear of rejection and the trauma of shame can create powerful strongholds in the minds and emotions of teens. Some may feel that God has rejected them because they have gone too

far to be forgiven. When those around them shame them, they assume that God does too.

Teenagers will only be satisfied as they step into the presence of Jesus. The Son of God longs to satisfy their deepest longings to be enjoyed. He wants them to know He enjoys them and pursues them. When teens discover this, they can freely and fully enjoy Him. As they experience the presence of God in their thoughts, emotions and choices, they are empowered to “go all the way” in loving Jesus. {eoa}

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5 Wondrous Ways to Strengthen Your Faith in God's Promises

Adversity is normal in the life of a believer, defeat is abnormal.” –pastor F. Dean Hackett

This may not be a very encouraging statement, but the fact is that we see its truth in nearly every page of the Bible.

From cover to cover, we see God promising someone something great, fantastic, miraculous; then we see their life go in completely the opposite direction before we see the

fulfillment of that promise.

David was anointed king in 1 Samuel 16.

Not only did he not become king right away, but Saul spends the rest of 1 Samuel in a jealous rage, hunting David all over the kingdom in an effort to kill him.

Then we get to 2 Samuel 2, and Saul's son is made king of Israel while David is king of Judah. And David is completely fine with this.

In fact, two chapters later, we see a group of men go out and kill the king of Israel, thinking they were showing their loyalty to David by killing the son of his enemy.

Not only was David not impressed, he had them executed for their assassination—just as he executed the man who killed King Saul, rather than attempting to save King Saul's life.

Yes—their assassination brought about David becoming king over all of Israel ... but there is a lesson to be learned from David in all of this.

David had received the promise of God years before he ever became king, but he wasn't looking for the fulfillment of that prophecy to happen immediately. He refused to rejoice in the death of Saul—his enemy and the man he would succeed as king. Not only did he not rejoice in Saul's death, he mourned his death, just as he mourned the death of Ishbosheth, who was made king over half of David's kingdom.

David did not set out to make God's promises come to pass, he had faith in God's timing and power to fulfill the promises He made.

David refused to grow discouraged and disillusioned when Saul sought to kill him.

He rejected the temptation to grow bitter and angry—even

revengeful. Rather, he purposely maintained respect for the anointed kings of Israel (first Saul, then Ishbosheth).

He maintained a heart of great faith in God's hand in all circumstances; knowing that in each situation, no matter how horrible it seemed, God was working out a plan that would reveal a beautiful outcome that would bring Him glory.

We get to 2 Samuel 5, and David is finally made king over all of Israel. God's plan was finally accomplished. I wonder if David took time to sit and ponder the years between the given promise and the fulfillment of that promise.

Are you in that stage right now? The time of waiting between God's given promise and the fulfillment of that promise?

Don't give in to discouragement, disillusionment and the temptation to make that promise happen.

God's hand will not be moved before its time. Abraham learned this the hard way, that any attempt by man to bring about God's promise will result in an illegitimate result.

Instead take time to do these five things.

5 Ways to Strengthen Your Faith in God's Promises

1. Study the great men and women of God in the Bible.

Scripture is filled with multiple examples of God's faithfulness to those who walked in His ways despite the adversity they faced. In fact, we see through their lives how adversity prepared them for the promise.

So many times, we see adversity as only the work of the enemy; but God uses the evil things the enemy plans as a tool to strengthen our character and toughen our faith in Him so that when the promise is fulfilled, we continue walk in faithfulness to God rather than falling into the temptation of believing our own good works brought about the promise.

As you're waiting on God's' promise, study great men and women of the Bible and learn from their example of trust and faithfulness to God and His Word.

2. Meditate on the promises of Scripture.

God has given us thousands of promises in His Word.

As you're waiting on the fulfillment of His promise to you, do a study of the promises of Scripture, keep a journal of them and begin to daily pray through those promises as a way to strengthen your faith in God and His Word.

3. Focus on what God is doing in your life right now.

So often we grow far-sighted, seeing only the promise God has given to us while completely missing what He is doing in our life right now.

The fact is that the path to the promise is just as important as the fulfillment of that promise because every step along the way is preparing us to live faithfully in that promise.

Take a step back and ask yourself, "What is God doing in my life right now?" Take time to see His hand at work in your life, and then ask yourself, "How is this preparing me for His promise?"

Teach yourself to be daily aware of what God is doing now, so that you don't become too focused on what will be in the future that you miss His hand right now.

4. Cultivate a heart of gratefulness in every season.

One of the dangers we face while in the season of preparation for God's promise is allowing discouragement, discontentment and disillusionment to grow in our heart.

This is the work of the enemy to sabotage us so we never make it to the promise God has for us.

One of the best protections against the enemy's strategy against us is to daily cultivate a grateful heart to God for all He has given and done in our lives and what He is doing right now. Grab a journal and write down things you are grateful for each day, purposing to not repeat anything you've already written.

5. Develop a life of worship.

One of the most neglected daily Christian disciplines is worship. We think of worship as being in church, surrounded by our church family, listening to the worship band play our favorite song and singing along with them.

But how often do we take time to sing and worship at home as a part of our daily quiet time?

Grab your favorite worship CD and begin to sing along daily. When a worship song comes to your heart, stop and sing, lift your hands and genuinely worship God.

Develop a life of daily worship to Him: Declare who He is; what He's done; His greatness, goodness, faithfulness and love.

As you do these five things, you will find your faith growing stronger and stronger, so that like David, you will have great trust in the hand of God—even when you can't see the outcome from your present circumstances. {eoa}

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her Bosnian hero. Together, they live with their two active boys, and she enjoys fruity candles, good coffee and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. Her passion for writing led her to author her best-selling book *The Missional Handbook*. At *A Little R & R* she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. You can also find her at *Missional Call*, where she shares her passion for local and global missions. You can

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