

Falling in Love With God All Over Again

I grew up going to church for the most part.

It started when I was eight-years-old and my mother and grandmother gave their hearts to the Lord. They attended a church where people attended together yet they also reached out to each other outside of the church building. I remember picnics and dinners out. I remember a new community of people who surrounded our family with love.

I remember my Sunday School teacher who shared God's love through flannel graph stories and films. Not the VCR tapes movies, but rather the old reel-to-reel films that showed the parables of Jesus, and told what it meant to be faithful, honest, and true. I loved my Sunday School class, children's church, and the prizes I got for memorizing Scripture. I remember singing songs about God. I remember wonderful Summer VBS camps and memorizing the books of the Bible to win a board game.

The problem was that while all those things made me think about God (and I loved Him in a way) I didn't understand what a personal relationship God meant.

I didn't know how it applied to my everyday life.

And then, instead of continuing my relationship with God, and continuing to spend time with others, I walked away from that in my teen years. I wanted to do things my own way. I was looking for love and I thought I could find it in boys.

Instead, I found myself pregnant and without a boyfriend when I was only 17. For many, many months I didn't want to think

about what God thought about me. I tried to push all thoughts of Him out of my mind. I didn't want to think about all the memory verses I'd memorized as a child. Instead, I wallowed in everything I had lost—my youth, my teen years, my boyfriend who was with someone else. I felt more and more depressed as they days passed.

Then one day around noon I was watching soap operas and I started to remember those good moments when a church family loved me. I didn't dwell on everything that had gone wrong.

This day, I thought about a time in my life when things used to be right, when I was happy. When I believed in God, and when I had joy.

And that is the day I gave my heart to the Lord ... my whole heart.

I wrapped my arms around my stomach and I said, "God, I have messed up big time. If you can do anything with my life, please do." It was at that moment that I felt HOPE spring into my heart. Hope in God. Hope in my future. Hope in eternity because I knew Christ had forgiven me for all my sins. And that was the beginning of my love relationship with God. I had loved him before like I loved peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and loved watching CHIPS on TV. Not potato chips, but those cute highway patrolmen who rode around on motorcycles and stopped crime.

Once I realized the depth of my sin and understood had God had washed me and made me are pure and white as snow, that's when I truly fell in love with him.

We can have knowledge of God and spend time in His house and with His people, but until we understand who we are without Him—understand the truth of our sin—that's when the true love

relationship begins.

By accepting my sin and the pain it caused, I truly fell in love with Jesus for taking that sin away through His death on the cross.

Tricia Goyer *has written more than 35 books, including both novels that delight and entertain readers and nonfiction titles that offer encouragement and hope. She has also published more than 500 articles in national publications such as Guideposts, Thriving Family, Proverbs 31, and HomeLife Magazine.*