

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

You are listening to episode 45 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled Life Is One Big Adventure with God. Welcome back to the podcast, friend! I'm thrilled you are here. Just this past Sunday I gave the sermon at our church, as our pastor was on vacation. It was Trinity Sunday in the United Methodist Church, so as I studied more about the Trinity in preparation for my sermon, I was reminded just how active the Trinity is in our lives on a daily basis. But oftentimes, we don't think about that or pay attention. So, I thought why not share parts of my sermon in this week's episode? So, here we are. I pray it encourages you and inspires you on your own adventure with God. Let's get to it.

I'm a part of one of the small groups at my church called Soul Sisters. We are a group of women who gather to grow closer to God, to encourage one another, and to be in community. We've been meeting off and on for almost four years. One question we ponder often when we gather is, "where have we seen God in our lives recently?"

So, I ask you this question today.

Where have you seen God in your life recently?

I consider my life with God one big adventure. Think about it... sometimes He takes us to high mountain top places, and we marvel at what He allows us to experience. At other times He leads us through the valley, where we cling to Him for dear life because we can't find our way out on our own. But no matter if we're on the mountain or in the valley, or anywhere in between, we know as believers in Jesus Christ, we are never alone. God is always with us on this adventure. Amen?

On Trinity Sunday, one would think to explain in depth the Trinity. But I'm not about to attempt tackling that, because even theologians struggle with understanding and explaining this mystery. And I'm no theologian.

But I've heard Christians attempt to explain the Trinity by saying God reveals Himself in three ways, sometimes as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Holy Spirit. I've also heard others say the Trinity is like an orange (the fruit, the juice, and the peel). But God doesn't change personalities and I'm sorry, but He isn't like an orange.

But I will say this. There is only one true God. The God of the Bible. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, which make up the Trinity, are the same God, but are different Persons. And all three are active in the lives of those who are followers of Jesus Christ.

For as long as I can remember, I knew God existed. Thanks to my mom, she wanted her children to be raised in a faith that worshipped the God of the Bible. I recall how each night prior to bedtime she, my three brothers, and I would kneel beside one of our beds and recite prayers she taught us. (I shared more about this in episode 37.) One of these prayers was the Lord's Prayer. Quite honestly, I was so young, I didn't understand fully the words I was reciting, but repeating them every night enabled me to memorize these prayers.

But this God was a mystery to me.

Who was He? Why did I feel like He was mad at me all the time? And why did I need to pray to Him, anyway? What was the point?

The answers I received to these questions didn't make sense to my young brain, so I did what any child would do. I conjured up various images of God in my mind. Because no one seemed to have a picture or a painting of God.

What did He look like, anyway? Was God a giant, mighty man who donned armor like a warrior? Was He a ghost-like figure wearing a long white robe? Or was He some sort of being who was stern and strict, just waiting for me to mess up so He could punish me?

I was afraid of God because I didn't really know who He was. Isn't it true, we often fear what we don't understand? How many people in this world fear God because they don't know Him? Or how many people think He doesn't really exist because they don't understand the reality of God in their lives?

I remember feeling the need to please God, otherwise He might punish me. And what child liked to be punished? Not this one. And I recall believing how attending church would make me look good in God's eyes, and maybe He would give me good things for doing so. Because after all, I was all about receiving good things!

For years God was an impersonal, impractical, and inaccessible deity in my life.

Until one evening in April 1991 when my best friend and her mom, who is an ordained pastor, introduced me to Jesus. Oh, I had heard of Jesus, but I didn't quite understand who He was either. But as I was struggling in my 22-year-old life, I was open to trying anything. Even inviting this Jesus into my life, whatever that meant.

So, over the phone that evening, they explained who Jesus was and how believing in Him would change me and my life forever. It all sounded good to me, so I repeated a prayer, asked Jesus to take over my life, and my friend's mom was right. I experienced a joy in that moment that I had never experienced before. She said that joy would never leave me, and she was correct.

That joy is still present within me today.

I wasn't aware of exactly what was happening in that moment, but it was then when the Holy Spirit began living in me and the result was that internal and eternal joy I felt. This happens for every person who believes in Jesus.

But I didn't understand the Holy Spirit either. *You mean something is living in me?!*

That kinda freaked me out until my friend and her mom explained it to me. That the Holy Spirit is a gift from God for everyone who loves and follows Jesus. And we'll talk more about that in a moment.

Since that evening, the Holy Spirit has been at work within me, and goodness He has had His hands full. Molding me, refining me, smoothing out some very rough edges. He has taught me much since those early days of my faith through studying the Bible and learning who God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit really are. He helped me learn a new way to pray to God without memorized prayers, but in more of a

conversation. And He taught me God's love and favor isn't determined by my church attendance, or really anything else, for that matter.

Life has certainly been a big adventure with God.

So, when I think about the question, "where have I seen God in my life recently," I can't help but think of the Trinity... God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

I marvel how God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are each distinct, yet how they are interconnected. I guess this is part of the mystery our minds cannot fully grasp.

God the Father desires a relationship with His creation, but scripture tells us the only way to Him is through His Son, Jesus. Just as our relationship with the Father depends on Jesus, our relationship with Jesus depends on the Holy Spirit. Believers in Jesus, receive the Holy Spirit, which scripture also describes as our Helper, indwelling us forever. The Holy Spirit teaches, guides, leads, and refines us to be more like Jesus.

See how they are all interconnected? They are all God.

The Father sent the Son to die for us and give us new life, and the Son sent the Spirit to help us comprehend all God has done for us and to enable us to keep growing in our faith in Him. Charles Stanley, author and pastor, puts it this way: "The Father creates a plan, Jesus Christ implements the plan, and the Holy Spirit administers the plan." (<https://www.christianity.com/jesus/is-jesus-god/holy-trinity/the-roles-of-the-trinity.html>)

So, where have you seen God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in your life recently?

If you're like me, you probably haven't given it much thought or paid much attention. Until now. But think back to this week. Where did you see God the Father in your life? Or God the Son? Or God the Holy Spirit?

As I was thinking about these questions, I was reminded of sunrises and sunsets. I am quite fond of them, and if you follow me on any social media, you see the photos of the ones I am blessed to witness. Thankfully, we can view them from our home. The sunrise through our kitchen windows and the sunset through our bedroom windows. And in each one, I imagine God painting that sky just for us to enjoy.

I guess you could say I see God the Father, our Creator, in the sunrises and sunsets. I see His creativity and magnificence in all He's created, but some days I'm just too distracted to notice. But when I am paying attention, I see God the Father everywhere. In the blooming flower in my garden, in the crystal blue sky above, in my grandson's laughter. God's creation declares His glory. That includes you and me.

And what about those times when our prayers are answered? Or when we missed getting in a car accident by a smidgen? Or when God's blessings surprise us? God the Father is at work.

What about God the Son?

Jesus? He said in the book of Matthew (28:20) that He will be with us to the very end of the age, so we know Jesus is with us. Jesus loved us so much, He died and rose again for you and for me, and in doing so, He removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. For those who follow Him, we are guaranteed a place in eternity with Him. But the thing is, every day we are living out that eternity. We

are already living in eternal life. Because eternity doesn't begin when we die, no. It begins the moment we exercise faith in Jesus. We see Jesus through our faith and in the actions of others. We see Jesus through the eyes of a fellow Christian. And we sometimes even see Him in the stranger on the street.

And what about God the Holy Spirit?

Scripture says the Holy Spirit, which is a gift from God, makes His home in those of us who follow Jesus. Sometimes the Holy Spirit is quiet within us, and other times He's very loud. You know that nudging that you get to say a kind word to someone who's struggling? That quiet nudge is the Holy Spirit. Or when you're overcome with the thought to give an extra tip to your server when paying your dinner bill? That's the Holy Spirit. Or when someone pops into your mind and you're prompted to pray for that person. Later you find out there was a reason he/she came to mind at that exact time. That's the Holy Spirit.

But scripture also tells us more about the Holy Spirit. Not only is He the Indweller of Believers, but He's also the Author of Scripture, He is the Comforter / Counselor / Advocate, He's the Convicter of Sin, He is the Deposit / Seal of our inheritance, He's our Guide, our Intercessor, Revealer / Spirit of Truth, Spirit of Life, Teacher, and Witness.

When we think of God, we may not always think about the three distinct persons of God.

And there's nothing wrong with that. God is God. We're reminded in Psalm 8, verses 1 and 9 of just how majestic He is. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (NIV) There is none like our God.

As we glorify Him and praise Him, and as we pay attention to His presence on this adventure with Him, we will see evidence of the Trinity at work in our lives as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And let's pay attention to where we see Him today, tomorrow, and in the days to come.

God is so good to us, isn't He? On this adventure with God He's given us everything we need to live an abundant life, now and for eternity.

I have some additional freebies for you on my Resources page, designed to remind us to look for God in our daily lives. You'll find all sorts of goodies there, but especially to go along with this episode some printables, a lock screen, and social posts. The link to this page is in the show notes.

And as always, we're continuing our discussion of this episode over in our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. Come on over and be inspired. The link is in the show notes as well.

I'll close with one final verse, and we'll consider it today's blessing. It's 2 Corinthians 13:14. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

Julie Lefebvre