

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER

Georgia Jenkin

FORMER CHILDREN'S MINISTER AND NOW FULL TIME MUM, GEORGIA JENKIN LOOKS BACK ON GOD'S FAITHFULNESS OVER THE YEARS

At the age of 14, I made a deal with God. It was either go his way, or just go off the rails, not bother much about school and just be a reckless teenager. That year was the first year I went to Spring Harvest with our youth work called Sonset. I remember standing in the youth zone called iScape, and having a chat with God. I told him I'd give him the benefit of the doubt, and I'd give church, Christianity and faith 'a go'. 14 years later, I am now a wife and a mum, a theology graduate, a qualified Children's Minister and helping in Children's and Youth Ministry in my church. Turns out God's way was pretty good!

I have now officially been a Christian for half of my life, which I find incredible. It's not always been plain sailing, there have been some pretty big bumps in the road, but God has never failed in his faithfulness. I remember in a lecture, the lecturer getting people up to the front, naming them as a person in the Old Testament and lining them up like they were in a queue. He got to the end of the line, and talked about that person's struggles; he told them to look back, to see the life of a person in the Old Testament, whose life reflected God's faithfulness. He continued on, saying,

'Look back; look back. See God's faithfulness throughout time.' That's what I want us to do, to look back and see God's faithfulness over our own lives and the lives of so many people who have come before us.

I want to share my stories of God's faithfulness. My husband and I first met at a youth weekend in Cornwall in 2008. Run by Andrew Nicholson, the then Youth Enabler for Cornwall, young people across the county were given the opportunity to attend and meet other young people in both the Methodist and Anglican churches. After being friends for a couple of years, we ended up together in 2010. September 2011 brought us both moving away to study at university. Craig went off to Winchester University to train to become a teacher, and I went off to study theology at Cliff college, focussing on children's and youth studies. After not very long, the strain of it all caused us to break up. It was pretty soon that I realised that he was actually something pretty good, but I had no way of seeing how on earth I was going to get myself out of the hole I'd dug. At the end of my first year, I vividly remember God speaking to me and telling me I was going to spend the rest of my time at Bible College single. Of course, I tried to change this outcome over the coming years but I knew that God was right. The years went on and we ended up reconnecting in 2014. After meeting up I knew it was all or nothing, we were either together forever, or we had no contact. So in the September we

officially started dating again, only to be in a 300-mile long distance relationship.

Craig tried hard to find a job where I was in Sheffield once he'd finished studying, but it just wasn't working. So we felt that probably wasn't God's plan for us! Instead, in the space of 2 months, we had to figure out how we were both supposed to find a job and separate places to live. I even handed in my notice at my job knowing I had nowhere to go! But God was faithful. We both ended up living and working in Winchester, and in 2015 got engaged and married in 2016.

This was not the end of us having to put our faith in God and rely on his faithfulness. Before we got married, my job was coming to an end and Craig had to move out of his flat and into where we would eventually live without me having found a job. Again we trusted in God, and on 1 June Craig moved into our flat. On 19 June I had a job interview working as a Children's Minister, and I was offered the job on the same day! We were a part of the church in Chandler's Ford for 3 years, beginning our church life there as a married couple, and ending it as a family of 3. Over those 3 years God was again incredibly faithful to us. We had gone to New Wine with our church in 2018, and one night Robbie Dawkins was preaching. He was talking about really praying in the power of God, and all I remember is standing there with my hands on my stomach, pleading with God for there to be a baby in there. We came home and a few days later it

was our 2nd wedding anniversary. It was also the day we found out we were expecting!

When our daughter was 3 months old, we moved back to Cornwall to live with my in-laws for a short period of time. We found a fantastic church where we are able to use our gifts, and found new friends. Whilst I enjoyed maternity leave, my husband tried his hardest to find a permanent teaching job. Turns out it's quite hard in Cornwall! Then January came along and I tried to find a job myself, again proving harder than I thought! This July will mark one year of us living as a family with Craig's parents, something we never imagined would happen. When we first moved, we thought we'd be looking at moving out by now, but obviously the impact of Coronavirus has massively changed all of this. An amazing story of God's faithfulness before our lives changed was that Craig's current teaching post is a maternity cover. He has an actual contract, as opposed to the supply work he was doing. Back in January this job was the last thing he wanted to take, as it was a step away from a permanent position. But now, he is still teaching online and going into school, we aren't stuck with zero wages coming in. At the time it seemed like such a rubbish position to be in, but right now it was an incredible blessing we could never have foreseen. Every day it baffles me at how amazing God is in his faithfulness to every one of us!

Some days I'm positive, thinking living here longer will help us save towards buying a house and we can take a bit more time to find a job that we love. Other days it's hard when you've got 5 people trying to live under the same roof! These are the moments when I remind myself to look back. You see, right now I don't have an amazing story of God's faithfulness. Right now, we are in the thick of uncertainty, worry and being fed up. Right now, it feels like living through the beginning of Lamentations 3! Verses 17-18 say this: 'I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say "my splendour is gone and all that I hoped from the Lord."' You could just stop there, stay in that place of hopelessness, but that's not what God wants for us. He tells us to have hope, to trust in him and to remember his faithfulness. Keep reading Lamentations 3:21-24:



'Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "the Lord is my portion, therefore I will wait for him.'"

The Lord is always faithful. Look back and see his faithfulness. In this time of uncertainty and not knowing how life will move forward, hold onto the hope that is found in the life of Jesus, in the empty cross, and in the words of Scripture which can truly transform our lives.

I can't end on an amazing story of God's faithfulness to me right in this moment, as that story is still being written. What I can remind you of though, is his unwavering, unshakeable and relentless love for every single one of you. Take a moment now. Read your favourite scripture. Sing your favourite worship song. Remember this time you are



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living right now, and then look back. Look back and see God's faithfulness to Abraham and Sarah who were far too old and yet bore a son. Look back and see God's faithfulness to Joseph, as he sat chained up in jail to then becoming the governor of the land. Look back and see God's faithfulness to Ruth. Her husband had died so she left her family behind to go to a foreign land. Who would have expected her to find a new husband and start a family? I could go on but Hebrews 11 does a pretty good job of talking about the faith people had in God and his faithfulness to them.

My hope is that right now God's faithfulness is at work in your life, that things have changed since I wrote this, and we are starting to be able to see those moments of faithfulness in our own lives. I pray that you are still holding onto God; even if it is by the end of your fingertips some days! Our lives will never be the same after this, but God's faithfulness will be. His love never fails and his mercies are new every morning.

The Lord is always faithful, so look back on his faithfulness. Look back over the amazing things that have happened in your own life, and celebrate the moments of joy. Before you look forward into the unknown, look back into God's goodness.

Georgia Jenkin is a theology graduate, trained Children's Minister and mum to a little girl who is 13 months old. She lives in Helston and alongside her husband is actively involved in the life of the church, helping to run both the children's and youth ministry.