E V A N G E L I S M

T H E P R E S E N T

My faith in Jesus means that I have peace, real peace, when life comes barging through the doors of my life. Through the foreclosure of my family’s home, my parents losing their business, my grandfather passing away, me not being to get a job that could support a family for 2 years, I have struggled but have had genuine peace because I know that my God is with me and that this life is not all there is.

I get to genuinely believe in people because I know that the Holy Spirit can change absolutely anyone. I’ve seen people go from being self-absorbed and mean-spirited to real people working out who they are in Christ. Never perfect, but allowing God to change them from the inside out.

I don’t have to be anxious or scared anymore. I know that my emotions are there but I live in a different reality. I live in the reality that my God can overcome anything and He has already overcome the world. I don’t have to be afraid of what people think of me because my identity is not in what they think of me but it is secure in the love of Christ.

I don’t have to worry about the future. I know that God has the best plans in mind for me. It’s not that I don’t plan or I’m irresponsible but I don’t have to be anxious about keeping a job or wondering whether or not my family will be taken care of. My God takes care of me and I have faith in that.

I don’t have to hate myself. I don’t have to beat myself up over being a bad husband, father, son, or friend. I get to ask God to come into my weakness and help me be a better man for the people in my life. I get to ask to look more like Jesus. To be strong, courageous, soft, gentle, truthful, bold, sacrificial, daring, trusting and trustworthy, steady, and more. The Holy Spirit in me reminds me that I am a new creation. I am not the same man that I was yesterday. I am being made to look more and more like Jesus even though I stumble and get lost along the way.

I don’t have to live my life alone. I have the Holy Spirit and I have my community. I have the Holy Spirit who encourages me and reminds me of the sacrifice that Jesus took for me and how I’m righteous and clean and white as snow before God. I am loved and secured. I also have my community who encourages me and lifts me up. Who cry with me in my weakness and celebrate with me in my triumphs. I get to do the same for them. God knows me and they know me. And I am loved despite my flaws.

I don’t have to live for myself. I don’t have to build my name up. I don’t have to vie for attention or have to be in the limelight. The world doesn’t have to revolve around me. I get to serve others. I get to put others above myself. Because of my security and love in Christ, I get to help others feel secure and loved. Through me and through pointing to the one that gives me these things.

T H E P A S T

I grew into my relationship with God by walking with other people who had genuine and vibrant relationships with God. I got to see them love like I’ve never seen anybody love before. I got to see them forgive others when it was painful for them. I got to see them comforted because they knew that their God was there for them. I got to see them grieve but not in a way that I had seen grieving before. They were secure and they weren’t afraid. They were strong and they were bold. And they would confess to me that they weren’t. That they were only the way they were because of their relationship with Jesus. I wanted that. I wanted to know who God was. I was tired of religion and just doing things because my parents did it or told me to. I was tired of just rules and regulations. I wanted a real relationship with the living God of the universe that would transform all of me.

One of my key influences was a mentor of mine growing up in my church. He would pick some friends and me up from school and help us with homework. We would hang out and have fun. We’d go on adventures and we felt like family. I got to see him love Jesus in the way that he would read his Bible and sang those songs. I got see him live out his faith for real by the way he would love us and speak wisdom and truth into our lives. I got to see him serve and love the homeless. I got to see him interact with people who didn’t know Jesus and love them and share his faith with them. I wanted to be like him. I wanted to have a relationship with God like he did.

Another one of my influences was a friend that I met at a Christian conference for college-age youth. He was just so excited about his faith and the ways that God was speaking to him. And he didn’t just talk about his faith but he took it seriously. He was passionate about building up high school students so they knew that their worth was more than being popular, but that it was because God loved them and died for them. He was involved in awesome events that he put together to raise money for charities and I got to see the love of Jesus so fully and clearly in his life. He always made Jesus look so amazing! He couldn’t help it. He had a relationship with God that I wanted.

I had always grown up in the church. I had doubts but never really got to talk about them. When I finally got to college, those doubts came to a head. I was going to a school that didn’t like God and thought that anybody that followed God was ignorant and uneducated. I was faced with a choice. I could either give in to what everybody was saying and just ditch God altogether. Or I could finally start to investigate who this God was that changed my friends’ lives. I needed to know for myself. I was tired of being spoon-fed my faith. I wasn’t going to let my pastors, my parents, other people tell me who God was anymore. I needed to find out for myself. And maybe you didn’t grow up in church but the challenge still goes for you. If the God of the Bible is real, then it changes everything. I had to find out who he was on my own. Investigate. Dig in. Come with doubts and questions and find God show up as I looked for Him! I came face to face with the living God of the Universe and I’ve never been the same. I still stumble and fall and make mistakes but no, I’m not the same.

T H E F A C T S

The gospel events of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection are so important to me because it means that I’m free. I’m secure and saved. Jesus lived a perfect life so that He could be a perfect sacrifice. God is a God of justice and He carries it out. So He carried it out on Jesus. Jesus not only took the wrath of God and died but rose from the dead. His resurrection proved that He was the Son of God. And that He is coming again. Without the resurrection, He would have just been another ordinary man. Because He was resurrected, that means that I really am free from and guilt or shame because of sin. God saved me! God saved us! And now my whole life is a response to what He did. It’s never easy but it’s worth it.