

“How am I faithful to God?”

by Sandra Miller

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Potter’s House: How am I faithful
to God?**

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How am I faithful to God?

It feels rather presumptuous to be here before you, me, only recently come back to God and more recently still, accepting Christ as my Saviour. I am even newer to the communities of [Church of the Saviour](#). And yet here I am because by the grace of God I am among people who believe that any one of us may be blessed to speak God’s truth as they experience it.

Fall is the season that this particular Body of Christ looks upon as a time of recommitment: recommitment to God, recommitment to Christ and recommitment to our church community. This is not something to be taken lightly. The reading in Matthew this week tells us to “Give to Caesar what

is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's." which seems quite appropriate. So, how do we decide what is God's? Where do we start our discernment process?

I found a point of focus in a homework question from my Seekers School of Christian Living class on the Hebrew Prophets – what does faithfulness to God mean in your life? Not faith **in** God, but faithfulness to God. Not just trusting that God exists, but living out faithfulness to God by obeying God, not out of submission, but with joy. I'd like to read you a Marge Piercy poem as the beginning of part of my own answer.

To Be of Use

*The people I love the best
Jump into work head first
Without dallying in the shallows
And swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
The black sleek heads of seals
Bouncing like half-submerged balls.*

*I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
Who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
Who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
Who do what has to be done, again and again.*

*I want to be with people who submerge
In the task, who go into the fields to harvest
And work in a row and pass the bags along,
Who are not parlor generals and field deserters
But move in a common rhythm
When the food must come in or the fire be put out.*

*The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.*

*But the thing worth doing well done
Has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident,
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
But you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
And a person for work that is real.*

*The Art of Blessing the Day, Poems with a Jewish Theme, by
Marge Piercy. Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher, New York.*

And a person for work that is real. That has such resonance for me. Because faithfulness to God is work, hard work, and it can take the form of mundane tasks, and it can beg of us to be prophetic, and it can challenge us to do what seems impossible.

My struggle to live out my faithfulness to God is of course intrinsically tied to my faith in God. Since I am new to that faith and new to the community I'd like to tell you a small piece of the journey that brought me to God.

In Isaiah we read "I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me" and "I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me."

Thirteen years ago I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and chronic depression, I faced an assailant with a knife in my own home and I put down my cat Leo whom I had had for nearly twenty years – all within a week. I started seeing a therapist, and I made some progress in getting on with my daily life, but I was in bad shape. At the time I was claiming to be an ex-Jew and an agnostic, but would readily admit that

I was on a journey of a spiritual nature, yet I felt empty. I got a call one day from my best friend Deborah saying “get thee to a nunnery.” No joke. She had recently started attending Seekers and met Marjory Bankson who was coming out to California to lead a [Faith at Work](#) women’s retreat based on the story of the bent over woman. Deborah and Marjory arranged for a scholarship for me, and based on my trust in Deborah, with much trepidation I set off to my first Christian retreat. I could go on and on about my experiences at that event, some of which could easily have sent me packing, but the core of my experience was that I was accepted for whom I was without reservation, and I left feeling strengthened.

Shortly thereafter I came to DC for the second of my annual visits and attended services at Seekers for the first time. As soon as I entered the 2025 building I had a sense of being home. I was being summoned by God, but still not acknowledging God. What I left DC with that trip was the sure knowledge that I would move here one day.

Back in Oakland life was still a struggle. I continued in therapy and under my doctor’s care I tried any number of anti-depressants. The results were less than stellar. Instead of feeling depressed all the time, I was numb from the medication, and I still had to make a conscious choice every day just to get out of bed and go to work. I opted to stop the anti-depressants so that I could at least be in touch with how I was really feeling. The best thing I did for myself was to start going to Faith at Work retreats each time they were held in California. In those precious weekends, just once or twice a year, I could explore my fledgling belief in God, though I resisted mightily believing in Christ.

Why? Having been born and raised as a Jew it clearly went against everything I was taught and the temptation to believe in this Messiah felt downright traitorous. Equally, or even more importantly, was feeling unable to live into the work and accountability required of a faithful Christian. I was still feeling emotionally and physically tired, I had developed some behavior patterns and toxic friendships that enabled me to continue feeling that way, and I had read Call to Commitment and it scared me.

It took me nearly 8 years to say that I believed in Christ's teachings, considering myself a Christian with a small "c". It took 2 years after that to accept Christ as my Saviour and get baptized. And it took another year after that to say I'm ready to change my life and become, as Marge Piercy says, a person that cries for work that is real.

Although I'm often verbose, I also have a fondness for breaking things down to the lowest common denominator. When I look at lessons like "giving to God what is God's" I see give your life to God. When I get asked "how do you live out your faithfulness to God" I answer by saying I try to follow the teachings of Christ. What does that look like in my life?

It still means choosing every day to get out of bed and continue the work I've chosen. It still means smiling my way into joy even when I want to crawl in the corner and cry for no apparent reason. It means having given up a relatively comfortable and somewhat hedonistic lifestyle to move 3000 miles across country without a job in answer to God's call of promise. It means working at Potter's House doing something I love to do, working in a Christ filled community, called upon to do ministry in my own brokenness even though it spells

financial disaster for my future. And it means going the extra mile, and it means always being present to the needs of Potter's House in order to insure it's viability for the future because I believe so strongly in its mission.

It means examining, not just yearly, but daily what it means to be a member of Seekers Church in the tradition of Church of the Saviour. Having always been a heart on my sleeve liberal, I feel called to try and do it all – which Kayla has been trying to counsel me about – but I know that I can't, really.

What I have taken greatly to heart is my vow to work to put an end to war, public and private I have to do the work that feels real to me around that. Right now that means helping to develop the curriculum and co-leading a three week advent class for Seekers that examines what that statement means to you as a Seeker and a Christian, and being a founding member of a new Seekers group called Seekers Church Peace Witness. Since it is a new group it has no structure even though we can respond to calls to march for peace at a moment's notice. So for me the real work is helping to discern what kind of structure is needed, putting that structure in place and then following through to keep the community informed about issues we need to address as part of the Body of Christ and informed about actions we can take to make our collective voice heard. Closer to home it means being on numerous list serves and reading volumes of mail nearly every day and responding by writing to congress and the president, etc.

Perhaps the most important way that I live out my faithfulness to God is by writing my weekly spiritual reports. It is there, knowing that loving eyes and heart are ready to receive my words, that I take stock of the things I have managed to do

that feel good; the struggles I have encountered in myself, the areas where I am still broken and vulnerable, and my hopes for what is to be.

And all of this is to say that I live out my faithfulness to God by working at being real and honest with myself. I leave you with an invitation to ask yourself "How am I faithful to God?"