

Two experiences recently have got me to thinking lately...

When Tolik and Alyona were here one night Tolik and I were sitting in the backyard talking. He had the day before or so found out about some of the trials of Steve's life - even though we don't know how he didn't know - but he just kept looking at me and saying, I just don't understand. How does he still have this joy that I see in him? He said, I know so many people that have turned away from the faith because of suffering and here he is - he's lost so much - and not just one time but several times - and he still keeps his faith and his joy and peace. How?

Mind you, this is a missionary and he's bewildered. He told me that is what drew him to Christianity originally. He was not raised in a Christian home and he met these people and they seemed to have this joy and peace and it made him angry. He didn't understand it.

Steve came outside and joined us and I shared what he'd been saying with Steve and Steve responded with "Well, sometimes it's like Peter said to Jesus, 'where else would I go? Since I have come to really believe that Jesus is the Son of God?'"

And then - Week before last an old friend was in town and called to meet for lunch. She asked me about my life and I told her some things that are going on. She said, "I don't get it. I've got friends that are in situations like you and they're losing their faith and giving up. And you and Steve - you've lost two children and now another has left the faith and y'all keep believing. How do you do it?"

I gave her the same answer Steve gave Tolik but as I've thought about it over the past week I've realized it's more than that. Steve and I are no better than anyone else. There are certainly days when I want to walk away. Days when I am so confused I can't see straight. Days when I would rather die than live. I live in a state of perpetual grief over my child.

But there is one thing I know I must do if I am going to stand in the storms of life:

1. I must build my life upon His Word. Matthew 7:24-25

Steve and I don't just say we're Christian. If God's Word says it then we obey it. I don't mean perfectly obey every single time, but we seek to follow His Word in every decision as best as we know how. And we have lived this way since 1984.

I don't read his Word and then go listen to what others think and make my decision about what I'm going to do. If Jesus said it - then that's what I need to do.

We've been studying the Sermon on the mount. Jesus wasn't making suggestions. He was telling us how to live our lives and then he concludes with this truth - that if we will build our lives on what He says - on His Word - when the storm **slams** against our house - and it will - we will not fall down because our lives have been founded on the rock - a firm foundation.

But we have to really build on what He says. We have to do what He says. We can't say - well that doesn't seem right or make sense so I'm going to do this. NO!

For example, years ago I had a little sister in the county big/little program and she was in a mess and I asked Steve if she could come live with us. That was the last thing Steve wanted. But he came home from work one day and told me, "I don't like it, but I was reading Matthew 25 today and I don't want to be a goat."

We have always tithed our income because we believe that is a Biblical principle that honors God. And there were many years we had very little income to tithe.

When bad things happen and we wonder how we are going to survive, we read God's Word and believe it and find encouragement. We read His promise that His grace is sufficient and believe that it is and it always has been.

Recently I was in such a state over a situation that I couldn't sleep and I was literally pulling my hair out the grief is so consuming. About 2 am, Steve reached over and patted my arm. I told him in tears that I didn't think

I could survive it. He prayed for me immediately and said, “Sandra, God’s grace has been sufficient for every thing we have ever faced and He will bring us through this too.” He could say that because years ago God had told Him through His Word that He would be with him. He would hold his right hand.

The world and well-meaning friends and loved ones will offer you all kinds of ways to deal with life. But if you want to build a life that will not fall down when the storms come you must build it upon God’s Word - His Word is the only thing that will stand forever. Opinions come and go. Philosophies change, what’s socially acceptable is changing faster than we can keep up these days - and if you build your life on that you have a very unstable foundation.

I love the song, “Build my Life” but I think it would be more Biblically accurate to sing, “I will build my life upon His **Word** it is a firm foundation.”

Amy Grant’s song - *Saved by love* - used to always bother me because I can’t find anywhere in the Bible that says we are “saved by love.” We are offered salvation because of love but we are saved by grace through faith. And God’s love is a firm foundation in that it will never change but again, God loves the whole world, but His love doesn’t save us.

To say that we are saved by love can give the impression that because God loves us, because God is love and loves everyone then God will save everyone. That is not what the Bible teaches.

Jesus said many will call him Lord, Lord, and he will tell them to depart - he never knew them and call them those who do lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. In other words, those who call Him Lord but don’t build their lives upon His Word.

The Word of the Lord endures forever...

The only way to follow Jesus is to build your life on His Word. Otherwise we are just doing what seems right or feels right to us and that is never a good guide. When we do, whether we realize it or not - we have become our own god. And we cannot save ourselves