

SPARE THE ROD©

By Keith Z. Yezdanian

This is a brief look into my family while on a journey of illness and faith. You may find that our family may not be so different from your own. We struggle with bills, communication, addiction, pain, grief and trust while trying to stay focused and dedicated to serving God. You may say “Keith you are a hypocrite!” from time to time as you read this. And to you I would kindly say “friend you are correct I am a Christian and I am a hypocrite”. You see I am not made perfect because I am a Christian, I am forgiven and I struggle everyday not to do or say things that contradict the Word of God. If I am to be honest with myself and those who look upon me as a Christian now, I must first admit that I’m a sinner and I’m not perfect and that I struggle with the same things as you.

In **Romans 7:21-25**, *New International Version* it is written:

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

I pray that these words that I share with you will touch you and bring clarity to your life and peace to your spirit.

So now I would like to share some of the experiences and a particular one while at a doctor’s visit in Raleigh. In July My wife and I started traveling to Raleigh to see yet another specialist on our 5 year journey of trying to cure a chronic illness my wife has been living with shortly after our youngest daughter Heather was born. We had an appointment the first week of December to discuss our coming to the end of the road called treatment and that surgery was imminent. During this visit my youngest daughter Heather would ask her mom a question that somehow summed up all my questions in life. As you could imagine this illness has given us some memorable moments and a number of moments we would rather not remember.

The first two years of my wife’s illness I was without the Lord in my life and I was well into my bout with alcoholism. Looking back I was living for myself and I wasn’t too concerned with her health or raising my two girls Jess 7 and Heather only months old at the time. I worked, took my wife to appointments, threatened doctors, celebrated birthdays and drank. I thought I had it all together. In my mind I was everything that I was supposed to be.

My wife started going to Church in which I was against and I shouted the common threats that I didn’t want her taking my kids’ and giving away my money. It’s funny that even when we don’t want God in our life, He gave us a gift or for a lack of better words programmed us to know Him and I just knew in my heart that if the kids went...I would follow one day. This didn’t sit well with my sinful nature and I didn’t want to give up my self-centeredness. This would challenge everything I ever did and make me face my days of street life, drugs and nothing short of criminal. I never read the Bible and I didn’t know that in **Romans 2:15** it is written that, “...***since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.***”

So my wife continued to attend church with my girls and she continued to give away my money (tithe). I would kiss them goodbye and then sit on the couch and mumble and grumble about this so called God that was taking my money and the building full of hypocrites’ called church she went to see, not accepting that I was the hypocrite within the walls of our own

house. I was the exact definition of a hypocrite. **1: a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion. 2: a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.** I had the appearance or virtue of a good husband, I stated I loved my wife and my kids, I also stated I would do anything for them and yet I continued to fight with them about something that was written on my own heart. This something could set them free and heal their inner most hurts.

Three years ago a friend's wife Amy came to me and asked if I would stand in for her husband, Charles, during a Veterans Day service at church? All of a sudden I was faced with my respect and love for Charles and Amy and more so my guilt and hate for God. Well, I left Amy without an answer and I went home and kicked around the many thoughts and emotions running through my mind and body. After coming up with what I thought were some viable excuses like "I don't own a suit, they really don't want my kind there, what has my wife told them about me and God is going to strike me dead if I cross that threshold". Beyond my control there was a growing curiosity and a tugging in my heart that got the best of me and I agreed to stand in. That day was the beginning of my healing and the healing of our family. Today my youngest daughter has a saying that reminds me of how God used this illness to bring us together and how much God has been working in the midst of us..."**A house is made of stones and bricks and a Home is made of Love and Care.**" She may say this when things are good or she may say it to remind me that I am beginning to become that hypocrite that would sit on the couch in that old house and not the man God is transforming in the home He has provided for us.

I wish I could write that after my Pastor of today or the figure of opposition during the Veterans Day service Pastor Bill walked me down to the alter days later that everything magically fixed themselves and the story ended there. Nothing could be closer yet further from the truth. I did however notice through the passing days, months and years a filling of the emptiness I felt those days when I would kiss my family goodbye as they left for church. Slowly and I repeat slowly the urge to drink started to fade and I took less and less of the PTSD meds (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Medications) I was on. I was able to finally enjoy going out to dinner with visiting family and enjoying a clarity I never experienced. And still the troubles came and they seemed to come with more severity each time. Troubles came in all forms from severe financial distress, questions of infidelity, to the worsening of my wife's health, a friend's death and the death of my own Dad three weeks later. And then there were times that when I thought I had it all figured out I would slip up and my anger would rage. And then there would be times when we shared as a family some precious moments of love and growth. In these times God would allow them to surface so we could help someone else. I truly believe that there is nothing that we go through that God will not use to help someone if we would just submit to His calling He placed in our hearts. Still today troubles arise we handle them better and with more wisdom.

And this brings us abruptly to my daughter's question. This question came while we were waiting for the surgeon to come and speak to us. I had corrected Heather sternly (stress getting the best of me I'm sure) about something she did. Heather turned to her mother and asked, "Why is Daddy so mean?" my eyebrows now raised waiting on her Moms answer knowing she could answer it many ways, especially after the four hour drive we just shared. My wife answered so sweetly, "Because he loves you!" And this was followed by a reply from my precious five year old that would put everything in perspective for me. She then followed up with, "That makes no sense!" And my wife, my daughters and I shared a laugh and a sense of peace came upon that room as we waited. More importantly that question sparked this story and has carried me through memories and trials some that could be the darkest I may face. She asked what so many of us ask daily and what I have been asking all this time. It has never made any sense until He had my daughter ask what I have been asking. And as it is written in **Proverbs 13:24, "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him."**

I think whether or not we are Christians we struggle with why things happen. I think we may ask where is God when in return we should be asking where were you? I don't know if things would have happened differently if I was still living the former life, I do know that I couldn't have made to this point without having Christ in my life. If He didn't correct me the way He

chose I may have never truly listened or learned what He was trying to teach me. I know now that even though it makes no sense at all to me, God must correct me and that if He decides to spare the rod I may not truly respect His Divine love and compassion He has for me and you.

So today if you are facing troubles as a Christian or you never made that choice, please reflect back on what little I shared of my family's journey and ask Christ into your heart and allow Him to still your troubled waters and lighten the burdens. AMEN!

"Spare the Road" was written 31 December 2009