

Dominique: My faith has never been a complicated thing. Brought up in a Christian home I simply believed all I was taught. The stories and teachings in the Bible made sense from creation to Jesus' birth, death and resurrection.

I was only ten when, at a youth houseparty, I realised that just believing it in my head was not enough. If it was true, I needed to make a conscious decision to live it in my everyday life. I slipped out of my dormitory, knelt down in the meeting room and prayed a prayer committing my whole life to God. I was quite surprised – I started to cry! I realised that God the Holy Spirit was present with this little ten year old. He had responded to my commitment by wrapping me in his love.

I'm so grateful that in my teens I was encouraged and taught by some excited and passionate youth workers who nurtured my fledgling faith.

At the end of school I took a gap year in Kenya where I was sent to work for a local church and teach in a primary school. Jennie was my wonderful mission partner and we encouraged each other in prayer and bible study together.

In Africa, away from home, church and school I sensed God was teaching me: 'Here is where you learn to live out your faith, free from the influences of others.'

Everything was going well. I returned to England and started to train as a PE teacher at University in Eastbourne. The first one and a half years were great. I loved going and dancing the night away at the Atlantis. Next day, in my sports kit, I would pursue all the PE games and activities I could. I met the man I later married, but one month after we got engaged my whole life was turned around.

In a space of three days I was confined to my bed. I couldn't move for two months. Then, over the next two years, I could only move around in a wheelchair. I was diagnosed with ME (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome). I am still affected by the condition to this day.

I have experienced significant steps of healing as people have prayed for me. Having my two children was a great challenge with ups and downs, but God has helped us through.

People ask me ‘How can I be so ‘smiley’ and look so normal with my condition?’ Here are some of the things I’ve learned:

- When times are bad it’s OK to shout at God.
- His grace helps me focus on the positives not the negatives. I’m always so blessed by what I CAN do.
- I’ve learned to seek his grace and to ask for his help for each day as it comes.

In the last year, I have taken three big steps of faith by accepting responsibilities in the church, including being part a new Leadership Team.

Each time my initial reaction was ‘No, I’m not strong enough to do that; I am not in the right position to be able to’. But each time I felt God’s prompting to say ‘yes’ so I have obeyed and am walking each day in faith that he will give me the strength I need in the place he called me to be. A great fruit of this is that my love for people has grown so much more.

My first big faith step was when I was ten and thirty years later I’m still taking them. I still have a simple, almost child-like faith, but I also have a depth of understanding and knowledge with a deep relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that means my faith is alive, growing and very much a part of me.

God has not only blessed me in the midst of my struggles but I am finding that more and more he is using me to bless the lives of others in the midst of their struggles too. Without my experiences I wouldn’t be able to empathise, understand and meet people where they are and for that I am grateful as strange as that may sound. “God works for good in all situations for those that love him.” (Romans 8:28 – a verse in the Bible.)