

Profiles in Faith

*"Therefore I urge you, imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:16).
"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).*

Would you, like the apostle Paul, be able to make this incredible statement?

Christ is our ultimate example, but He knows we are watching each other. Who do you know that is an example of faith? Who can you credit with helping you stay true to the Lord?

Of course, the Bible is full of profiles of faith. Their lives, because God decided to include them in His holy word, give great examples of how to live for God regardless of your circumstances.

Some of my favorites are:

Job who refused to sin against God with his words
Joseph, son of Jacob, who trusted God to make everything right
Nehemiah, who prayed before he attempted any task for God, was bold enough to ask God to
remember his good deeds
Ruth who dared to leave her homeland to serve the one true God
Joseph, husband of Mary, who was humbly obedient to God's every command
Andrew, brother of Peter, who was content to stay in the background and lead others to Jesus

I have been privileged to travel all over the world with my husband in an international ministry. Below are just a few of the many examples of people who are living today and staying true to God. Some of them live in places where Christians are persecuted in one form or another. Others live where their Christian witness is ignored or considered irrelevant.

I am only aware of part of their story. Here they are unnamed for privacy and security reasons, but God knows their names and their commitment to Him. The sacrifices these friends have endured and are enduring for the cause of Christ is a testimony of His grace and provision. I believe He has reserved rich rewards for each of them.

An American couple from Charleston, South Carolina

Not a part of any mission organization, this couple served an international church in Sofia, Bulgaria. He was a businessman who agreed to hold a spot for a permanent pastor in that church. She was a southern lady with the gift of hospitality. The short interim turned into many years. Although their family tried to make them shorten their stay, they remained committed to serving the people in that church amidst the great challenges of that culture. It was not a time of vacation and pleasure. It was a time of commitment to the Lord and His church.

An Australian couple called to minister in Europe

God first sent this couple to Germany to share the gospel. Living in a bus and using it to show the "Jesus" film, God then asked them to cross the border into Poland. Learning Polish as they lived among the people, they stayed for many years refurbishing an abandoned palace serving the locals - most of them incredibly poverty stricken and many of them driven to alcoholism. In a country

where their denomination was often considered a "cult", this family (they raised five children in Poland) became so respected that the local authorities asked for their assistance. Even after they returned home to Australia, this ministry in Poland continues to flourish.

An adorable couple living in France

This couple (one French one British) continues to witness through written word and spoken word regardless of opposition or ridicule. Each of them had incredible stories from their experiences in WWII. A Gideon in his 90s, he continues to hand out Bibles when and where he can. The French bureaucracy and laws concerning any Bible distribution are extremely challenging, but it does not deter his commitment to getting the word of God in the hands of students and anyone else he can.

A dear friend, born in Indonesia, who moved to the Netherlands as a child

While visiting her sister in the U.S. as an adult, she was converted to Christianity. Shortly thereafter she felt the call of God to leave a lucrative job in the Netherlands to witness to people on the streets. Called to singleness, she gets her daily instructions from the Lord and shares His love with practically everyone she comes in contact with. She will often tell someone, "See how much God loves you. He sent me to tell you about Him." She prayed her parents into the Kingdom of God - both of them accepting Jesus shortly before He took them home.

A young Middle Eastern man and his wife who have a special ministry in the Ukraine

Although they have endured many hardships as Christians in the Ukraine, if this couple were to return to their home country, they would be killed because they are Christians. They have led many Muslims to Christ through personal witness and the internet.

Scores of Filipino men and women

Many leave their country to obtain work in order to send money back to their families in the Philippines. These sacrifice much as they often leave spouse and children behind. In the international churches, they are always the hardest workers - doing the manual labor with joy.

Servants of God, He knows every heart and circumstances. Their testimonies could be multiplied many times over. Each biblical and living example was able to bring glory to God because they did not and are not allowing circumstances, opposition, illness or Satan's tactics of diversion to take their focus off God. His will, His promises, His provisions and His guidance were more than enough to get them through their daily trials.

As I go to minister overseas, I always leave inspired - by these and many more like them. Their examples are worth imitating.

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:11-12 NKJV).