

RECOUNTING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

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In a Biology 101 lab my freshmen year in college, I was forced to count the number of rings on the cross-section of a tree trunk. At the time, the exercise seemed both pointless and painful; however, every new year, I find myself thinking of those ringed patterns.

Dendrochronologists scientifically analyze the rings and growth patterns of tree. You would be surprised how much there is to learn from a series of ring patterns. In certain types of wood, these scientists are even able to date to the exact calendar year. In a sense, stumps of trees become a record of their lives, the years of near famine, the seasons of abundance, the effects of sickness. Hidden in these patterns, a tale of the tree emerges.

Gradual, almost imperceptible growth is both a physical and spiritual reality. We planted an orange tree in our garden two years ago. I swear that little sapling hasn't grown an inch, despite my doting care and maintenance of it. Yet, I know that one day, the tree's rings will tell a different story, will prove that it was indeed growing, millimeter by millimeter, month by month.

The growth patterns of the stump pieces always catch my eye. Varying degrees of thick rings, evidence of abundance and fullness and plenty, are broken up with an occasional thin ring, evidence of drought, sickness, failure to thrive. Whether thin or thick, the rings provide evidence of growth and survival, a literal record of faithfulness.



In the same way, our lives are living records of God's faithfulness. Looking back over the years, we are able to recount God's sustaining grace to us through a myriad of different seasons. Tree ring by tree ring, He has sustained us. Running our hearts and minds over the growth patterns of our lives so far enables us to grow in hope for the future.

The Psalms are replete with God's people running their fingers over the various records of His faithfulness to them in order to garner hope for the future.

I have been young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread...The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. Psalm 37: 25 and 39.

I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself. Psalm 89:1-2.

Ring by ring, He is creating a record of faithfulness in your life and in my life. Through the seasons of plenty and health, through the seasons of sickness and sadness, He will prove Himself faithful. It is in His nature. He cannot change.