
April 6, 2022

Faith

It was a sunny, quiet, late autumn Saturday. The young man asked her to accompany him, and his dog, to go for a walk in the woods. She accepted. He announced to her family that he wanted to continue the training of his small-game dog, as if the young couple needed a practical reason to spend time together.

Once in the woods the young dog was eager to be off leash. With its nose to the ground, it sniffed along the trail stopping at every hole and crevice it found. The young man would call the dog back when it ventured too far and the dog would return to be rewarded with a treat. Occasionally the dog went out of sight so the man blew a high pitch whistle inaudible to humans, but the dog would return.

It was a glorious day, likely one of the last sunny days of autumn before winter set in. As the young couple walked through the woods, they somewhat resembled bumper cars at a carnival, first bumping into each other in laughter. Other times colliding and sticking against each other held by an invisible force, then completely separate, circling around destined to collide again. They were fiercely independent individuals that wanted to be together.

The conversations during their walk were heavy topics for a young couple. The effects of the Great Depression were subsiding only to be supplanted by the prospect of impending war. She said that two of her brothers had enlisted and were now waiting to be stationed. She worried about them, and she worried how the loss of their income would affect her parent's home and her siblings. However, at this moment in the woods, she was happy. She stopped by a large oak tree on the trail, looked up toward the sun with her eyes closed. The warm rays caressed her face and nourished her body to its core. Her outward glow reflected her inner peace. When she turned away the cold late autumn air foreshadowed the dark winter days ahead.

The young couple's hopes and dreams resembled those of many young people, even though current events looked bleak. The young man was fortunate to have had employment throughout the depression as a bank teller. His income was modest, but he felt fortunate compared to many others. He also had recently enlisted. The thought of him going overseas was devastating for the couple. That is partly why they had eloped, however, more importantly they wanted to show their commitment to each other. They would tell their families in due time.

The setting sun was turning the air much colder. They needed to head back. He called for his dog, but it didn't come. He blew the whistle with no success. She joined in frantically calling. Darkness was coming quickly. They had to leave the woods while the trail was still visible. They were devastated to leave, but they had faith.

They had faith in each other, faith in the bond that pulled them together, faith in their country and its leadership, faith that the Higher Power would guide them through the challenges of life, and faith in the dog's abilities and that the dog wanted to be part of their family. With those thoughts, he took off his coat and placed it between two root buttresses at the base of a large oak tree. The dark-grey twilight made silhouettes of all objects along the trail as they reluctantly left the woods. The car ride home was somber as she contemplated how quickly events could change.

When they parted on her porch, they embraced and agreed to meet early the next day.

It was a restless night for both of them. Once again, the young man borrowed his father's Model A, and bought another \$1.50 of gasoline. She was waiting on her porch. They were quiet during the drive back to the woods, which seemed to take forever. They briskly walked the meandering trail to the large oak tree. Their hearts were racing as they circled around the tree. Then they saw his coat at the base, and upon it laid a wide-eyed dog looking up with its tail thumping against a root buttress.

Sincerely,

Tom Challen

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

