

He First Loved Us

My little sister had a close friend that went missing when we were children. It was a difficult situation because this girl was a young teenager who had struggles, and at times had threatened to run away. Then one day she just vanished without any notice to anyone. No phone call or letter, she just disappeared and left her family wondering if she was okay. From that day forward her bedroom was empty, her seat at the kitchen table was barren, and her parents could not share their love with her anymore. To this day no one knows where she is and I am sure her family is still hoping to be reunited with her one day.

All these many years later I am now a parent of two beautiful children. Each day I love to pour into them and share experiences with them. When they were tiny and learning to crawl and then to walk, we were there cheering them on. Many people have told me to enjoy it when they are young because they grow up fast. They were right! I took the wisdom from my mom who told me to pour into them and not to let busyness rob me of my time with my children.

Now as they have gotten older, when they have a difficult time with something I love being able to share my advice to help them figure things out. I can't express just how much of my heart revolves around my children and my family. I know that I will think about my children every single day for the rest of my life. I will miss the young years as they grow independent and start their own lives, but I will enjoy the pleasure of being a part of their future and all the wonderful things that God has planned for them.

I learned a lot from my momma about love and one of the most important things she taught me was that she would never change when it came to loving her children. I could fail a thousand times and the whole world could hate me, but I have always known that I can go home. My mom will always have a home for me and her children. She will always welcome me to my old bedroom, to her roast beef, mash potatoes and gravy (my favorite) and lots of love. As I also have become like my momma, I will always love my children. They will know that as long as they live, their father and mother love them unconditionally. If one of my children chose to run away from home, I assure you that I would never give up hope in finding them. I would keep their room ready for them to come home and a place at the table would always be prepared because it will always belong to them. I would never give up faith in them returning to the Lord. The love of a father and a mother provides a safe place for their children to be home.

There is a lot of preaching going on right now around the world about how far God's love is. Some will preach that if you have a bad thought in your mind then you have sinned in such a way that you have lost your relationship with God and now you must repent and ask for it back. Some preach that you are now free to stop worrying about sinning and just enjoy God's love. I thought I would write this letter to help explain how some of this works because it really shouldn't be this complicated or confusing.

Always remember that we love God because He first loved us. This is important because when we were separated from God and in the worst condition possible, God still loved us. Long before we ever prayed or reached out to Him, He still loved us. Before we ever thought about holiness and obedience to Him, He still loved us. God's ability to love us is not based on our life, it's based on Him. Look at a verse from 1 John 4:10 which says, *"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

It is essential for you to always understand that God's love towards you is not sent back from your love to Him. It is not a reflection of your goodness, admiration, faithfulness, holiness or serving towards Him. His love comes to you because Jesus took your place in sin. It was on the cross that God turned away from Jesus, so that He could never turn away from you. There is nothing you can possibly do to make God love you more than He already does. Also, it is impossible for you to make Him love you less than He already does. His love for you is not based on you. It is based on what Jesus did for you! In the New Testament, when someone lost their salvation it was because they walked away from God and not because He rejected them.

This is very important when it comes to understanding how God acts towards you as a Father. Here is what it says in Isaiah 49:15-16. *"Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me."* I have found that most of the body of Christ lives in fear when it comes to God. It is a type of torment that a child faces when they are never good enough to receive their parents love. God's love for you is not based on your performance. You will always be loved by Him. You can never, ever, not in a billion years chase God away from you. He loves you because of what Jesus has done for you and that means that He is not going anywhere. Even when you fail miserably, He will always be there.

Can you recall the story of the Prodigal son? He rejected his father's lifestyle and took his inheritance and squandered it away on himself. He found himself with nothing, working with the pigs and starving for food. When he was willing to eat the pig's slop was when he thought that he could at least work for his father as a servant. He thought this because he felt that he had lost his standing as a child of his father. *"I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"*

The son was surprised at the Father's reception because he expected to be rejected, *"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry."* Luke 15 18-24

Your Heavenly Father will never abandon you nor turn away from you. He will always have a place at His table for you and your room ready. The choice to be close with God is not His. It is yours. You can have as much of Him as you want. Every struggle, sin or pride that can cause us to walk away from God can be overcome as long as you don't give up. Every day of your life, God will always welcome you into His arms.

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