

“COMING OUT OF HIDING AND INTO THE ARMS OF AN OUTRAGEOUS LOVER”

TRUSTING IN THE FATHER’S LOVE

Two common trust issues that people share with us in counseling are, “I know in my head that God loves me, but I don’t know it in my heart,” and “I can believe it for others but not for me.” The word **trust** goes deeper than just “believing” in His love for me. To actually trust in someone is to be able to rely on the integrity, strength, ability and surety of that person. There is a confidence in and a security that this trust will prove to be valid and that the person will not fail you and shatter this trust. Although the word “believe” in Scripture can be synonymous with “trust,” there are times when trusting indeed goes far beyond mere believing. A classic example of this is in James 2:19, where James states, “*You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.*” Yes, the demons “believe” regarding God, but of course they do not put their trust in Him.

REASONS FOR HIDING AND NOT TRUSTING

It all boils down to this—If I am unable to fully trust in another’s love for me, I will withhold a part of myself from that person. I will hide a part of my heart for fear of being hurt. We frequently see this in marriages where there has been accumulated hurt in the relationship. One or both parties begins to withdraw and withhold . . . or hide parts of themselves from the other, which often leads to more serious issues down the road. But why hide from God? Why do we not easily run into His arms . . . His heart? We have been taught and we know the truth about His love from His Word and from the life of Jesus, who reveals the nature of the Father (Jn. 14:9). Yet we often respond as though He is not really one to be trusted . . . fully trusted with all we have. Trust is one of the first building blocks of life. It is foundational in our earliest years of childhood and our life is built on that trust—whether weak or strong. For example, if I could never fully trust that my earthly father truly loved me and thus rest in and give myself over to that love as a child, I will learn to “hide” parts of myself and it will be very difficult to “trust in love” (human or Divine) as an adult. I may “believe” that I am loved by God, but my behaviors do not support that I really “trust” that I am loved. For example, I may struggle with feeling insecure and inadequate, fearful and anxious, angry or depressed. I may find myself needing to perform to perfection or I might feel the need to be a “peacekeeper” or a “people pleaser.”

GOD AS AN OUTRAGEOUS LOVER

We have two favorite Scriptures that reveal the “outrageousness” of God’s love. The first is the story of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-31). Brennan Manning, in his classic book, “The Ragamuffin Gospel,” says it this way:

The son had his speech carefully rehearsed. It was an elegant, polished statement of sorrow. But the old man didn’t let him finish. The son had barely arrived on the scene when suddenly, a fine new robe was thrown over his shoulders. He hears music, the fatted calf is being carried into the parlor, and he didn’t even have a chance to say to his father, “I’m sorry.”

Manning continues . . .

God wants us back even more than we could possibly want to be back. We don't have to go into great detail about our sorrow. All we have to do, the parable says, is appear on the scene, and before we get a chance to run away again, the Father grabs us and pulls us into the banquet so we can't get away.

The second example of His "outrageous love" is the story of the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8:1-11). The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought this woman to Jesus with the intention to stone her, as the law demands (and also to trap Jesus as one who would not uphold God's law). In verses 6 to 11, we read the following:

"But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning Him, he straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'"

Brennan Manning again profoundly addresses Jesus' response:

Now, get the picture. Jesus didn't ask her if she was sorry. He didn't demand a firm purpose of amendment. He didn't seem too concerned that she might dash back into the arms of her lover. She just stood there and Jesus gave her absolution before she asked for it. The nature of God's love for us is outrageous. Why doesn't this God of ours display some taste and discretion in dealing with us? Why doesn't He show more restraint? To be blunt about it, couldn't God arrange to have a little more dignity? Wow!

THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH WE HIDE . . . AND THE WAY OUT

This is the God . . . the Father that invites us into His heart and asks us to **trust in His love.**" But to do this we must ask Him for the grace to "come out of hiding." It might not necessarily be hiding from some big sin in our lives—like the two stories here—but it may be more subtle hiding. Maybe it is hiding behind busyness or work or serving in ministry. Maybe it is hiding behind fear, shame, anger, self-sufficiency or control. Maybe it is hiding behind bitterness or resentment in response to past hurts. Whatever the case, we were created to live from the place of experiencing His outrageous love.

PRAYER

Please join us in this prayer . . . *Father, I want to trust in Your love for me. I want this to be experiential rather than mental. I believe that there may be parts of my heart that, from an early age, were not able to trust. I know that it is from this place that, when healed and restored, I will be able to truly "let go" and give you everything . . . all of me. Lord, please continue to work in that deep place and please help me to keep "pulling back the covers" and allowing you to love me. It is the cry of my heart to be loved like that. Please keep taking me deeper into your heart. Let me see your heart for me, rather than only to intellectually know it. I am grateful for*

all of the times that you have done this with me, but I am aware that there is still work there to be done. I may always need you to reveal more of this to me. I thank You in advance for opening these "doors to my heart" and I receive your grace to choose Your way instead of hiding. I believe, Lord. Help my unbelief. I pray this in the name of Your Son, Jesus, Amen.

From the Father's Heart,

Jerry and Denise Basel