

"EMBRACING THE 'LOVE' OF THE FATHER"

A few years ago I was preparing to share on God the Father's love for us and our need to embrace that love, and I sensed the Father say to me that ***we—you and me as His precious creation—are the Father's "love."*** As I pondered this thought it brought up various issues to consider, and I would like to take some time here to share some of these things with you. I believe they are very important to all of us if we are to live in a greater "experiential understanding" of His love and fulfill the destiny that He has for us.

THE LOVE OF THE FATHER—IT STARTS WITH JESUS

Before we can proceed we must be clear on one thing—to embrace the Father's love we must embrace His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus was and is and will always be "the Love of His Father" (John 5:20). Yet the love of the Father went beyond His own love for His Son and reached down to you and me. I like the way the Amplified version puts it . . . "For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life" (John 3:16). Again, the Apostle John writes of this love of God . . . "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 9-10 NIV).

THE PURSUING LOVE OF THE FATHER INVITES A RESPONSE

Jesus, in His last discourse before His suffering and death, said that the love that the Father has for Him is the same as the love the Father has for us (John 17:23). If God is love and the heart of Father God (and Jesus) is full of love for you and me, then why are so many of us not changed more? Why are we lacking in such passion for Him? When you know someone is passionate about you and is pursuing you, it affects you! Yet, the Father is passionate about us and pursues us, but we often lack a fervent response to this pursuit. There are many potential reasons for this lack of heart-felt response to this love, but I believe that one reason can be our own lack of ability to embrace our self as "His love."

JESUS (AND THE FATHER) WELCOME AND EMBRACE THE CHILDREN

We know that the heart of Jesus reflects the heart of Father God. He stated this very clearly when he addressed Philip and said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). We also know that during Jesus' ministry he had a very special place reserved in His heart for children. On one occasion, in response to His disciples' concerns about who would be the greatest among them, "He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the One who sent me.'" (Mark 9:36-37 NIV). On another occasion He strongly clarifies His position on children, when He says, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14 NIV). Though these Scriptures refer to actual

children in His presence, He makes it clear that we all must enter the Kingdom as a child (with child-like faith, humility, trust, dependence) (Mark 10:15). It is also in the heart of the Father to take in and embrace the children. We see this in the Scripture already referenced above, and He did it on other occasions as well (See Mark 10:16).

DO YOU EMBRACE THE "LOVE" OF THE FATHER?

There is a "child" within each of us, whether you refer to it as a part of your spirit that God breathed into you at conception, a part of your heart, or by some other metaphor. The Father loves every part of us and invites us to do the same. Do you welcome or embrace every part of yourself and thus bring "all of you" to the Father? Or do you reject a part of yourself and thus prevent a part of yourself from receiving the fullness of the Good News and life that is promised by the Father? There are many things that can cause us to turn away and not embrace the child within. Some of these include such areas as childhood hurts, abuse, a lack of affirmation, acceptance and nurture, disappointments, betrayals, rejection and physical or emotional abandonment. Many times these issues lead to a loss of hope, a "numbing out" and the shutting down of a part of ourselves.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION AND A TIME OF PERSONAL REVELATION

One reason that I am writing this at this time is that I recently became aware that this issue is still not resolved within me. During a recent House Church gathering, a friend asked all of us to respond to the question, "What one thing do you like about yourself?" Surprisingly I found myself "stumped" and unable to respond. Although I did answer with some "acceptable response," it became evident to me that an area I thought I dealt with in the past—contempt against a part of the child within—was not finished! I will continue to allow the Father to do a deeper work to heal those parts that I still struggle to embrace, because I know that we cannot hate what the Father loves—and He indeed loves you and me! I invite you to ask yourself the same question I was asked, and to allow the Holy Spirit to shine His light into every part of you. Do you freely embrace all of you as the Father does, or are there any parts or any ages which you reject and turn away from (or simply are apathetic about). If you're concerned that you might become too "self-focused" by looking at yourself in this way, lay that down for now. Breaking through areas of self-contempt and thus opening the door to experiencing His love will most likely cause you to love the Father and others in ways that exceed anything you could imagine!

From the Father's Heart,

Jerry Basel