

“SEEING MORE OF THE FATHER’S HEART . . . MY PUPPY EXPERIENCE”

Personal Note: During a four-year period leading up to us entering full-time ministry many years ago, the Lord used various experiences to show me His heart for healing His people. There is, however, one experience that stands out, which I refer to as my "puppy experience." It occurred shortly after I had started my own personal counseling in 1989.

MOVING FROM FEARFUL TO FEARLESS

It was a very hot Saturday morning where we lived south of Houston, and I was going out to our garage to get prepared to cut the grass. Our garage was separate from our house, and I had gone out and opened the door a few minutes earlier. When I entered the garage at this time, I heard a whimpering coming from under one of our cars. As I crouched down to look, I saw a very small dog that was way up towards the front of the car. He was terrified, shaking very visibly and even urinating from his extreme fear. I tried to draw closer to him, but he recoiled even more and wouldn't let me come near him. I needed to move the car out of the garage, but I didn't want to take a chance at hurting him. Actually, I was more concerned about alleviating some of his fear. I decided to go and get a small dish and fill it with cold water and place it near him. He again wouldn't let me get very close with the water, so I placed it as near to him as I could and I began to talk quietly to him, encouraging him with the tone of my voice that he was in a safe place—that he didn't have to be afraid any longer. After about 20 minutes of this quiet encouragement, he got up enough nerve to come to the dish and take a drink. His fear appeared to subside and he gradually came out from under the car and began to allow me to pet him. A few minutes later he began to follow me up and down the sidewalk between our garage and house, sticking very close to my feet. He then started to jump around, still at my feet, like a totally different dog from what I had seen 30 minutes earlier. I was amazed. But what happened next was even more amazing to me. A very large dog walked into our yard and this rejuvenated little pup (a quarter the size of the intruder) proceeded to chase him away from me and out of our yard. Within a 30 minute period, this little dog went from paralyzed fear to warrior and protector status—all from a few comforting words and a cup of cold water.

THE FATHER WANTS US TO COME OUT OF HIDING AND TO HIM

After he chased the other dog away, I stopped and just started to cry because I sensed the power of God on me and His Spirit telling me that what I had just witnessed was analogous to the Father's love for His children. I was crying because I realized in a vivid way the Father's love for me. I realized that in many ways I was that little dog—fearful to come out of hiding. I was afraid of how my Heavenly Father would view me if He saw all of me—especially my sin and my shame. Could I trust Him? My mind knew of His love and goodness through the Scriptures I had read, but the revelation was not imprinted within my heart. To come out of hiding and into the light of His presence required a great risk on my part—risking being hurt, or worse yet for me—risking that the Father God would not approve of me; that I might not be acceptable to Him. I saw through this "puppy experience" that the Father not only wants us to come out of hiding, but He is "wooing" us to Himself. He longs for

relationship with us. The problem is that the path to coming to a deeper, loving relationship with Him requires a willingness to allow Him to reveal our hearts—which is generally a painful process.

WHY DO WE HIDE RATHER THAN RUN TO HIM?

Why do we so often hide in fear rather than come out and run to the Father? There are many reasons, and most stem from early and sometimes repeated wounding to our spirits from significant people in our lives. Interestingly, after my encounter with the little dog, I spoke to a neighbor about him. He said that earlier that morning he saw that same dog aggressively being beaten with a broom by its owner a couple houses down from ours. That made the picture even more complete for me. Trust was shattered—a problem we see so often in our counseling. When we do not trust, we develop alternative ways of relating to each other and especially to the Father. We withhold a portion of our hearts and we are unable to receive and give fully—the way God intended.

THE PROCESS FOR CHANGE . . . SEEING MORE OF HIS TRUE NATURE

What must happen for this trust in the Father to be restored such that we can have a fuller relationship with Him? We must experience His love, which often involves placing ourselves in a position to receive from Him. It may require “wrestling” with Him for a season. It occurs when we come to that place where we see “who we are” in the light of “who He is” (like Isaiah in the presence of God in Isa. 6:5). It always involves extending and receiving forgiveness. As we have counseled hundreds of people since starting this ministry, we have again and again seen manifestations of the Father’s love. It continues to work something into our own hearts as we see this on a regular basis. In particular; we have seen that: 1) the Father is truly an encourager and is not judgmental; 2) He is faithful when we call upon Him; 3) He desires His people to be free from sin and demonic bondage; 4) He desires a soft, vulnerable and teachable heart; 5) He desires us to forgive and be reconciled to one another and to Him; and 6) He wants us to believe that His love for us is real, and that He will guide us in the healing process, if we trust Him to do so.

PRAYER

Please pray with me . . . Father, I so need to see more of Your heart for me and for others. Although I know that You are good and that You are for me, I need that truth to go deeper into my heart and transform me. You say in Your Word that we are to love You with everything in us and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. But You also say in Your Word that we love You because You first loved us. Father, bring that reality of being Your “first love” deep into my heart. I invite You to reveal and to heal every place in my heart that opposes or resists Your love. I choose to trust You and believe that You see me, know me, desire me, and want the very best for me. Please let the glory of Your love flow through me—back to You and to others. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

From the Father's Heart,

Jerry Basel