

LOVE, Like You Never Knew It
Chapter 3: A Divine Download of Love

Take it away. I don't want to see it again!

The best expression of the spirit of sonship happened to me in a meeting in northern California recently. It was a singing and worship time. We were singing great songs to God, "Majesty, Worship His Majesty". You know, all the stuff the angels are saying and singing around the throne of God. It's all great stuff, right? God is worthy of all that adoration, isn't He? Is God not worthy of it? He's the king of all. He's worthy of all praise and glory and honor. But what does God want?

We have this idea of God. This gigantic ego sits on this throne and says, "Tell me! Tell me! Tell me how great I am." My daughter is the one whose picture I showed you. She's a little bit deceived about my parenthood. Every Father's day and birthday I get cards from her that say, "Dad, you are the best Dad in the world." I don't know why she's so deceived, but I'm enjoying it. And I'm glad she thinks that of my life. But let me tell you something. If my daughter came over to spend the day at my house, do I want her sitting around all day just saying, "Oh Dad, you're the best. You're great. You're awesome." I really wouldn't. That's nice to hear once in a while. I'm sure God enjoys hearing it. But what Father wants most from us is great affection.

So, we're singing this majesty song and I'm just feeling restless in my heart. Like there's something God wants to teach me here and I don't know what it is. And as I was just thinking about it

and kind of disconnected from the song for a moment, I'm just saying to God, "What is it You are stirring in my heart? I notice sitting next to me is a man named Jim. I'd met him a few days earlier. In Jim's arms is a little four year old girl named Narissa. When I say in his arms, I mean cradled in his arms like an infant, this little girl. Narissa, without an intervention of God will never walk. She'll never talk. She was born with more congenital birth defects than I could begin to describe to you. At four years of age, her method of communicating is about like sputtering, and that's it. And it's not likely to be more than that unless God intervenes with some kind of healing, which Jim and Jane pray for. They do.

During the middle of this worship song where everyone else is singing majesty, I look over at Jim and Narissa and she's lying in her Dad's arms sputtering loudly. And Jim's responding with the same noises. And they're both laughing and smiling. When I saw that, what captured me in that moment is "that's what my Father wants. That's what Father wants, the delight of children." And at her place of brokenness, I could easily see that Narissa is broken physically in too many ways to count. But, her brokenness doesn't make her less endearing to the father. If anything, it makes her more endearing.

We're broken too and we all know it. We're all infected by sin and evil thoughts and guilt and shame. We feel like, "Boy, I could never earn father's affection like that." We're broken too. But how many expectations do we put an infant like my granddaughter Amy. She can't feed herself. She can't dress herself. We don't sit around and ask her, "Okay, Amy, tell us about your day." Not yet. The

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expectations of that child are almost nothing. She can't tell us when it's hot and take her stupid sweater off. She can't tell us when she's cold and get me a blanket. She's totally dependent upon us to care for her. That's the age Paul chooses to talk about our sonship, our daughter-ship with the Father. That's where He just gets to love us. And yes, God knows you're broken. It's no big surprise to him. But he knows that it's that love and affection that will transform our brokenness. **It's our self-preferring nature that makes us broken.** And once we know how deeply Father loves us and therefore we don't have to remain in the orbit of our own 'self preference,' we will find sin falling off. But it's not our brokenness that makes us less endearing to the Father. If anything, it's our brokenness makes us even more endearing. Even if all we can do spiritually is spit and sputter, God will be right in there with you. He invites you to let that love transform you.

The Rest of the Story

Later that day I sat down to lunch at a conference. I sat down next to Jim and his wife. I said, "Jim, let me tell you what happened today when I was in our praise time and what I saw between you and Narissa and how deeply it touched my life. I told him the story. And when I finished the story, he looked at me and he said, "Do you know Narissa is not mine by birth?" I said, "What?!" He's got three perfectly healthy children, quite a bit older than Narissa. I said, "What do you mean, she's not your daughter by birth?" Jim told me his story. My wife Jane is an obstetrics nurse up in the Sacramento area.

Narissa was born to a crack addicted mother who when she saw the child and how broken and deformed it was, said this, "I don't want to ever see it again. Take it away from me." Jane was in the room when it happened. She just felt like she wanted to take this baby home and give it a home. So she called me and asked, "Jim, there's a baby that's been born down here. The mother doesn't want. I think we should adopt her. Could we do it?" I said, "Yeah, let's do it. And Jane, because she's a brilliant woman, said, "No, no, no, no, no. You need to come down here and see this. This is not a normal child. This will take everything we have to raise this child. Will you come down here and see it?" I said, "I will."

So, I went down to the hospital. I went into the nursery. As I was looking at the child, they are explaining to me everything that is wrong with her and every challenge she will have, trying to grow up with all these things wrong with her. And at the end of it, I was standing there with Jane and she said, "What do you think honey?" And I replied, "I don't think I can do this. This is a lifetime choice. She will always be this way. And I just can't. We have three perfectly healthy children. It'll take something away from them. There's just no way I can do this. And Jane, because she's a brilliant woman, said, "Then God will have someone else for her. And I left the nursery. I got about 30 feet down the hallway when suddenly God dumped enough love in my heart to contain Narissa. I knew that I could love her all the days of her life. And I just, I turned around, walked back to Jane and I said to her, "I **can** do it. Let's take her." And when I watched Jim and Jane love her, and when I watched those older brothers and sisters love

her, I knew that family was not losing anything. That family has truly gained by taking Narissa into the family. This is something incredibly precious. Narissa, doesn't take away from the life of that family. She nurtures the life of that family. And they are pouring love into her.

This is the spirit of adoption, brothers and sisters. God chose you in Christ before the foundation of the world. God saw you at your most broken moment. God saw you when you were broken and hurting and self-focused and living in rebellion. God saw you and He loved you and He invites you into be his child He wants you to let that Father love envelope you until that Father love transforms you. Does that make sense? This is something we need to experience. Not just sing about. Not just talk about; not just hear about; not just take notes about. Jesus, in the new covenant and by the cross, revealed the very way that God wanted to relate to us. No longer master to slaves, as in the old covenant, doing what we do because fear and guilt consume us and we do it so that we don't feel guilty or ashamed or afraid. The reason why the world doesn't know this love of God and why this atheist can sit on a plane next to me and say, "I've never seen it done," is because he's never had a Christian do anything for him that did not have some hidden agenda in it. Maybe it was: get saved, come to my church, do this, don't do that. It wasn't that you just loved me as a person. You loved me for a reason.

God never loved you for a reason. God loves you with a deeply passionate affection. Love is an emotion, and the highest one at that. God takes great pleasure in you. He knows that if you and I can

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embrace that reality, that affection will transform us. And even those of you, like me, that don't even like people, will somehow find yourself loving people. It is my greatest joy to walk on an airplane flight now or to walk across the street in my neighborhood to share this Father's love. We just moved three months ago. We have a whole bunch of neighbors. We don't know. We're not going to get to know them so we can convert them to the Gospel. We're going to get to know them because they're people whom God cares about. And in the course of a real relationship with them, something incredible might happen. I no longer go to Home Depot screaming in anger at the stupid manager that doesn't have enough checkout people, so that I have to wait in an hour line that's keeping me from finishing my project. I realize now I have the self checkout. So I have to tell you, I do that a lot. But now and then I'll get in the line just so I can talk to people. And you can tell by starting to talk, that some people don't want to talk to you. You can just say, "Hey, what are you building today?" You don't have to talk to them because your reason would be to serve them. That's not going to serve them. Some people don't want to talk to anybody. But a lot of people say, "I'm building this. What are you doing?" "I'm building this." Next thing you know, we're talking and so many times in that 45 minute, 20 minute wait in line I know that God may have an opportunity to reveal His love. Sometimes they don't go anywhere. Sometimes they do. It's not in my hands, it's in their hands. If we get to something spiritual, it's because they'll bring it up actually. And it's amazing how often they'll bring it up.