

7 Ways to Show the Love of God

I was 14. Swayed by the schoolgirl whose mom was nonexistent; yet paid the mortgage so her daughter wouldn't be homeless.

I longed for acceptance. My charismatic friend seemed to give it, while simultaneously criticizing my church-going parents; telling me I should be free, just like her.

I was ignorant, so I followed.

I ran away that freshman year, to the house of this rule-less girl; the one who sunbathed on her roof, wandered the streets under the moon, whose mother stayed out all night and never made her dinner.

Spinning lower, too young to recognize the world's false freedom, like a prodigal squandering her inheritance; my dad waiting with the light on ... but I never came.

Until one day, the phone rang.

She found me. My friend since birth, living states away. A few years older, like a sister. I respected her because she cared.

I listened while she didn't condemn or judge, didn't quote some Scripture, or give me some churchy, "bad girl" sermon.

All she said was, *"Don't you know that you are loved?"*

Still, sometimes I wonder in our world of megachurches, power preachers, conversion counting, and overseas evangelism; could we be forgetting ... people are more than numbers, individuals need more than bulk formulas for conversion to bring them to the kingdom?

Don't most people just need someone to love them, a friend who will listen, a Savior who never fails them?

Don't people just need to be seen as a soul, a person ... not a number?

Still, in our fast-paced society, vehemently attempting to reach the lost and needy; can't we forget what Jesus teaches ... leave the 99, reach the one? (Matt. 18:12-14).

And I wonder, can't it be easy to jingle our pockets, triumphantly boasting of the nine coins we've accumulated, all the while forgetting about the one, not sought out and missing?

Doesn't Jesus tell us to light a lamp, search the house, carefully look until we find it, then rejoice when it is found; knowing joy abounds in heaven when one sinner enters the kingdom? (Luke 15:8-10).

Who has God put on your heart; that one compromised on Facebook, someone headed in the wrong direction, that person missing church more frequently, the one lost, nobody sees?

What if daily we ...

- Asked for Jesus' eyes to see the lost sheep?
- Stepped out boldly, not just praying, but actually reaching the lost around us with a text, phone call a helping hand, or kind word drawing people closer to Jesus?
- Cared less about what others think of us, leaving the comfort of our homes, reaching the unpopular, unloved, the broken all around us?
- Took the time to slow down, being a Good Samaritan to the one others walk past?
- Lived not for earthly praise, but humbly served with diligence, one hand not seeing the other?

- Truly believed one mattered as much as filling our megachurches?
- People weren't categorized in groupings according to what they looked like or with whom they were affiliated, but each were listened to and heard, people cared for according to their needs?

It's 1:00 AM. I get a call from someone needing to hear "You are loved." I answer the call ... because somebody once saw me.

I live my life determined not to miss the one; pointing others home every chance I get, reminded that 30 years earlier, a friend saw me and never left me in my mess.

And isn't there a world of hurting people all around us crying out for someone to tell them, "Don't you know that you are loved?"

Who is that runaway God has put in your life? The one surfacing in your heart and mind as you read this? The one needing to hear even now as you read this ...

"Don't you know that you are loved?"

*Though born, raised and still living only miles from where she grew up, **Jen Avellaneda's** heart lies in the nations. Jen loves the beautiful tapestry found in the wide diversity of people, different cultures and all nations. Jen and her husband have been married 20 years, and have parented 15 kids and counting; 12 foster, one adopted, and two bios. Her multiracial family reflects her passion for unity, desire for faith without walls, and missional mindset to share both the gospel and the power of redemption to a world desperately needing the hope found in Jesus Christ. Jen and her husband have led in a variety of ministries, including prayer, small groups, children's and women's. Jen advocates for the orphan as a board member for the nonprofit A New Song and loves doing missions work internationally along with her family. You can find Jen writing about faith, while challenging her readers at*

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