

Rediscovering Intimacy

In my June column I told the story of my intense desire to see my son, Luke, right after he was born. I had a stronger yearning for him than I had ever imagined I could have. But the day after his birth I had appointments I could not cancel.

Finally, I went speeding down the road to him, eager to look into his face. En route, an overwhelming realization hit my heart: that God felt about me exactly as I felt about Lukey!

The discovery of God's affectionate desire for me was so emotionally overpowering, I pulled off the road and wept. I believe the church has lost this sense of God's delight in His people, this revelation of His intense desire for us—which is far greater than that of a natural father for his children. We have also lost the revelation of God's majesty.

A.W. Tozer placed his finger squarely on this problem when he wrote: "A existed in the church for some years and is steadily growing worse. I refer to the loss of the concept of majesty from the popular religious mind. The church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshipping men."

There is a great need in this hour for a full recovery of both majesty and intimacy in our relationships with Jesus. The church must come to understand that we worship a majestic God who gets a big grin on His face whenever He looks at us—a God who wants us to run to Him, not away from Him.

I was a pastor for 25 years. During those years I interceded for many individuals who came to me with stories that were sad enough to make anyone weep—stories of molestation, abuse and perversion at the hands of cruel, selfish human beings.

Many of those individuals had never known a single person who showed them real love. But I knew that God's Word offered each one bondage-breaking truth and the joyful hope of being desired and longed for by God Himself. I was able to share that truth and hope with them.

The true knowledge of God's pure, consistent, passionate affections for you and me is far more powerful and life-transforming than any human witness we may or may not have had. It is the Holy Spirit, not human witnesses, who reveals God's affection for us and makes God real to our hearts, and that revelation is available to everyone.

I was once a frustrated Christian who carried a heavy burden of guilt and failure for not measuring up and not enjoying serving others. It was only when I caught a glimpse of the true knowledge of how God really felt about me that the strongholds began to fall in my mind and in my heart.

These words came to mind: "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment" (1 John 4:17-18, NKJV).

I saw that the person who is afraid of God, who fears that God will judge him for his immaturity even though he desires to

follow Jesus, lives in torment. To live in constant fear of being judged is to live in torment—and being in torment is the opposite of being bold and confident in God's love. I had to recognize that God's heart is filled with tenderness for me even though I'm not perfect.

God knows exactly how to reveal Himself to you. And when you come to Him for help, you will not be ignored or rebuked. You will not be ridiculed for your mistakes. He is extraordinarily patient toward you. He cares for you affectionately and watchfully. His love for you will never fail or come to an end.

It's wonderful to have known people who showed us what God is really like. Their examples can help prepare the way for God's work in our lives. But if we have never known even one loving, godly person, we can still be filled with passionate affections for Jesus. God, His Word and the Holy Spirit's work in our lives are sufficient to bring us to this place of personal wholeness and spiritual maturity.