

A Touch From the Father's Hand

One evening when my parents, my husband and I were having dinner at a small family restaurant, I witnessed a scene that became a powerful object lesson. Initially, the atmosphere in the restaurant was warm and friendly, alive with the laughter and conversations of parents and their children.

Suddenly it changed. Conversations ceased as all eyes were directed toward a young child—a very LOUD young child, who was protesting with pitiful sobs as she watched her mother leave the table and go into another room.

Listening to the toddler express her dissatisfaction, I had my usual “professional” response. I tried to analyze the thoughts and feelings she was undoubtedly experiencing: “Mommy isn’t with me” (feeling of loss); “Is she coming back?” (feeling of doubt); “I need my mommy now!” (feeling of fear).

Then something happened to change the whole scenario. The little girl’s father stretched his hand across the table and took her hand in his. The child wrapped her fingers around his thumb, and he gently rubbed the back of her small hand. As he continued to soothe her, the sobbing turned to whimpering and soon died away.

No words were needed—just a touch from the father's hand.

When the child's tears subsided mine began to flow. I felt as though God had allowed me to witness this tender moment as a natural demonstration of a supernatural reality: When God's children are hurting, all they really need is a touch from their Father's hand.

As a Christian psychologist, I frequently examine human behavior. In my personal practice, as well as in my public observation, I have noticed a saddening trend—a lack of physical expressions of love between family members, particularly during times of stress. Just when a person needs expressions of love, those who can meet the need abandon him or her.

One example of such behavior occurs when parents distance themselves from a child as a form of punishment for the child's acting up. "Get away from me" or "Stay away from me until you can act right" are commonly heard phrases.

This type of behavior is often displayed in interaction between husbands and wives. When disagreements occur, some spouses attempt to manipulate their mates by withdrawing physical attention.

Ironically, medical studies continue to show the importance of human touch in determining a person's health and wellbeing. It is a well-documented fact, for example, that newborn babies who receive little or no physical affection do not progress physically. The medical terminology used to

describe the condition of these infants is “failure to thrive.” The babies fail to grow and eventually, if they do not receive life-giving touch, they die. If the babies are put in an environment where they are held, cuddled, rocked and given the proper physical attention, on the other hand, their bodies begin to respond and grow.

It is the same with all of us. We need that life-giving touch—of love, comfort, of care and concern—to survive and grow. But we can’t always depend on other people to give it to us. We must reach out for the touch of the Father’s hand.

As God’s children, we are never alone. We have a heavenly Father who knows our need to be comforted. It was to fill this need that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to us: “I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you” (I John 16:7, KJV). We have the Comforter with us. We can thrive and grow in His loving arms.

If you need a touch from God’s hand, then close your eyes. Imagine that you see Jesus, stretching His arm toward you and gently taking your hand in His. Feel the soothing touch of your heavenly Father. Sense the loving presence of the Comforter. Allow your feelings of loneliness and doubt to fade away, and let God’s “perfect love [cast] out all fear” (1 John 4:18).

"I will turn [your] mourning into gladness."

Promises the Lord, "I will give [you] comfort and joy instead of sorrow" (Jer. 31:13, NIV). Trust Him to fulfill this promise as you reach out for His hand today.

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 4/4/2011

This week open your heart to receive the Father's touch by faith and pray for opportunities to carry His presence and touch others with His love and comfort. Continue to pray for those suffering from the effects of earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and Japan's nuclear reactors. Pray for those risking their lives to bring disaster relief to these areas. Pray that God would give President Obama and his administration wisdom in dealing with Israel, the Middle East, our troops, our economy and our national security. 2 Cor. 1:3-4; I Tim. 2:1-4