

# IN THE ARMS OF DAD!

I can't remember a time when I have been so confronted with such an intense revelation as I was when I encountered my heavenly Father's tender affection for me for the first time. Here I was a grown man, and desperately needing to be the son of someone. Father God was holding His adopted son (me) close to Him. I can't begin to describe all the emotions of that moment in my Father's arms.

Since the reality of Father's embrace and finding that I really did have a special place in His heart, I have found that I have an incredible need to just nestle in His arms, and from that place of safety and security, let my arms be an extension of the Father's love that I had received as His son.

Abandonment, rejection, isolation, shame and fear of failure came under Father's eye and took a tumble in that embrace. For the first time in my life, my Dad approved of me - I literally heard Him say, "You are My son, I love you and My favour rests on you." When you've grown up all your life without a father figure - in or out of the Church; when those in authority only accept you based upon performance; when Christian leaders and congregations do the same, and when you fail to measure up and you are discarded as an item that has gone past the "use-by-date", you only have one model to follow - I call it the cloning syndrome - you become like all the rest in nature, character and appearance. You even do what they do in like manner. Not only that you will do whatever it takes to be accepted.

When I heard those words, "You are My son, I love you and My favour rests on you" from Father, abandonment, rejection, isolation, shame and fear of failure lost out in the face of perfect Love. My Dad loves me! He approves of me! His favour rests on me! Do you know what freedom that brings?

Learning now to be a son is challenging. I never had a father figure, ever, in my life - so being a son was foreign to me. For me now, it is a question of sonship and submission, intimacy and dealing with orphan attitudes that try to hinder my ability to receive Father's love: it is a basic issue of trust.

Let me clarify why I found this experience so intense. When I was three years old my natural father left my mother for another woman shortly after returning from service in WWII. I grew up on welfare and never knowing a father's real affection for his son. Even the male role models in my early life didn't demonstrate any real affection towards me. So, when I reached adulthood, I had no male role model that I could follow in the area of fathering. At the age of 24, married with two young children I went off to serve in Vietnam as a Troop Sergeant. Service there changed any last

hope of showing affection or being a loving father or husband. On my return from Vietnam life was chaotic and confusing.

Since my encounter with Father I had to deal with the whole issue of failure - failure in ministry (so I thought), failure as a husband, and failure as a father to my three sons. Failure has affected every area of relationship I had with God and with people in the church, even those I ministered to. You can have all the theology; even be a leader in a church, and have an orphan spirit. I had one, and I didn't know it!

I know that I am moving onto the centre line, into the reality of the spirit of sonship. I am focussed on growing and becoming softer, gentler - more transparent and vulnerable, more visible, more expressive and affectionate. My ability to receive Father's love is increasing. I am submitting to His love and His love expressed through others more. Pastors and leaders are no longer the enemy to be held at arm's length and never trusted. I could give a solid testimony on how leaders and pastors fail in the area of basic trust and its effect on believers. I will leave that to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This testimony is not about them, its all about God's mighty hand at work in my life!

I have a great desire now to lower walls long built through rejection and hurt. My focus is to live in Father's love and give His love away from the overflow that I receive. The capacity to give love away is increasing as I yield my spirit more to Father.

You see, before that single embrace I was:

- Guarded in relationships
- Less open to basic trust
- Expressed love was on my terms, whether you measured up or not - not on Father's terms
- Expressed love was calculated - again you got some only if you measured up
- I was in effect isolated, insecure and definitely uncomfortable with love of any kind
- I had an "I can do it" independent spirit and an "I can survive in my own strength" self-reliant spirit

When Father embraced me I became intently aware of my need to be a son. When He asked the question, "Whose son are you?", I knew that I had no answer - I was

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literally an orphan - saved, anointed, ministering in both Holy Spirit and in the ascension gifts, yet still an orphan. I had played the Church game and was good at it.

Dad had now exposed the roots of the fruit and it was being stripped away. I grieved over the hurt that I had caused so many people and my Father in heaven. The tears and intense crying was from surgical pain as Father cut into my heart and began to remove all the flesh that was causing me to cascade into a spiritual heart attack. His scalpel was at work and I was the one being operated on.

You see, for me it was a simply issue of basic trust! Get this right and the whole process of sonship, submission and inheritance would become part of a normal family existence - Father to son. Jesus only did what He saw His Father do, and do it in like manner. Independence and self-reliance cannot exist in relationship with Father - they had to go, another cut, another piece of flesh cut away. The theologians know it as circumcision of the heart and I suspect have never experienced the reality of it for themselves. It is not a theology for me - it is a reality. It is not a mark left on your body, but a change of heart - one turned - the heart of a son to his Father.

No longer an orphan, now a son! Now, I focus on achieving the following do not's:

- Need a ministry
- Need to be a leader
- Need to be a pastor
- Need to be up-front
- Need man's approval
- Need man's acceptance
- Need to knock myself out doing it (we call it ministry)
- Need to be employed to serve (going to work for God)

I just need to be a son! Dad said in February this year, "Dave nestle, don't wrestle." I know what He means now. I have experienced and heard the heartbeat of Father. I can come to Him now as a child and as an adult.

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Before I can be a father I first need first to be a son - I'm learning. Whose son am I? I am the son of the Living God the Eternal Father. Whose son, whose daughter are you?

My Dad hasn't finished with me yet, but every day I am now His son and my safe place, my security is in His words to me, "You are My son, I love you and my favour rests on you." I'm not perfect, I haven't got it all together, I haven't all the answers, but my Dad loves me and that is sufficient for me.

When was the last time your natural father embraced you and from the sweet tenderness of his heart told you that he loved you and that you were the apple of his eye?

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