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Encouragement for Today

“The Love of a Father”

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Key Verse:

1 John 4:19, “We love him, because he first loved us.” (NKJ)

Devotion:

After my husband died, I knew that if I remarried it would have to be someone extra special. You see, I came with a very unique package: a four-year old son. You might say it was a “buy one get one free” kind of deal.

While not just anyone could be the recipient of such an exclusive package, I began to pray and ask God to protect me from the wrong person until the right person came along.

Quickly I knew there was something different about Pat. Not only was he athletic (which meant he had a great pair of legs), had crystal blue eyes, a great sense of humor, was a lover of God, and had a great job, but he was smart, too. Whenever he invited me out it was always a family affair. Pat never planned a date that didn't include my son. As new friends, he wanted to get to know us both. Right away, this caught my attention.

Over time Pat fell fast in love with my son... and then with me. I guess that made me the “bonus” part of the “buy one get one free” deal. Nevertheless, I had a new husband and my son had a new daddy. We were blessed.

I have to admit that I had concerns. Fearing that my son may feel cheated from the loss of his biological father made me wonder if he would ever accept and love Pat as he would have loved his real dad. “Would Pat ever be more to Mitch than just a step-dad?” I often speculated.

Because of the love Pat displayed for my son, it didn't take long for me to realize that anyone can “father” a child, but a real daddy is one who is around to wipe the nose and the other end, too. A daddy is eager to play in the living room floor after a long, hard day at work. He's the guy who gives up his golfing hobby to coach little league baseball, and who carries the child to bed after he falls asleep in the car late at night. A true dad also cares enough to discipline his son.

Mitch did, indeed, accept Pat as his dad, and their relationship flourished as he grew – until Mitch turned ten. With maturity came understanding, and Mitch began to question everything, which brought about new challenges. One of those difficult times will forever be etched in my mind.

I don't recall why Mitch had been sent him to his room for time out, but I do remember his reaction to his dad's discipline.

“You're not my dad!” Mitch screamed with rage. “I hate you, I hate you!” He added between his sobs.

I ran to his room and stood there shocked as I watched the two of them battle out their affections. I had never seen my son like that. He was completely out of control and overwhelmed with anger, fear and pain.

Pat immediately fell to his knees and embraced our son. Mitch fought back, while screaming out all of the emotions he had locked away deep in his heart over the years. Pat interpreted his outburst as fear instead of rebellion, and without letting go of him, began to calm Mitch's worries.

"You can hate me if you want, but I will always love you," Pat said, struggling to keep his arms around him as Mitch tried to pull loose. "Even if your mother was to go away, you would stay with me because you're my son. I will never leave you."

Every word Pat whispered into Mitch's ear as he held him tight melted away his fears. Suddenly, Mitch's body relaxed and he returned his father's embrace. It was a defining moment for us all. In that instance, while our faces were still wet with tears, Mitch began to believe in the love of his father, accept the love of his father, and return love of his father. Not because he was someone to play with or filled a certain role in his life, but because Mitch finally believed he was loved.

I was right to have been concerned. It did take a special person to enter our lives and care for us - baggage and all. Pat's enduring God-like love not only helped to fill our empty places, but it enabled and compelled me and my son to love again, as well.

In the same way, we love our heavenly Father *only* because He first loved us, and then taught us how to love others. God didn't wait until we were loveable to love us. He adores us because He is love. Without the love of God being poured out upon us, we would never be devoted to God or others on our own. It's just not in us. For that reason, God doesn't wait on our affections. He loves us first, and because He does, we can't help but give love back.

My Prayer for Today:

Dear Lord, thank You for your endless love. Thank You for loving and accepting me just as I am. Fill my heart with Your love so that I may love You and others as You love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Applications Steps:

Think of the many ways God has poured out His love toward you and your family. Then, thank God for His love and find a way to express your gratitude to Him. You might do that by saying it in a prayer, singing it to Him in a song, writing a poem or sharing His love with someone else.

Reflection Points:

Has God ever loved you by sending a friend to console you at just the right moment?

Has God ever loved you through a gift given, a song sung, a card received or an unexpected hug?

Have you ever received His love and forgiveness by putting your trust in Him as your Lord and Savior? It's never too late.

Power Verses:

1 John 4:7-12:

4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

4:8, "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

4:9, "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him."

4:10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

4:11, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

4:12, "No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." (NAS)

Additional Resources

Dreams of a Woman, by Sharon Jaynes

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_dreamsWoman.htm

Do You Know Him?

<http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/knowHim.htm>

Coming Out of the Dark, by Mary Southerland

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_outDark.htm