

## ***WOULD YOU CARE TO DANCE?***

Ever since I can remember I have been told that God loves me and I believed God loved me. But somewhere along the way, I was also taught that His love for me had conditions attached to it. I was taught that I must live a life worthy of His love, and I must respond to His love with responsible, good behavior. My understanding of what it meant to be a Christian became focused on how to please God in an effort to earn His approval and forgiveness. I also came to believe that the struggles I went through in life were punishment from God for my bad behavior. However, if I followed all the rules and kept all my promises to God then this would make me a successful good Christian. Have you ever heard someone refer to another person as a "good" Christian? Well, that's what I wanted people to say about me. That I was a "good" Christian.

When it came to finding the perfect marriage partner, I believed the only way to have a happy marriage was to find a "good Christian man" who shared my same beliefs. And I did. We met at FBC of Atlanta, fell in love very quickly and were married within a year. We prayed together every day, we taught SS together, we sang in the choir, attended church, and we tithed our 10%. We did all the good things that good Christians were supposed to do.

During the fourth year of our marriage, a set of circumstances brought us to a place where we lost everything we owned. We began blaming God for our circumstances and we both became very angry and bitter with Him. We believed that after our years of religious service for God, God should have fulfilled all those promises we had been taught over the years and rescue us from our circumstances. Why would He allow us to lose our home, car, jobs, friends even our church after all the faithful service we had given Him over the years. We claimed every scripture and prayed constantly for God to meet our needs, and when our circumstances didn't change, we sincerely believed God had turned His back on us when we needed Him the most.

It was during this period of time that I began viewing God as my enemy and in my mind He had declared war on us. I could not understand why He was allowing us to suffer so much after all we had *done* for Him. It must be because we didn't do enough for Him or there was some kind of terrible sin in our lives and God was going to "teach us a lesson". Somehow, we must have moved ourselves out of God's "perfect will" and now we were being punished. Then one day as I stood in my son's bedroom, I declared war on my enemy. I declared war on God! I stood there shaking my fists at God, shouting my hatred towards Him, vowing never to read a Bible again, step foot in a church again and above all else, I would never pray again.

Months went by and our marriage began to suffer from all this bitterness and anger. We became two strangers living together in the same house. Lee began to do things that were totally out of character for him, disappearing for days at a time with no explanation and I became very depressed and withdrawn.

It didn't take long before I noticed that my husband had become more distant and wanted nothing to do with me as his wife. After about a year of living this way, one day my husband moved out without giving me any notice. He took the only car we had, emptied our bank account and apartment and had left me to raise our 2 year old son by myself. Several weeks later I discovered that my husband had been having a homosexual relationship with his employer and that they

were living together somewhere in Marietta. I soon lost track of him and it would be seven years before I would see him again.

Through a very unusual set of circumstances that only the Lord could have engineered, we found my husband at Grady Hospital in 1990. He had contracted the Aids virus and within one month after our first meeting he died alone during the night. We had 3 visits together and each time, I went with *my own* agenda in which I believed it was his duty to ask for my forgiveness and he *owed* me an apology for what he had done to my son and I by disappearing for 7 years. Lee never offered an apology or begged my forgiveness. And even while standing at his death bed, this was all I could think about.

I was so wrapped up in my own selfish flesh that I failed to see the pain he was in. The fear he must have been going through. He was only 32 years old and he knew he was going to die. And yet, all I could think about was myself and my needs. The Lord allowed me to walk in that selfishness for about a year after Lee passed away. Then he gave me a special compassion for Lee and allowed me to see the pain and guilt he must have been going through and it was at that point I saw my own selfish flesh and my lack of forgiveness towards him. So many times we think we have the right to receive an apology from someone who has wronged us, but it's only in laying down those rights we become free.

Seven years earlier at the time when my husband left my son and I, I had allowed the rejection by my husband as a *woman* and my perceived rejection by God, to totally take over my emotions. I had self-talked my way into a state of hopelessness and despair to a point of wanting to take my own life. One evening as I sat in a dark room with pills in hand ready to end all of the hurt, my *enemy* quietly and gently reached out to me in love. I began hearing a soft voice in my mind that kept telling me to read Phil 4:1. After about an hour of hearing the repetition of this verse in my mind, I got up out of my chair and found a Bible and read this verse, "*My beloved, I love you and I long to see your face, for you are my joy and reward for my work. Beloved, stay true to the Lord.*" These were not the words of an enemy, but words of love, compassion and acceptance for me, *His beloved*.

That evening I knelt and prayed a prayer of total surrender to Him. This was not a prayer for salvation. It was a prayer of brokenness, of absolute surrender of living my life my own way. I didn't fully comprehend all that it meant to totally surrender to Him, but somehow I knew I had to give up control of my life and allow Him to be my life. That evening, my "enemy", my Lord proclaimed His love for me and in His eyes I was *His* joy and *His* reward, and *I was His beloved*. Listen to what it means to be someone's beloved, "*one who is dear to the heart, one who is greatly loved, highly esteemed and precious.*" He declared His love for me as a groom would declare his love for his bride. All he wanted from me was to totally surrender to Him. And all I wanted from Him was His love and acceptance which He freely gave.

Over the years, it has been a gradual process of understanding my identity in Christ and all that it means to belong to Him. I have no doubt that He loves and accepts me and that I have been totally forgiven. However, I still felt like there was a wall of some kind around my heart that kept me from totally experiencing His love in my life.

Then many years later I attended a Tres Dias retreat. During the retreat on Friday, the Lord began

bringing to the surface a memory I had buried deep inside of being raped at the age of 17. I never told anyone what had happened, not even my family. I just buried all the feelings of filthiness that are associated with being raped.

As the weekend progressed, I began to remember how my husband's rejection of me sexually had made me feel as a woman. During the last year that we were together, I had convinced myself that I was a repulsive, ugly woman because my husband wanted nothing to do with me. When I found out about his homosexual relationship, this was only *affirmation* that the distorted view I had of myself was correct. After all, I *must be* a repulsive, ugly woman because I drove my husband into the arms of a man. These were feelings I had long forgotten and honestly thought I'd dealt with, but instead I had only buried them....deeply.

As He began gently walking me through all of this, He led me to Ezekiel 16. *Then I passed by you, and behold, you were at a time for love; so I spread my skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became mine, declares the Lord God. Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. I clothed you with embroidered cloth and put leather sandals on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. Then I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. I put earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil, so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you, declares the Lord God.*

He has made me beautiful! He has made you beautiful. He saw the nakedness of my shame and spread His covering of love over it. He bathed me with water and washed away all those feelings of ugliness. Then He anointed me with oil to show me how precious I am and covered me with HIS wedding dress. He placed a crown on my head, dressed me in His glory and advanced me to royalty!!

When God created you, He chose you to come into an intimate relationship with Him for no other reason at all than the fact that He loves you and He wants you. This passionate love relationship with the Divine Lover of our soul, is our destiny as Christians. I love to research the meaning of words and I recently researched the word destiny. It means, *a power which foreordains the course of events in a person's life. A person is fixed by this power. It is a place to which a person is bound.* Our destiny is secure in the power of His love for us. It binds everything together. It is what permeates our lives and ordains the course of it throughout all eternity.

Everyday we have the choice to allow Him to dance with us in the passion of His love. He comes to you as a gentle prince and politely asks, *"My beloved, would you care to dance? Allow me to be the leader and you just hold my hand as we waltz around this room of life. Let me dress you in my glory and allow my love to flow through you. Lay your head on my chest and listen to my heartbeat. Come dance with me my darling, come dance with me my love. I'll sing to you a love song of the joy you bring to my heart with every single glance of your eyes. Of how beautiful you are to me and how much I cherish you. And as we dance just rest and let Me be the leader, let Me*

*be your life!*

It has been over 20 years since my husband first left us, and all this time I have remained single. This was so out of character for me. I had dreams of the house, children and loving husband. Of being the homemaker my mother was. You know, the whole picket fence thing. However, my life took a different course of being a single parent at the age of 22, a widow at 29 and a single adult from that point on. People will say, in love, that I need to be married in order to be fully happy. That I must be terribly lonely and... one day I'll find that special someone.

I know these people mean well, but I've discovered that this season of singleness, even though it has been a long one, has been so precious with the Divine Lover of my soul. Sure, there are times of loneliness and wanting to be with someone. Sometimes the cat and the dog just don't cut it! I'm not one to sugar coat things and tell you it's all been just wonderful. There have been times of deep longing and grief over what was lost. A physical aching of just wanting someone to hug or a hand to hold. But I have faith in Him that my singleness is what He sees as best for me. My singleness allows me to do things I would never be able to do as married and I don't have to be on the "look out" to find a mate... I already have one.

I can't begin to tell you the freedom this brings to me knowing that it's not my job or anyone else's to find me a husband. I used to pray for a husband every day when I first became single. But over the years I became more and more at rest in Him that if it's His desire for me to marry again, He will bring that person into my life and I can leave this in His hands, just like everything else....and to be very honest, there are times when I have to remind myself of this truth.

Some would say, what about your son? Didn't he need a father? I can remember when my son was younger thinking that I have to find him a father in order for him to grow into a well rounded young man, and I almost made a very serious mistake by trying to fix this problem on my own. But I soon found out that my heavenly Father wanted to build a relationship with him like no earthly father could and he has grown into a young man far beyond any expectations I had for him as a child.

Over the years there has been one scripture verse that I have held onto more than any other and I will close with this. *"I have set the Lord continually before me, because He is at my right hand and I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad, for Thou will not abandon my soul. Thou will make known to me the path of life and in Thy presence is fullness of joy. In Thy hand there are pleasures forever."* Psalm 16

My prayer for you is that as you have read what Father has done in my life .... and continues to do, that He has touched you with the truth of His love and acceptance for you as His beloved. That there is nothing you have to do to earn His love, you just need to accept it. I pray that you may always hear the music of His love for you and may you feel His arms around you as you dance with Him through this wonderful life of grace. You will find that His song is like no other, His dance is like no other and His love for you is like no other.

In His Loving Grace,  
Cheryl Buchanan

[cheryl@gracewalk.org](mailto:cheryl@gracewalk.org)