

Experiencing the Fathers Embrace

By Rev. Jack Stagman President - Loudoun Church Alliance

We are primarily created by God to receive His love and give it away to others. The Holy Bible tells us that God is love. Many of us have grown up with bad childhood experiences where our parents have misrepresented Father God's love to us and this has left many of us struggling with: insecurities, lack of joy, troubled relationships, failed marriages, broken families, lack of life's purpose and a general inability to truly love others.

When I look back, that was me. At the age of two my father abandoned our family and I grew up without the love of a father. This left me with many insecurities, a lack of real joy, I did not know my purpose in life and struggled to love and relate to people.

Last year, I read a book called "Experiencing the Fathers embrace" by Jack Frost. This book, next to the bible has helped me become a better Dad and husband and has helped me better relate to Father God and most importantly, I have become an open vessel to receive God's love and give it away to others. It did not come easily and I had to go through much pain in my life time. After reading this book I came to the conclusion that often the way we view and relate to our earthly father is the way we relate to our Heavenly Father. What was my problem? Subconsciously I was thinking that after God created the universe and put his laws into operation, then He abandoned us and left us to our own devices...and just like my earthly father, I could not trust Him. Although I loved and could relate to Jesus, I could not relate to Father God, because I could not relate to love, and the Bible says that God is love.

Paul writes to us in 1 Cor 13:2-3. "If I have faith to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give my possessions to feed the poor, if I deliver my body to be burnt, but do not have love, it profits nothing"

John 14:7-8 "Everybody who loves is born of God and experiences relationship with God. The person who is unable to or refuses to love, does not know the first thing about God, because God is love." Most people are trying to gain God's acceptance by their actions but don't know how to relate to love and God.

So there I was, 58 years old, an ordained Minister for nearly ten years, a missionary from South Africa living in Purcellville for seven years and heading up Loudoun Church Alliance (An association of churches across all denominations) and now being confronted with and finding out that I had a head knowledge about God, but was unable to relate to Father God through heart-felt love. All because I could not relate to love. I concluded from 1 Cor 13:23 above that my whole life was hay and stubble and that I was in serious trouble because I could not relate to love and God. What do I do now!

From June last year (2007), after realizing my spiritual poverty, I began to hunger and search for the love of God and found it in a most unexpected place and way. In my hunger, I read "Experiencing The Fathers Embrace" by Jack Frost four times, watched his 9 videos a number of times and sought Father God without ceasing. Looking back now, I believe God was preparing me for what I had to go through during December. On Christmas day, we received news that my eldest daughter Sheldene, then thirty five, was involved in a serious head on car accident in South Africa and that she was on life support and not expected to live. An illegal drunk alien from Nigeria without a license had hit my daughter head on.

I lay on my bed that night, a devastated and broken father. The next morning, I awoke very early, suddenly hearing my daughter Sheldene's voice in my head "Daddy, don't be afraid, I am in heaven. Remember when I was eleven and I accepted Jesus Christ into my life, well because of that decision I am here. They are holding my hands now and when we cross over the bridge here, I can't communicate with you again. I love you daddy. Please let my mother, husband and children know that I am safe and that I love them". And then she was gone.

I was so startled and scared and when I glanced at my watch, it was 5 AM. I was notified from South Africa, that it was precisely 5 AM that they removed the life support and she passed on. Scripturally, there is no foundation to communicate with the dead but I have subsequently spoken to many people who have had similar experiences at the time of death and it also ties up with what daughter said, "I will be unable to communicate again when I cross over the bridge."

Two days later, I was on a plane to South Africa to attend the funeral. On the plane I had the opportunity to witness to a wealthy businessman for four hours and what he said shocked me. He said "Jack, I have everything in the world that money can buy, but I do not have the power of love evident in your life" Wow! Next at 1 am, I went to the back of the plane to get something to drink and struck up a conversation with the two South African flight attendants there. I told them what happened to my daughter and both of them were in tears. While talking to them I became so overwhelmed with God's love for them. I said to one of them that she had gone through a very challenging six months and Father God wanted her to know that He had been with her every step of the way and that He dearly loved her. With that statement, the flight attendant started to visibly shake. I asked if I could pray for her and as I touched her shoulder it was like a bolt of lightning had hit her; she landed on the floor shaking uncontrollably all over her body. This was enough to shock me to and I was unprepared for what happened next. The other flight attendant asked me to pray for her to. I suddenly realized my predicament. What if she goes down like the other one. What if people think I have hijacked the plane. I could envision the air Marshall with a loaded gun to my head, thinking I had hijacked the plane.

Well, I took courage and prayed for the other flight attendant as well. Her response was not to fall, but to lift her hands above her head and she started to twirl like a ballerina. She kept on repeating "I have never felt the power and love of God so strong before". She was tearfully overwhelmed by the presence of God. After ten minutes, we helped the other flight attendant as she struggled to get up from the floor. I remember asking her what happened. She said that when I touched her on the shoulder to pray, she felt what she described as a lightning bolt hit her, yet I had felt nothing. After a few more minutes of talking, I went to my seat overwhelmed at what had happened and began to weep. Here I was in the most anguished pain of losing my daughter and yet I realized I had at last become a vessel of Father God's awesome love flowing into me and out to others. I realized that I had the power of love which I was so desperately looking for and I was now relating to a loving Daddy in heaven and He had my full attention. I am in a new and exciting season of God's presence and love. I have not arrived. I still have my struggles but I recognize I am on a new and exciting journey. The purpose of telling you this story is to tell you that Father God loves you and that He has a purpose and destiny for you and He wants you to become a vessel to receive His love and give it away to others.