

A Love I've Never Known *Until Now*

My pastor preached recently on how we are constantly being “ripped off” by the devil. He said we allow our enemy to rip off our joy. This got me to thinking about how much ground I gave the enemy. How much more than joy he stole from me. I had allowed him to poison my relationship with God.

It started when I was very young in church. Papa God was portrayed as an angry father who was waiting for me to mess up so He could knock me around. I was terrified of Him. I think I wanted to “get saved” so I wouldn’t have to endure the punishment He dished out to those who didn’t. I was taught I could lose my salvation for the least of things, and it was something I had to work to hang on to.

This clouded my perception of who Papa really is. It also affected how I believed He saw me. I never really thought He loved me personally. I believed He loved the world collectively. Like me loving a church as a whole but knowing there are specific people in it that I really don’t care about and wouldn’t miss if they left. Thankfully God doesn’t think or love like we do. He doesn’t see the world’s population as a whole, He sees millions of individuals. What I believed was so far from the truth. But here’s a reality I have come to realize: “What I believe about Him doesn’t change who He really is.” Because of my wrong perception of Him, I was robbed of the kind of relationship He desired to have with me.

I saw Him as the angry, mean, giant and me the tiny frightened mouse. It’s virtually impossible to experience the love relationship He was offering with that type of mindset. In addition to believing that He was always in a bad mood, I also thought He might be a little forgetful. I experienced a very long season wrapped in fear that He would come for His children and forget me. This caused me to get saved at least a hundred more times. Needless to say I could not really trust Him at that time. What kind of relationship can you enjoy without trust?

I experienced a better relationship with Jesus. I saw Him as caring and loving. I must have skipped over the verse that says He is “the complete representation of the Father”. If I would have really let that verse sink in I might have had a better understanding of Papa and His love for me. So instead I talked to Jesus and ignored Papa. I guess because Jesus came to earth as a human and experienced life as one of us, He seemed more relatable to me. I’m not sure how many people do this, but I know from experience as one who lived this that you are missing out on love beyond your wildest imagination if you don’t get to know Papa God.

Another thing I have come to realize through this is “what I believe about Papa defines my faith”. If I believe He’s mean and angry, how can I go boldly to the throne? Also this kind of thinking totally removes grace from the message. How can there be grace when you are condemned for the least offense? This type of belief requires more formula than faith. Without grace its all performance based. If I believe these things about Him, how can I ask Him for anything and believe He will do it?

When I failed to get to know Papa God for who He really is, I chose to believe lies about Him and about myself. He is love. I saw Him as the judge preparing to pronounce His sentence for me. I couldn’t grasp His great love for me. That’s the whole reason He sent Jesus to earth to begin with, because He desperately loves me, loves the whole world individually. The lies I believed about Him were preventing me from knowing the real Him. I like the real Him so much better than the god I created.

Yes, I was ripped off and lied to, but I have no one to blame but myself. If I would have given Papa a chance instead of believing lies about Him I would have seen how wrong I was. I have been spending time with Papa and getting to know Him, I am seeing how good, kind and encouraging He is. He is my biggest cheerleader. He wraps me in His love. He accepts me and welcomes me into His presence. Joy radiates from Him. He knows me and adores me, and now that I know Him, I can fearlessly run to Him.

If this spoke to your heart, I’d love to hear from you at mdorris@iggm.org