



THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVE

Greg was about 8 years old and I only saw him that week of Vacation Bible School, but that one week of encounters was enough to make an indelible imprint on my life. Our Church sent out buses and Greg was a child who came from an unchurched home.

I was assigned to grades 1-3 both boys and girls. Greg needed his own teacher or care taker we found out as the week progressed. He was loud. He hit. He shoved. He pulled hair and pinched. He never stood or sat still. He was constant motion.

Expecting him to sit and listen to the Bible story and then complete the daily art project was beyond his ability. He seemed to be created to stir things up, and not in a good way. He seemed to always be about the opposite of what you wanted him to do. Honestly, he tried my patience, and my kindness, and my joy, and my peace. Just seeing little Greg come through the door was enough to drain the Fruit of the Spirit right out of me!

By Wednesday, all the teachers and helpers seemed to disappear when Greg started his routine. I was the only one left. I jumped right in as he began to hit, push, kick, scream, and curse all at the same time. I was not too surprised to find us both down on the floor, Greg in full out attack mode, and me with my legs wrapped around his legs and my arms holding him tightly. Struggle as he might, he could not get away.

It was in that moment that something amazing happened. Both of us were at the end of our ropes and I was contemplating telling Greg's bus driver that he could not come the last two days. Much to my surprise, I heard myself whispering through gritted teeth, "I love you, Greg." And instantly his little body relaxed, the struggle was over and I heard a tiny voice reply, "I love you, too."

I relaxed my hold. Greg got up and went to his seat and became the model child. I got up off the floor and straightened my hair and clothes and continued to steal glances at Greg. The power of love, God's love, in a moment had transformed this child.

On our journey in life, we will meet many people like Greg. Perhaps they will be unchurched like he was. Perhaps their outward behavior is a reflection of their inward cry for love and acceptance, but like Greg, they do not have the language or skills to tell us.

Some of them, God will send on purpose, like He sent Greg to me, so I could witness a visible demonstration of the power of love. Some are sent to grow Grace in us so that we are more like Jesus. We can turn the other cheek. We can not only give our shirt, but our coat, too. We are carriers of His Presence everywhere we go and for many, we are the only evidence of God they may ever see or experience.

In 2003 God unplugged us from our past and rewired us to become totally new. He has awakened us to who we really are in Christ. He has positioned us geographically and spiritually in the earth to be a visual demonstration of who He really is.

Jesus said, “When you see Me, you have seen the Father.” (Jn. 14:9) The same must be true of us. “Two commands I give to you. Love the Father with all your heart. Love your neighbor like you love yourself.” (Matt. 22:37-40) Acts 10:38 tells us what our mission and assignments will revolve around, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power and He went around doing good and healing ALL who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him.”

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

In Graham Cooke’s teaching on *First Love*, he said that before anything was created, there was the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the love between the Father and the Son was so awesome, so profound that They were compelled to share it with someone. So They created a people group that would live in the space between the Father and Son and their experience would be filled with the love the Father had for the Son and the love the Son had for the Father. This people group would be so enraptured by this love that it would change them forever and they would be made in the image of God by this love.

Somewhere between the beginning and now, the truth about the love of God became distorted. From the time we were small children our parents told us that doing ‘bad things’ brought an equally bad result. Lie and you would go to hell. Cheat, yes, hell was your destination. Steal. Hell. It is no wonder that today we struggle with believing that we have a loving Father who is for us and not against us, who is always working in every situation to cause it to come out for our good.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When God looks at you, what is He looking at? Mistakes? Or Jesus living in your heart?
2. Is it true or false that when God looks at us, He sees us in Christ and Christ in us?
3. When we make a mistake, is God angry with us?
4. When Jesus died for us on the Cross, did God pour out all His wrath on Jesus or hold a little bit back to pour out upon us today?
5. Many people think that God is focusing on behavior so they allow their behavior to define them. However, God is always focusing on our position and He placed us in Christ at salvation. Does this mean He is okay with sin?
6. What would it mean for you to fully accept the unconditional love of God as part of your identity?
7. God’s love disarms anger, unravels hatred, and draws us to Him. How is the Love of God drawing you today?