



"Send us to bring them in"

THE FATHERS LOVE by Colleen Wheeler

Before sitting down to write this article, I decided to unwind and make myself a nice hot cup of tea. God took this opportunity to reveal a lesson to me. I nonchalantly placed a tea bag in a glass mug, poured steaming hot water over it, and watched as the flavor was released. As the tea leaked through the mesh bag, turning the water a red-brown color, I was reminded of a tea-bag metaphor I had learned about in a book entitled *Taking Time To Change* by Jim Berg. Our hearts are similar to tea bags. When immersed in a heated situation, what is inside will be released.

Heart Issues:

The heart is the center of spiritual activity and the operations of human life. It governs our actions and affects our emotional state: joy, sorrow, anxiety, courage, fear, and love. Boiling water represents a heated situation, such as when our buttons are pushed. When the heart becomes immersed in heat, whatever is inside will be forced through a filter and will then spew out from the mouth. **"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34 KJV).**

Reflexive words are often regretted and can leave us dumbfounded, wondering, Why in the world did I say that? If we do not exercise the spirit of self-control, our heart responses will be like a gunked-up drain unclogging. Our hearts will become blocked with issues such as rejection, hurt, bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness. When pressure is applied, it unclogs, filtering out a lot of ugly, smelly gunk.

Sometimes we do not know how to respond, so instead of speaking the truth in love we agree with another simply for the sake of agreeing. Thus, the situation does not get resolved and returns later. When dealing with unresolved hurts, many try to vindicate themselves by justifying their feelings. In their wounded state, they need to vent their hurts, but in doing so, they unknowingly gossip. Then the sin of slander must be dealt with, but the original issue is pushed aside.

The wreckage must be repaired by getting right with the Lord and with the other person or persons. Unfortunately, when trying to work things out, grumbling and complaining can occur--who's right and who's wrong--and this can lead to confusion, where all parties become



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completely exhausted.

We must cry out to the Lord before we speak out what is in our hearts. **"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31 NASB).**

Bitter Waters:

Miriam led the Israelites in song and dance after Moses led them through the Red Sea after their oppressors were conquered by the judgment of God. Only three days later, on their journey toward freedom, they faced an obstacle at Marah, which means "bitter." Bitter water was their test, but they grumbled at Moses instead of calling out to God. Moses did what the people did not do: He called out to God. And the Lord gave him the strategy to get rid of bitterness.

After 400 years of slavery, the Israelites had hastily left everything familiar and journeyed to an unfamiliar place. They expected the Promised Land, but instead came to a place where they could not even get a drink of water. Who would not be bitter and grumble after going through all that? When something happens that is beyond our control, we tend to justify our reactions. But this is not the will of the Lord. His desire is to make bitter things sweet. James wrote, **"Does a fountain send out from the same opening {both} fresh and bitter {water} (James 3:11 NASB).**

Recently I have become aware of my responses and reactions when I am tested in heated situations. I exercise my reflexive muscle, and do not give in to the adversary, who seeks only to break unity in the body of Christ. Over the past few months it seems that whenever I say something that gives the impression that I do not approve of something or that I dislike someone, the Holy Spirit deals with my heart right away. This conviction pours over me like hot water over a tea bag, but it does not give warmth. Rather it hurts until I yield to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to search my heart. I am learning that in most heated situations, reflexive responses come from a deep root of bitterness. When this root goes unchecked, we become conditioned to this type of reaction. **"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15 NASB).**

Jesus Is Our Weed Trimmer:

I had a vision of weeds tangled up and wrapped around the roots of a tree, seeking to



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strangle the life out of it. Then I saw a weed trimmer coming toward the roots. Jesus desires to trim the weeds and cut out the roots that seek to choke the life out of us and kill our destiny in Christ by stunting our growth. His desire for us is to be healed, be whole, and grow to our full measure of stature until the day of His coming. But we must allow Him to trim and chop away.

Reflection:

I used to think that if I looked back at the past, I would not be able to move ahead to serve the Lord to the fullest. I thought I would fixate on the past hurts and betrayals and be stuck, unable to move forward. However, we must bring our past to Jesus. If we don't it will follow us and find us through our reflex reactions.

Forgiveness:

"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32 NASB). Although there are many aspects of attaining peace, love, and joy, we must begin with forgiveness. Before I was saved I had been on a quest for wholeness and spent years going to therapists while I blamed all my problems on my father. I had harbored a lot of bitterness toward him; in fact, I hated him. But I truly wanted healing. I tried various methods and tactics to forgive, but I did not know what real forgiveness was until after I got saved. Then I learned that what I thought was forgiveness was only a surface type of forgiveness; Because I was still walking around with anger and bitter rage. Even though I thought I had forgiven my father, I slowly realized that only by accepting Jesus Christ's forgiveness for my sins would I be able to forgive those who have hurt me.

When I truly accepted Jesus' forgiveness, I was able to look at my father from a different perspective: God's. I began to love him with the love of God that was pouring into me. Even so, my relationship with him remained distant.

Early in my newfound faith, I had the opportunity to lead my father to the Lord, but he continued drinking for a couple more years. He had to fall again, and when he did, he fell hard.

Two years ago, I was driving upstate to visit him at the nursing home where he was being rehabilitated from an accident. I was almost at my destination when I experienced something unusual. An old familiar scent of beer crept into the car, though I had not had a drop of



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alcohol for over fifteen years. The smell seemed to increase until the odor triggered bitter childhood memories that raced through my mind. I was reminded of the years I had longed for my father's love. Visions from different scenarios faded in and out of my mind, and then I realized that my relationship with my father was woven with fear, hurt, and anger. That realization saddened me.

After my mother's death at the tender age of fifty-one, my father's drinking increased each year until he became out of control. I remembered one night when he fell down in a drunken stupor; three days later, he called my sister for help. At the hospital X-rays revealed that the fall had cracked his shoulder. Following the operation to heal his broken bones, he lost control of his bodily functions. He could no longer walk, talk, or swallow.

After a few weeks He ended up in ICU where I had visited him. As I looked upon him, the Lord filled me with compassion. While he lay there helplessly hooked up to the respirator, I reached out to brush his hair back off his forehead. His head was cold. Then I touched his arms; he was freezing. I told the nurse, and she informed me that they did not expect him to live much longer. They gave him twenty-four to forty-eight hours.

I stood there thinking about the irony of the alcoholic merry-go-round my parents had been on during most of their years together. Then something clicked inside me. I realized that the enemy had robbed my family through alcoholism. A righteous anger welled up inside me, and God gave me the unction to take back what the devil had stolen. I placed my hand on my father's head and with authority said, "I declare the blood of Jesus Christ and command every spirit of infirmity to leave my father now, in Jesus' name!" Immediately his eyes popped open and I felt something leave him. Three days later he was off the respirator, out of ICU, eating, talking, and swallowing. A week later they transported him to the nursing home for physical therapy and monitoring. It was a miracle from God; my father was healed by the precious stripes of Jesus Christ.

Unconditional Love:

A few years before my father's accident, the Lord prepared me for a specific mission. After much prayer, He decided it was time to send me to face my father and speak to him about my past issues. Before I left my apartment to drive upstate, I asked God if there was anything else I should know. The Lord led me to a Scripture verse that seemed to jump off of the page. It said, "**They will go up with acceptance on My altar**" (**Isaiah 60:7 NASB**). Instinctively



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I knew my father was going to receive Jesus.

I felt empowered by the Lord's direction and prayed in the Spirit during the entire drive. The hour passed quickly. When I arrived at my family home, I walked in and found him sitting at the kitchen table in his favorite chair near the washing machine. The look on his face seemed to indicate that he knew what I was about to say. When I put my purse down, some papers fell on the table. My father offered me some tea, which I accepted. As he turned on the burner, I was surprised to observe that he seemed sober.

Here goes, I thought. He listened as I spoke about my past resentments. I finished by saying that those things made me the mess I was as an adult. When I looked up to see how he would respond, I saw an awkward smile on his face. He sort of laughed. It was not a degrading laugh, but it had the sound of denial. The Lord gave me discernment as I silently prayed, In the name of Jesus; I bind up the spirit of mockery. Just then he started crying.

My heart broke as I watched God break him. I did not know what to say, but then I looked at the papers that had fallen on the kitchen table and saw a tract that said, "Good News."

"Dad," I said, "There is good news. Jesus Christ forgave me for all of my sins, and He will forgive you for yours too. All you have to do is ask Jesus to forgive you and invite Him into your heart. Do you want to ask Jesus to come into your heart, Dad?" "If He will have me," my father said.

The power of God came on me and I stood to my feet. "Dad," I said, "Jesus will have you. Lift your hands to heaven." His hands went up. I placed my hand on his head and said, "Repeat after me. Jesus, I am a sinner." He sat there sobbing while he tried to get the words out. "Dad," I said again, "repeat after me. Jesus, I am a sinner." "Jesus," he finally said, "I am a . . ."

"Dad," I said, "Jesus will forgive you, but you have to ask Him." In between sobs he finally asked for Jesus' forgiveness and finished praying the sinner's prayer.

I told him he needed to follow Jesus by going to church, praying, and reading the Bible. I sent him a Bible in extra-large print.

Second Chances:



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God gave my father an opportunity to recover from all the years of drinking, to get right with the Lord and his six children. But I was still uncomfortable with our new relationship. One day after his accident I walked into his room at the nursing home and saw him sitting at the edge of his bed. He invited me in and I sat beside him. I felt awkward and did not know what to say or how to act. As we were speaking to each other, he kept staring at my lips. He mentioned that they were dry. He reached into his little pouch and pulled out a tube of ChapStick.® He handed it to me, but my natural reaction was to grab my own tube of lipstick from my purse. I had been conditioned to doing things myself.

In that moment the Lord quickened to me that my father was trying to express a token of his love for me. When I realized this, I pulled my hand out of my purse and reached out to receive my father's gesture of care. I gently took the ChapStick from his hand. When I opened the tube, the scent brought back memories. They were not like the ones I'd had in the car, but sweet memories of my father's love. I recalled that, when I was a little girl, he always gave me his ChapStick. Sometimes he would put some on his finger and smudge it on my dried lips.

A moment of innocence touched my heart. I felt like a little girl as I smeared the ChapStick on my cracked lips, which were immediately soothed. As this moment was touching my heart, I realized that my lips, previously hurt, were now healed. I looked at my father and smiled comfortably. I handed him the tube of ChapStick and smiled, gratefully and pain free, because the same type of healing balm that had soothed the dry, painful cracks of my lips had done exactly the same for my relationship with my father.

There Is Balm in Gilead:

Have you ever believed in something man has told you about yourself, such as you could never be healed and made whole, you were a mistake, you are emotionally crippled, or you can only be healed up to a certain point? This is contrary to God's Word. These are man's words, not the Lord's. God's Word has the answer to all our hurts. How does His Word differ from man's? God's Word is Spirit and life (John 6:63). The Word of God is God breathed, but man's word is limited by his humanity.

Jeremiah saw wounded people who could have been cured, but they were not turning to God; they were trying everything else but God. Some of us have chosen therapists, self-help books, or ungodly quick fixes before going to the heavenly Father. Jeremiah cried out for the Great Physician (Jesus) and for balm (the Word). Jehovah told him to go up to Gilead, a place of



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refuge, and obtain balm. It is our responsibility to go to our place of refuge in Gilead, to our Jehovah Rapha, our Great Physician and Healer, and to apply the Word, His healing balm, to our hurts.

By believing God's Word and not the words of the devil, the father of lies, you will find healing. No matter what your childhood was like, no matter whether you are single, married, or divorced, He wants you to be humble under His mighty hand so He can bring the healing balm of Gilead to your troubled soul. God's Word says, **"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?" (Jeremiah 32:27 NASB)**

Heavenly Father's Love:

My experience with my earthly father revealed something about our heavenly Father's love. The Father has given us free will to choose independence or dependence upon Him. When we are independent we take things into our own hands. We try our own remedies for fixing things that the Lord desires to fix, but only if we allow Him to do so. When we have a hurt, do we allow God to give us what He earnestly longs to pour out upon us: His love? Can we allow Him to take care of us--especially those of us who are survivors of abuse, who are used to taking care of ourselves because no one else did?

Old memories can be soothed by our heavenly Father, but only if we surrender them to Him and trust Him. Today, through the power of forgiveness, the bitter roots and weeds of my past have been cut down through forgiveness in Christ. We must be willing to forgive, to call out to God and obey His rhema word to receive healing.

By yielding to the Holy Spirit, I was able to receive a token of love from my earthly father. The balm was applied and healed the years our relationship had been in the wilderness. Today my earthly father loves me and I truly love him. We actually have a relationship! This year, for my forty-fifth birthday, he sent me my first birthday card and signed it, "Your daddy." This is a miracle of God's gift of forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Call Out to the Lord!

We can all relate to the Israelites. Before we were saved we were bound for years, perhaps generations, enslaved to the world by the scheme of the enemy, bound in the power of darkness. We did not know what freedom was until Jesus Christ brought us into His marvelous light. We rejoiced in Him and our newfound freedom. As soon as we encountered our first wilderness experience, we thirsted to drink from the fountain. But when we tasted only



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bitterness and discouragement, we grumbled and complained. We must pass the bitter water test and deal with our hearts right away so that no bitterness will spring up. **"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3 NASB).**

What Is in Your Heart?

In every trial, we can learn to cast our cares upon the Lord, pour out our hearts before Him, and submit our will. The Holy Spirit will comfort us and get us through the bitterest trial. Wherever we are dry or cracked in the wilderness, He will be there to soothe us with His healing balm. Look, He is there, holding out His arms. He waits to lavish you with His love. Let us call out like Jeremiah and say, **"Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for thou art my praise "** (Jeremiah 17:14 NASB).

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