

BFF419 The Love of the Father

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I'm well. How are you?

Scott: Good. After a few technical difficulties, I'm ready to roar.

Steve: OK. And you got a new car? Pretty cool?

Scott: Yes. A new old car for my boys. That headache has been taken off my list.

Steve: I bought a Volvo that had 450,000 miles on it when my sons were in college. They left home and drove a thousand miles and when arrived at college, the transmission died a mile from campus at night. Ethan put it in reverse and drove the last mile in reverse.

Scott: That is a creative solution.

Steve: That was a very creative solution. I was totally impressed.

Scott: I would not have thought to do that.

Steve: That's the kind of stuff I used to do. But we're not going to tell stories about Steve then. We're going to talk now. All right. Let's pray

Father, thank You for another wonderful opportunity to dig into Your word and to find application and to learn more about You, more about Your care for us, more about Your love for us. I pray that You'll guide our conversation, our deliberation. I pray that You'll quicken the Scriptures which You've inspired and You've recorded for our benefit and let them find a soft heart in which to lodge. Let them transform our thinking. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: We started this last time talking about experiencing the love of the Father, and having our mind transformed by studying because I think it's one thing to get a taste of God's love, however it's another thing to abide in His love.

It's one thing to hear about God meeting with other people and it's something else to meet with them yourself. That's how we close the last one is I was encouraging folks to not only taste His love but to be transformed by it and do the work and study the Scripture, but also to draw near to God and let Him reveal Himself to you.

My journey, if I could just give a quick overview, really began when I asked God to help me to love Him with all my heart, soul, and might from Deuteronomy 6. I was surprised how He answered that prayer because He answered it by showing me how much He loved me. The verse that really was the eye opener was John 15:9, which says, as the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.

We're wanting to be like our heavenly Father, and we want to see our heavenly Father. One of the ways we see Him is by studying Him in Scripture. Jesus had His eyes on the Father. He said, just like My dad loves me, that's how I love you. That's how we want to love our families. But then at the end of that verse, it says, abide in My love. Paul says in Ephesians 3, be rooted and grounded in His love.

Now both of those sound extremely attractive. I want to abide in His love. I want to be rooted and grounded in His love. But I struggled. This was probably the first time that I felt like I needed to not just go back to what I knew to do, which was to work for God and to read the Scripture and to sing hymns, but to really begin talking to God and trying to figure out what was going on in my heart because I struggled to believe His love. I just did.

I knew that God loved the world, and I was a part of the world, but I felt like if He knew what I knew about me, He wouldn't really love me. I got that far. Then I also was with my son, John, a lot those days. I remember talking to God, and I said, "I'd really like to believe that You love me as much as my son does," because Johnny, with his Down syndrome, has a gift of loving unconditionally. He just does.

When he meets people, they light up because he just likes people. He loves me, and I'm his pop. I think all men have issues of identity. We think that God loves us more if we do stuff. We're performance oriented. We want to be accomplishing things. He doesn't know if I'm doing anything. I'm just his dad, and he loves me.

I could make a list of things that he can't do, but I don't think about those things. I think about the fact that he's my son, and I just love him. I just do. I talked to God, and I said, "I'd like to believe that You and I have that same kind of relationship, that we just love each other because of who we are, not based on things like that."

This was the first time I think that I'd ever put everything on the table, that I'd really begin to articulate what my fears were and what my concerns were and what my issues were. That day that I finally got to the point where I said, "If You knew [laughs] the things in me that I know," and it was really funny. The spirit right away said, you need to go read Psalm 139. [laughs]

Here's me telling God, if You knew what was really in my heart and the things that I've done and the thoughts that I've entertained, You wouldn't like me and the Spirit said, you need to go read Psalm 139.

I knew what was in Psalm 139, but I turned to it anyway. I'm going to read the first 18 verses for us today. Everybody can just take a deep breath and just soak this in. I chose a different translation to bring a little bit of a different meaning to it.

"Oh, Jehovah, You have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see

me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I'm going to say even before I say it, Jehovah.

You go before me and follow me. You place Your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand. I can never escape from Your Spirit. I can never get away from Your presence. If I go up to heaven, You are there. If I go down to the grave, You are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there Your hand will guide me and Your strength will support me.

I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night, but even in darkness, I cannot hide from You. To You, the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to You. You made all the delicate inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

Thank You for making me so wonderfully complex. Your workmanship is marvelous. How well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born.

Every day of my life was recorded in Your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are Your thoughts about me, oh God. They cannot be numbered. I can't even count them. They outnumber the grains of sand and when I wake up, You are still with me."

I had a friend say, "There's nothing we can do to make God love us more. There's nothing we can do to make God love us less." About the time God led me to read Psalm 139, a song came to my mind, from the Gaithers, in their album "Reunited". Here are the words to the chorus. "I am loved. I am loved. I can risk loving You. For the one who knows me best loves me most."

I'll read that again. The one who knows me best loves me most. I am loved. You are loved. Won't You please take my hand? We are free to love each other. We are loved. That's what this knowledge does for us. It's freeing to be completely known and completely loved.

Just to make sure that our minds are not playing tricks on us, Romans 5:8, "God shows or God reveals His love for us in that while we were still sinners. Christ died for us." Along that same vein, 1 John 4:10, "This is love. Not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins."

I don't think we can hear this enough. I personally think that earnest Christians are susceptible to feeling like we are never quite enough or, I know God loves so and so, but I really don't think He loves me. We don't even say that, but deep down in our inner being, we entertain that thought.

I think that's a piece of what we call in Scripture 'condemnation.' Romans 8:1, "There's no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus." None, because God does

know us, and God knows how needy we were and are. He sent Jesus to die for us and be our propitiation. Propitiation means He takes the penalty of our sins and restores us. It's a twofold word. It restores us to our Father because this is love.

God took the initiative to love us while we were messy, while we were sinners, knowing full well what was in our hearts. He took the initiative. As we abide in this knowledge and we're rooted and grounded in this awareness of His complete love for us, then -- and the more we take it in the better we're going to be at it -- then we can love others as we have been loved.

When we have been forgiven, it's easier to forgive. When we've been accepted, it's easier to accept. This is how it works. We love because He first loved us. He loves us, and now we can love.

I'm going to read another passage found in Luke 15, where we see the Father loving His boys.

"He said, there was a man who had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' He divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

When he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. As he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. When he came to himself, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger?

I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.' He arose and came to his father. While he was still, a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, for this my son was dead and is alive again.'

He was lost and is found, and they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing, and he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. He said to him, 'your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'

He was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him. He answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' He said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.'

This is a father who has been rooted and grounded and abiding in love from God himself. Then he was able to love both of his sons right where they were, the repentant prodigal and the older brother. I don't know what adjective to use for the one who had his own issues.

This father did not take anything that these boys said or did personally. He just simply, graciously received them both, met them both, loved them both because this father, he was solid. He had been loved. He had been forgiven. He had been accepted, and now he was able to love, forgive, and accept his sons.

This is what is on my heart, that we first take in God's love. We become loved sons, known sons, sons with nothing to hide, sons that are talking to our dad and working out our issues. The more we are rooted and grounded in this kind of race, this kind of forgiveness, this kind of love, then we're equipped to love others as we have been loved. That's it.

I wish now I could have kids because it's taken me decades to get this right down into my bones. My grandchildren are benefiting from this now. I just had a time two nights ago, I was talking to my son who has four kids. I was explaining to them we just had them the previous weekend, and some things happened.

I patiently sat down with each of the kids, and we got our hearts together. Then I looked at him I looked at my son, and I said, in other words, I did exactly what I wished I had done with you, but I'm sorry I didn't have it then. But what I have now, I want to pass on to my grandchildren because I know now that God likes me, loves me.

I don't take things as personally. I'm able to be more even keeled. I'm able to be more gracious because I've received grace. It's bearing really good fruit. It started with me and my dad working on our stuff until I got his love in a special way. Now it's your turn.

Scott: Yeah. This is so, yet again, so huge. If you get this, it'll change everything. In my own life, I'm seeing how much I focus on myself and what things I perceive God has denied me, that it's hard for me. It's like the enemy has a fog that's in the way of seeing and feeling the Father's love sometimes. I mean, that's what the enemy wants to do is keep us from understanding this, from getting this in our heart of hearts, you know. Because if this gets in, there's nothing that can touch us.

When you feel that love of the Father, when you know, when you're rooted and established in His love, you're unstoppable, and the enemy can't handle that. I need to just bask in His love, I think, because it's such a game changer. I'm so often like the older brother in the prodigal son story where I'm just like, "Yeah, but I didn't get this."

Steve: Yet, I don't know about you, but generally, in my past, when I've heard this passage preached on, it was all focusing on grace for the prodigal. They don't think much about the older boy, but the older boy had legitimate issues. What I like, the father didn't say, well, that's stupid, and then walked back inside and party with his younger one. He goes he heard him, didn't raise his voice. Then and what he told him is just amazing. I tear up even reading it.

Son, you've always been with me. All that's mine is yours. What else can I give you? You know? It's, yeah, it's all about the father. It's not about the prodigal. It's about the father. And that's that father had received fatherly love, or he couldn't have been that kind of a father.

Scott: That, like you said about Johnny. That's always been something that was key to my even getting a little bit of this, was seeing how my kids responded when they were little, especially when I'd come home from work and they'd just be like, daddy, and come running at me.

Scott: I saw that as a picture of worship and of what our worship should be like of God. I was like, that's worship. Not some of the stuff we do nowadays. And then that love is so genuine. That picture, I'm like, oh, if my kids love me like that, maybe God loves me a lot.

Steve: Yep. Our children teach us what's important.

Scott: If I love my kids the way I do, I mean, my daughter sent me a video of Henry yesterday taking a couple of steps and looking so proud of himself. I called her up, and she had me on speaker. I said, hi or something, whatever I said.

She was like, she and her husband both were like, oh, that's so cute because Henry started looking for me as soon as he heard my voice. Then he was like, oh, he just lit up and smiled. He looked for you, granddad. I'm like, yeah. If the father loves me, like, I love that little guy. I'm set.

Steve: Amen. He does in spades. Let's pray. Father, thank You for these inspired, accurate words that are informing our mind as well as our heart. But I pray in addition that Your Spirit would pour out Your love on each of us in a deeper way. Make us know that we are fully known, fully loved. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@Gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.