

## A Deeper Experience

### DAY 1—TO KNOW AND BELIEVE

**“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isa. 49:15).**

Can a child fully understand the love of God if he has not felt the love of an earthly father? In my experience, it is very difficult. I had four fathers. My birth father divorced my mother when she was pregnant with me. I felt his rejection deeply. My mother’s second husband was an alcoholic and very abusive—he even attempted to kill her. My next stepfather was kind but greedy. He, along with two friends, robbed three banks. He ended up in prison, and my mother divorced him.

My childhood years were anything but glamorous. I was insecure, had low self-esteem, and felt very unloved. It was difficult for me to make friends in school. As a teenager, I longed for acceptance from my peers, but my search for love only left me feeling empty and alone. I didn’t know that my Father in heaven was working behind the scenes to fill that void. “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. . . . I have called you by your name; you are Mine” (Jer. 1:5; Isa. 43:1). “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:18). “When my father . . . forsake[s] me, then the Lord will take care of me” (Ps. 27:10).

When I was 19, a friend invited me to attend a Christian concert at her local church. One of the music group leaders gave this invitation: “*If your life is empty and you feel alone, won’t you give Jesus a chance?*” His words and the music touched my heart, and I responded to the call to come forward and receive Jesus.

I was reading the Gospel of John when I came across this phrase: “the Father Himself loves you” (John 16:27, first part). It struck me! I had heard that Jesus loved me, but the Father? Could I really believe that? All I knew of God the Father was that He seemed far away from me—somewhere in heaven—and that He could see everything I was doing. I was afraid of Him. As I read the Scriptures, I fell in love with Jesus. Jesus came, however, to show us the love of His Father. When Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father,” Jesus answered, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14: 8, 9).

I had to accept that God the Father truly loved me through His Son, Jesus Christ. “The very first step in approaching God is to know and believe the love He has to us; for it is through the drawing of His love that we are led to come to Him” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 104, 105). “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Also, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. . . .” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Once I understood that God loved me unconditionally, I found strength to forgive my earthly fathers for rejecting me. God gave me grace to move on. I know now that I have a heavenly Father and that I am a daughter of the Most-High God, the King of kings. Our heavenly Father understands the human need for love and acceptance. He didn’t forget about me.

So what about my fourth father? I was 11 when my mother remarried. Because all the other men left us, I wondered if he would stay. He did. I adopted him as my dad and love him as if he were my biological father. He has provided the security and love that any father should. My mother is gone now, but my dad remains a vital part of my life. A father is more than blood.

How about you? Have you been abandoned by a parent or family member? Do you long to be accepted and secure? Do you ache to be loved unconditionally? “Live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go. Know and believe the love that God has to us, and you are secure; that love is a fortress impregnable to all the delusions and assaults of Satan” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 119). “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Prov. 18:10).

### SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR THE PRAYER TIME

#### Praise

- Father, we praise You for loving us first.
- We praise You that You draw us with Your love (Jer. 31:3).
- We praise You for Your unfailing care.
- Lord, we praise You for Your healing power.

## Confession

- Lord, please forgive us for any sins that keep us from having a deeper experience with You. [Spend a few moments in personal, silent prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to search your hearts and show you any sins you may need to confess privately to God, not publicly.]

## Supplication and Intercession

- Lord, we pray, as Paul did in Eph. 3:17-19:
  - That You will find a permanent home in our hearts as we learn to trust You.
  - That our roots will go down deeply into the soil of Your love.
  - That we will understand the width and length and depth and height of Your love.
  - That we will be filled with all the fullness of God.
- We ask that You fill us with Your love and make us passionate about loving others to Jesus.
- We pray for families whose world is filled with chaos, sorrow, and confusion.
- Please bless the hundreds of thousands of outreach activities around the world during 2019. We pray especially for Total Member Involvement evangelism efforts in India, June 2019, and Papua New Guinea, May 2020.
- We pray for Adventist members who face persecution or imprisonment because of their beliefs.
- We pray for a spiritual revival among Seventh-day Adventist young people who attend public colleges and universities worldwide. May they become vibrant ambassadors for Christ.
- We pray for the 69 percent of earth's population who have not received an unclouded presentation of Jesus.
- Lord, we pray for the seven (or more) people on our individual prayer lists. May they let the Holy Spirit work in their lives. We also pray for the personal needs of those gathered here and for our local prayer requests.

## Thanksgiving

- Father, we thank You for those [name specific people] who have loved and nurtured us.
- Thank You that You had Your hand over us before we were born (Ps. 139:13).
- Lord, thank You that even if I had been the only one, You would have died for me (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 187).
- Thank You for answering our prayers even before we ask.

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## SUGGESTED SONGS TO SING

"The Wonder of It All" (SDA Hymnal #75); "And Can It Be?" (SDA Hymnal #198); "I Will Sing of Jesus' Love" (SDA Hymnal #183)

## PROMISES TO CLAIM AS YOU PRAY

- "For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God" (John 16:27).
- "The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you'" (Jer. 31:3).
- "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him" (1 John 3:1).