

She Comes Running

In April of 2011, I became a grandmother for the first time. For many years I had heard those older than me speak about the experience of grandchildren with such emotion. It was an emotion I couldn't understand. I'm still not sure I understand it, but now I have encountered it and can say that it's a beautiful thing. To see your children experience the joy of becoming a parent is almost more than your heart can hold. When they hold that tiny baby for the first time, they know a love they've never known before and watching them nurture and love that little bundle is beyond words. It is quite possibly the first time they really begin to comprehend the love you have had for them all these years.

The Lord has used me being a 'Grand' to take me to a deeper encounter of love. One of the sweetest times of being a grandmother stirs a feeling I don't think I'll ever forget. It still makes me smile and makes my heart skip a beat! Our oldest grandchild, had just learned to walk without too much bobbling and was on the road to trying to run. She was also at the stage of trying to talk and was managing words like 'puppy', 'mama', 'daddy', 'shoe'. One afternoon we pulled up to their house for a visit and they were awaiting our arrival in the front yard. As I stepped out of the pickup she saw me, her eyes lit up and she said, "Ganny" for the first time and started running toward me as fast as her little legs could carry her. She was smiling the whole way. You talk about dancing inside! She said my name and came running toward me with such excitement.

We know that the good things that happen here on earth are just a small reflection of the things that occur in heaven. God ordained the family. He speaks of children and grandchildren. It was in His heart to do it this way. Not long ago, my husband and I were talking...again!!...about the joy that little innocent act brought us and I just knew our Heavenly Father was in on the conversation and rejoicing with us. You see, He understood. When we come running to Him calling His name, His heart rejoices, too. We are His children. Remember when I said that my children didn't fully grasp the love I had for them until they experienced it with their own children? In the same way, the Lord used the love I have for my children and grandchildren to show me just a glimpse of the love He has for me. I know I've only begun to scratch the surface of that love and it is almost more than I can stand...but there's more!

As grandparents, of course we love to buy gifts and little surprises to take to the kiddos...but only on occasion. They aren't conditioned to assume we have something for them every time we visit so when they run to us with those bright smiles and sparkling eyes, it is because they want to see us. They love our presence and want to spend time with us. Whether or not we have a gift for them is secondary.

I've noticed that sometimes they get so excited to get to us that, as they are running, they stumble and fall. Their hearts want to go faster than their little feet can travel. Never once have I gotten disgusted with them for stumbling. Never once did I decide to walk away because they fell. I don't

expect perfection. I certainly don't want them to wait until they have it all together to come running. I can't even imagine turning my back on them because they failed to run to me without a flaw. It's that pure love...that innocence...that makes it so special. All that's in their heart to do is to be scooped up in our arms and held. In their excitement, they just got a little ahead of themselves.

I've noticed, too, that they don't care what they look like when they come running. Barefooted and dirty faced; spit shined and dressed to a tee, or not dressed at all...they just don't care. They don't stop and analyze how they should run or compare themselves to the other to see if they're running the same way. No, at the sight of us they just drop what they're doing and run with everything they've got. No wonder Jesus said unless you come as a little child you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This may not be exactly what the Bible means when it talks of 'first love', but I believe it is one facet of it, for sure.

That picture of abandoned love is what I believe the Father desires of us. He desires that we run to Him as fast as we can and yet He knows that by doing that, we might get a little ahead of ourselves. Sometimes we will stumble and barely notice. Sometimes we will fall, and that fall will hurt so badly that all we can do is sit for a minute, cry and wait for the Father's hands to reach out to us. He doesn't walk away. He runs toward us to pick us up and dust us off. He scoops us up and holds us just like we do our own children. I know Jaycee's heart is to get to us. If she knocks something over in her excitement, we can deal with that. Her heart is what pleases me. In the same way, the Father sees the hearts and He's pleased. I would never look at my grandbabies and tell them, "Until you can run to me without stumbling or making a mess, don't even try." And if I, being less than perfect, know how to good gifts to my children, how much more does He love giving to us? Unfortunately, unlike those little ones, we sometimes hold back...compare ourselves to others...wonder what others think. Sometimes we want to have it all together before we step out for fear of failure and yet, the Father just loves us to run to Him in that childlike innocence.

I wondered at times, because our three grandchildren are close in age, if I would feel the same way when the other two would see us and come running. Our grandson has just begun doing it and let me tell you, I feel no less excitement and love than I did with the first one. I'm sure the same will be true for our youngest in a few short months. All of this brought back memories of years ago when I was pregnant with my second child, wondering if I could possibly have enough love in me to love him as much as I did my older son. It was really a concern because I didn't think it was possible. I didn't think my heart could carry that much love...but it did. I found myself in the same place with my grandchildren. When we found out Jacody was on the way, I thought, "How can I possibly love this child as much as I do Jaycee?" But I did. Again, a few months later when we heard the news of Atley, there was more than enough love for her. I experience such joy and happiness with each of these babies and celebrate each of the milestones in their lives with an unwavering level of excitement. How can this much love be in one heart? Because we are created in the image of our Father, and our Father is Love. We are in Him and He is in us. The only limitation is that I physically need six arms to hug all three babies at one time. They may have to compete for the

hugs, but there is no need to compete for the love. As children of God, we sometimes feel like we have to compete for Father's love and that's just not true. If my human heart can pour out unending love on my children and grandchildren, how much more can the Father, who IS love, pour out on his. There is always enough...and not just enough...but exceedingly, abundantly more than enough. And we can all sit in His lap at the same time and be held.

The Father speaks to us in our own language and as I said, He used these sweet times to teach me. I saw just a glimpse of His heart as He was a part of our conversation that day. He, too, loves it when we see Him and run to him with everything we've got. He loves it when we run to Him just for the pleasure of being with Him...not just because He has something for us or because we need something from Him. Yes, we are always in need of Him because without Him we can do nothing; and yes, He always has something good for us because He is the giver of good gifts. Sometimes we do approach Him out of our need and that's ok. Sometimes my grandbabies run to me because they need help with something. That's a part of the journey, but what I saw that day was His heart skipping a beat when we run to Him, calling out "Daddy!" with such excitement just because we want to be with Him....just because we saw Him coming. That never gets old with the Father just like it has never gotten old with me.

"Unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 18:3