



A V o i c e F r o m T h e W i l d e r n e s s

A Personal Loving God

It was October 1985, and I was about six weeks pregnant with our third child. I was one of those who suffered with morning sickness most of the day. I had just spent the last eight hours sitting in a mandatory inservice for nurses. I was tired and anxious to pick up our two daughters and go home. As I got into our Honda Accord to drive across town to my girlfriend's house where the girls were waiting, the thought flashed through my mind, "You are going to have an accident today. Be careful and drive slowly."

Wow, where did that thought come from? Am I so tired and sick that I am having morbid thoughts? I tried to push the thought out of my mind, but it came back again before I even got out of the parking lot.

Driving cautiously, I crossed a residential area. Even though there was very little traffic, I stopped and looked twice before proceeding through each stop sign. Soon I was heading toward Downers Grove on 57th Street, a four-lane road. The traffic continued to be unusually light, yet I still drove carefully, watching every side street. I anticipated every green light as it turned yellow, and gave myself plenty of time to stop. I drove in the right-hand lane, allowing more hurried drivers to pass me on the left.

I had nearly reached my destination when a pickup that had just passed me went into the left turn lane and entered part-way into the intersection. Just as I was about to enter the same intersection, a car coming from the other direction turned out in front of me. I hit the brakes, swerved to the left, and cried, "Oh God, save me!" Despite my effort to avoid it, we collided in the intersection. I heard the sounds of metal crunching, glass breaking, and people screaming, and I was almost paralyzed by fear.

I waited for a brief moment, and all was quiet. I wondered if I was all right. Making a quick mental evaluation, I realized I was not seriously hurt. Then my mind turned to the people in the other car. Both ladies were crying from fear and pain, and I could see blood on one lady's face.

Within a few brief moments that seemed very long, people came to help us, and a police officer arrived to make his report and call for medical assistance. Meanwhile, my mind recalled the warning that had come to me before I'd left the hospital that day. Had God prepared me for this trial? Had He cautioned me not to be in my usual hurry in order to save me from a worse or even fatal accident?

What do you think?

I know the answer. I knew the answer that day. I felt His tender love and watch-care even though I wasn't thinking of Him in the busyness and circumstances of my day. I know He spared my life and the lives of the other two ladies. **He is a very personal and loving God!**

I'm sure many of you experience similar situations where the still small voice of God brings thoughts to your mind. Perhaps He says, "Don't do that," "Don't say that," "Be careful," "Watch out," or "Slow down." Are you listening?

Why is this little story significant? It is not just that God gave me a warning, or that He kept me from being seriously injured or even killed. Rather, I began to realize as never before that **He is personally interested in me** and yearning to direct me— and each of us — through the day.

That event motivated me to consider what little time I actually spent with Him in a personal way. I had taken Him for granted. Oh yes, I prayed. I went to church. I even helped lead out in many of the church programs. I lived a wholesome life and did not indulge in bad habits. But I didn't really have a conscious awareness of His presence with me, even though for the previous few months my husband and I had begun spending time with Him on a fairly regular basis.

In this experience I not only realized His love and care for me, but I also began to feel more of my need for Him. During my recuperation, I had a lot more time for reflection and seeking after Him. **Love responds to love**, and that is what began to happen in my heart. I started to love Him more for loving me when I was too busy and preoccupied for Him. I began to want to read and study more of His word to become better acquainted with Him. I wanted to know His will for me in ways I had never thought of before. I wanted His wisdom and guidance in my life, and He was there multiplying every small effort I made to fill the longing in my heart.

Over time, God revealed to us many blessings which resulted from the accident. First, more time spent with Him in a personal way produced a deeper commitment to be directed by Him. Second, it gave me more time with my children to really tune in to them, as I was no longer pre-occupied with my other interests. It also helped provide us with some additional funds to make our move to the country. And lastly, it helped me begin learning how to depend on God when I am in pain or don't feel good.

Over the years since that time, I have come to love and appreciate my time in communion with God and in His word, which truly has been a *lamp to my feet and a light to my path*. (Ps. 119:105) In it I have found guidance and comfort that I

never knew before. It is not just a book of history, but a living resource for the daily Christian walk. As I have **made time to seek Him** and His will for me as a wife and mother, I have been thrilled to see how powerfully His principles work when I am surrendered to Him and receiving His enabling grace to live them.

I would like to share with you one of the simple examples of how God's love has come alive to me through His word. As I have read about the faithful men of old, God has showed me that there are principles I can learn as a parent to train and prepare my children to be faithful to Him regardless of the trials they may face. In studying the lives of Christ, David, Elisha, John the Baptist, Joseph and many others, I have seen a clearer picture of a personal, loving God who directed these men in the mundane, apparently insignificant, details of life and who was still guiding them when they made decisions that changed the world. I saw some common threads that contributed to making these men whom God wanted them to be. It was exciting to see, and I wanted to follow the principles for our family.

First, each of these men lived in a more rural setting - in the wilderness, in the quiet of the country, in a little mountain village, in retirement, or in the plains. They were not raised in the city with all the attractions and distractions that bombard the senses. Every possible avenue was closed to temptation.

Next, I noticed that their lives were plain and simple. They were trained in the practical, daily duties of life, often experiencing trial and hardship. Some of them were poor in this world's goods, having a very lowly lot in life. All of them learned to listen to and obey instruction.

I further noticed the inspiring descriptions of the characters these men formed in their childhood. They had willing hands, and were earnest workers. They were joyful and unselfish, yet persevering and fearless. Truthfulness and integrity characterized their lives, regardless of opposition. They learned to control their thoughts, and had moral firmness amid immorality. Their parents trained them to be helpful, courteous, cheerful, steadfast, and faithful in the little things.

What a loving God who not only shows me how to develop these attributes in my own life, but also how to train my children! He says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." (Ps. 32:8) I believe that He not only gives me His wisdom, but also His strength (Matt. 19:26) to accomplish this calling. He longs to personally teach each of us His will and ways. **He wants to show me — and you also — that**

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all things are possible in Him. I have been greatly encouraged and motivated by His love shown in His word and in His Spirit working in my heart. I long to do all that He shows me.

The results of faithful training by parents not only brings the reward of God's honor in this life, but, more importantly, the reward of eternity with the God of love. We, too, can begin to experience the results in our daily lives as well as in our families. It is truly the happiest way I have found to live and look forward to the final reward with Him.

I began to see that everything commonly viewed as advantageous to success is contrary to the way these men were raised. The environment of the city or suburbia with houses on every side; the traffic; constant noise from TV's and radios, sirens, trains, and planes; the unending light from street lights and neon lights -- all keep the senses constantly stimulated. Home life is often extravagant and plush. Ease and amusements are sought, driving individuals and families to be hurried, pushed, and pressed. Time with God and realization of His loving presence is lacking in the lives of even professed Christians.

Many people are swept into this kind of lifestyle even while living in the country. This is evident in the demanding, impatient, disrespectful, disobedient characters of both children and adults alike. Although these results are not intended, they naturally result from excluding God from the heart and life. Sadly, they lead to current emptiness and eternal loss.

As I have studied inspiration, I have seen the contrast between the two lifestyles. Even if one cannot reside in the quiet of the country, it is not necessary to accept and live by the standards of the world. What we choose to do in the home life is the key to the direction that we, as well as our children, will go. If we choose to connect ourselves with God in our present circumstances and allow Him to lead and guide us, He not only will direct our steps, but also will empower us to accomplish His will. He is a personal, loving God.

I am coming to understand more and more the guidance of God's still small voice -- the quiet impressions made upon my heart. What seemed strange fifteen years ago before the accident, I now recognize as my personal, loving God leading me in the smallest of matters in my life. I have come to know His call to my heart as I am learning how He speaks to me through **His written voice**. Often He brings to my mind the things He has shown me in my communion time with Him, and helps me to choose the better way. He continues to call to my heart as a mother in coop-

erating with Him to train my children in His ways. He reveals the character traits that He honors, and He helps me to understand how to cultivate them in my own heart as well as in theirs.

Obedience, motivated by love for Him, is at the foundation of a real vital relationship. As I learn to respond to His love, He helps me understand how to train my children through love to be obedient to both parents and to God. And this experience continues to grow even in their teen years.

Recently we were helping a family with young children gather wood for the winter. On one of the trips back to the house with a truck load of wood, I asked the mother if it would be all right for her little girl to ride in the back of the truck with us. The little girl was delighted with the offer and her mother's approval. We drove very slowly, and she really enjoyed the new experience. After loading the truck again and getting ready to return with that load, I felt strongly impressed not to ride in the back of the truck, nor to let the little girl ride either. Who do you think gave me that thought? I know it was a personal, loving God. Of course, the little girl wanted to ride back there again, but I told her mother that I felt we should not ride in the back this time.

Within seconds after the truck started moving up the hill, the load shifted and came tumbling down right in the area we would have been sitting. How thankful I was that I had listened to my personal, loving God and had yielded without questioning or reasoning His message away. How thankful I also was that the little girl had chosen to obey my denial of this truck ride without fussing and whining.

I find my time of communion with God and the study of His word to be a preparation for my day. I find encouragement and strength to face each challenge as I walk with God throughout the day. He has given me hope in times of despair. He has strengthened me when I've been weak. He has instructed me when the circumstances seemed confusing or unclear. He is a personal God, and I am learning to trust Him more each day and to respond in love to His love. I am challenged and motivated to be all that He desires me to become.

Are you experiencing His love? Are you aware of His personal guidance in your life? If not, you can be. It does require a simple choice to say, "Lord, I want you to be real to me in my life." And He will! But you must realize that He will want to guide you in all areas of your life -- not just the ones you can't manage, but the ones you have been managing as well. **You must give all!** Then He will be all and in all to you. You will find yourself in love with Him more and more

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each day, spending time with Him in His word and in a conscious communion even in the little things, whether you are driving out of a parking lot, or in the back of the truck with a load of wood. **He is a personal, loving God!**

One thing that has helped me to see the lessons God wants to teach me through His word is to put them on paper. For instance, when I was studying how the various men in the Bible responded to God's love, I made a simple outline of my findings, and titled it *Attributes Especially Needed for Children*. This allowed me to see in one quick glance what God wanted me to see and understand. This practice has helped me keep my focus day after day.

One day, just for fun, I asked my family if they could match each person in the Bible with the corresponding description of their home life and character. I read each descriptive list, and they identified the person. Then we discussed the results. What a motivation it was to all of us! Try it with your own family!

I thought this simple, sample outline on paper might also help you as you study to extract from inspiration what God may be trying to communicate to you. You can use this as a spring-board for many areas of personal study. Then use it in your family to encourage each one that God is personally interested in us, our choices, our destiny, for **He is a personal, loving God.**

A Voice From The Wilderness

This publication is available free of charge.

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Attributes Especially Needed for Children

Have a little fun and try to match the man (David, John the Baptist, Jesus, Elisha, or Joseph) to the inspired description and personalize it to your life and family.

Home location:

little mountain village	quietude of country	retirement	dwelt in the plains	lonely region
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Home life:

quiet, simple, no display, poor, poverty, adversity, helped parents, mother instructed	trained in habits of simplicity, pure worship, practical daily life	perils & hardships, lowly lot, contemplated works of God, daily communion	simple, pure, joyous, became a slave, trial, suffering, father instructed	plain, simplicity, self-denial, studied men, daily duties
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Character qualities developed:

willing hands, earnest worker, unselfish, faithful, cheerful, firm as rock to principle, patient	quiet, gentle, energetic, faithful in little things, cooperated	joyful, fearless, faithful, earnest, persevering, adoration for God, reverent	obedient, truthful, gentle, faithful, moral firmness	helpful, faithful, steadfast, words - plain, pointed, & hopeful, distrustful of self
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Results:

not my will but Thine be done	God honored, abiding trust in God	heart and mind strengthened	preserved, simplicity & fidelity to God	knew how to reach men with truth in love
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All were faithful to God and to their call, for God was to them a personal, loving God!