

Love Rest
by
Amy Carroll

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." John 15:9 (NIV)

I read books about it. I listened to sermons about it. I wrote about it. I sang songs about it. I thought about it. I was completely immersed, so why couldn't I get it?

God loves me.

It's a simple truth. How could a 44 year old woman who has loved Jesus since she was 10 not *feel* loved by God? Deep down I was going through the motions of believing...hoping...but truthfully, I had fallen into the mindset of working for God's love and acceptance. I could have given you a theological dissertation on grace and salvation by faith, but my perfectionist, I'll-do-it-myself attitude blocked a full, heart-changing understanding.

One day I blurted out to a dear friend and mentor, "Why can't I feel the love of God? I'm working so hard!"

She let the silence sit for a beat before a big grin spread across her face. "Did you hear yourself?" she asked. "You can't *work* to know the love of God. You need to rest in the love of God." Then she encouraged me to relax and pray, asking God to reveal His love to me in a deep, transforming way.

Several months later, still in the midst of my wrestling match to understand God's lavish love, my eyes drank in the site of a bent and wizened woman wearing a bridal veil and carrying a tattered bouquet of silk flowers hobbling down an aisle created of women. I was in Kolkata, India helping with a mock wedding at a women's conference. Although the atmosphere following a message on being Jesus' bride was largely celebratory, tears streamed down the old woman's face.

The scene gripped my heart. Here was a woman, because of the fear and superstition of her native religion, who missed the love of God most of her life. He was always with her, however, loving, drawing and wooing her heart until in the midst of her sickness and the pronouncement of her numbered days, she abandoned everything to take hold of His love. I watched as she walked feebly down an aisle toward her adoring groom, Jesus, His love healing her of a lifetime of hurts and making her radiant and strong despite her fragile frame.

As I watched her weep, something broke inside me, and I found myself kneeling on the cold, concrete floor sobbing. In John 15:9, Jesus tells His followers, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." The ever present reality of God's love for me had never changed, but I had not remained there. In His

tenderness, God placed me in a home where I learned of His love every day as my mother and father watched me grow from an infant to an awkward teenager. But just like the elderly Indian woman, I didn't stay and rest in His limitless love. I walked into a place of self-sufficiency that left me with a weary hollowness that only God's presence and love could fill.

Seeing a weak, impoverished, old woman who had little left to give to God being fully encompassed in His love brought truth like a piercing ray of sunshine through a foggy morning. It's a simple truth. He loves me, not because I have anything to give to Him, but simply because I'm His. God doesn't call me to manufacture a feeling but simply to rest in His love and remain in it. He loves you too. Limitlessly. Profoundly. Lavishly. Relax, rest and bask in His love today.

Dear Lord, your very nature is love. You surround me and fill me with it just because of who You are. Help me to rest and remain in your love instead of walking away to the exhaustion of my own efforts. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Reflect and Respond:

What makes you feel loved? Reflect and journal about times that God has revealed His love for you in these ways.

Pray and ask God to help you remember evidences of His love and to see new ones today. Relax and watch.

Power Verse:

Jeremiah 31: 3, "The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." (NIV)

© 2012 by Amy Carroll. All rights reserved.

