

Love Reinvested

by

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"Now in this way those who are trusted with something valuable must show they are worthy of that trust."

1 Corinthians 4:2 New Century Version

The musician stood before us and with an emotional voice shared that his beloved daughter, who he had raised since she was five months old when he married her mother, asked why she didn't have his last name. She was coming of an age when she noticed this, especially since her siblings had his last name. It was time to deal with it, and he decided to pursue adoption of his stepdaughter. The musician shared that he had ambivalent feelings about doing this, for although he loved her and saw this child as his own daughter, he didn't want her scarred by the rejection of her biological father. Although the birth father had contributed nothing to the child's raising, including clothes, food and housing costs, or support in any way, the musician had hoped the man would show up in court and fight for his daughter, like any real father would. The musician loved his stepdaughter enough to want what was best for her, even though it would be unfair to him. He thought she needed to know the birth father still cared for her in his own way and wanted her to carry his name.

But sadly, the birth father was a no show, and as he had done all of the child's life, he was consistent to the end in that he showed no concern or interest in the child he birthed. The adoption went through uncontested by him. As I listened to the musician share his family's story, I could not help but admire his love and kindness. I could see that his ability to love like this was being summoned from something deep within him, for that kind of thing is not normal. It is much too "Christ-like" to be the product of a man's choice. When I heard his words, I thought to myself, "How could he be so selfless, when the jerk who was his stepdaughter's birth father had had no part in her life? Why should he even be considered?" Then I heard the musician say something more, and I realized where his perspective came from.

"I was so sad because my daughter's birth father rejected her to the end and didn't fight for her. But she has me, and I know I will never reject her, much like God has never rejected me, and has fought for me all my life."

Bingo! There was his reason. There was his motivation. There was the behavior model he was choosing to follow instead of what most people do, and why he could do something most men would not do. It was because of what Christ had done for him

that he could do that which was not normal. He was giving that which he was receiving from Christ, and it was a powerful example of obedience, and a radical perspective for living a radical life for Christ. Where did a perspective like this come from? It comes from the Bible. Read it for yourself again. In the passage above, we see a clear example that when God has entrusted something sacred to us, it in turns requires that we embrace the gift as a sacred responsibility. In the case of the musician, he realized that Christ had invested His life into him, and in fact, had entrusted to him His love to be shared with others. He connected that in the case of his stepdaughter and her birth father, he needed to reinvest Christ's love in them. He connected that dot.

But, there are many more ways we do this, and this is only one example through a humble man and his challenge. In his case, it was to love the most unlovable scoundrel around his life, because of his love for his stepdaughter, and the love Christ had given to him. But, what if it were you or I? Our situation will likely be different, for we all have different challenges that are unique to us. It might not be a birth father of our child we are dealing with. But the question becomes personal when we see those challenges through the grid of embracing our sacred responsibility with the challenging person we are dealing with, instead of being angry and impatient with him or her. So, here's my question to you.

Is there a scoundrel in your life that needs Christ's love through you to him? Are you willing to put your personal feelings on hold and embrace your sacred responsibility to give to him what you have been receiving from Christ? Several years ago when I was in business, I had a relationship that I depended on turn against me. He was the "scoundrel" in my life. We had a clear contract to build a home for my wife and me with this man. We stipulated clearly that he was hired to control costs. We would not build outside our budget, no matter how much we desired to upgrade to better appliances and such. He agreed, and we had a contract. Then we started the project.

It was challenging working with the man, for he carried a lot of personal baggage into our relationship from his past that I was not prepared for. It was baggage that traveled as far back as his childhood. It was explained to me by one who knew him well that he was a character who could not allow himself to have success, for he would somehow sabotage his own self in some way. Sure enough, he chose to do it on my watch. The guy actually built a beautiful home for us. However, we had to eventually sell it, for it went way beyond our budget. The day he delivered our final bill was when it hit the fan, for there was no prior warning that he had gone over the budget by a large, large amount. Rather than face me, he left the bill in our mailbox and skipped town for a few days. Again, bazaar behavior was seen. He didn't make sense. Now I was really mad. I was steaming, for he had broken our contract and placed me in financial jeopardy because of it. I had every right to sue him. He would have lost. I was motivated. I was justified. I'll never forget what happened next.

When I am challenged with things such as that event, I tend to get alone and seek God's perspective before acting out what I am feeling. I have learned to avoid some mistakes such as being misled by a limited perspective, or even knowing the truth, but not handling it as Christ would have me deal with it. Therefore, I go to the Lord and sometimes complain, but I try to always seek wisdom with how to deal with my challenge. This was the case when I had the shock of a very large, unexpected bill dumped on me that day. I went to my screened porch and cried out to the Lord with my anger, my condemnation of the man, and my extreme disappointment in having to pay for a purchase I never intended to have. The fact is, I was angry because I was trying to be a steward of the resources God had entrusted to me, and I felt that this man had violated my plan. It was a fact that he had betrayed my confidence and trust in him. He had violated our contract. I was in the right. Therefore, I felt I was in the right to ask God to take action against this terrible violation. Well, God took action, but it was not how I expected it to go.

I began my complaint and reminded God that my intention was to be a good steward of His resources, and this was an expense, and even now a house that was not in my plan. In fact, it was forced upon me because of this man's negligence. After I settled down a bit, I heard words spoken to my heart, "Be MY champion in this." Almost immediately, I had a picture pop into my mind of a regal knight in armor, wearing the colors of the king he represented. Another thought that this knight represented the values of his king came to me. If he represented a ruthless king the knight would be ruthless. If he represented a good king, then the knight would represent those values. When I heard God ask me to be His champion, I knew He was telling me to represent His ideals in the situation I was facing.

But, I also knew that what He was challenging me to do next would be very difficult. Like the musician who was asked to be Christ-like to someone who didn't deserve it, I too was being asked to do the same. I knew God's values, and the ones I would be asked to represent were mercy and forgiveness. When He asked me to be His champion in the situation I was praying about, I knew He was telling me to forgive the man. God also told me that he would have no difficulty restoring our lost resources if I obey. But it was my choice to entrust this forgiveness of the debt to the Lord on the man's behalf. It was one of the hardest things I've had to do. But, I also knew it was the right thing to do, if it was my desire to represent my King by my life. Did my act of forgiveness become a catalyst for change with the builder? I'm sorry to say that I never saw it, and other clients of his fell victim as well. But, the issue wasn't whether he deserved it or if it would change him. The issue is the fact that Christ deserved it, and it changed me. However, I did see a large sale come to me only a few months later that completely restored the lost resources used to pay this builder's debt. The scripture I listed above points out that the reason we live radical lives that will do things rarely seen by most people in the world such as radical forgiveness, is because Christ has entrusted something very valuable to us.

He has entrusted to us His name that we are identified with, and because of this we have to protect it by bringing glory to Him even in the most difficult of situations. Therefore, when you face your next challenge with someone who has hurt or offended you, also consider that it is through the greatest challenges that you find your greatest opportunity to bring glory to the name of our King. Next time you

have this opportunity, stop and consider what is at stake, for God has invested greatly into you both the reason and ability to represent Him well. So ... represent Him well.