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Love of Life Vs. Love of Death

I want to make it clear how important the belief in a living God is to a culture. This is why I start with more questions: Why has the twentieth-century embrace of secularism unleashed human depravity of unprecedented proportions? Gender confusion, pronoun confusion, sexualization of children, drag queens performing in schools, killing babies at birth, etc. You can add more I am sure, but why? Why is this so rapidly happening?

What is it about our cultural milieu that it is so easily willing to accept immorality, corruption, wickedness, pornography, sexual abuse with children and debauchery without seemingly any resistance? And more recently, I am reading about the growing trend among women to not want to have a child. Are these things happening because we have no God?

At the Catholic Prayer Breakfast in 2018, Cardinal Sarah,⁵⁶ explained that gender ideology, same-sex “marriage,” and transgender bathroom policies are demonic attacks on humanity. He noted, “This is not an ideological war between competing ideas. This is about defending ourselves, children, and future generations from a demonic ideology that says children do not need mothers and fathers. It denies human nature and wants to cut off entire generations from God.”

Thank God for Cardinal Sarah’s voice, but where are the other voices of the people of God? Where is the community of believers? Is it because we no longer have confidence in a living God? Could it be because we have only a head knowledge of Him, not heart faith? Or are we cowards, afraid to speak our truth?

Perhaps we think our Creator will take care of everything, so we don’t need to do anything but trust Him. And of course, some of us have bought into the idea that He is dead, so life no longer has any meaning and purpose for us.

Hate speech

I am sure you are familiar with the charge of “hate speech” whenever someone expresses beliefs that differ from those in authority! Perhaps you have experienced it. Hate simply means that you do not have a right to exist anymore, especially in

⁵⁶ Cardinal Sarah (1945–) is a Guinean prelate of the Catholic Church. A conservative cardinal since late 2010, he was prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments from late 2014 to early 2021 when he resigned. He has authored several books, including *Couples, Awaken Your Love* (2021).

someone's life. They want to eliminate you from conversations in the market square, and they will do what they have to do to destroy you.

A few years ago, I was accused of this when I wrote my weekly article for our newspaper. I found it difficult to understand the hatred; in fact, I felt quite intimidated by the charge of hate speech made in the public forum section of our newspaper. It was new to me; I didn't realize how bad things had become in our culture.

According to the late Charles Krauthammer,⁵⁷ "Liberals think conservatives are evil." Perhaps this explains the Left's use of name calling like *Nazis*, *bigots*, *dangerous extremists* as a way to silence the voices of people whose moral, spiritual, or political views they disagree with.

Currently the accusations of hate speech are very familiar across our country. It is an attempt to silence our voices, our stories of truth, of facts, of reason, and our testimonies of a living God. In my opinion, the people doing this have rejected the need for a personal living God. Science, government, or climate change is the God they serve. And without a Creator God and His Sacrificial Lamb, their souls are empty and their lives have no meaning and purpose, so they want to destroy the people who do know a living God.

Getting rid of God

Eric Metaxas wrote, "Once you get rid of God, you get rid of the idea that human beings have any inherent dignity or worth. It's unavoidable, and what happens in places where those ideas disappeared amounts to perhaps the most monstrous evil in all human history."⁵⁸ This makes it easy to kill babies at birth, or people who are deformed or old, like Hitler did.

When the Oxford mathematician John Lennox visited the Soviet-bloc countries after the fall of communism, he heard people say, "We thought we could get rid of God and retain a value for human beings. We were wrong. We destroyed both God and man."⁵⁹

War Between God and No God

For me, Metaxas, in his book, *Is Atheism Dead?* connects the dots between atheism (no God) and the evil we are seeing arise in our Western world. How else can we explain the destruction of a civil culture? It is much easier to hate life, be violent, and murder others when you have no living God.

In recent years, we have seen a movement toward the love of death – on t-shirts, in music, interest in cemeteries, in symptoms like depression and suicides, mental illnesses, addictions, and in murder – as our culture slowly loses touch with the Giver of Life.

Just yesterday, I heard about a CFO of Bed & Bath who took his life by jumping out of a window. In recent years, we have heard about an increase of suicides by famous people

⁵⁷ Charles Krauthammer (1950–2018) was a moderate liberal American political columnist who turned independent conservative as a political pundit.

⁵⁸ Eric Metaxas, *Is Atheism Dead?* (2021), p. 278

⁵⁹ Metaxas, *Is Atheism Dead?* (2021), p. 278

like Kate Spade and Antony Bourdain – also among much younger people. About Spade’s death, her husband said: “It clearly wasn’t her. There were personal demons she was battling.”

The god of this world

Remember, underneath all of these symptoms we have an enemy named Satan. When Adam disobeyed God, he lost his God-given power. So the tempter himself became the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Gloria Copeland⁶⁰ explains, “The world speaks of everything on this earth that’s under the influences of the devil. It refers to the fallen world system he’s set up here and to the thinking behind it. It encompasses all the evil in the world and the destruction that results from it; and to its source the devil himself.”

- The thief comes to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly (John 10:10).

I encourage you to look at what is happening in our culture as a war between God and no God, not only political ideology or political parties. We are no longer life-giving: slander, name-calling, hatred, violence, and murder are ruling our streets. These things are not the fruit of the Spirit of God!

I remember when the Bible was read in my public school, when each child received a New Testament, when the Ten Commandments were posted in the market square, and when children didn’t hang out in cemeteries because they were sacred places. But today’s youth want to destroy the tombstones. Why? Could it be they no longer value life because they have no Creator God who loves them?

The following ideas might be new to you, but just think back over recent years and remember how the logos on t-shirts and the words of music have changed. If you are over forty, you know there has been a rapid downward slide in our culture. Recent polls tell us that most Americans feel we are on the wrong track.

- ❖ Many of my thoughts in this chapter are drawn from Eric Fromm and his book, *The Heart of Man*. His division and characterization of people make sense to my observations and experiences as a nurse, social worker, spiritual life educator, and my own personal experiences.

Two camps of people

Over half a century ago, Erich Fromm⁶¹ wrote about the differences between people who love life and those who don’t. He said, “There is no more fundamental distinction between people, psychologically and morally, than those who love life (*biophilous*) and those who love death (*necrophilia*).”

⁶⁰ Gloria Copeland (1942–) is an internationally known Bible teacher and bestselling author, “Born Overcomers,” *Believer’s Voice of Victory* (June, 2022).

⁶¹ Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil*.

Fromm divides people into two camps: those who foster growth and development; and those who promote decay and destruction. So we need to ask the question, *which one is the stronger in me*, because it will definitely influence our behavior and choices in life.

Syndrome of growth

Fromm explains that people who are interested in growth and development are characterized by three traits: 1) the love of life; 2) the love of others, more than themselves; and 3) individual independence, or an individuated person. In other words, they know who they are apart from their connection to another person or group. He says these three orientations when combined together form a “syndrome of growth.”

Syndrome of decay

In contrast, people who promote decay and destruction are characterized by these three attributes: 1) the love of death, or *at least an indifference to life*; 2) a malignant narcissism, that is, a love of self; and 3) the regressive tendency to remain bound to a mothering type of person or her equivalents – such as a tribe, mother earth, or an organization – resulting in their inability to be creative, productive, and fruitful in their own lives. Fromm says these three characteristics result in a “syndrome of decay.” Is this what is happening to our culture?

- ❖ I know most people are not knowledgeable about psychological/social/spiritual development so these words may seem like gobbledygook to you. But in this Study I will only focus on the first attribute, the love of life and the love of death or the indifference to life.

The Love of Life

At the time I was reading about these two syndromes in Fromm’s book, I was preparing to speak to our local Tea Party rally. About the same time, I was at our Barnes & Noble book store watching our then Vice-President candidate Governor Sarah Palin⁶² sign books, when Jason Horowitz, a reporter from the *Washington Post* asked if he could interview me. He wanted to know why I wanted to see Palin.

The evening before, as I listened to pundits trying to explain the intensity of reactions to, or obsessions with, Palin, both on the right and the left, I saw them struggling to put it into words. I didn’t think they were seeing the phenomenon of someone like Sarah correctly. It isn’t about ideology, but about something else.

Why was Governor Sarah Palin a lightning rod for public criticism?

So when the reporter stopped me, I was ready. He quoted my response in his news article. Here is what he published:

⁶² On September 2, 2008, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin gave a speech at the Republican National Convention that electrified the nation and instantly made her one of the most recognizable women in the world. As chief executive of America’s (geographically) largest state, she had built a record as a reformer who cast aside politics-as-usual and pushed through changes other politicians only talked about. In her book, *Going Rogue: An American Life* (2009) she writes about her life and love for God.

Judith Doctor, a spiritual therapist, said that Americans have mostly misunderstood Palin's visceral appeal. It has nothing to do with her politics, or her folksiness, or her looks, she asserted. "She's alive inside, and that radiates energy, and people who are not psychologically alive inside are fascinated (*terrified*) by it. There's a wire in those left-wing liberals that has never been quickened (*made alive in their spirit*), and Sarah's got it." (Jason Horowitz, *Washington Post*).

❖ The italicized words are what I said, but the reporter left them out or changed them.

A few days later, Maureen Dowd, a liberal Op-Ed Columnist for the *NY Times* picked up my remarks and used them in her Op-Ed piece, *Palin's Gut Outflanks Obama's Brain. Visceral Has Its Value*. Here is some of what she wrote in quoting me:

Palin's visceral appeal has nothing to do with her politics, or her folksiness, or her looks, but she is alive on the inside, and that radiates energy, and people who are not psychologically alive inside are terrified by it. There is a wire in those left-wing liberals that has never been quickened and made alive in their spirit, and Sarah's got it.

↪ *What is it that makes a person life-giving?*

Pure hatred in the heart

In the following months, I watched how the press tried to assassinate Palin and her family. I realized it was not about political ideals, but it was about something more – it was about pure hatred! It was not motivated by political differences, but by hatred. Hatred says that you do not have a right to live.

Since then, I have seen the hatred toward anyone who believes in God and puts Him first. In her book, "*Going Rogue: An American Life*," Palin wrote about the importance of faith and family and how she surrendered her life to God as a teen. When she discovered her unborn child was down-syndrome, she made a decision to not abort him, believing that every human being has a divine purpose. She chose life over death!

I like what this Russian historian wrote about the importance of our hearts.

Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good [life] and evil [death] passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart. – Alexander Solzhenitsyn⁶³

There are people in our culture who want to *rob, kill, & destroy* people, good people, by assassinating their character with words, by deceptive reporting, by deformation of truth, by distorting everything they say. How have you experienced this hatred?

63 Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) was a Russian historian and political prisoner who studied the Russian revolution in order to understand why it happened. He found it was because men had forgotten God.

The first law of life

Do you remember when we talked about the first law of life in Chapter 1?

The first law of life is the right of the individual to choose for one's self, i.e., self-determination – to be free. We are responsible by our Creator to regulate our own affairs.⁶⁴

However, some don't want to take responsibility for their own lives. They want to be controlled, they want someone else to take responsibility for them. They do not feel competent to make their own decisions. So they are willing to hand over the freedom that God gave them. Listen to what Fromm said about Americans:

The majority of people in the U.S. are suggestible, *half-awake children*, willing to surrender their will to anyone who speaks with a voice that is threatening or sweet enough to sway them. – Fromm⁶⁵

Interestingly, probably no more than 3% of the people in the Colonies actually took part in the fight for American independence. Then, as now, apathy, self-interests, uncertainty, and fear prevailed among a large portion of the population.

Studies show that scarcely seven per cent of the American population have independent minds. The power of suggestion is readily seen if one considers the part it plays in politics, where it is exploited by every party and every government.⁶⁶ This means that it is possible to control the opinion of a vast majority of the nation, if we are not really awake.

👉 ***How awake do you want to be? Do you want to surrender your will to someone else?***

The problem of ignorance

I always am touched when I read what Andrei Codrescu⁶⁷ wrote on the eve of the Christmas 1989 revolution when he returned to his homeland in Romania to witness firsthand its destruction. Perhaps it is because I have been to Romania and talked with Christian people who had lived during that time and was deeply moved by their bravery and courage.

With the keen eye of a reporter, Codrescu revealed the hideous secrets of the Ceausescu regime nightmare that lasted forty-five years. Here are bits of what he said:

“People, stop and think. Don't you see how this miserable and unscrupulous tyrant is making use of your naiveté and your illusions? Do you want to be a nation of peasants

⁶⁴ Paul Tournier, MD, *The Meaning of Persons*.

⁶⁵ Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man*.

⁶⁶ Paul Tournier, *The Meaning of Persons*.

⁶⁷ Andrei Codrescu (1946–) is a Romanian-born American poet, novelist, essayist, commentator for National Public Radio and author of *The Hole in the Flag* (1991).

who are ruled by people who hold the power of life and death over you? Being themselves the law, they are *above* the law. They are all-powerful and go unpunished.

“The importance and power of thought, of the necessity of being oneself and fighting for one’s own dignity and the art of walking with head held high in times of rejection and nihilism. Let there be more light.

“The first thing in becoming a free people is to speak freely without fear. If you do not know how to speak freely, then you are not free yet. First thing is to speak freely without fear.”

↳ *Are you able to speak freely without fear?*

They love the adventure of living

“People who fully love life,” according to Fromm, “are attracted by the process of life and growth in all spheres. They enjoy life and all its manifestations rather than mere excitement.” They are capable of wondering. Interestingly, they love the adventure of living more than they do certainty. They value experience over memory; being, rather than having things, is what counts.

Interestingly Fromm notes that the primary sin of the Israelites was because of their failure to serve the Lord with joy and gladness of heart in the abundance of all things (Deut. 28:47).

Characteristics of people who love life

Here some characteristics of people who love life:

- A passionate response to life.
- An open heart, outgoing warmth, and interest in others.
- A love of God, country, others, more than their own life.
- An interest in the future, not their past failures.
- A love for people, demonstrate an outgoing interest in others.
- A depth of interest: think interesting thoughts and are interested in nurturing life.
- They turn quickly to life and attempt to do good, rather than dwell on their failures.

Qualities of a person who is full of life

Here are some of the qualities you will see:

- ◆ More spontaneous—full of creative caprices and unforeseen whims.
- ◆ Full of enthusiasm.
- ◆ Have an extremely lively personality.
- ◆ Curious, full of inquiry and questions.
- ◆ Animated and exhibit more vitality and vivacity.
- ◆ Radiate a zest for life.

- ◆ More full of the joy of adventure.

The Love of Death

Now let's focus on the characteristics of people who love death more than life.

According to Fromm, "People who lean towards a love of death are attracted to and fascinated with all that is not alive, i.e., all that is dead like corpses, decay, feces, dirt. They love to talk about sickness, about burials, about death. They even seem to become more alive when they can talk about these type of things"⁶⁸

People who love death

Hitler was an example of someone who loved death. Apparently he was fascinated by destruction; even the smell of death was sweet to him.

Apparently, Hitler was not only motivated by destroying his enemies, but in the end he showed that his deepest satisfaction was in witnessing total and absolute destruction of the German people, of those around him, and even himself.⁶⁹

Dwell in the past, not the future

People who are attracted more to death are inclined to dwell in the past, never in the future. Their feelings are essentially sentimental, that is, they nurse the memory of feelings which they had yesterday – or believe that they had then.

Are cold, distant

Fromm suggests we can recognize these people by their appearance and gestures. They are cold, their skin looks dead, and they often have an expression on their face as though they were smelling a bad odor. As mothers, they will be more interested in their child's sickness and failures than their joys and successes.

Need to control

They have a strong need to control, and in the act of controlling, they will use force and kill life.

Willing to destroy life

The one who is a lover of death necessarily loves force. For them, their greatest achievement is not to give life, but to destroy it, like not to give birth to a child, but to destroy it before it is born.

Force is, in the last analysis, based on the power to kill. Perhaps they don't want to kill someone, but simply humiliate them, or take away their freedom or possessions. But

⁶⁸ Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man*, p.39

⁶⁹ Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man*, p.39

behind all their actions, Fromm notes, is their capacity to kill and their willingness to do so.

Approach life mechanically

While life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional manner, the *necrophilous* person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical, robotic. Fromm notes: "All living processes, feelings, and thoughts are transformed into things. *Memory*, rather than 'experience,' *having*, rather than 'being,' is what counts.

"These people are deeply afraid of life, because it is disorderly and uncomfortable by its very nature. They are willing to kill for the sake of what they call justice."⁷⁰

Characteristics of people drawn toward the love of death

Some general features of people who love death more than life:

- The wish to kill.
- The worship force.
- The attraction to death, dirt, and sadism.
- The wish to transform the organic (that which is living) into the inorganic through "order."
- They dwell on their remorse and guilt, which are only aspects of self-loathing and sadness.

Interestingly, one of the chief distinctions between the two different camps of people is this: People who love death rely on force to destroy life, whereas people who love life rely on inspiring people.

↳ *Can you think of people who have inspired you in some way?*

Indifference to life

Although there is a continual line between the love of life and the love of death, Fromm notes that "most people are somewhere in between, *not fully committed to their life, living half-hearted, or double-minded*. However, there are some who are totally devoted to death, and these people are usually classified as psychotic, insane, or pure evil. On the positive side, there are some people who are entirely devoted to life and they seem to be accomplishing the highest aim we human beings are capable of." We often call them saints.

But he says, "there is no denying that each person goes forward in the direction they have chosen: that of life or that of death; that of good or that of evil."⁷¹

Thousands of years earlier, God made us aware of the need to choose between life and death – because it will affect not only us, but our children in the future.

⁷⁰ Fromm, *The Heart of Man*, p.41.

⁷¹ Fromm, *The Heart of Man*, p.23.

- I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice and by holding fast to him (Deut 30:19-20).

Unfortunately, many churches (Catholic & Protestant) are emphasizing a social gospel, instead of faith in God. They are teaching that Christianity is a social manifesto for change in society's structure, rather than faith in the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to change each of us from within.

- He who finds me finds life ... All those who hate me love death (Prov 8:35-36).

The majority of us are a blend of both, but what is the most important is which of the two orientations we allow to dominate.

↳ *Which direction to you lean towards more?*

Descriptions of A Fully Alive Person

Let's drop in on someone who is more fully alive; what will we notice? What characteristics will we see?

Some characteristics of a person more fully alive

1. More fully engaged, living in the moment.
2. Are not playing a role or hiding behind a mask; they don't mask feelings, thoughts, or play artificial roles.
3. Make life-oriented choices.
4. Willing to let themselves be known.
5. Authentic and real in their relationships. When they say, *I love you*, they are in touch with the feelings of love.
6. More fully present, able to feel with others their struggles, to experience with them.
7. Willing to look at themselves.
8. Know they are the author, not the victim, of their life.
9. Know who they are; they have their own identity.
10. Have a mission or purpose in life.
11. Respect and appreciate themselves.
12. Have a more accurate view of reality.
13. Eyes are alive.
14. Open to change.
15. Genuine, authentic, and real.

↳ *How do these characteristics differ from you or most people you know?*

Agents of light

Research reports that the crucial variable that determines the outcome of a therapeutic encounter is the degree of aliveness and psychological health of the counselor.

It is through our own genuineness and our aliveness that we can significantly touch others. – Dr. Gerald Corey⁷²

One of the most important instruments we have to work with in life is ourselves as a person. Although our beliefs, doctrine, and skills are essential, they are not sufficient by themselves to touch another human being in a deep way. In every “meeting,” we bring our human qualities and the experiences that have influenced us: our testimonies. According to Dr. Corey, “The human dimension is one of the most powerful determinants of fruitful person-to-person relationships.”

↳ *Do you have a testimony of what God has done for you?*

10 My Story

My childhood imaginings

As a child I often imagined myself lying in my bed, dead, yet I would still be in the room, somewhere up near a corner in the ceiling, watching. I could see everyone, but they couldn't see me. I watched them come and cry because I was gone. In this, I found my comfort. Inwardly I was sobbing, deeply, but without a sound.

↳ *What would cause a child to imagine they were dead?*

Like a closed rose

I want to share with you my testimony of the power of God to transform me from the inside out, to bring me out of darkness and death and more fully into life.

Just as I started this seven-year period of inner healing, a man prophesied to me that I was like a closed rose beginning to open.

Exploring my family tree

God used the following dream to focus my attention on what I had experienced in childhood:

I am in the backyard of my childhood home. A large tree (with no branches, only the trunk) is walking toward me. It has eyes and is looking at me. I run into the house, trying to get away from it. The tree follows me inside. I am terrified. I run out the door and down the sidewalk.

⁷² Gerald Corey, a Professor Emeritus of Human Services at California State University at Fullerton and a licensed psychologist, published this text book: *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1976).

As I run, I become an inchworm.

Through the dream the Lord was showing me that I needed to look at my family history and the experiences I made during that time – if I wanted to become fully alive and set free. A childhood home usually depicts the part of our character which developed in our home environment, or things we experienced in childhood. The tree symbolized my family tree.

A search for truth

Jesus taught that truth will set us free (John 8:32). King David prayed, “You desire truth in our innermost being [inward parts]” (Ps 51:6).

Here are two favorite quotes by a friend of ours that helped me see I needed truth in my heart, not only in my head:

- It is not by trying harder, but by seeing in a new way—seeing God, ourselves, and the world around us – that we grow⁷³ (Dr. Bruce L. Morgan).
- All growth come by “seeing” truth, not by trying to change, conform, or reform; seeing who you already are in God and who He is (Dr. Bruce L. Morgan).

At one point in my spiritual journey I realized that I had many emotional issues and fears. I began to pray for God to heal me. But first I asked Him to show me my poverty; then I dreamed this dream.

Dream: I am filled with rottenness

In my dream, I was lying on a table, split open down the middle. My insides were filled with rottenness, and someone was packing me with salt.

As I awoke, I realized my true condition and surrendered it to God. I remember saying, “God, I am sick from head to toe; I do not know how to heal myself. You are the great physician; would you heal me?”

Even though I had many emotional and psychological symptoms indicating my need for healing, I did not focus on my condition. I just kept looking to God for what He wanted to do in my life, as He brought me through one healing experience after another in the next seven years.

Death of a dog

This healing experience occurred when an older woman was praying with me. She said, “I believe the Lord is showing me something about the fear of the death of an animal.”

When she said this, a memory popped into my mind. This traumatic experience happened when I was about four-and-a-half years old.

I had asked my mother if I could walk to a nearby store with my older cousin. She said I could, as long as I promised to not let her dog get out of the yard and follow us. A few

⁷³ The late Dr. Bruce L. Morgan was a personal friend and spiritual mentor who often stayed in our home when he was in town. He wrote, *You Are God's Own Special Nut*.

blocks from home, I turned around and there was the dog following us. I yelled trying to make the dog go back—but of course it didn't. A few blocks later, the dog was hit by a car and lay dying.

I remember seeing my mother lying on the couch, crying. Nobody said anything to me—I was never punished, scolded, loved, or comforted in any way. As I remembered this event, pain welled deep inside me and I let out a cry, *"Mamma, mamma, I always disobeyed you. I am so sorry. I am so sorry. Please forgive me!"*

As I listened to myself, I knew the crying was not coming from my adult self, but from a small child crying in anguish. Over the years I had never thought about this incident, nor had I been troubled by it.

But now at age 37, up comes all the anguish and pain from that long-ago trauma, and I was healed from the guilt and pain. I asked the Lord why I had to go through this experience and He pointed me to this scripture: *"Whatever is hidden must come to the light; whatever is in darkness must be revealed."*

Student nurse trauma

For years I had been tormented with images of three patients I'd cared for as a student nurse: a teenager paralyzed from a diving accident, a young mother being eaten away with cancer, and a toddler dying with leukemia. Apparently I had been horrified by their situations. Not knowing what to do with my pain and fear, I swallowed it and never allowed myself to feel it.

One day in prayer with my Christian friends—I had just finished fasting—pictures of these people began to flash into my mind. I stayed with the memory. In the process I was brought face to face with each patient again, and I experienced the anguish and pain I'd stuffed years ago: pain over their suffering, pain over the loss by their families, pain over broken lives—it just poured out of me. When it was finished, I was free and no longer tormented by the memory of their faces.

I never had a daddy

In the late 1970s, a former baker, and now a Catholic lay minister, and his wife were staying in our home. He asked if he could pray with me about when I was a little girl. I said, "Sure, why not." He started to pray about when I was in my mother's womb—and nothing happened. Then he prayed for me when I was an infant. Nothing happened. But when he prayed for me when I was eighteen months old ... whoops! Something changed.

A cry began to form in the middle of my belly. Slowly it came up and out with the sound of a heart-broken little girl. "Daddy, daddy, I never had a daddy," I wailed. I was surprised. I had been unaware of any need for a daddy—I'd never felt like I lacked one. Although my father was an alcoholic when I was young, he was not abusive and was always home at night. He did not know how to love a small child; I remember no loving relationship with him. But the Lord knew my deprivation and brought it to the light.

As I sobbed out my need for a daddy, this wonderful man lovingly took me into his arms and sang lullabies to me. Then he whispered in my ear, "You got a daddy now,

honey." In a few moments, God enabled me to receive what I had been deprived of in early childhood.

He is able to help us complete developmental stages, which we go through in developing as a healthy, mature person. Hurts (transgressions/ iniquity) can interrupt this process, causing us to remain stuck in our development. But missed development can be made up; anything can be healed. The loving presence of Jesus and others can enable us to accomplish in a short time those many years of missed emotional development. Healing happens as we receive love and bring that love into hurts.⁷⁴

Dream: Rotten to the bone

In 1985, I dreamed that a simple pimple had erupted on my thigh. The pimple opened up and my whole thigh was filled with infection right down to the bone.

For six months prior to this dream, I had been praying, "Lord, there is a lie somewhere in the depths of my personality; would you heal it?" When this dream came, I knew it signaled something was about to happen. Two days later, Jerry and I were discussing something Scott Peck had said in *The Road Less Traveled*: "Frequently (but not always) the essence of a patient's childhood and hence the essence of his or her world view is captured in the earliest memory."⁷⁵

When Jerry asked what my earliest memory was, it precipitated two hours of healing for me. During this time, I saw in the eye of my spirit three lies that had entered me when I was a very young child. As I experienced the pain of each lie, I saw a hand pull it out of the fabric of my personality.

In my earliest memory, I was looking through a window at my mother holding my new baby brother. I could not go to her because I will ill. I was two-and-a-half and was staying with my grandmother. When I started crying for my mother, my grandmother mocked me and made fun of me.

As I told this memory to Jerry, intense pain welled up within me and I released it. It was the cry of a broken-hearted child who did not know she was loved. It lasted about twenty minutes. During this time, I saw by revelation that the feeling that I was not loved was all a lie — my mother had loved me. As I saw the truth, I also saw a hand pull the lie out of me.

Spiritual experiences are difficult to explain. I like to think of the personality as a basket consisting of many strands all woven together, and it carries the life force/energy God has given us. This episode was followed by two more. The second was the pain of feeling that I was not wanted or valuable to anyone. Again in the process, I saw that it was all a lie; I had been deceived. My mother had wanted me and I was important to her. That lie also was pulled out of the structure of my personality.

There was one more episode. It followed the same pattern — the release of pain, the revelation of what it was, the truth about it, and the extraction of the lie.

⁷⁴ Matthew Linn, Sheila Fabricant, Dennis Linn, *Healing the Eight Stages of Life* (Paulist Press, 1988).

⁷⁵ M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled* (Simon & Schuster, 1978), p.191.

However, perhaps this was the most important episode, because it involved a reaction by me as a young child: If I wasn't loved and wasn't valuable, then I must be rejected. So I had rejected who I was, and the strands of self-rejection and self-hatred were woven into the fabric of my personality. As a result, I had never seen myself as a separate and distinct human being.

Dream: A beautiful woman steps out of me

In this dream, I was again lying on a table again. However, this time out of the center of my being stepped the most beautiful woman, vibrant, dancing with life.

This woman was totally alive and everything I could ever hope to be. What did she represent? Perhaps my true self, the new creation, fully alive and free. Now I understood St. Paul when he wrote:

- For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed [Gr. Uncovered], then you also will be revealed [Gr. Uncovered] with Him in glory (Col 3:3-4).

A vision

A few weeks later, the Lord gave me a little picture vision as I was sitting in a restaurant with my husband. Out of the left corner of my eye I saw this image which suddenly flashed into my awareness. It was a small tear-shaped vessel, quivering and pulsating with life.

When I saw it, out of my mouth spontaneously came the words, "I am, I am, I am, I am!" Then I put my hand over my mouth and said, "I can't say that! That is what God said; that is what Jesus said."

I know these things may not make sense to you, but I included them, because I want you see how God makes the truths in the Bible real to us and uses them to transform our very identity.

The open rose

Later that year on my birthday, someone who I had never met handed me a box, and said, "The Lord told me to bring this to you." I opened it; inside there was a gold cross with a fully open rose in the center of it! Her husband was a jewelry maker and he had made it out of Black Hills gold.

My prayers to be made full, to be bigger, were all answered. Rejection, emptiness, boredom, and loneliness disappeared.

No longer an empty box, I asked the Lord for a new picture of how he saw me. Here is what He showed me:

I am like a treasure chest packed full of treasure.

I am like a sunflower packed full of seeds.

I am like a light, shining in the darkness.

Reflection point

- ◆ What will you take away from this chapter?
- ◆ Do you know the feeling of indifference to life?
- ◆ What prayers do you need to pray?

Your Response

- ⇒ What can you do to strengthen the life-loving side of yourself?
- ⇒ Write a letter to God about your desires to love life, and your fears about it.
- ⇒ Can you describe what would change if you really loved life?
- ⇒ What do my inner healing stories mean to you?
- ⇒ Have you experienced inner healing for some trauma you had?
- ⇒ Do you have any pictures of how God wants you to see yourself?