

A Story of Getting Honest

By: Lynda Savage, M.S., LMFT, LPC

Recently Anne said to me "'Inviting Jesus in' to feelings is different from wrapping your feelings in a package and handing them to Him, isn't it?" I said, "Yes, it is." The woman had a soft, thoughtful look on her face as she described opening herself to Jesus.

Admitting feelings to the Lord is sometimes difficult. For many people admitting uncomfortable feelings is downright unheard of. Opening the package of who you are is a wonderful experience in the Lord's presence. It can be a sweet and meaningful celebration, but sometimes it takes a while to get there. It requires trust...a kind of trust God may be developing in you.

Anne is a hardworking woman of God. She has served with her husband for many years as a pastor's wife and co-minister. Anger, sadness, grieving, disappointment, and other unpleasant feelings had never exactly had the upper hand in her life, but neither did she have consistent joy. Without realizing it, Anne had been pushing away highs and lows, thinking she was not going to be over-run by her feelings. Not being "run" by one's feelings is a good idea, but assuming the position of forging on without responding to God-given perceptions is another thing.

Anne was not praying. Oh, she was praying in most ways, but she was not allowing God to help her with the full gamut of her life experience. She was ashamed of her ups and downs so she hid them, even from herself. As God often does, circumstances came into Anne's life that gently forced the issue. As Anne's pain increased, she and her husband prayed more and she began to stop sending packaged feelings to God. She began to ask God to come in to the here and now. She asked God to feel her feelings with her, even the more unpleasant ones.

The struggle that Anne faced was how to respond to crisis. She had made lots of assumptions about what strong Christians did and did not do. She had to change those assumptions and deal with the fact that she may have been wrong about what strength really was. She could no longer keep the difficult feelings at bay, but she was afraid to feel them. As she leveled with God about her conflict, she began to level with God about her feelings. Not that she would act on those difficult feelings, mind you, but when they were exposed to the light, they gradually lost their power. God's presence in the midst of her struggle produced relief. She was not God! She didn't have to handle everything on her own!

After sharing more honestly with her Savior, Anne has found that she does not expect as much from the sheep; the people of the church. Because Anne was not fully open with the Lord, her hope and some of her trust had begun to subtly

shift to the church workers and away from God. When they failed, she was very discouraged. Small failures on the part of church people bred more and more disappointment. Though Ann did not openly share her unmet expectations, they were sensed in small ways by church workers. Unknown to Anne, these hidden grievances were eating her up inside and causing the some around her to feel condemnation.

When Anne invited Jesus in to her real thoughts and feelings, a marvelous sharing began to take place between she and Jesus. He began to show her wonderful things that she knew not. Soon I began to see Anne's face light up more often. She and Jesus were in love again: deeper and more meaningful love. She had trusted Him deeply and He did not fail her. She had also let church people "off the hook". Her strength was not in them or even in herself. Her trust was back where it belongs; with the one who first loved her.

No matter what your walk in life, you may identify with Anne in not sharing real life experience honestly with Jesus. If this is you, take a moment or two now and ask Jesus to come in to all of you. Ask Him to reveal areas where you have been holding back. Ask Him to help you to invite Him in to all of it so that He may walk you through to renewed joy in Him.

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