

## Childlike Needs in Adult Losses

By Mary Lambrecht, M.S. LMFT

If a poll were taken around common questions asked to children by parents and teachers the week after Christmas, it might include the following: "What was your favorite present?" and "Did you remember to write thank you notes?" Following is a portion of one of my thank you notes that I wrote to my oldest daughter, Sarah. May it point you, PFL readers, to the permanency in our brotherhood with Jesus Christ. He is the One who assures us that though "our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

*Dear Sarah,*

*When I was young, Raggedy Ann and Andy were cute, popular toys and I secretly wished for them but never told anyone. Perhaps this is because my brother Ted and I were Raggedy Ann and Andy and could do some of the things that I imagined the dolls would do in a doll-sort-of-day. Things like jumping rope, sharing secrets, and being best friends. And so, though I wished for them, it was OK not to have them because I had Ted. Dolls never grow up but brothers and sisters do. I married a wonderful man, your father, and we had three real baby girl dolls to love, nurture, and raise to adulthood. Ted graduated with honors from college, pursued medical school and then, as you know, chose a lifestyle that went against God's plan. On November 21, 1991, two days after accepting Jesus as his Lord and Savior, Ted died of AIDS. When your best friend from childhood dies, certain things demand attention and significance. One of those things was the significance of Raggedy Ann and Andy. In the months and years following Ted's death, I would "happen" to run across them in stores, craft fairs, and even other people's homes. When no one was looking, I would place them sitting next to each other a little more closely. Andy's arm would be around Ann's shoulders, and they would smile at each other. I would walk away, and the longing to have the dolls for my very own gently increased. One such shopping trip you were with me, and Ann and Andy were on a shelf, buried between stuffed bears, coyotes, and rabbits. "I want those dolls someday" I told you. "When I pay off grad-school loans, I think I will buy those dolls". But adult life is busy and sometimes complex. I fooled myself into thinking that "coming as children unto the Lord" (Matthew 19:14) would not include this context of life. Perhaps inner-child work was just for my clients and not for me.*

*Two more years passed, and our first born daughter followed God's call to Guatemala. The Christmas after she returned was extra-special because, after all, she was home! And inside a large square box, under the tree, was a gift from you to me. In past Christmases, your mother and grandmothers gave you and your sisters various dolls that performed amazing feats and functions. But this Christmas found your mother opening a box that held two dolls, one a boy doll*

*and one a girl doll. Your mother gently placed Andy's arm around Ann's shoulder and they smiled at each other.*

Sarah's gift to me increased my willingness to come boldly to the throne of grace for the things I need from Him. No need that we have is too great, too small, or too childish. He is a man who has "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). He still remembers our youthful longings and desires. Allow Him to bear them, carry them, and in His way and timing, to meet them. Though we may have affliction in this world, Paul assures us in 2 Corinthians, that it is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He is smiling at you and His right arm is around you.

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