

Emotional Healing for Adults: Through the Inner-Child

Mary Lambrecht, M.S. LMFT

As a family therapist, a fulfilling task for me is to occasionally ask an adult client to recognize the "child within". This child within is the childlike characteristics that the Lord has graciously allowed to remain in our heart, soul, and emotions. Once in touch with this inner child, people often recapture elements of themselves that have long been buried such as spontaneity, creativity, laughter and simplicity. One specific way an individual can achieve this is through remembering a childhood event that was particularly meaningful or nurturing. For myself, my hometown ice cream wagon is such a memory.

For my brother Ted and me, the ice cream wagon was always somewhat elusive. Its inconsistent melody teased our ears and minds, coaxing us to guess its real or imagined existence. We chased the song long before we chased the wagon. This bell-song was beautiful, haunting, and promising. Its lilting voice beckoned Ted and me to one street corner after another. Sometimes we split up to quickly cover more ground. If we caught a glimpse of the actual wagon that bore the bell-song, we had a choice to make. Chase after it, or take the chance that it would come our way. The joy was indescribable when our choice was right; when the jingled melody became louder and closer and then, just for a moment, stopped altogether. Two sweaty dimes could then be exchanged for two, cool, ice cream treats. The ice cream man was a little bit like Santa Claus; he often spoke not a word. I guess his words were the bell-song. Treats in-hand, Ted and I would then walk away and the wagon would sing away.

The ice-cream wagon is a memory the Lord has used in my life. It brings back an essence of childhood that yearns to be repeated in an often complicated and rushed adult world. But more importantly, it reminds me to listen. It reminds me to listen beyond the bell-song, to the sweet sound of God's voice. When I desire to look at the child within me, He promises to be there in the rediscovery. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:14)

Rediscovering the child within can bring us to know the voice and touch of God in a profoundly simple way. After Jesus beckoned the children, He laid His hands on them and prayed for them. Melodies in ice-cream wagons and other memories can beckon us, but ultimately it is the voice and touch of God, through Jesus Christ, that heals us. For to us "the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear His voice; and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out." (Matthew 10:3) The ice-cream man never spoke and never knew my name. But Jesus promised that we would hear His voice and that He will call us by our name. God bless you as you become as little children unto Him.

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