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10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...

Ready or not – Here I come!

The object of the old childhood game is to hide well enough that no one will find you. If no one finds you, you win.

I think that is a pretty good picture of how we often live. We look for the best hiding places; places to hide our true heart, our emotions, our giftings, our anger, our thoughts. We try to hide so well that no one will see us. And then, if no one finds us, we declare that we have won!

Yet when we choose to hide our true self in our relationships, instead of winning, we actually lose. We lose the opportunity to be truly known and loved for who we really are.

We hide our faces, our hearts, our fears, and our failures from each other. We then declare that we have won. Oh, not verbally, but deeply within our hearts. It is too risky to allow someone else to see our most intimate thoughts and feelings. We even convince ourselves that we can hide from God. And the paradox of it all is that in the hiding of our hearts, we effectively prevent ourselves from receiving the love of God and the love of others.

We haven't really changed so much since the days of Adam and Eve. We have tried to hide behind our fig leaves and convince ourselves that God won't really know what we've done. Just like Adam and Eve, we try to hide ourselves from the presence of God. We often hide because we are afraid. We believe that if God really sees us as we are – in our failure – surely He will be angry with us. And we neglect to acknowledge that *All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him... Hebrews 4:13* and that in our nakedness, He has offered love and acceptance.

But the beauty of the great romance that God enters into with us is perhaps best framed by the wonder that He never gives up. He is relentless. He can always see where we've hidden. He never gives up in His pursuit of us. Yet He doesn't force us out of hiding. He woos us and whispers for us to come to Him. He calls our name just as he did Adam's, and by that very call, He shows that He knows us. He personally identifies us.

He speaks right into the darkest places that we've hoped He wouldn't see. He calls us to deal in truth with our own hearts. And then He replaces our fig leaf covering with the covering of Christ, the only one which can ever truly cover our sin.

Have we somehow pictured the image of God in the garden as one of an angry God? Would we dare to see His image as a God who is a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"? Can we see His face as Adam and Eve left the garden....so saddened because Adam and Eve had chosen to live in a way that trusted their own hearts more than they trusted the heart of God?

Could we say that we cannot truly allow God to love us unless we trust Him?

The same scripture that tells us that He is acquainted with grief, also tells us that He is tender and that He was wounded for us because with all His heart, He just wants to be with us. We are the ones who wounded Him, and yet He has overcome and pursues us still.

I picture the little girl who was deeply injured. Her parent tried to look at the injury. The little girl screamed and kicked. The pain was too much. The pain caused her to withdraw from the source of her help. She wanted to handle it her own way. Yet the parent was tender, pursuing the child, and holding her until her emotions calm down and she gives up her fight. The parent has overpowered her because of love. Love knows it would be cruel to allow this little girl to face her pain alone. It would be cruel to leave the dirt in the wound. It would surely scar even more if it was not cleansed. The parent sees the big picture and does what seems painful at the moment, but what is healing in the long run.

And there we find God's heart. Pursuing us. Holding us while we kick and scream. Staying until we relax and offer our trust to Him. He washes the dirt away. It burns. We cry out. But He keeps on. He covers our wound with the Balm of Gilead. He knows we need to allow Him do the painful work that is necessary for us so that we might be healed, completely.

The big picture doesn't scare God away. He already sees it. He has already been there. No matter how long it takes for us to relax and learn to trust Him in the middle of our pain, He is committed to us. He is committed to the process. And He is the only one who can truly cleanse us, purifying our wounds, allowing the uncomfortable process of healing to begin, and carrying us during our painful times believing that we can learn to trust Him during times of woundedness and times of healing and wholeness.

And as we learn to walk in trust, we can take the masks off our faces; we can confront our fears; we can face our failures; and in it all, we can discover the heart of God.

A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.

Yes, we are just like Adam and Eve. Hiding our faces. Hiding behind temporary coverings. But we when calm down as a little child in daddy's lap, He tenderly cleanses us, cover our wounds with healing balm, and we feel His strength. We are close enough to hear His heartbeat. And we "get" it. We "get" Him. For a while. Then as we heal, we climb down out of His lap and run and play again only to eventually find ourselves wounded again. But as time goes on, what He wants is for us to learn to trust. He longs for us to remember how He cared for us before and allow Him to do it again.

Can you hear Him?

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Open for me, my love... Song of Solomon 5:2

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