

Hungry
for...
a father's love

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CRYING INSIDE

I grew up scared, thinking that everybody lived in fear, like me.

I was the youngest of five children with three older sisters, then my brother and then me, the last. I don't know how my mum managed, to be honest, with less than 6 years between the five of us. It was cramped in our small 3-bedroom semi-detached house in northwest London, but it was normal to us. The four of us girls were in one bedroom with bunk beds, and my brother in the small box room.

My mum was lovely. She had trained as a secretary, but worked as a cleaner in a posh house, not far away – better hours for running the family.

My dad had been a mechanic in the Army, then in civvy street he became a Transport Inspecting Officer – doing mechanical checks on fire and ambulance vehicles involved in accidents. He was good at his job, a skilled handyman, but still very 'army' when it came to people. I don't know what rank he had been, but at home he was certainly in command.

I suppose it was very tough for my parents, managing five young children. There had to be order of course, and some discipline in the house, but my dad was definitely in control: that meant that only he was allowed to give any punishment when we were naughty.

For instance: we had a long garden, with grass one side, and my dad's precious vegetables the other. Woe betide us if our football or fights damaged any of his precious plants. If I had done or said something wrong, I would have to wait until Dad got home, to see what the consequences of my actions would be.

I can remember playing and being happy one moment ... and then, I suddenly remembered that when he came home, I would have to say what happened. My heart sank.

Would it be the slipper or the cane?

We dutifully went to the Catholic church each Sunday, as a family. I thought we were Christians, but we didn't actually have any real connection with Jesus. If anyone had asked me then, I believed I would have gone to heaven if I died.

After all, I had been baptised as a baby, taken Holy Communion and been confirmed – what more was there for me to do? And I hadn't murdered anyone, or been such a bad person really.

Once my dad was home from work, we all had to be quiet. At mealtimes we didn't seem to have much to say to each other. We were walking on eggshells most of the time.

I don't remember feeling any love or any affection. I was never held or hugged. I was never told I looked nice - apparently in case I got big headed - and I received no words of encouragement from my dad. I realised, years later, that he had had a tough childhood; he was unable to show any warm feelings to us kids, nor much to our mum, because he had not received love himself.

One of my saddest adult memories was realising that, as siblings, we didn't look out for each other at all. On the contrary, we could get angry with each other and lash out and sometimes the injuries were quite bad. We just all lived

in our own little worlds.

I guess it was a very dysfunctional home, but it was all I knew at the time.

We all walked to the local primary school. I think I enjoyed school really and making friends. Since I was next in age to my brother, I was a real tomboy. And so, I enjoyed climbing trees, being on my bike and car washing – anything that got me away from the house.

At the time, I wasn't aware of feeling that my childhood was unhappy.

Looking back, I think that my dad really wanted me to be a boy.



GROWING UP

We moved to a bigger three-bed semi in West Harrow when I was 12. I got into a girls Grammar School and did reasonably well. But in the background, all the time, I was anxious when my dad was around and would avoid him.

After a bit, I came to realise that I hated him. He controlled my mum mentally and physically to the point that she was not allowed any friends. He was very strict with us, and even as teenagers we were not allowed to go out in the evenings.

So, I was lonely. I had no local friends and no motivation for

school, but I somehow got my O-levels. A-levels were different. I really struggled and wasted my time.

By the time I was in the 6th Form, I was the last one at home. This was fine to begin with, as that meant more space in the bedroom we had shared. But it was strangely lonely. Fortunately, I had a very close bond with my mum, but I hated the tense atmosphere at home because of my dad.

Coming home from school, my mum and I sometimes got out the secret bottle of sherry in the kitchen to cheer us up. Mum seemed to need me as much as I needed her. I think, now, that Mum saw me as her protector. Things were calmer when I was around.

Then I would eat my evening meal quickly to avoid being with Dad. All he said was negative or critical and got me down. So, I could not be bothered to even try to talk to him.

Nothing ever satisfied my heart's desperate need for a father's love, and to be special.

As soon as I could, I left home.

Having only passed 1 A-level I was offered a 3-year HND course in Business Studies in Hull. I jumped at the chance. I couldn't bear another year at home near my dad. I enjoyed

the course mixed with business experience, and my lifestyle now had no restraints.

But all I really wanted ... was to be loved by my dad. To feel special to him. To be encouraged that I was worth something.

The result of not having a father's love was not good. It made me lack confidence in myself and led me down many dark roads looking for approval, value and love. I would have been an ideal candidate for being groomed by men, today - I was so emotionally needy.

But at the time, I was not aware of needing these things, and I overreacted to any kind words and smiles, thinking someone really cared about me.

At age 21, I got the qualification, but my dad wasn't pleased saying, "Well, it'll never be a degree, will it?!"

I was crushed. So, I went off to live in France for a year working on a farm and then as a nanny. The lady was nice and spoke English to help me which made it less scary. There, I learnt to speak French fairly well, which came in useful later.



POLICING

When I came back home, there wasn't really much happening on the job front, but the Metropolitan Police were starting to recruit more police officers.

I'd always loved police dramas on TV but didn't really have a clue as to what it would be like to be a Police Officer. I just thought I might as well apply anyway.

Surprisingly, even though I thought my interview was dreadful, I was accepted.

I did my training to be a Woman Police Constable (as female officers were known at the time - WPC) at the Hendon Police

College. Then I was sent to a North London police station and lived in the Section House for three years.

What was I like? Well, I was very arrogant. I don't think I ever smiled apart from with my close friends and some of my police colleagues. With the police being a serious job, it was quite easy to be emotionally flat. I never joked with the public, and if they joked, I just stared at them. I became hardened and cynical about people, their problems and life in general.

But I did enjoy my job and most of the banter. French came in useful and I was called on when two French girls and one Swiss were raped. I could understand them well and somehow feel for them: I was pleased to be able to help the investigation.

I liked most of my colleagues but, if there was somebody I didn't like, such as a new recruit, then I could be quite unkind, critical or mocking. I'd use bad language and didn't really have any time for people much. That went on for about seven years.

The reality was that I had a heart of stone. I was not a nice person at all; I was completely selfish, angry and self-centred ... though again I didn't really see it.

I thought I was fine. But I was blind; I could not see myself as I was.

In my first year as a WPC, I met a policeman at the same Station.

We lived together, bought a house together two years later, and married the next year. He was a good man, an effective Police Officer, who became a Sergeant. He was good at everything, and he was very even in nature, whereas I was up and down.

No parent is perfect, but we had both been more damaged than we realised, during our childhoods. The scars were showing in both of us. So much so, that he was unable to receive the affection I desperately wanted to show him; and he was unable to show me the affection I craved.

It wasn't his fault, but he couldn't understand my emotional needs. Communicating well was a struggle for both of us.



CHANGING

As I started my career in the Police, something amazing happened in our family. Three of my siblings had all turned to Jesus! They had become real Christians.

Did I care? Not really. I had grown up not caring about them. There was no kind of bond between us, and we were all angry inside ourselves. As kids that anger could spill over into violence. As adults, because we lived in such different parts of the country, and I still didn't feel close to them, I didn't really hear their stories.

Nor would I have been interested. But I know now they would have been praying for me.

One day, my sister in Durham invited me to stay, and on Sunday we went to her church. I felt totally empty, but I loved the music and singing as they worshipped. The atmosphere seemed authentically good, and I knew I needed a new start in my life; perhaps Jesus might be the answer. I came away with a book called 'New Life, New Lifestyle' by Michael Green.

I went away and read it, but all that came into my head was, *"What would I have to stop doing if I become a Christian?"* I was, once again, being completely selfishly motivated; I wasn't thinking - how much Jesus loved me, or what it cost Him to die on the cross for me.

I still didn't recognise that I had a heart of stone, or that I was shut down in many respects emotionally. I went back to London, and my sister found a church that was local to me. I decided to go, and by the time I got there, I just knew I was desperate to be forgiven, unconditionally loved and clean.

So, one Sunday, on my weekend off, I went by myself to a school hall where the church held its meetings.

I sat a few rows back from the front. I was sitting there thinking, *"What am I going to do?"* There was nobody in the row in front of me ... so I said to God, in my head, *"If you put*

someone in the seat in front of me then I'll ask them to pray for me to be a Christian."

It was quite outrageous, really. I was dictating the terms and conditions of my becoming a Christian, and what God would have to do for me there and then to prove His love for me.

Moments later, after my having this thought and chat with God, a man walked straight across and sat down in the seat in front of me!

Obviously, this was quite a big surprise, and I just thought in my head, *"Well, I can't argue with that can I?"* So, I tapped him on the shoulder, and he turned around and I said, "Would you pray for me to be a Christian?" He led me in a simple prayer; I asked God to forgive all my sins, because I believed that Jesus died on the cross for me and rose again.

It was as though Jesus was standing there knocking on my heart's door and I was opening it, asking Jesus to come into my life. I remember weeping and weeping, overwhelmed with God's love and peace.

I went home with massive relief, I felt clean and I thought, *"This is the start of my new journey"*. I'm going to take it one day at a time and see what happens. I believe now that the grace and undeserved favour of God had protected me, and

kept me far safer than ever I deserved, from the stupid and sinful things I had done for years.

The very next day, I was on night duty driving the van and out with another WPC. We were out doing different calls, and then about two in the morning she just said, "Julie, has something happened to you? Because you're different today."

I couldn't believe it. I certainly wasn't trying to become a better person. I said, "Well, I became a Christian yesterday!"

My new life with Jesus was kicking in. I was not afraid or ashamed to identify with Him. I subsequently realised that when Jesus came into my life, I lost all sorts of fears: my fear of being alone at night and my fear of flying.

But my husband was unmoved. In the years to come, he never criticised my belief in Jesus, and he even paid for me to go on mission trips abroad. But it was not for him. He felt he had been a good person and had helped lots of other people in his police work. But it was hard for me, because I was excited about Jesus and could not share with him.



TRUSTING

Only a couple of months after asking Jesus into my life, I was diagnosed with an ovarian cyst that needed surgery.

Someone prayed for me the next Sunday at church and I felt God's presence in a deep way. I believed Jesus had healed me though, since there were no symptoms, I couldn't know.

When I next saw the Consultant, I said, "I don't need the surgery because Jesus has healed me." He wouldn't eye contact me and he didn't believe me.

He refused to examine me. So, I asked, "Can you send me for another scan?" and he said, "Yes there is time before the

surgery".

When the lady did the scan she said, "Well, I can't see anything on here". When I went back to see the Consultant, he asked cynically, "Oh praise the Lord is it?", and I said, "Yes, I think it is!"

Two more years went by, and I applied to become a Home Beat Officer. This meant that you had a set area to patrol on foot, the idea being that people within the Beat area get to know you better. I was accepted for this role, but before I became a Christian, I thought Home Beat Officers were slackers, effectively opting out of police work. I did not hold them in high regard, and yet here I was wanting to be one!

Perhaps one reason was that I had actually started to like people! I was so impacted by God's forgiveness towards me, and felt so clean, I wanted to tell everyone and pray for them.

I had a joy in my heart I'd never experienced before. I knew deep down I was clean and I was loved by God and accepted into His family. I was His child, precious and loved.

The main job of the police is reporting people's misfortunes - whether their house is being burgled, car accidents, physical abuse and assaults, sexual assault or rapes, or

delivering a death message to a relative or loved one. It's rare to be bringing good news to someone's house.

As a Home Beat Officer, it would be my job to go into the shops on my Beat and to chat with the shopkeepers. They would tell me any concerns they had or I would give them security advice. Before I found Jesus, I wouldn't say I had a lot of compassion. But, as a Christian, that changed a lot.

There were times at work where some colleagues could be a bit hostile, but that was more the exception. I just knew I was now so happy and glad that I chose Jesus. It really never bothered me what people said.

I'd been a Christian two years now. Not many months into my new role, I was suddenly diagnosed with bilateral retinal detachments. It's a nasty condition where there's holes and tears in your retinas which could result in going blind.

The next day I was off to Moorfield's Eye Hospital with my husband. I was listening to some music on my Walkman cassette player on the train. To my surprise I heard the words, *"I can see that there's light in your eyes"*.

It seemed to be God's voice too. This gave me peace. It reminded me that God's always protecting me when things have been wrong.

I had to have quite complicated eye surgery and, whilst in the hospital recovering, I found myself sharing about Jesus with other patients. Now, amazingly, my right eye is perfect and the other one is well usable.



RELATING

I returned home after the operation, carrying on in my role as Home Beat Officer for another five years. Right from the beginning, I had a boldness to share about Jesus - because I felt so transformed by my salvation and God's presence of the Holy Spirit within me.

Because of the eye surgery, I was eventually retired on ill health grounds, as the surgeon said I must not get involved in physical violence to my head. That meant that I could not do public order work.

It was God's time for a change of direction, and I was ready.

I knew I had been forgiven much. I wanted people to know that they can be set free as well; they can be unconditionally loved, they can be forgiven and they can have new life in Christ.

My journey with God continued and I worked part time for a Christian company in administration. Part of my role was to pray for people on the phone. God was at work, training me.

In the last three years I have been going out with a group of Christians who reach out to people in local shops on the High Street.

We simply say, "We are Christians and we wondered if there's anything we can pray for your business or for you or your family?" It's something I would never really have thought to do as I couldn't imagine anyone saying, "Yes".

Then, I thought maybe 1 in every 10 would agree. But as I did this with this group of people, I was finding that it was 7 or 8 in 10 who said, "Yes"! I couldn't believe it actually. I couldn't believe so many people had so much going on in their lives, that they would welcome prayer from a complete stranger in the middle of the High Street or in a shop.

I had become a different kind of local Beat Officer!

We prayed for healing, for freedom from addictions, for reconciliation between families, for peace in mental health situations and so many other things. It has now become a lifestyle for me in a way that I feel so comfortable.

It's so natural now. God showed me that, even when I didn't know Him for the first seven years in the police, He was training me to have the boldness and the courage to go and speak to people I didn't know. Thank You Jesus.

As we come through those experiences, God gives us a deeper compassion for other people who are experiencing the same situation. Whether it's to do with childhood traumas, mental health problems, abuse, addictions or anger, jealousy or insecurity etc...

I've been through many of those valleys. They have been really horrible experiences. I wish I had not gone through the pain, but I've come out stronger and can understand where so many other people are hurting so badly.

This was very emotional for me. I hadn't really thought of it before. I now believe that every tough situation that comes into our lives, whether through our own fault or what someone has done to us or just life happening, God will use those experiences. Nothing is wasted in God's Kingdom.

HURTING

Pain? Yes, several years back my husband was diagnosed with Stage 4 mouth cancer. He had been a heavy smoker, and never one to fuss about himself, but one day he admitted there was a problem.

He let me help him get an appointment and the dreadful truth was soon revealed on New Year's Eve 2019. He was given the option of surgery, but that would have been so mutilating; he chose to let it take its course.

This meant a lot more hospital appointments. But at the same time, I couldn't believe how many Christians I met in

the hospital, especially staff. It's like God placed them all around me.

My husband didn't have a real faith or trust in God, even though he was brought up in the church, the same as me. He felt that he was OK and that needing Jesus was a bit of a crutch. Not the sort of thing that real men do. But God surrounded me with people that love Jesus. I would just say to them, "Would you please pray for my husband, as he doesn't know Jesus yet?" And over the next 3 years, God drew him to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It was horrible to watch him as the tumour grew. He was in constant pain regardless of medication even with constant morphine. He was unable to eat or speak, only communicating by writing on a pad.

A week before he passed away, he wrote in his writing pad, "At the moment I feel like there are 3 people in the house." I asked him, "Was it a bad thing?" He replied, "No. I'm comfortable." I believe it was Jesus with us. He chose to trust Jesus the day before he died. I'm so thankful that he made his peace with God.

You can't make someone believe in Jesus, but you can show them the difference Jesus makes, and explain, if they will let you. Otherwise, you pray, like I did, and ask others to pray too.

RESTORING

What about my dad? Well, over time, and with the Lord's help, I was able to forgive him. After all, I had been forgiven much by Jesus.

Our relationship improved and I began to feel a great compassion for him as I recognised his behaviour came from a damaged childhood. In fact, I don't think my dad was ever really happy throughout his life. But I am so pleased that he came to make his peace with God as time went on.

And my mum? She trusted in Jesus too and was baptised when she was 89.

And me? Since knowing that I have a heavenly Father that

truly loves me, I am thinking and feeling differently. I used to think everything was my dad's fault, but now I know that many choices I made were wrong and I was responsible for those. I was not just the victim of other people's unkindness.

Bringing my mess to God has been a huge relief. I know I am forgiven and I have the confidence to walk with Jesus into a new future.

God is still with me, protecting and guarding me. He's also given me the most wonderful friendships, and He's given me the most wonderful care from my brothers and sisters in Christ.

He's given me so many opportunities to pray for people I meet - delivery drivers, people in shops, people stocking shelves, people in the street, neighbours, staff in a cafe that come and bring your coffee.

Everyone of these are loved by God, but many do not feel cherished or appreciated by others. It's a privilege to be interested in them, as Jesus is, to be kind to them and to pray for them.



WELCOMING

I don't know what you have thought or felt reading this, but I know that the Jesus who found me can find you too. God is on the move and very close to you, and your life will never be the same once you have Jesus living in your heart.

It has been such a big change for me: from angry, loveless resentment which propelled me into more sadness, bad choices and despair as my heart got harder still. Although I desperately wanted to be loved, I looked for it in the wrong places. I have not given the details but if you have felt you understood my story, just put your own story into the gaps.

The big difference for me is: I now know that I have a Heavenly Father who truly loves me. His love, encouragement, kindness, mercy and grace are giving me everything I had been missing. I know that I am wanted and known by the God who made me. I know I am valued, special and precious to Him.

God is so full of kindness. He does not make it hard for anybody to find Him. He is right near you, waiting for you to welcome Him.

Jesus said, *"You must be born again."** I had tried lots of other options but I now know that only Jesus could lead me to my heavenly Father. Only He could give me a new start, a clean past and all the love I have always needed.

"How is that possible?", I hear you say?

Jesus says in the Bible, *"I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in."***.

The door handle is only on the inside. Jesus doesn't force His way in, but He is waiting for you to welcome Him into the mess of your life, like He came into the dark disorder of my life – and sorted it out.

The Bible (NIVUK): *John 3v7 **Revelation 3v20

Although Jesus had done nothing wrong, and was the victim of vicious cruelty ending in a tortuous death, He chose to go through all that, to be punished for all the wrong choices we have all made. The Bible says that

'All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way.

But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved.'

Isaiah 53v6 (GNT)

Jesus died so that all who believe in Him will never stay in their mess but have a brand-new life forever:

'For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not die but have eternal life.'

John 3v16 (GNT)

Because Jesus has already been punished, God has promised that all our sins will be totally forgiven when we admit them:

"... if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing."

1 John 1v9 (GNT)

How wonderful that is. I love it! You can also find the love of Father God who will cherish you for ever.

This little story is my journey. What about yours?

Just like me, you can talk to Jesus:

- Admit your emptiness, your frustrated dreams, wrong choices and that you have got lost having gone your own way.
- Believe that Jesus has been punished for all your messed up past: He died on a cross so that you could have a brand-new life.
- Consider that receiving Jesus' new life will mean letting go of your old life (with your 'right' to control everything) – but you will be secure in the undiluted love of Father God, and His Spirit will help you.
- Do it! When you repent of your sin, going your own way, you are free to receive Jesus into your life. Welcome Him and let Him take the painful burdens away! Your new life will start!

You might find www.crosscheck.org.uk helpful in understanding how you can find real love with Father God.



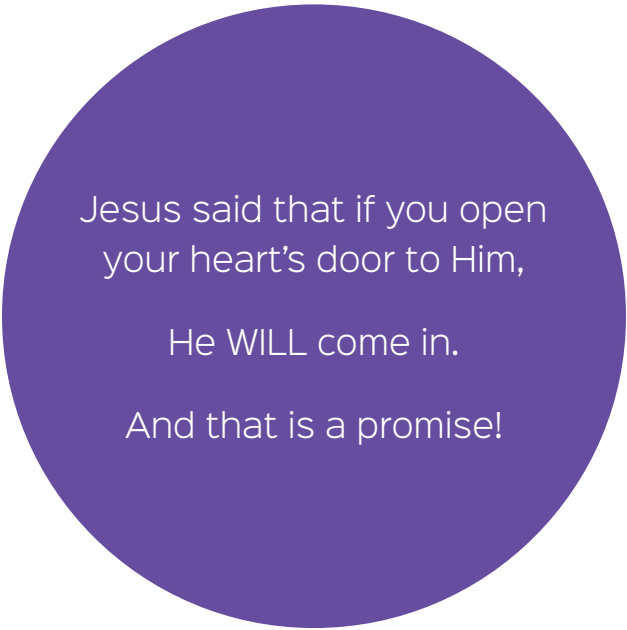
CrossCheck

CrossCheck is an easy way to explore how anyone can find real friendship with God in 6 helpful steps.

You can watch the video at:
www.crosscheck.org.uk



▲
scan the QR code

A large, solid purple circle is centered on a white background. Inside the circle, there is white text arranged in three lines. The text is a religious message about opening one's heart to Jesus.

Jesus said that if you open
your heart's door to Him,

He WILL come in.

And that is a promise!

Hungry for... a father's love

Julie's honest story from an unhappy childhood to a career in the police force, unpacks the reality of her lostness and pain while just 'keeping going'.

The answer she found surprised her and brought the peace and joy she never knew existed.


BeaconLight
biblical truth to share



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