

Seasons In Time

ENCOUNTERING GOD FACE TO FACE...
IN OUR BRIEF JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE



Life Season I: My Childhood Years (Continued)

Why I Learned to Love Myself!

Have you ever been the last kid that nobody picked? That was me. On the playground when sides were chosen for sporting games, I felt like digging a hole and crawling in it. I was awkward, shy, pimple-faced and not very athletically inclined. I wasn't "cool" like the other kids. I guess that's why I was picked on, bullied and targeted for pranks that made me look even more ridiculous than I knew I was. For a boy about ready to enter Junior High School, everything is about acceptance, image and being included. Oh, I was "included," alright...included on everybody's list to send the most vicious hate-texts they could think of! *"Nobody likes you! You'll always be stupid and ugly! We wish you weren't alive. So, why don't you just go ahead and kill yourself. You'd be doing everybody a great big favor! I'll bet your parents wouldn't even miss you...we sure won't!"* **That's when I learned to hate myself. I hated myself so much that I decided that they were right. I should just do away with myself and put an end to all my rejection and pain...forever!**

Cleft Lip is what doctors call it. That's an unemotional medical term for a birth defect...a gruesome gash in my upper lip that twisted my mouth into a hideous sneer exposing red gums and crooked teeth. It's a horror story for any human being to be born like this. But for me, a young girl wanting to look pretty, it's a social death sentence! I blamed God for my disfigurement every time my classmates called me a freak. I blamed my parents, thinking that maybe God was punishing them by giving them a repulsive child. ***But most of all, I hated myself for having a grotesque face. Maybe I deserved it, I don't know. But I knew I would be pitied and shunned by everyone for the rest of my life and I couldn't do anything about it.***



The most succinct definition of God found in the Bible is in 1 John 4:8, ***"God is Love."*** David wrote in Psalm 34:18, ***"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted."*** God's saving and restoring love reached out to each person in the stories you just read. ***Just listen to their stories when they responded to His gracious visitations:***

Thoughts wildly ran through my mind as I stood with a rope around my neck ready to jump. Over and over I rehearsed the spiteful words of others. Then I thought about my parent's loving care for me when I was sick or hurt. I remembered my Sunday School teacher telling me how much God loved me and had a special purpose for my life. Then, out of nowhere, I thought I heard a voice say to me, ***"Don't do this! I have something better for you."*** I didn't know if I was imagining it, but suddenly I felt immersed in indescribable warmth. For the first time in my life, I really felt loved! That was 30 years ago. Eventually I grew out of my awkward stage, walked with God and became a successful businessman. I used my wealth to build crisis centers for rejected children. ***I never forgot why I hated myself. And I will never forget my encounter with God and the New Season He gave me. I not only love myself, but I love and help restore others who are brokenhearted! (Luke 4:18-19)***

My parents prayed for God to heal me when I was a baby, but it never happened. Then one day, they heard of a Christian surgical group who would sponsor children around the world to come to the United States for reconstruction surgery. Believing that the Lord had heard their prayers, they applied for help. Because of the unconditional love of God that He placed in others, these physicians became the skilled hands of God to restore the appearances of children who are disfigured. I was like the little girl in this picture who was given a New Season in life. ***I hated myself because of the way I looked, but then learned to love myself once again. Because of my Face to Face Encounter with God's compassion in others, I grew up and joined that group of doctors.*** I now help to locate hurting children and coordinate bringing them to America. ***Every day I thank God for His transforming love in Christ. (2 Cor. 1:3-4)***



Next: More Stories from My Childhood - *My Lost Childhood...Regained!*

