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THE SPIRITUAL HEALING OF A FATHER AND HIS DAUGHTER

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This case describes the spiritual healing and family/generational healing of Clarence Jensen and his daughter, Gaylene. Clarence was born into a family where religion and faith life was not lived or expressed. He professed not to believe in a God and said when he died his life ended. "Throw me in a hole. It won't matter. I will be dead and there is nothing more," he would say.

Spiritual interventions that seemed most helpful included uncovering a family lie, generational healings, suffering, dreams, new attitudes, intercession of a Saint, and acceptance of spiritual truths.

The healing outcome for Clarence was an awakening to spiritual truths and the acceptance of these truths. For the daughter, Gaylene, the healing was the elimination of fears and anxieties for her father's salvation.

INTRODUCTION

Context

The context of this illustration is intergenerational family life as lived by a daughter, who was gifted with a strong faith in Jesus Christ, and her father, who initially expressed no belief in God, much less a God, but who gradually revealed a longing to believe and to be in a personal relationship with God.

Goal

The daughter, Gaylene, sought to experience the fulfillment of Joshua 24:15, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." and John 10:10, "I came that they might have life and have it to the full."

Theory/Theology

All of scripture beckons humankind to know the living God by experiencing God as God and ourselves as his creation, humankind. God's love for us is expressed again and again in the spiritual history of humankind. This love of God is available, yet sometimes illusive to His creation. An age old question is, "Why do some people seem to have faith and others have none?" If, as it says in Romans 10:17, "Faith then, comes through hearing, and what is heard is the word of Christ," why then do so many never hear those words? What prevents hearing? What is needed to open the "ears of the deaf"? How does one assist others in the healing of their deafness?

Questions open the soul to pondering. Questions demand answers. Mary, the mother of Jesus, asked how such impossible words could apply to her? She was given an answer that she reflected upon for the remainder of her life. Answers can be pondered for richer understanding. "Why do some people seem to have faith and others have none?" is a question that offers the opportunity for further pondering.

The struggle to understand this question and the search for answers is presented in this case study of a father and his daughter.

CASE ILLUSTRATION

Early Years

One of the daughter's, Gaylene's, oldest prayers was for the conversion of her father. As far back as she can remember she knew her Daddy didn't believe in God. As a child of nine, preparing for her First Communion, she became aware of what baptism truly meant, to be raised into the household of God, eternal life. She became frightened for her father. With all of her heart, she desired his conversion. Prayers for his conversion became a daily ritual of intercession. These prayers continued into her adult years. During those years, she attempted to speak to her father about faith. He would always brush her aside, telling her if she wanted to believe those things she could, but he wanted no part of them.

In her thirties, Gaylene had an experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. She was filled with the Holy Spirit and the desire for her father's conversion deepened. After days of prayer and intercession, she approached her father once more. She was prepared to share and explain the story of salvation in Jesus Christ. Clarence listened attentively to his daughter. When she finished speaking, he said, "Have you said it all? Is there anything else you need to say?" She searched within herself to see if the Spirit had anything else to speak and responded, "No, that is everything." "Good", he replied, "I have heard it all, and I don't want to hear any of this again." She was unable to transplant Faith into her father.

She was crestfallen. She knew her dad. He was a man of few words, but when he spoke, she knew that was his final answer. This subject could NOT be broached again. Her only recourse was to continue to intercede for him and trust that God would break through his resistance. Often, she felt discouraged and hopeless, but a desire stronger than her fears would call her back to intercession. The only consolation she experienced was a sense of knowledge that she would supply the water for her father's Baptism. She believed Jesus was speaking of the many tears she shed for her father.

Trip to Denmark – The Ancestral Homeland

In June of 1993, when her father was 80 years old, the two of them, father and daughter, journeyed to Denmark, the ancestral homeland. One of Clarence's sisters and her daughter met them in Denmark. Arrangements had been made to meet some distant cousins and visit with them. While visiting the relatives, Gaylene asked about their mutual great grandfather. In prayer many years before, Gaylene had discerned that a spirit of depression and darkness, which existed over the Jensen family, had come from her great grandfather. She had a desire to go to his grave and pray for healing of the family tree. The relatives were delighted to take their American cousins to the ancestral farm. Near-by, was the little country Lutheran church of the ancestors. The cemetery was adjacent to the church with the burial plot of great grandfather. Kneeling at his gravesite, Gaylene invited the relatives to pray with her. They all declined except for an American cousin, leaving the two of them alone at the gravesite. Gaylene began to intercede for her great grandfather. Recalling previous intercession for him, she prayed for the angry man she had seen and his curse upon the family. She asked Jesus to forgive him for any sin, especially toward his son, her grandfather. In prayer, she experienced great conflict between father and son. She asked Jesus for His mercy and healing between them. She visualized her grandfather, as a little boy, running to the outstretched arms of his father. She then saw in her mind's eye the mantle of depression and darkness that had been over the family lifted. Only when the prayers were finished, did Gaylene notice that this was her great grandfather's 138th birthday, June 16, 1993.

Upon return to the relatives' home, those relatives who had not joined in the prayer begin to question Gaylene about what she was doing at the gravesite. Gaylene shared the essence of her prayer with them. Then they told the secret that none of grandfather's children knew.

Clarence's grandfather, Jens Christian Jensen, was a well-known healer in Denmark. People came from all over Europe to seek his ministry. He and his wife were Lutherans and he was known to quote the Bible in that ministry. But Jens Christian Jensen had a dark side too, as all humans do. His first born son, Clarence's father, was born out of wedlock. Jens projected his shame and guilt toward this son, berating him and accusing his wife of infidelity. When his son was nine, great grandfather ordered him to leave the family home and never return. Jens walked many miles until he was taken in by a widowed woman. Eventually, he made his way to the United States, where he married and had fourteen children, one of whom was Clarence.

Clarence never knew why religion or talk of God was prohibited in their household. Clarence grew-up with little or no exposure to spiritual values. His father would have none of that nonsense.

Clarence's father never spoke of his life in Denmark or of his childhood. When Clarence and his daughter visited Denmark, her grandfather's father's secret was exposed. Jens was an illegitimate child banished from his home at nine, by his famous bible-quoting, angry, ashamed, broken father.

After Denmark Trip

Soon after returning to the United States, the annual, State-side, family reunion was held. Gaylene and Clarence shared the "family secret" they had learned with the other family members. Behaviors of their father were more clearly understood by his children. Their father had never shared any stories about his parents and now they knew why. They could understand his reluctance to allow religion in their home. He had always said to them, "If you want that when you are gone from me, so be it. But not under my roof." They could understand his sternness and bitterness toward God now. Understanding and hearing the truth, truly sets the captives free.

In October of 1993, Clarence underwent an angiogram. His heart was pierced by the doctor during this procedure. Immediately, he was taken into surgery. By-pass procedures were completed, as well as a replacement of

a heart valve. When the surgeon met with the family, he excitedly said, "I've never seen anything like this. His heart was pierced, but by the time I got into his chest cavity, it had sealed over. I could see where the piercing had occurred, but it was sealed." One could wonder if as Clarence's father's heart was pierced but remained broken, Clarence's heart was pierced only to be healed.

Clarence had a difficult recovery. He appeared to come out of the surgery well, but after a few days began to have problems keeping his eyes open. He was lethargic and slowly began to lose control of his muscles. One day while visiting, Gaylene had an inner urging to go to the lobby where she encountered an assistant parish priest. She asked him to come and bless her father. By now Clarence was in a semi-coma and had been non-responsive for weeks. The priest visited with the family members and then gave a brief explanation of what it means to ask Jesus to be one's savior. Before leaving, he suggested they say an "Our Father". The family prayed together. At the end of the prayer, the strongest, loudest "Amen" escaped Clarence's lips. No further response could be elicited by the hospital staff or the family.

Days passed and his condition worsened. Inadvertently, it was discovered that a drug was causing a severe allergic reaction. After ceasing the medication, his systems slowly came back and finally his eyes opened once again. He had been in the hospital sixty-six days, when he was finally released.

Clarence had little or no recollection of his days in the hospital. When told of his loud Amen, he just shook his head in disbelief. Despite his close brush with death, nothing seemed to have changed in his belief system. What was noticed was a new openness to people and a more loving attitude.

Pilgrimage to Betania

In March of 1996, Gaylene went on pilgrimage to Betania, Venezuela. While there, she learned about Mother Mary of St. Joseph, a local Saint, who touched the lives of many. Gaylene learned that during her lifetime, this woman prayed many prayers for the conversion of her father. Very late in his life, he was converted. There was a huge portrait of this Saint in the local church. The portrait showed Mother Mary of St. Joseph as a stern and serious woman. Kneeling before this image, knowing that Mother understood her heart, Gaylene asked this woman to intercede for her father. Suddenly, as Gaylene was praying, the portrait seemed to come to life. The stern looking woman seemed to come out of the portrait, looked down at Gaylene, smiled broadly and winked, as if to say, "All will be fine. I understand your pain." Then the woman in the portrait went back to her usual form. How does one explain such an experience? Clarence's daughter took that precious memory home, trusting that Mother Mary of St. Joseph had indeed interceded for her father.

Baptized by Jerry

In April of 1996, Gaylene began taking Eucharist a few times a week to a family acquaintance named, Jerry, who was in end stages of prostate cancer. One day Jerry said, "I dreamt about your father last night, and I am supposed to baptize him." Not daring to believe such a dream, she suggested that Jerry pray for God's interpretation of this dream. Going back the next day, Jerry said he had the exact same dream and he knew it meant he was to baptize her father. Unknown to her, Jerry had baptized over twenty-five people in his lifetime.

With trepidation she approached her father and said, "Dad, I know you told me once you never wanted to hear about baptism from me again. I have been faithful to your request. But Jerry has had the same dream twice and he believes he is supposed to baptize you." To her delight, Clarence replied, "When can we go?" Arrangements were made for the next day. April 22, 1996, Clarence, his wife, their son-in-law, and Gaylene went to see Jerry. Jerry explained Baptism and what it meant to ask Jesus to be one's Lord and Savior. Clarence listened intently and said that was his desire. He asked Jerry to baptize him. Jerry asked his wife to bring the Holy Water that had been a gift from Gaylene when she had visited Betania. Jerry used this water to baptize Clarence. Tears of joy flowed from all who were gathered.

Knowing Clarence had received new life in Jesus, Gaylene asked him if he wanted to pray for Jerry. He promptly made the sign of the cross on Jerry, bowed his head and prayed for him. No one had taught him how to do this. He just did it.

A few weeks later, Clarence asked if he could receive Jesus in the Eucharist! The parish priest heard his story and made arrangements for Clarence to be received into the Catholic Church. He made his First Communion with tears streaming down his face.

Amazing Grace

Seven years had passed, when on March 24, 2003, Gaylene went to visit her father. The Texas Bluebonnets were in full bloom and she asked her father if he would like to take a ride with her to see the flowers as this was one of his favorite past times. He just looked at her for a long time, before he answered. "I don't think I will be taking any

more rides with you,” he responded. Slowly, the truth of those words sunk into her heart. “Are you telling me your next ride will be to heaven?” she asked. Choking from emotion, he nodded his head, “Yes.”

Clarence died the next day, March 25, 2003, which is celebrated as the Feast of the Annunciation. Prior to his death, Gaylene and he spoke of his dying. No longer did he just want to be thrown into a hole when he died. He wanted a mass of celebration for him on the day of his burial. “And, Gaylene,” he said, “make sure they play ‘Amazing Grace’.”

Gaylene Baier has been a member of The Association of Christian Therapists (ACT) since 1983, the year she became a Registered Nurse. Her joy in nursing was as a Psychiatric Nurse on closed and open units. After retiring from nursing, she was certified as a Spiritual Director and currently serves in her parish in this capacity.