



The Problem of Love

My husband has a problem—a problem with love. Specifically, God’s love. Not much has been written on the problem of love. People write books on the problem of pain, or why bad stuff happens to good people, but not about the problem of love. Love is generally viewed as a good thing, a sought for, fought for, to-die-for thing. Yet love remains a problem for many, because it’s hard to figure out how it works.

God’s love comes for free, lasts forever, is doled out to the sadistic and the saintly alike, and overthrows injustice without raising arms. It would seem that such a precious commodity should have specific trading rules. But the only rule I’ve discovered is that love begets love. No matter how much you put on the market, you always end up with more.

But receiving such a precious commodity for free is often harder than it looks. For my husband, God’s love feels unjustifiable. Dan sees his short-comings under a high-powered lens, and they consume his entire field of vision, leaving no room for unwarranted affection.

But Dan keeps praying about his problem accepting love and also sharing God’s love for others—especially the rejected, homeless souls lining the streets where he works. He’s discovering that love can be experienced in the times he surrenders to its call—when he stops, listens, prays for and shares what he has with those who call the streets of L.A. “home.” It’s never easy, but he feels it’s what love is asking him to do.

A couple weeks ago, Dan spent a Sunday morning on his knees begging God for a more tangible taste of his love. And God met him...at *Subway*, where Dan had gone to retrieve a 6-foot sandwich for a party. As Dan stepped out of the store holding the giant sub, he heard a low wolf-whistle, and turned to see a well-weathered, “long-life-on-the-street” gentleman salivating at the sight of the sandwich. Dan smiled and nodded, then

turned back toward the car—until love pulled his shirt and turned him around.

“Hi,” Dan grinned, “Can I help you?”

The man replied, “You got any change?”

Dan said “no,” but he did have a dollar bill, which he handed over as he sat down at the table and asked the man’s name.

“Daniel,” came the response.

My Dan chuckled and said, “Cool! I’m Daniel, too.”

“No way! No way!” hooted his new acquaintance in disbelief, demanding a driver’s license for proof. Once he was satisfied that Dan was who he said he was, he seemed pleased with the chance encounter, and the two Daniels began to chat about life.

Eventually, my Dan asked him if he had ever tried to get a job, and Daniel said he assumed no one would hire him because he smelled so bad. “Would you hire me? No way! I stink, man. No way anyone gonna hire me!”

“I would,” said my Dan.

At that point Daniel’s face changed, and he started stuttering. Dan got a bit nervous, remembering what they say about mental illness often co-existing with homelessness, but he strained to see if he could hear what Daniel was saying. With difficulty Daniel mumbled, “I have a message for you....”

Curious, Dan asked, “What’s the message?” And with a pure, childlike face, this gnarled, wrinkled, smelly man looked up at Dan and said simply, “Jesus loves you.”

Tears came to my Dan’s eyes as he took in his answer from heaven. Love had turned him around so it could come back to him. Then Dan asked, “What about you, Daniel? Does Jesus love you?” Daniel’s face lit up with a joy that cannot be birthed from earthly places. “Ohhh yes! He loves me so much! No matter what I do, he loves me.”

Then Daniel held out the dollar bill Dan had just given him and said, “Hey, I don’t need this. You can have it back.” He already had all he really needed. And my Dan did too. □

—Susan Reedy

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