

Daddy, Do You Love Me?

Saturday afternoon was passing without much fanfare. Her father was sitting in his recliner watching the college football game of the day when his six-year-old daughter walked up to the side of his chair. Reaching over, he lifted her up and into his chair. She sat comfortably next to him and with mischievousness in her eyes asked, “Daddy, do you love me?”

He was not surprised by this question as he often took the opportunity to show and tell his daughter he loved her. On this occasion, however, he answered with a question of his own, “What do you think?” Looking intently at her father, and with a whimsical grin, she replied “NO.” He thought to himself how could she say such a thing. He restrained himself from his immediate emotional response, which was to say, “Of course I love you,” and said, “OK.” They gazed at each other through the mutually awkward, but momentary distance.

She inquired again, “Daddy, do you love me?” He again asked her, “What do you think?” With more determination than before, she replied, “You love my brother more than me.” Her father’s response remained the same, “O.K.” She burst into laughter and tried to take in such an unbelievable response. She thought to herself how could he say such a thing?

Again, she asked, “Daddy, do you love me?” His response was clear to him now, “What do you think?” With the compelling need to hear the 'right' answer, she said, “You’ve never loved me, daddy,” as she looked at her father with the anticipation only a six year old can muster up. He accepted her rejection with, “OK.”

She now knew her father’s response would be the same each time she posed the question every little girl asks. She decided to change her response to her father for their next exchange. She asked, “Daddy, do you love me?” Not knowing her direction, he remained true to his course, “What do you think?” With a broad smile and a twinkle in her eye, she said, “Yes, daddy, you do love me.” Without allowing a moments hesitation, he replied, “Yes, princess, I do love you” and gave her the hug only a proud father could deliver.

They smiled at each other and knew that something different and strange had occurred in those few moments. Perhaps they had actually stumbled upon the essence of love.

One-day eternity was passing without much fanfare. The Father was enjoying the beauty of his creation when a young woman walked up to him in innocence and vulnerability. Reaching over, he lifted her up and into his arms. As his child sat comfortably looking into his timeless eyes the question came to mind, “Father, do you love me?”

He was not surprised by this question for all of heaven and earth was created for this moment and eternity prepared for those who could receive the answer. The Everlasting Father knew the real question being asked of Him was “Am I a person who can be loved?” The Mighty Counselor asked his child, “What do you think?”

Looking intently into His ageless face and hoping to escape the responsibility for her self, this little one answered, “No.”

The Prince of Peace accepting his child's answer with grace and humility replied, "O.K."

As they gazed into each other's eyes his creature was faced with the weight of the question behind the question: "Am I a person who can be loved?"

She inquired again, but with more determination to tempt the Creator with even greater leverage she asked, "*Father do you love me?*"

The Lord asked again, "*What do you think?*"

Hoping to lure the Center of the Universe off center and with greater determination, this reckless one replied, "*You love others more than me.*"

From the essence of love itself, the Master replied, "O.K."

With deliverance in the balance, the Redeemer recognized the urge to protect his child, but refused to give into the fear. Because of His love and in spite of fear's knock, the I AM remained true to his nature.

Again with innocence slipping into insistence the child asked, "*DO YOU LOVE ME?*"

"*What do you think?*" asked the Holy One.

On the edge of despair and hoping to escape into this Other this woman impetuously declared, "*You've never loved me!*"

The Lamb of God humbly replied, "O.K."

The air was filled with awe as this little one experienced the power of God's humility and the presumption of her hubris. Filled with gratitude, she stepped into The Light. "Am I a person who can be loved?" was answered not with an answer as much as with the encounter of love itself.

She asked again, "*Father do you love me?*"

Her Father asked in reply, "*What do you think?*"

Without a moment's hesitation, her heart answered through the tears, "*Yes, you love me and I love you too.*"

Daddy, Do You Love Me? QUESTIONS

1. What is necessary for the father to ask the child, "What do you think?"
2. Why is this approach uncomfortable for parents?
3. How does courage foster more courage and how does anxiety create more anxiety?
4. At what point can you be sure that information will not change another's mind?
5. What does the question "What do you think?" require of its recipient?
6. What role does distance play in communicating confidence in another's competence?
7. In other systems, marriages, families, churches, schools or businesses how would this conversation occur?
8. How does humility reinforce personhood and how is hubris a symptom of emptiness?
9. If her father always asked her "What do you think?" would she ever know she was loved?
10. If her father always reassured her of his love never asking her "What do you think?" what would the effect be for her?