

Give Me A Hug



By Bob Helyar

At the age of 18, David has had more than his share of growing up challenges. Both his parents were involved in drugs and crime from the time of his birth and consequently he spent all of his childhood and early teen years with various short-term and long-term foster parents. Some of the fostering arrangements were good experiences for him. Others hold memories he'd rather forget.

When he turned 16, he decided to leave school and take on an apprenticeship as a plumber, and with the assistance of a local youth support service, he was able to set himself up in a small one-bedroom apartment.

As part of his apprenticeship, David is required to spend a certain amount of time in lectures at TAFE. In his class, he develops a close friendship with Jim. They spend a fair bit of time together socially and eventually get into sharing their individual family backgrounds. As it turns out, Jim's father, Frank, is the Chief Executive Officer of one of the major mining companies in the State.

Later in the year, David gets invited to Jim's birthday party and while at the party he meets Jim's father. The two of them talk for hours. Frank greatly admires young people who have persevered through difficulties in life and have maintained a positive attitude. Over the following weeks, David spends a lot of time at Jim's home and soon becomes like a member of the family. A father - son bond starts to develop between David and Frank.

Frank decides he would like to be more involved in helping David to get the opportunities in life he deserves. After discussing his thoughts with his wife, one day Frank says to David, "How would you like to live here with us? We would all be very happy to welcome you as a member of our family."

David can't believe what he is hearing. Frank is just the sort of bloke he always pictured as the ideal father he never had, so he instantly accepts the offer with great expressions of gratitude. Frank's response is to say, "From here on I'll think of you as my own son and I will be honoured if you will think of me as your father. Any time you need any guidance or assistance, just come and see me."

This is the greatest event so far in David's life. He is so thankful to Frank and his family for opening up their home to him and spends many hours after work each day talking with Frank about every aspect of life that sons talk with fathers about. He has a lot of years to catch up on.

One day, David is doing a plumbing job on a burst sewerage pipe under a hotel in one of the main streets of the city. At lunchtime, he takes a walk to buy a hamburger and as he passes one of the high rise office buildings he notices the street number on the wall. He thinks to himself, "I'm pretty sure this is the building where Frank has an office." So he walks through the front door and checks the directory. Sure enough, Frank's office takes up the whole of the 25th floor. Without

thinking too much about it he makes a snap decision to call in and visit him.

So, in his grubby work gear, with mud flaking from his legs, and smelling like the sewerage system he has spent the morning working on, he steps out of the lift on the 25th floor and approaches the receptionist. She is extremely disturbed by his state of hygiene and rudely asks, "What on earth are you doing here?"

Totally oblivious to the inappropriateness of his attire for the surroundings he is in, with a big smile he says, "Is Frank in? I'd like to see him."

The receptionist abruptly replies, "He is in a managers meeting and can't be disturbed for two hours."

David reassures her, "That's OK. He told me to feel free to call in on him any time. He won't mind."

He walks straight past the receptionist who is horrified as she anticipates the worst possible reaction from Frank, who has given her strict instructions that the meeting is not to be interrupted. He grabs the handle of the enormous door that leads into the conference room, and walks straight in.

Now picture the scene in that room. Frank is meeting with all the managers of the various departments of his company. They are all wearing suits and paying very close attention to everything Frank says. There is enormous tension in the air because at these meetings,

Frank calls on each of them to demonstrate a very high degree of accountability in relation to the performance of their individual work groups.

David bursts into the room, coke in one hand and hamburger in the other, and with a grin from ear to ear, calls out to Frank, who is sitting about 10 metres away at the head of the large oval table. "Hey Dad, I've been working down the road so I just thought I'd call in and say G'day while I have my hamburger for lunch."

Around the table, managers' jaws drop. Frank stands up. A glowing smile explodes from his face. Tears burst from his eyes and flow down his cheeks. He is totally blessed that David has openly acknowledged him as his father and felt free to call in like this. In his deep thundering voice he says, "Boy, you come up here."

As David approaches him, Frank says, "Give me a hug." They hold each other in a firm embrace for half a minute. Frank then tells all his managers to take a coffee break and proudly invites David to sit down at the conference table and talk with him while he eats his hamburger. He takes great delight in listening as David talks about all the recent developments in his life.

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The story you've just read is fiction. I wrote it to illustrate the quality of relationship I believe God wants to enjoy with us. One where we feel free to walk into his presence at any time and discuss anything and everything with him

- our interests, challenges, fears, struggles with temptations, desires, needs, and our celebrations - and also to listen for his perfect guidance and instructions for our lives.

*(Jesus also told a story to illustrate this loving father - child relationship with God. It is in the New Testament in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15, verses 11 to 32. The story is well known as the **Parable of the Prodigal Son.**)*

David was accepted into Frank's family because he had developed a close association with Frank's son Jim.

In the same way, according to the teachings of the New Testament, **anyone can be accepted into the family of God, through developing a close association with God's son, Jesus.**

Consider the following verse from the bible:

If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. (1 John 4: 15)

Think of the significance of the word "anyone" in that verse. No matter what your past or present circumstances may be, you can enter into a loving father - child relationship with God, the creator of the universe, the most powerful, wealthy, unconditionally loving father in existence.

ANYONE!!!!!!

This includes:

a destitute, homeless alcoholic;
someone doing a life sentence in prison because of the seriousness of his crimes;
victims of childhood abuse and neglect;
people struggling with addictions and mental illnesses;
people living in extreme poverty in Africa or Asia;
people contemplating suicide through feelings of worthlessness; and also
people who feel they have been successful in all they have ever done.

All of these people have just as much right as the President of the United States or the most successful influential person in the world, to enter into a loving relationship with God - a relationship through which we can expect to experience his loving support and encouragement, and also to find the most meaningful purpose for our lives.

Have a look at my brief summary of the central message of the bible:

God's original plan, at the time of creation was for all of mankind to live in a loving father - child relationship with him. The first humans he created, Adam and Eve, made a choice to do something God had instructed them not to do, and this act of independence ended the close relationship with God for themselves, and for following generations.

*But God had a plan to allow that relationship with mankind to be restored. As the ultimate expression of his love for us, he sent his son Jesus to live on earth as one of us for thirty-three years. During his last three years, Jesus spoke to thousands of people, clarifying God's priorities and basic instructions for life, and demonstrated how to be a channel of God's love to people. He then suffered a torturous execution (crucifixion), **and for all who believe in him, his painful death would serve as the punishment for all the ways we have chosen to live independently of God.** After his execution, he was physically resurrected, and spent a short amount of time with his followers and others, before he was taken back up to heaven with God.*

So, God was prepared to pay an enormous price (the crucifixion of his son) for the privilege of adopting us into his family.

No matter what state of desperation you may find yourself in, I believe you are only **ONE SENTENCE AWAY** from the most positively life-transforming experience you will ever have.

Only **ONE SENTENCE AWAY** from accepting the greatest offer ever made to mankind.

That one sentence is, ***"I acknowledge that Jesus is the son of God"***.

The greatest turning point in anyone's life can be activated by that one sentence statement of acknowledgement.

However, if this statement is to be sincere, it must be made with appreciation of the fact that God was prepared to allow his son to have most of the flesh whipped off his back, and then be nailed on a cross to die in extreme pain, so that this offer to be adopted as a much loved child of God could be extended to us. **With this level of appreciation, I believe you will have a strong desire to follow the teachings of Jesus.**

I strongly encourage you to take a close look at the New Testament. Read the four accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), and the subsequent experiences and teachings of his first followers. **I believe that as you do this, you will identify, and be strongly attracted to the character of Jesus.**

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Thanks for taking time to read it.

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