

## **Ohana: *The Father's Heart***

June 15-16

### **Introduction**

*"The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart," (1 Samuel 16:7a).*

God is not looking for how tall you stand, how wealthy or intelligent you are. God is looking for what is inside of your heart.

When I was a kid I would measure my Dad against other dads. I would secretly wish my Dad was larger in stature instead of being a 5'6" Filipino. Or I wished he could command the room instead of making obscure Star Trek references that often led to awkward silence. But as I've gotten older and become a husband and a father myself, I've discovered that the measure of a man is not how tall he stands, it's not about how witty or intelligent you are. It's what's in the heart that defines the measure of a man. My Dad has been a faithful husband to my Mom for over 40 years. He has been a committed Pastor to this fellowship for 25 years. He has impacted countless lives for the Kingdom and there is not another man on the planet who I would rather be my Father.

I truly believe I won the Father Lottery when it comes to Dads. Dad celebrates life. Did you bring home good grades or pass your quiz? We had to celebrate. Band recital? Let's celebrate! Was it a Wednesday? We might as well celebrate. But without a doubt, my Dad's true super power is his joy. Not just the joy he exudes throughout different circumstances but the joy he exudes when he sees you. People, I think especially children, possess an innate ability to know whether or not the person they are with wants to be with them. With my Dad, you never felt like you were a burden or that he didn't want to be with you. His face would light up and he'd get a twinkle in his eye that said, "I'm happy to be with you."

And this joy-filled presence is something I mostly took for granted until I became a Father myself. I figured it was just a personality trait but as I mentioned before, I've come to realize that it's more than that — it's a super power and one that I did not inherit.

Not too long ago we had a friend visit from out-of-state. This was a military couple who was a part of our Church and then moved to their next duty station. The husband was on-island for work and swung by the house to say hi. When he saw Coco, he swept her off of her feet and swung her around saying, "I remember when you were a little baby! I held you like this as a little baby!" We talked story for a little and caught up on life and kids and then he got ready to leave. As he was leaving, Coco said, "I wish my Daddy was more like you!"

The next day Coco and Jalee were talking and she said it again, "I wish Daddy was more like that man!" And Jalee said, "Why is that?" And she said, "His voice was higher, his eye brows weren't mad, and he picked me up and twirled me around." That's when it hit me, I had not inherited my Dad's super power. To my kids, I'm not always a joy to be around. My eyes don't twinkle, my eyebrows are furrowed. My face doesn't light up. I have resting Grinch face. My voice is deep and angry. I don't scoop up my kids and twirl them around.

And my natural defense is to go to the, "I show love in other ways" card. I provide, I show up for things, I work hard. But God has been teaching me more and more about the power of a joy-filled presence.

[Joy Exercise] Everybody, make an expression-less face. Now look around the room. Now put on a big smile and look around the room.

## **The Power of Joy**

Notice the difference? But Mark, it was just an exercise, it was contrived. Perhaps. But our brains don't know the difference and God has wired our brains to grow through healthy attachments and relationships. When the joy of the Lord fills our Churches and our homes they become fertile ground for growth and transformation. But imagine coming to Church and not finding faces that light up to see you. Imagine not seeing that twinkle in other's eyes when you walk into the room. Or imagine the face of God, eyebrows furrowed, voice deep and angry, and He doesn't want to pick you up and twirl you around. Our growth in that environment will be very stunted and may stagnate all together.

In their book, *The Other Half of Church*, authors Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks write, "*Brain science reveals that this joy sensation is crucial for emotional and relational development. Our brains look specifically to the face of another person to find joy, and this fills up our emotional gas tank.*" (*The Other Half of Church*, pg. 56).

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"You make known to me the path of life;  
in Your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore," (Psalm 16:11 ESV).

It is so important that we contend for the Joy-filled Presence of God in our gatherings, whether in service, in our small groups, or in our homes. The way that we behold one another and the way that we behold God makes all the difference in our lives.

## **The Face of God**

God's people had to learn this. In Numbers 6 God gives His people a prayer so that they would know what He was really like — How He felt about them. It's often called the Aaronic Blessing.

*22 The Lord said to Moses, 23 "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:*

*24*

*""The Lord bless you (Provision and Favor)  
and keep you; (Protection and Care)*

*25*

*the Lord make His face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;*

(When the Lord looks upon you, His face lights up with joy-filled love. His face radiates when He sees you and His eyes twinkle in delight when you are near).

*26*

*the Lord turn His face toward you  
and give you peace."*

(God is not preoccupied. His face is not buried in His phone or the millions of tasks that He has to get done. His face is turned toward you and you have His undivided attention).

*27 "So they will put My Name on the Israelites, and I will bless them," (Numbers 6:22-27).*

It was in this beholding and belonging that the Israelites received God's Name upon themselves. It was in beholding the joy-filled love of God that they discovered who they were — their identity.

*<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves Me will obey My teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them," (John 14:23 NIV).*

Knowing God's love is the key to living for Him. *"Anyone who loves Me will obey My teaching."* We can't live for God if we're not in love with Him. Bible teaching, spiritual practices, Church attendance — all of these things are great but only so much as they deepen our love for Jesus and our awareness of His love for us. That is what the Christian life boils down to — love.

*<sup>9</sup> "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands and remain in His love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete," (John 15:9-11 NIV).*

This is a powerful reality to the Christian life that sadly many people in the Western Church have neglected. In a post-enlightenment world we have reduced people to largely walking brains. And the Church is not exempt. We have turned Christianity into a largely academic exercise. You must learn, take notes, study the Word of God. Don't get me wrong, all of these things are great. But our obedience to God flows from our love for God and our love for God flows from His love for us. Sadly, anything involving emotion, sensations, and a physical response to God's Presence has been deemed suspicious and highly dubious.

But all throughout scripture we see that the people of God have always loved Him with all of their heart, all of their mind, and all of their strength. The Christian life is not merely a left-brained endeavor or an intellectual pursuit but one that involves our entire being.

Jesus was not a stoic unfeeling Rabbi as He is sometimes portrayed in the movies.

*<sup>29</sup> "As Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. <sup>30</sup> Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matthew 20:29-30).*

Look at Jesus' response,

*<sup>34</sup> Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him," (Matthew 20:34).*

The word for "Compassion" literally means, *to be moved as to one's bowels, hence to be moved with compassion.* In other words, Jesus felt love and compassion for these men in the pit of His stomach. This wasn't a left-brained response it engaged His entire being.

Another time, Jesus' good friend Lazarus has died and He goes to visit the family. Jesus knows He's going to heal Lazarus but that information doesn't stop Him from feeling the pain and grief of those He is ministering to. Jesus wept.

Jesus is our perfect model for living in right relationship with the Father. Jesus knew that the Father would care for and provide for Him. Jesus knew that the Father's face was shining upon Him and delighting in Him. Even before He began His earthly ministry the Father proclaimed that Jesus was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. Jesus did not minister from a place of earning or performance but from having received the unconditional love of the Father. He existed in the joy-filled Presence of God and the joy of the Lord was His strength. For the joy set before Him Jesus endured the cross. When you and I exist in the joy-filled Presence of God there will be no cross we cannot bear and no one we cannot love.

If we remain in His love and in His joy we will bear much fruit but apart from Him we can do nothing. So often we slip into the rhythm of religious routine. We perform out of dutiful obligation. It is in our nature to try to earn or deserve other's approval. But when it comes to God, the opposite is true. The only way we can live for Him is if we abide in His Presence, which is fullness of joy.

I met with a Pastor this past week who shared a conversation he'd had with a friend recently. This friend spent years of his life training in Kung Fu doing that wooden training dummy (Ip Man). And this friend shared how eventually you get to the place where you train blind-folded so that it becomes muscle memory. One day this friend was playing basketball at a local park and there was an altercation. This other guy got really upset at him and started swinging. But the Pastor's friend said that he felt like the man was moving in slow-motion. He said his body began to block the throws before his mind could even catch up.

In his book, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, author John Mark Comer describes the results of disciplines,

*"Any activity I can do by direct effort that will eventually enable me to do that which, currently, I cannot do by direct effort."*

Experiencing the joy-filled Presence of God does not come effortlessly to me. It often requires great intentionality and discipline. Exuding joy to those around me does not come effortlessly to me. I have to make daily conscious decisions. As I come down the stairs in the morning to greet my kids who have been up since 5:30am I have to fix my face so that my presence exudes joy. When my daughter asks me a question while I'm working at the computer I have to make a conscious decision to turn my face toward her and raise my eyebrows so that they're not furrowed. I've also started the practice of twirling each of my kids around 1-3 times a day. For my wife, I've been practicing the daily six-second-kiss. They say it takes at least six seconds for the oxytocin to kick in but I've learned that she and I count differently. I always stop first and she says, "Are you using Mississippi's?" Are these actions contrived? Maybe. Can I do them with my eyes closed? Definitely not. I didn't inherit my Dad's super power. That doesn't mean I can't grow in providing a joy-filled home. I'm praying that what takes effort today will become effortless tomorrow.

### **Group Discussion Questions**

1. When you picture God as your Heavenly Father, what do you feel? (Tension, shame, guilt, peace, love, joy, etc.) How do you think your view and feelings toward God affect your walk with Him?
2. What impact will our view of God and our understanding of His love have on the rest of our Christian life?
3. How do you think others feel being around you? What feelings does your presence exude? (Work, school, home, etc.)

4. We were created to live in the joy-filled Presence of God but we often gravitate toward sources of pseudo joy. What pseudo joys do you most often turn into instead of God's joy-filled Presence?
5. How do you experience God's joy-filled Presence?

### **Closing Prayer**

As I pray this over you, engage your whole being. Pay attention to every part of you. What feelings are you experiencing?

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and keep you; (Protection and Care)*

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*the Lord make His face shine on you  
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