**EMBRACED by our Father’s Arms**

I remember a couple of years ago, I faced a tough situation with a difficult client that came to the corps. Things got heated and as much I wanted to help the client, the individual resisted. Filled with disappointment in not being able to help, I began to cry out of frustration. My heart was racing and my mind seeking to make sense of the situation. I called on God but did not hear him- I needed a word. It was then when Judith walked into my office, without saying or asking anything, she looked at my watery eyes and embraced me in her arms. Judith was a pillar in our church. She always had the right GODLY words of encouragement to say. But this day, she did not have to say anything; her embrace was a deep heavenly hug that said it all and brought me straight into my Father’s presence. It was then I heard Him say “Everything is going to be alright. I know your heart.”

Mark 10:13-16 says “People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And *he took the children in his arms*, placed his hands on them and blessed them.”

The past year has taught us many things. Even our vocabulary has changed. We have adopted new words in our daily conversations. Amongst them are the words *socially distant or socially distancing*, which is probably the most used phrase for 2020. It’s been over a year that we have been asked to keep social distance from others. I ask myself, are we ever going to be able to embrace into each other’s arms once again? In contrast, amongst all the uncertainties and turmoil that we have all faced, we have felt the need to be embraced by a loved one.

The word embrace -or to take into one’s arm (to be more specific)- in Greek is *enagkalizomai* (Phonetic Spelling: en-ang-kal-id'-zom-ahee; can you practice saying it?). It only appears twice in the New Testament. Both instances refer to Jesus and children.

We have heard and seen illustrations of this portion of scripture many times. Notice that Jesus was ready for children to come *to* him. We often see him sitting down on a rock with children surrounding him. Can we take a minute to think about what that scene must have looked like few seconds before? Jesus must have been kneeling so that the children would recognize his face full of love calling them to come. He must have had his arms open and extended, his hands as wide open as possible ready to embrace all the children that came to him.

In recent days, I felt the joy of becoming a first-time mom. In preparation to giving birth, I wondered how I would distinguish my baby’s cry; when the cry meant she needed to eat, sleep or a diaper change? I read so many articles about types of cries and what they should sound like. However, “when the rubber meets the road” all those tips in books go out the window. After giving birth, I found myself with a newborn life in my arms asking myself how I would know what she needed.

The so awaited moment came: At her first cry, the nurses placed her on my chest, and I wrapped her in my arms. It was then I instantly learned that all she needed was my embrace to know that she was going to be cared for, safe, loved and all of life’s joys.

It has been a few months since the day she was born, and I cherish every second I can to embrace her in my arms and teach her about navigating through life. Don’t you think God our Father is ready to embrace us (holding us in His arms) as we navigate through life?

Today, God, in all his greatness, is kneeling and calling us closer to him with His “big bear” arms ready to squeeze us tight. Perhaps, our Heavenly Father has placed someone in your life today to embrace you and remind you He is closer to you than you know.

Words of encouragement are great, but there is something deeper and special that comes out of embracing in each other’s arms. It transcends all that words cannot be said. Next time you embrace someone, may it be one that brings them straight into our Father’s arms.

Questions for individual or group reflection:

* How has our body language changed during the pandemic?
* Have you ever experienced a time in your life where words were not necessary to connect to someone?
* How can we embrace others in a way they perceive God’s presence?
* How does God embrace you personally?

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