

COME AS YOU ARE

No need to wait and no need to worry. Take the time and come to the One we all need without hesitation. He is Light in darkness, Father to the orphan, Victor in struggles, and boundless in mercy!

IT TAKES TIME

I spent a lot of time with my husband's grandmother in her last days. The more I did, the more I realized what I had missed out on. You see, I had neglected to visit her regularly. I leaned in one day to tell her, "Gaba, I wish we could have spent more time together." She was quick to answer me, not in a jabbing manner, but a gentle one. A life-changing response came off her lips, "Well, we didn't." There really was only one honest response. We didn't, we hadn't, and now it was too late. These words made such an impact on me. Who knew three words could teach so much? Three words delivered by this precious woman.

Do you talk about what you are going to do? Those of us from the south use our manners -- "We need to get together" -- but often they are words without action. There isn't time for everything, and everything takes time, and the older we get the less time we have. What stirs in your soul, that if left undone, will leave you regretful in the end? Time well spent, with lasting value, isn't in things; it's in relationships. I am so glad we can say "we did" spend this time on these pages. It's wonderful when we can say "we did" spend time with others. And the best yet is when we

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1) Pull up a chair, have a seat and soak it in. Now is the time! Let's say, "Well, we did."

can honestly say, "we did" spend time with Jesus. And on that

day when our time here has run out, The Lord will say, "Well, well, I know you, Come on in!" (Matthew 7:21-23)

THERE'S NO NEED TO WAIT

It was a usual play date. The kids recklessly ran about in the backyard and climbed the branches of the magnolia tree out front. A neighborhood friend was over. The kids all hurried in for a little break, to refuel with a snack. I listened as their sweet young voices filled the room. They melted my heart as they struck up this conversation. Very matter of fact, a little boy spoke out to my son, "When I grow up, I'm going to be a Christian!" My son instantly replied, "You don't have to wait. You can be one right now!" Let that settle into your heart. "Right now?" you might say. Yes, right now. There really is no need to wait.

NO NAME TAG NEEDED

It was the exchange of peace during our church service. We always sat near the same people, in our unspoken assigned seats. I reached my hand out to a very familiar face I'd met before and had seen weekly. He reached for mine, too, but with his other hand he quickly covered his nametag and put me to the test. "What's my name?" My heart hit my toes. My friendly smile and kind gestures lost their impact as I searched for his name and blurted out the wrong one. I wanted to sink into my seat. My face was hot and I was red with embarrassment. He had really hoped I'd remember. It taught me to be ever more aware.

Hearing our name is sweet to our ears. We all want to be known. I'm working on remembering names, but the Lord knows us by name already. And what's more? "He knows the number of hairs on our heads." (Luke 12:7) Go ahead, cover up your nametag. We are known fully by Him and never forgotten.

Jesus' big heart is ready to receive you wherever you are.

"Do not be afraid, I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine." (Isaiah 43:1)

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NO NEED TO WORRY

Don't worry if you doubt. Jesus didn't rebuke "doubting Thomas" and He won't rebuke you, either. Have you heard about Thomas? He was Jesus' disciple, one of His friends. He earned his nickname due to doubt. He insisted on seeing Jesus after He rose from the dead; only then would he believe. Jesus met him in his doubt and lovingly extended confirmation to him. He desires to do the same for you and me. He asked him and us, "Why are you troubled, why do doubts rise in you? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see." (Luke 24:38-39)

Did you know His scars were still there after He rose from the grave? Do you think He wears them as a visual reminder to confirm that His scars cover all of ours? To remove that doubt too? Are you still not sure? Touch my scars then. I've seen Him in my questions and struggles, my answers and my rescue. He's touched my scars and removed my doubt.

Maybe today is the first time you've set out to find answers. First days are good days. He promises, "Since the first day you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them." (Daniel 10:12)

EVERYBODY

The scrap of paper fell from a little book I found buried deep in a cabinet. I had written it down many years ago, so I'd be sure to never forget the moment. Our daughter was probably four at years when she prayed these Amen." Immediately, looking up with "Mommy, does everybody need

God, we all need You, and You want us.

the time, but wise beyond her words: "God, we need you. heartfelt eyes, she said, God?" Out of the mouths of babes! "Everybody. Yes, everybody," I told her. Oh, may we never forget this.

WAY BACK & WAY

I found my little journal tucked in the top drawer of our guest room dresser. It's from way back in high school. I say way back because I am getting way old. Opening to the first page, I read this entry:

"The Love We All Need."

*A love that's never ending,
One that asks nothing of you,
A forgiving love at all times.*

It doesn't give up on you and waits with open arms.

A love that accepts you for who you are,

One that plants the seed in your growth.

Growing in this love brings you life and makes you new.

It's a love that's honest and sincere.

A love that makes your heart sing,

One which creates a strong bond of security locked within your heart.

It's the love of God the Father in Christ Jesus!

<p>"More than once I have heard God say that power belongs to Him and that His love is constant." (Psalm 62:11)</p>

Every part of Jesus I was beginning to understand way back then are the very pieces of Himself that He has proven over and over to be way true! This security I wrote about, I've since discovered, is the only real kind. Read it again. He loves us WAY MUCH! HE is the love we all need.

COUNT ON IT

I can remember when I first learned to count. It started with counting stairs and moved into covering my eyes and counting during Hide and Seek. All the way up to one hundred was a huge accomplishment. You know, God is good at counting, too. He can count far better and much higher. However, I think His favorite number might be one. You see, He keeps a careful count and keeps a close watch. He's not willing to let any "one" wander off. I know. I wandered and He came and found me. If you've wandered, don't wonder.

Not maybe, but SURELY,
His goodness and mercy
will follow us all the days
of our lives. (Psalm 23:6)

Know He still loves you. Truly, I tell you, He's stuck on "one," and that one is you!

Lord, we are all wanderers, and You are far more wonderful than we can begin to grasp. You truly are The Good Shepherd. There is no One like You! We can count on You always.

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices about that one sheep more than over the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven feels the same about you. He is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost." (Matthew 18:12-14) He is all about finding each "one".