

# 11

## A Daughter's Letter

Dearest Papa & Momy,

I have finally made time to write to you a letter of this kind as you both have stepped into a very special phase after growing strong together for thirtynine years (2009) in the seasons of life. I have tried to pen down what being your daughter has meant to me and that continues to affect my life and that of others.

Just like any other child I had the need to be loved. You gave it to me unconditionally, in full measure, with all genuineness and warmth. It was active, passive and tough. Your love to me was giving, sacrificial and expressive. You communicated it well so I could understand and believe it. The kisses, the hugs and holding hands were ever so special. I didn't have to look for it anywhere else. You kept loving me even when I let you down.

Deprivation of this love would have hindered my maturation and could have given way for the development

of other problems. I loved it every time you said and wrote, “We love you.” It tightened the bond and gave me strength and security.

You accepted me unconditionally as well, just as I was, with all my weaknesses. You communicated this. When you accepted me, I knew that your acceptance did not necessarily mean you agreed to every bit of what I did. Whatever I did or didn’t do did not change your degree of acceptance. You encouraged mutuality in accepting each other within and outside the family. I am now able to accept people with their differences, appreciating the uniqueness of God’s creation.

You respected me as a person, as a girl, as your daughter and as a child of God. You respected my feelings, views, opinions and counsel too. Because I received respect I am able to give respect. My eyes well up when I look back at the times when you were amazingly understanding. My friends even commented, “Why do you have to get married, when you have such understanding parents?” You understood me as a student and as a preacher’s kid. When I went through hurts, the difficulties of a single child, the aftermaths of a traumatic birth, complexes, bullying, teasing, your understanding was therapeutic. You helped me to understand that receiving pity and giving pity would take me nowhere.

Your appreciation and encouragement even in little things have built in me a healthy confidence about myself. You always appreciated the wee gifts I gave you, held them precious and they were never laughed at. You helped me to handle failures well and gave a balanced view of my own personality. You even appreciated my smile and that

helped me to love myself according to Romans 12:3. You appreciated my school and college work, encouraging me to do better, behave better and at the same time not allowing me to feel “I’m not good enough.” This pulled me gently out of my complexes.

There were times when you chose the wrong timings to correct me and it was hard for me to take it though I knew deep inside that your intention was only to make me a better person. I knew well that you found the fault ugly and hateful, not me, never! A lot of times your corrections were sandwiched with appreciations. As a little girl, I then saw and understood that you were pessimistic and saw only my faults. I even wondered if you were waiting for me to go wrong but soon I realised it was only a feeling and you helped me deal with that negative feeling by replacing it with the truth. I didn’t enjoy it very much when you corrected me in a crowd, especially when my friends were around. I waited for a time when you were calm and in a “good mood,” and told you how that hurt and you tried hard not to do it again. It took you sometime to change your styles of disciplining but you finally did. Thank you.

I love you for your willingness to change, learn and grow through corrections which came from a little girl. To have your daughter correct you would have hurt your ego but you stooped down, pulled down by the weight of your maturity. You don’t regret it, do you?

To have your eyes opened a bit, I want to say a few more things which surfaced as I tried to dig into my buried thoughts. I feel strongly to say these because we as a family today are involved in counselling parents and children regarding parenting and growing up.

I appreciate much the article you had written a few years ago stressing the fact that what children need is not the MONEY parents give, it's the TIME. Thank you for writing that and I'm glad you recognised the need for time from parents to children. You were not able to give me that for "justifiable and understandable" reasons. But to me, then it was hurting and it has taken me all these years to understand those "justifiable and understandable" reasons. You were never there for any of my special programmes in school or college, the days when I received prizes, my graduation and many other occasions. It hurt because every other child had its parents to give them a "welldone hug" and to take them out for dinner that night. I also remember when I walked back from school each evening with a back bent heavy with books hanging behind, all I found was a huge lock hanging pathetically to welcome me. I hated it. Sometimes, there would be some snacks left on the table for me to help myself. I understand now the 'whys' I had then, but would I ever get those days back? Would you ever be able to see me running up the stage to receive my prizes won in school again? I miss possessing, treasuring those memories. I say it hurt because I could well see that there was a major muddling up of your priorities. You had changed God's order and placed "ministry" before your family.

Thankfully, I managed with God's surpassing grace and coped with the neglect and loneliness but it wouldn't be fair if every child would be expected, pushed to do the same.

There is another grievance I want to tell you about. You did at times gauge me against what others said and trusted their words more than mine. This shook the faith

and belief we had on each other and it took us ages to rebuild.

Parents say, “Children would not remember this and that,” but not many parents ask their children what they remember and they don’t have the time. (If fact, they remember every bit.) You’ve realised it now. Thank you for asking me. There was also a little too much of the phrase, “When I was your age, ...” heard at home. There might be a relevance to the concept on the underlying principle but definitely not the methods with its antiqueness. Times have changed and are still changing — above all what has worked in your life need not necessarily work on mine.

I don’t have memories of you correcting me when you were emotional. You were able to explain well my wrongs in the best way possible with all calmness and got the message across. Polite yet firm. Your corrections were clear and you never reminded me of my past misbehaviours but treated each mistake as a fresh root to be uprooted. Momy, I never liked your spankings, guess you were only following one of God’s disciplinary principles. I still don’t like them, but it did work, didn’t it? (Heb 12:11). You taught me to say I was sorry and to take responsibility for my behaviour and for the damage I could have caused in the other if another was involved. I cannot, should not, move on without telling you that I learnt to say ‘sorry’ from you. You always admitted that you were wrong when you went wrong and when you did not keep your words. It easened the disappointment. I learnt from mistakes. I respect you for letting me see your mistakes.

You were good role models as a father and mother figure. Your roles were distinct and natural. Teaching me little things like how to hold a pen, drawing a straight line, emptying the bin in the right place, cleaning the hair from the comb, switching off lights, closing the paste tube, washing my clothes, and many more have made life easier for me and for those I live with.

Papa, I respect and appreciate your perfectionism and I know you are trying hard not to push it into those around you. But as long as it's in you, you can't help but expect it in others, too. I want you to mind yourself that we are imperfect human beings and our aim is towards perfection but never at the expense of smooth relationships. Please try to strike a balance.

I know that you, Papa and Momy, disagree on almost everything except that you love the same God but you never entered into open disagreements and arguments when I was too young to understand what went on. That was good for me. I don't remember any angry outburst, a fight, abusive words being thrown at each other or being physically abusive.

You taught me how to behave at the dining table. No shapy faces. No murmurs. No complaints. Thankfulness stressed. I have a memory, Momy, you had stuck a picture of a dying boy stung by poverty, just above the dining table and had the words, "Remember the Poor," written across it. Little lesson. Big difference. Our family times across the table were times when we talked about our day, cracked jokes. It was funtime. I think we realised before it was too late that corrections done at the table spoiled the peace and fun and you tried to choose a better time, making it even more effective.

Most of all, you taught me to love God and to make Him known through so many creative ways. I say that you both worked with God to show me who He really was and what He could make of me if I would let Him be my Lord. I have such vivid memories of you telling me the true tales of the Bible from cover to cover, as you fed me food. I enjoyed the entertainment and ate more. I want to thank you for giving me hard and soft pushes now and then to memorise the Scriptures. These will stay with me and adorn my life with beauty and depth. Making the Word of God relevant to commonplace situations made me grow into a practical Christian.

When your answers were “No” or “Wait” to my desires for a Teddy Bear or a banana, I didn’t understand why. I hated the feeling of helplessness and not being able to question then. But now I know there has been a hidden lesson. If, then, you had never taught me to accept a “No” with willingness and joy, I would never be able to accept “No’s” and ‘Wait’s’ from God today. It worked the same way with obedience. Implicit. Immediate. Not delayed.

Another blessing you extended towards me was that you allowed me to talk and question about anything and everything to you in the right way, in the right environment. You never left me in the dark or to loiter in grey zones in matters regarding sex. At the right time you opened my eyes and helped me to understand the changes I was going through and with a Christian perspective. This was not only informative but it saved me from the many pitfalls adolescents come across. It also protected me from learning the wrong side of the story from wrong sources.

Apostle Paul speaks about 'exasperation' which I understand as abusing children verbally, physically and psychologically, neglecting them, not trying to understand them, expecting too much from them, withholding love unless they perform, forcing them to accept parents' goals or ideas, and refusing to admit their own mistakes (Eph 6:4). Papa & Momy, your expectations of me were to the potential which God had given me. There was neither a pressure to perform nor a pressure to accept your goals and ideas as mine. You had an exemplary way of helping me to choose my friends.

Going back to communication, you let me talk about my friends and studied them without me knowing it. Directly and sometimes indirectly you taught me how to respond to negative and positive influences others had on me. You always quoted the Bible, so I knew that these principles and ethics were not just yours. I would like to add though that I always hesitated to bring my friends home because I was not very happy the way they were treated. I kept wishing that you treated them the way I was treated in their homes.

As I entered into my middle teens and even at an earlier stage you helped me to make decisions on my own and stood with me through it whether I was right or wrong and kept pouring in counsel whether I asked for it or not. But they always fell on my ears and I chose to go by them. Handling money was a learning by itself. I see that I matured with more confidence when there was no condemnation when I made a mistake but only a loving correction.

Following the eagle's parenting principle, when it was the right time, you let go of me and allowed me to make some important choices in life and that increased in me the confidence to fly on my own. The more you let me on my own, the more I learnt to trust God and others less. Don't hear me wrong here, I will continue to value counsel and guidance from elders and others who care but I will remain responsible for the choices I make because I firmly believe that the stops as well as the steps of a righteous man are ordered by God. As you let me go you assured me that nothing can tear us apart. You reminded me to major on the majors, keep short accounts, nourish the inner life, remain sexually pure, avoid credit but invest, invest and invest, to take care of fitness, health, nutrition, select friends more wisely and to select the God-ordained person for me most wisely of all. Even when I was in school you persevered in encouraging me to wait on the Lord regarding my future steps in life. I don't have the faintest remembrance of you pushing me into becoming a missionary like both of you. I made the choice myself to serve God fulltime. As I entered college, it was a joy to seek the Lord together with you regarding a specific direction in my ministry. I want to thank you for being there when I needed guidance and confirmation that God had called me into the ministry of counselling.

In me you have dedicated yourself to the care and training of the next generation. Quietly and confidently you have prepared me for a lifetime of service to God and to mankind. I thank the Giver of every good and perfect gift for the meaningful marks you have branded on the

core of my character and take wholesome habits woven into the fabric of my flesh.

Our family is a beautiful combination of memories, changes, growing dependence and dreams. As I am struggling to end my little long letter I want to thank you for the times when you were not there — that made, me run to God. If Dr. James Dobson had known you, I am sure he would comment, “You have been daring in disciplining me because you loved me and surely Parenting isn’t for Cowards!”

You are not perfect. You would be the first to admit it. Nor are you infallible, much to your own dismay. Nor altogether fair... nor always right. But there’s one thing you are—always and altogether—you are my parents—the only ones I will ever have. And quite frankly there’s only one thing you need to hear me say in five words:

“Papa, Mommy, I love you!”

This is the best gift I can give next to giving you the joy that your daughter is walking in the Truth!

— Evangeline

## **Great is Thy faithfulness!**

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see.  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

*Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!*

— Thomas O. Chisholm, 1866-1960

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