

LOVE THAT COSTS

By
Jessica Meldrum

“I hate you! You’re not my mom and dad. I’m going to ask my social worker to move me to a new home!”

As Lynn* stormed off and slammed her bedroom door, I looked at my husband. The hurt I saw in Glenn’s eyes mirrored my own. Just a month ago everything seemed to be going so well. Lynn had been in our home two years now and we had witnessed many wonderful changes in her. We knew she had begun to believe that we would not abandon her, a very legitimate fear because she had been abandoned by family and other foster parents.

Lynn was 10 years old when I first met her as a volunteer helping with an outing at a local foster care agency. I fell in love with her immediately. After five years foster parenting and many years of working with unwanted kids on the streets of Detroit, I could tell Lynn had potential. I saw her often over the next two years and kept hoping that her current foster home would work out for her. It was number six since coming into the foster care system at four years old.

One day while at the agency office, I overheard one of the social workers talking about how hard it would be to place a 12 year old. The other worker agreed adding that such a nice kid like Lynn could really use break. At once I felt the Lord speak to my heart about taking her. I spoke to Glenn that night and he also believed it was God’s will for us to share our home and our hearts with her.

The first year with Lynn was certainly not uneventful. It is common for a foster child to test their foster parents for at least the first year. Due to attachment issues, they want to know as soon as possible if a foster family will keep them or “give them back” once the family discovers negative behaviors in them.

Over the next two years, we came to love Lynn as we would our own daughter. She slowly opened up to us, but still we sensed that she was fighting her growing attachment to us. Two weeks before we were to celebrate our second anniversary, Lynn began doing things to

sabotage our relationship. She betrayed our trust, lied to us and began forming detrimental friendships behind our backs.

When she disobeyed us, it seemed she wanted to be found out. When we confronted her about her behavior, she suggested we just get rid of her since we didn't like what she was doing. Although we made many mistakes through this time, we did try to confirm our love for Lynn and let her know we would be very sorry if she chose to leave us.

The decision to become foster parents was not really our decision, Jesus chose it for us. He showed us a need and we simply obeyed His command to care for the "least of these." It began with taking in teens off the street and getting some type of legal guardianship. Because of their age and circumstances we never had to be concerned about giving them up. When Glenn and I decided to take Lynn, we again believed that we would not be in danger of losing her. Although she was younger, given the history, it was very doubtful that she would ever be given back to her mother. We hadn't considered the possibility of Lynn rejecting us.

I was facing the predictions and warnings that many had made to us over the years; "You're going to get your heart broken if you foster parent, that's why I would never do it." It was looking like we were going to lose Lynn and I realized that I had never really prepared myself for a loss like this. But how could I have prepared for it? By not giving my heart away? How could I ever make a difference in the life of a child unless I let them into my heart?

The world teaches us to preserve our life; to save our life. That it is a very foolish thing to knowingly put yourself in a position to be hurt or suffer loss. The Scriptures teach the opposite. To love as Jesus loves is never safe. To give your life away is risky and sooner or later it will cost. As Christians we are to lose our lives through absolute surrender and follow our Master even if He takes us to a cross.

Lynn's social worker did not grant her request to be moved to another home and soon afterwards she came to the point to love us and trust us. We had many more trying situations to go through with her, but today Lynn is a tender-hearted, young adult following Jesus. She is not repeating the sins of her natural family. Her life is a wonderful testimony of the love and mercy of God.

It all worked out well with Lynn; however all our stories don't end like this one. At times Jesus chose for us more difficult paths, ones that included the pain of loss or the sting of betrayal. Our decisions to love must never be based on the predicted outcome. To love as Jesus loved will

always cost, yet to share in the fellowship of His sufferings by giving our lives away is in truth, a great privilege. Whether we join with Christ in His sufferings by spending hours on our knees for someone who is hurting or we give ourselves in some manner of service for Him, it is a gift from Him, no matter the outcome.

Emma Booth-Tucker, a granddaughter of William Booth, understood the real blessing in living on this earth. “The portions of my life which have given me the most satisfaction,” she confessed, “are the seasons when I carried the cross for Jesus, and the one regret which fastens down upon my spirit at the thought of turning from earth and entering heaven is the realization that I shall never again be able to companion Jesus by bearing the cross, by suffering with Him for the salvation of sinners, and by ministering to Him by ministering to the sorrowing, suffering multitudes for whom His blood was given.”

* The name has been changed.

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