

He Loves You Anyway

BY KATIE CARSON WEBSTER

ASHBY, A PRECOCIOUS six year old in my previous church, received a “no” from her mother, Nancy, in

response to something she had asked for. Ashby, clearly devastated by this answer, stared

her mother in the eyes for some time before tucking her head close to her heart, raising her hand to her lips, and

whispering something unclear into her chest. She then paused, looked up, turned her ear to her chest, and listened.

Nancy watched all of this with curiosity, waited a few minutes, and then asked Ashby what she was doing. Ashby

replied, hands on hips, “I told God what you said.” Clearly Ashby had appealed to a

higher authority who would perhaps bring justice to this unreasonable ordeal. Nancy paused and then asked Ashby, “Well, what did God say?”

Ashby exhaled, rolled her eyes a bit, and replied, “He said he loves you anyway.”

Ashby’s actions were a bold but peaceful challenge to the authority she was under. These types of challenges, even in

Ashby’s small way, are a risky business — especially when we are uncertain of the outcome.

Bold language and actions that support our convictions are effective ways to disagree peacefully. They work because

they create a breach in the system, a threat to those in power. Jesus’ threat came as promises about a new authority under the reign of God.

When Peter told the Sanhedrin, “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven

given among mortals by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), he subverted the hierarchy of his day. His boldness not only

claimed a higher authority than empire, it issued an inclusive invitation for all people.

In verse 13 we learn that the boldness of this witness had an effect on the Sanhedrin. “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized

that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed, and recognized them as companions of Jesus.”

Peter’s words, like Ashby’s, were effective because they were authentic. Honest words from “ordinary” people can

have great power, even if their full implication isn’t known at the time.

We too have the opportunity to speak to an authority higher than any law, bondage, or injustice. In large and small

grievances, we need only speak to our hearts and listen to the God of the universe who speaks back into our lives.

Our authentic witness will strengthen our words and allow the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of listeners. That

relationship and a simple and entirely radical message can still subvert the empire: God loves us anyway.

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