

## Of Birds and Seeds

*Bonnie Walker, Former Associate Superintendent and Teacher, BC*

"Don't you say another word!" I screamed in anger.

Two sets of eyes gazed at me. A chin quivered. How on earth did I get to this place? These were my very own grandchildren and haven't I told my friends that God is giving me a second chance to learn patience by giving me grandchildren?

Minutes before I had received a long distance call from a former student from my first year teaching. We had been having a great conversation when from the living room rose such a din I couldn't believe my ears. It was the typical "calico dog and gingham cat" scenario. I had to cut my conversation short and literally tear those two grandchildren of mine apart.

"It was his fault. He said he would take my Barbie and bury it in a hole."

"No, it was her fault. She said she was going to tell all the kids at school that I love Chelsie. She knows I hate her."

"I don't care who said what," I raged. "You knew I was on the phone. I am embarrassed. What will that lady think?"

I sent the children into separate rooms and sat at my dining room table staring at the quiet landscape. What had happened to that sweet perfect granny who had shaken her head in disbelief when her daughter had phoned to tell her how angry she was at the same two children?

Ah, the Pharisee in me. Always thinking I had grown and changed and become a much better person. At sixty shouldn't I be?

I watched the chickadees and the purple finches fighting for a place at the feeder near my window. Black oil sunflower seeds flew here and there. The struggle of the fittest, the strongest, the biggest, seemed to be the rule.

I am the strongest here too. I can easily dominate those children, but I am still a baby in the Lord's sight. He is not finished with me yet. Yes, I should be improving and developing better strategies for coping and listening. I have. Some. Yet, here I am. I failed again. Baby that I am, I cry now. Tenderly Jesus looks at me and reaches out his hands to pull me up from the ground. Dusting me off, and giving me a hug, He points me in the right direction again.

Suddenly I know what I must do. Love those children. Really love them. But where do I begin? My parents first, and then my teachers, taught me to love, I guess. Sometimes I have blamed those two people who brought us into the world for how I act. I excused myself because of what I inherited from them. I remember when I first realized that my parents weren't perfect? I felt angry and disillusioned at first. I

suppose we become adults when we can finally see our parents as just two ordinary people with their hang-ups, their sorrows, their joys and all that comes with being human. I think when we realize that if we can learn things from these people, we can also unlearn things. We can stop blaming. But somewhere along life's path we have to learn to love: To love ourselves even when we have acted unkindly. To love our children when they appear thoughtless, and to love all we connect with when they make mistakes.

Which brings me to this table and these birds and those children again. I will arise, seek my Father's forgiveness, and then go into those rooms and hug each child close to me while I ask them to forgive me for yelling. I will explain how important it is to me to be able to talk on the phone without interruptions. Maybe even work out a plan of what they could do until I am free, when there is conflict. In short, I am going to go and love those children and let them love me.

To get in touch with being human is my goal. And while we sit at life's banqueting table pass me some love too. I need a good serving.