



KNOWN, BUT NOT YET BORN

I knew my children before they were born. I talked to them and held them and played with them and learned who they are. I didn't just know *about* them and they weren't just a bump on my wife's belly. They were my children and I *knew* them. My wife knew them even better.

Our firstborn, Brian, was so full of energy he never held still in the womb. He twisted and turned and pushed and shoved. My wife felt this before I could (of course), but by the time he was 3-4 months along I could feel him squirming inside her. He moved all the time. So much we thought he must never sleep at all (Alice didn't when he was awake!). At birth Brian emerged with arms and legs flailing. He hated being wrapped up and learned to run and walk at the same time. In restaurants, if we turned our heads for a second or two he would be at someone else's table talking to them! He chose sports like soccer where he could run continuously the whole game. Over 30 now, he has yet to hold still in life! And not just physically – his mind is always running too!

Our second son, Michael, was amazingly calm. Until you poked him. Then he would poke back – hard! And sometimes he would seem to go crazy in the womb and climb all over the place! We knew him as an all-or-nothing person by the time he was six months in the womb. When he was born, he didn't just emerge quietly into the world; he teetered on the edge of disaster requiring an emergency procedure to save both he and his mother. Today he is a wonderfully compassionate, all-or-nothing loving man who still lives on the edge. After two terms as a Special Ops Marine he has a chest full of combat ribbons and still likes to make a grand entrance. Our house is never quiet when Michael is there!

The third, Samuel, was unpredictable – and still is! You never knew how he would respond to your voice or your touch. When you put your hand on him you could feel him examining it – tracing the fingers and pushing at different parts as if to see what they did. It seemed he was playing with you. He was! And today – can you guess? Sam examines everything in great detail and can turn anything into a game. He runs a pizza shop where laughter is abundant and is starting a company to produce the games he designs.

Our daughter was loving, sweet, and quiet in the womb. But you were never quite sure what she was up to – every now and then she would sort of twist around and explode – arms and legs squirming all over the place. Now an aspiring actress, you're never quite sure what twist Katie will throw you the next time she's on stage. She is loving, sweet, gentle, and quiet in life. Until she sings – then her voice explodes out of her and makes your heart squirm loose from whatever has it trapped

Who they were before they were born is who they have remained after birth. It's gotten much broader and deeper, of course, but they are the same people Alice and I met as they formed in her womb.

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Amazingly, none of them have any memory of it at all. Can you believe that? They don't have the vaguest impression of what their life was like before they were born, yet they were certainly alive. They don't remember floating, or being warm. They don't know if it was dark or their eyes could see. They don't remember Alice rubbing them or me playing with them. They don't remember hearing us talking to them, but we knew they recognized our voices by the way they responded both in the womb and out.

They also don't remember being born. But the life they had before birth accompanied them into the world for they still knew their mother's touch and her voice. And they still knew my voice and the ways I played with them. Alice and I knew them. And, though they don't remember it, *they knew us!*

They did not, as newborns, respond to anyone else the way they did to Alice and I. And to this day – Alice and I hold a special place in each of them even though they don't remember when that bond formed or what caused it. That's OK though, Alice and I remember it well. It didn't happen by chance on our part. We were caught up in the wonder, no – the miracle of each child as they formed.

We nurtured them and protected them as each one grew. Alice 'ate for two' and I tried to keep her from overexerting while still building strength for the delivery to come. We took classes. We trained. We learned. We 'lost it' and later 'found it' again. Slowly we prepared a place for them in our 'universe' – the physical universe of our house, the mental universe of our minds, and the spiritual universe of our hearts. And we held them and talked to them. As we learned who they are, we taught them who we are.



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We came to love them long before we saw them.
We loved them long before they were aware of us.

And as they learned who we are, they came to love us long before they ever saw us. They loved us because we first loved them. No class taught us that. We did it because it was in our hearts to do it. We did it because our Father first did it for us and we are formed in His image.

Is it really so hard to believe that God knew you before you were born?
Do you have to remember Him speaking to you before you entered the world to recognize His voice now?
Is it incomprehensible that your Father in heaven loved you before you learned of His existence?
Or is it just easier?

⁴ *Before the creation of the world, he chose us through Christ to be holy and perfect in his presence.*

⁵ *Because of his love he had already decided to adopt us through Jesus Christ. He freely chose to do this*
Ephesians 1:4-5 (GW, my emphasis)

³ *Realize that the LORD alone is God. He made us, and we are his. We are his people and the sheep in his care.*
Psalm 100:3 (GW, my emphasis)

Maybe the hard part isn't believing that we existed before we were born. Maybe the hard part is believing that there is someone who loves us – really really loves us - when life tells us in a thousand ways every day we are not lovable, not important, not valuable, flawed, second-rate. For some the lesson started early. Some had only one parent; some had no parents. Some had parents that showered them with neglect. Others resented the effort required to care for a child – and vented their anger into their children's unprotected hearts. Some were born into horribly abusive situations. Many of us carry scars from things we faced as children or teens which we could not even comprehend, much less cope with. Those wounds run so deep we cannot even find them though their presence haunts us.

Even those born into the best of situations find themselves fighting society's message that we have to conform – to change to be acceptable; that we cannot be loved as we are. So many of us for whatever reason, come to believe that we are a mistake. That God sent us to the wrong place or family, or He didn't make us right because there seems to be so much wrong with us. We find ourselves plagued with an absence of self-worth and difficulty believing we could ever find a purpose or amount to anything.

It will take more than all the majesty of the Almighty God of the Universe to heal wounds so deep inside us. We don't need to be awed by His power or amazed by His miracles or shaken by a thundering voice. We don't need provisions or wisdom or all the blessings heaven can offer.

We need to be held. And talked to and played with, poked and rubbed. We need the truth that Father loved us and took care of us long before we knew it. And still is though we *don't* know it. We need to remember His voice and learn who we are. We need the lies of being worthless and unlovable to be shattered and replaced with the truth that The amazing God of the Universe loves each one of us – loves you - so much that He couldn't stand to make a universe without you in it. So He created you, a child of love no matter what selfish people and a godless society may have done to convince you otherwise.

Only the love of a Father
- the love which began long, long, long before you were aware of Him –
can possibly reach that deep

Do you realize that God did not *have* to make you? You exist purely because God loves you. There was no other reason for which He created you. No matter what situation you were born into, no matter what has happened to you, no matter what experience has taught you,

God is your Father who *loves* you.