
THE NEED

BY MICHAEL CARD

So much revolves around it; our deepest needs, our frustrated desires. It shapes so much of who we are, or who we want to become; where we go to church, who we marry, what we do with our vocational lives, even what cars and clothes that we buy. It can shape what is best in our lives, but also, unfortunately, it can also be the cause of what is worst.

If you look deeply enough, it is beneath all our addictions. We take drugs to numb the pain of its absence. Sadly, we eventually discover that it is the source of a wound so deep that its pain cannot be numbed, only perhaps offered up or entered into like a hidden holy of holies. We obsess with all our sexual issues in an attempt to somehow satisfy it. Lamentably, we discover our need for physical intimacy is only a shadow of its larger absence in our souls and that even the most loving experience leaves an unspoken disappointment that we have yet to receive what our hearts need the most.

I am talking about something that will seem so deceptively simple that when I finally name it (and I've put off naming it as long as I can) I fear you'll say to yourself, "Of course I know what he's talking about." But you don't know what I'm talking about. You know certainly the pain. You may or may not be able to articulate its effect on the deepest part of your soul. But you and I don't know, cannot fully know, because the resolution to what I've been talking about has yet to break fully into the world.

The need is simply this: To be known. Though you may not know it, if you are married, this is the reason why. At some point you hoped you had found that one other person in the entire world who would "get" you, who would seek and find you, who would discover the richness of who you really are. Gloriously, flashes of moments of being discovered and known occur by grace, do they not? But our fragile fallen-ness drives us away from each other sooner or later, and we experience an aloneness we could have never thought was possible before. To have come so excruciatingly close to what would indeed have satisfied our souls only to sense it receding into the shadows. This is perhaps the greatest pain of marriage. When we are left alone once more with only the aching hunger of the need to be known.

Though it might seem a slender connection at first, if you have ever struggled with an addiction, the heart of the pain you were trying to anesthetize is located, for the most part, in the need to be known. Drugs and alcohol numb the pain. Sexual addiction distracts our attention for an instant.

But the source of the ache never leaves us and that is the primary reason addiction presents so difficult a struggle. We cannot ultimately cover up the fallen world we inhabit and that inhabits us.

We not were created to live like this, though God did build into our essential image this need to be known. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve lived in the immediate presence of the God who perfectly knew them both. This innate desire would have been perfectly satisfied by that unbroken Presence. But the Fall tragically occurred and the both of them, along with you and me, were forced out from the Presence and left with a hunger of It that will never go away.

It was then that mankind began the endless string of sad laments which always contained somewhere an idea like; "Why do You hide Your face?" or perhaps, "Look upon me again, O Lord," or simply, "Where are You?" The psalmist put into words for us this lamentable loneliness that is both the source of so much pain and at the same time the reason for our greatest hope. We were made for God, and so we ache deep inside for Him. All our other emotional aches are connected to this primordial emptiness by slender threads of nameless sorrows. Nothing else will ever, *could* ever possibly satisfy this deep need.

"He has also set eternity in the hearts of men..." says Solomon. (Eccl. 3:11) This eternal vacuum is the holy place God created in us to inhabit. You were born with it. You can never escape it. You and I cried out in the delivery room when our eyes first squinted through the bright hospital lights, and we will, each of us, end life with a sigh or perhaps a groan that will echo this same struggle. The source of our greatest pain but, in the same instant, our greatest reason to hope.

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Cor. 13:12

That death bed sigh will not be our final word. If we have come to know Him, who all mankind aches to know, the eyes that close in death will open to Life. In that resurrection instant, which Jesus refers to as "waking up," we will find ourselves in the presence of the One who, though we did not feel it, had known us all along. "Even as I am fully known," says Paul. In it not as if we will be ushered into His presence to give God a chance to somehow get to know us. He has known us from the beginning.

The world's fallen-ness and ours have placed a wall between us and an awareness of His knowing, but nevertheless we are, you are, I am, in the sacrament of this present moment known. When the lie of aloneness whispers itself to you, answer back, "I am known." When the temptation to numb or distract yourself from the untruth of isolation, assert your faith by responding, "Never will He leave me, never will He forsake me." *✍*

