

## Giving Value

Here is an exquisite example of what I said about encouraging others by giving value to what they do or have. It comes from Brennan Manning's book *Ruthless Trust*.

I will never forget the witness of an Episcopal priest named Tom Minifie several years ago in St. Luke's Church in Seattle, Washington. He spotted a high-profile couple sitting in the last pew with their one-year-old Down's syndrome child. It was clear from the parents' demeanor that the little one embarrassed them. They hid in the rear of the church, perhaps planning a hasty exit once the worship service had concluded.

On their way out the door, Tom intercepted them and said, "Come into my office." Once seated, Tom took the Down's baby in his arms and rocked him gently. Looking into the baby's face, he began to sob. "Do you have any idea of the gift that God has given you in this child?" he asked.

Sensing confusion and even concern in the parents, he explained his reaction: "Two years ago my three-year-old daughter, Sylvia, died with Down's syndrome. We have four other children, so we know the blessing that kids can be. Yet the most precious gift we've ever received in our entire lives has been Sylvia. In her uninhibited expression of affection, she revealed to us the face of God as no other human being ever has. Did you know that several Native American tribes attribute divinity to Down's children because in their utter simplicity they're a transparent window into the Great Spirit? Treasure this child, for he will lead you into the heart of God."

From that day forward the parents began to brag about their little one.

Uncompromising trust in the love of God inspires us to thank God for the spiritual darkness that envelops us, for the loss of income, for the nagging arthritis that is so painful, and to pray from the heart, "Abba, into your hands I entrust my body, mind, and spirit and this entire day --- morning, afternoon, evening, and night. Whatever you want of me, / want of me, falling into you and trusting in you in the midst of my life. Into *your* heart I entrust *my* heart, feeble, distracted, insecure, uncertain. Abba, unto you I abandon myself in Jesus our Lord. Amen."

Here is everything Dale teaches about building friendships and changing behavior in others. The sincerity is very clear. The empathy brought this priest to tears, even to sobs. He was concerned for the well-being of the parents or he wouldn't have pulled them aside - in private. He didn't criticize their embarrassment. Instead, he uncovered the hidden value in their child and offered his own insight about that value to the parents. What he valued, they were able to value. The vision, the image he held in his own mind, of what these parents had their hands on, what had been entrusted to their care, caused them to change the way they thought about their child. Then that changed the way they behaved. Do you think this one short talk changed the relationship they had with their priest? I do. How could I ever express my gratitude if someone did that for me?