

“The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). A number of years ago, I experienced this biblical truth firsthand while on a retreat.

Our group had gathered in the church and one by one, each person, stood up in the front before the crucifix while others prayed for that person. When it was my turn I moved forward, and my fears and worries were exposed to me in my conscience. Jesus also revealed a solution to me and encouraged me to write to my mother and father whom I was worried about. I am sure I cried a bit as I felt Jesus melting my defenses away and helping me to see things from a new and truer perspective.

I had been away from home for five years and in a few months, I would be returning to live with family for the summer. I feared going home because I recalled my mother and father arguing a lot. Based on that soul enlightening experience, I wrote about my fears and sent a letter off to my parents. Within a week, I received a letter back from my mother and another one from my father. They acknowledged their differences, but also shared their deep love for one another and the ability to forgive and move past any arguments that I was recalling.

After a few months, I returned home and there were still arguments, but I saw my parents in a different light. It is as if I had cataract surgery and now I was able to see their actions through the lens of love. After spending the summer at home, I moved north to Alaska. As my younger brothers moved away from home, my parents had a lot more time to reach out to others. With each visit home, I was able to see the way they took the love from a healthy marriage and utilized it to help others in the community.

My father looked in on elderly folks that were widowed. My mother became more involved at the church. They took time to travel and visit people from their past and their circles of friendship grew as they met new people and opened their hearts to them. When my grandmother became forgetful, they opened their home to her and lived out day by day the commandment to honor your mother.

As I saw their love extend out to others, I couldn't help but recognize that they had been that way in their younger days dealing with four growing boys under one roof. But at the time, I didn't recognize it as fully as I did later in life.

“The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.” I am very grateful to God for the experience I had on retreat that helped me to put down my own barriers so that I could open my eyes to see the truth of the lifegiving love that my parents shared.

Jesus, the Son of God, is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. In his humanity he was tested in every way yet without sin. “So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help” (Heb 4:16). As the Word of God pierces the walls and barriers we hide behind, we have the possibility to grow in wisdom and understanding ... being more tolerant of other's faults ... more forgiving of those who have harmed us ... and more loving to those beyond our inner circle.