

READING REPORT FOR *Abba's Child* PMN 346 – Personal Spiritual Formation

Cecilia Humphrey

With integrity, I have read this book (circle one):

Thoroughly and Entirely—100%

Signed: Cecilia Humphrey

1. Where did this book “take you apart?” How did God use it in “spiritual surgery?” (please use quotes & page numbers)?

Initially when I started reading and Manning was talking very harshly (in my opinion) about having an Imposter, I was irritated. His language surrounding having an Imposter was actually scary to me. The way he described it was like having a second person in your mind and I thought, this is definitely not me. I'm sure you read that a lot. However, after getting to page fifty I started getting destroyed (in a good way I guess). The first part that hit me was when he talked about “the great divorce between my head and heart...” (p 9). It's interesting because I've always had one, for as long as I can remember by emotions and my thoughts are never on the same page (probably because I'm a 4 wing 5). Regardless of the reason, it was a huge struggle for me before I developed a relationship with God and when I did, the struggle permeated that relationship too. On page 54 Manning writes “The compassionate life is neither a sloppy goodwill toward the world... It does not demand that we like everyone. It does not wink at injustice. It does not accept reality indiscriminately- love and list, Christianity and atheism, Marxism and capitalism. The way of tenderness avoids blind fanaticism. Instead, it seeks to see with penetrating clarity.” This section hit me because I tend to intentionally disconnect from my emotional responses because I think my emotions are too much or inappropriate. More than that, I have this belief that passionate emotions are automatically dramatic. Even so, all of this was the presurgery stuff.

The actual surgery started for me on page 75 when Manning quotes Anthony De Mello who wrote “The first quality that strikes one when one looks into the eyes of a child is its innocence: its lovely inability to lie or wear a mask or pretend to be anything other than what it is.” Literally as I was reading Jesus brought a memory back to my mind and it was when I was in fifth grade and my sister won an award and I had to wear a dress in public and I literally had a panic attack about it. The way my parents reacted to this? By being completely angry and telling me I ruined the entire day. It was around this time I started believing I was too much and hid my emotions from everyone. After this point, and realizing how ‘fake’ I am because I'm not honest about my feelings. From this section on, I started coming to terms with how much and for how long I've hated myself. And I realized I needed to invite Jesus into that. It's not enough to *know* logically (in good Christian terms) that Jesus doesn't hate me the way I hate myself. I have to actually *let* Jesus love me, which was and is **mindblowing** for me.

2. Where did you agree most with the author? Disagree most?

I'll start with what I disagreed with the most because it was really only one thing and it was quite minor but it made me mad. On page 69 he writes "a mother never holds up her infant to a visiting neighbor with the words 'this is my daughter. She's going to be a lawyer.'" I mean, in theory no, a mother *shouldn't* do this, but there are plenty of mothers and fathers who do. The second part that made me think (I don't necessarily disagree but it was odd to me), was on page 50 where he tells the story of a man and his three crazy children on the train. He asked the Father to do something and the father said "I know I should do something. We just came from the hospital. Their mother died an hour ago. I just don't know what to do." Mannings point was to have compassion. But in my mind, I also don't think people owe us their story. We shouldn't have to *know* the mother just died to have compassion for him and the way he parents his children. I don't disagree with his sentiment of "have compassion," but I think compassion should always come before understanding. But that's just me.

Where I agreed the most was in his section about love. This was within pages 50 and 58. The one line that summed it all up was "This is the first quality of love- its indiscriminate character," (p 57). He also writes "The command of Jesus to love one another is never circumscribed by the nationality, status, ethnic background, sexual preference, or inherent lovableness of the "other," (p 56). These two statements I agree with so fully. I think what's interesting is how much it intersects with our own relationship with Jesus. Manning writes almost everywhere in the book how being loved for who we are (good, bad, ugly and everything in between) is the only way to develop a true, authentic relationship with Jesus. And I agree with him. So it only makes sense that as Christians, the only way to guide people to an authentic relationship with Jesus is to love them indiscriminately. But at the same time, on page 54 Manning writes "The compassionate life is neither a sloppy goodwill toward the world... It does not demand that we like everyone. It does not wink at injustice. It does not accept reality indiscriminately- love and list, Christianity and atheism, Marxism and capitalism. The way of tenderness avoids blind fanaticism. Instead, it seeks to see with penetrating clarity." So while love is indiscriminate, it's not blind, and it's not passive. Clearly, for us humans to be able to execute this appropriately, there's a fine line between legalism and passive liberalism- both are lacking actual love. So this section was the part I agreed with most.

3. What was the key spiritual truth you gleaned from this book? How are you integrating it into your personal spiritual formation process?

The key spiritual truth I got from this book is that I'm loved and I am enough. I know that probably sounds lame and super basic but in all seriousness I definitely did have some kind of imposter syndrome. Not in an extreme way because I'm pretty honest with myself. I know my flaws and my shortcomings and I'm the first to use them against Myself. While I'm open with myself about my stuff, I definitely am not open with Jesus. I read this book over spring break and I started inviting Jesus into my mess daily. At first it was really scary. The main reason I was hesitant is because I didn't think I should be

loved while I was messy. If God loves me while I'm a mess then what incentive do I have to change? Also, I didn't want to bring my stuff to God because I thought He would turn me into a fix it project and that's something I've dealt with before. Basically, I thought that keeping my mess from Jesus was actually protecting me from getting hurt. Which... clearly was not true because talking with Jesus about my stuff has been one of the best changes I've ever implemented to my life.