



I "HEARD" THE LOVE

By Paul Barton
from A Cup of Chicken Soup for the Soul

When I was growing up I do not recall hearing the words "I love you" from my father. When your father never says them to you when you are a child, it gets tougher and tougher for him to say those words as he gets older. To tell the truth, I could not honestly remember when I had last said those words to him either. I decided to set my ego aside and make the first move. After some hesitation, in our next phone conversation I blurted out the words, "Dad . . . I love you!"

There was a silence at the other end and he awkwardly replied, "Well, same back at ya!"

I chuckled and said, "Dad, I know you love me, and when you are ready, I know you will say what you want to say."

Fifteen minutes later my mother called and nervously asked, "Paul, is everything okay?"

A few weeks later, Dad concluded our phone conversation with the words, "Paul, I love you." I was at work during this conversation and the tears were rolling down my cheeks as I finally "heard" the love. As we both sat there in tears we realized that this special moment had taken our father/son relationship to a new level.

A short while after this special moment, my father narrowly escaped death following heart surgery. Many times since, I have pondered the thought, if I did not take the first step and Dad did not survive the surgery, I would have never "heard" the love.

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