BAREFOOT *(a Summer Series)*

Since I was a little girl, I have had an aversion to shoes. I'd rather be barefoot on any given day on any surface than to stuff my feet into oblong boxes of different shapes, colors and materials to clothe my feet. Imagine my delight when I found this verse in the Bible! "'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground (Exodus 3:5 NIV).'" It would be many years before I'd understand the significance and humility of holy ground, of standing in God's presence.

There are times when even in church I must remove the shoes from my feet because I do not feel worthy to step barefoot on the holy ground I am entering, let alone with shoes on. Sometimes, His presence is so impenetrable, so dense, that it permeates the air of which I breathe. So overwhelming, I feel undone and intimate. Just as if I would have enough respect to remove my shoes to enter into someone's beautiful home, so must I also have that much honor for a holy God to remove my shoes before I step any further into His presence. The idea that the ground where I am standing is holy can buckle my knees and flatten me on my face because of the nearness of God. Why is it holy? Because God is there!!! It is considered holy ground because the very Spirit of God Himself is present. And He is allowing, welcoming, inviting, this unruly, negligent, rambunctious child to enter into His presence to hang out with Him!

What is more, later in Exodus, (chapt. 33:12-23—read it when you get the chance!), I encounter the very epitome of a loving yet holy God. We find Moses having an intimate conversation with God. (Wouldn't you love to have an intimate conversation with God? One where He speaks back to you?!) God says to Moses that He is pleased with him and He knows his name (v17). O my word! That would unravel me! Yet, this holy God, this God Almighty, who spun the heavens into being and hung the stars in place and breathed His breath into my lungs...THIS God! I know He is pleased with me and knows me by name.

Moses goes on to insist that God show him His glory, and check this out! God agrees! But there are conditions. He tells Moses no one can see His face and live. So, the God of the Universe arranges to hide Moses in the cleft of a rock, and to place His hand over him while He passes by. Then, He will remove His hand, so that Moses may see His backside after He has passed by. I can't even fathom the nearness of God to humanity in this moment. It's like hearing Him whisper. I can imagine the wind I conceive blowing as this holy God is in movement, passing by. But even more startling and poignant, is looking up and seeing the backside of God retreating from me. I'd want to run after Him, yelling and screaming, 'Wait! God! Don't leave without me! Let me catch up!' And then I am reminded; I have never seen His back retreat from me. He has never walked away. I have walked away, but never has God, my *Father,* walked away from me. In fact, sometimes He has had to coax me into His presence, but I am so grateful that He pursues me relentlessly. His pursuit of me is relentless.

The ground where I stand today is holy, in the presence of a holy God. Thank God, He thought I was worthy to save! Thank God He chose me! Thank God, He beckons me into His presence, where I can slip off my shoes and stand in humility on the very ground He occupies. O Lord, help me just to ... be. In your presence. May my insides spill out at Your feet the totality of the weakness in my being for You and my deep need only You can fill.