

Love at the Petting Zoo

James Packer, in his book, *Your Father Loves You*, tells an inspiring story of the meaning of love.

He took Helen, his 8-year-old daughter, and his son, Brandon, age 5, to the Cloverleaf Mall in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to do a little shopping. As they drove up, they spotted a Peterbilt 18-wheeler parked with a big sign that read: "Petting Zoo." The kids jumped up in a rush and asked, "Daddy, Daddy. Can we go? Please. Please. Can we go?"



"Sure," Packer said, flipping them both a quarter before walking into Sears. They bolted away, and "I felt free to take my time looking for a scroll saw," he said. "A petting zoo

consists of a portable fence erected in the mall with about six inches of sawdust and a hundred little furry baby animals of all kinds. Kids pay their money and stay in the enclosure enraptured with the squirmy little critters while their moms and dads shop."

After a few minutes, Packer turned around and saw Helen walking along behind him. "I was shocked to see she preferred the hardware department to the petting zoo," he said. "I bent down and asked her what was wrong.

"She looked up at me with those giant limpid brown eyes and said sadly, 'Well, Daddy, it cost 50 cents. So, I gave Brandon my quarter.' Then she said the most beautiful thing I ever heard. She repeated the family motto. The family motto is *Love is Action*."

Helen had given Brandon her quarter, and no one loves cuddly furry creatures more than Helen, her father said. She had watched her parents say *Love is Action* for years around the house and the ranch. She had heard and seen *Love is Action*, and now she had incorporated it into her little lifestyle. It had become part of her.

"What do you think I did?" he wrote. "Well, not what you think. As soon as I finished my errands, I took Helen to the petting zoo. We stood by the fence and watched Brandon go crazy petting and feeding the animals. Helen stood with her hands and chin resting on the fence and just watched Brandon. I had 50 cents burning a hole in my pocket; I never offered it to Helen, and she never asked for it."

"Because she knew the whole family motto. It's not *Love is Action*. It's *Love is Sacrificial Action*! Helen gave her quarter to Brandon and wanted to follow through with her lesson. She knew she had to taste the sacrifice. She wanted to experience that total family motto – *Love is Sacrificial Action*."

(more)

Packer's story reflects the nature of love. Love always pays a price. Love always costs something. Love is expensive. When you love, benefits accrue to another's account. Love gives, it doesn't grab.

That philosophy is the foundation upon which Life Care and Century Park are built.

And our associates are great models of *Love is Sacrificial Action*.

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor
(Romans 12:10 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter