

OUR DETERMINED & RELENTLESS GOD

by Jan Johnson

The mighty Ruler of the universe vigorously pursues your affection.

Santa Claus . . . a detached Father Time . . . Mother Nature . . . a Cosmic Security Guard, watching our every move . . . the Good Witch of the North from *The Wizard of Oz*. These are some of the answers I got when I asked a group of high school students to describe their mental pictures of God!

Sadly, even Christians often do not have a clear picture of God's involvement in their lives. Some have reduced Him to a warehouse clerk filling their mail-order prayer requests. Others perceive Him as a fair-weather friend who abandons them when illness or trouble darkens their

lives. Even those of us who view Him as a powerful, caring Creator can easily underestimate the strength of His unswerving love. But an enlightened Andrew Greeley described God's passion for us in this way:

Our God is not patiently standing by and waiting for us to offer love; he is actively and vigorously pursuing us. . . . Old Yahweh wheeling and dealing in the desert, the father running down the trail to embrace the prodigal son even before he can speak his act of contrition, the mad farmer showering a full day's wage on men who hadn't even worked, Jesus forgiving the sinful woman even before she spoke her sorrow, . . . these are all symbols of a God whose love for us is so strong that, by human standards at least, he would be said to be mad.¹

GOD'S TENACIOUS SPIRIT

Our Father is like the persistent owner of the vineyard in Jesus' parable. Nothing deterred him—not the beating and killing of servant after servant, not even the death of his son (Mt. 21:33-41). Despite our response, He never wavers in calling us to Himself.

The servants in this parable represent the Old Testament prophets who warned Israel against idol worship. God used them as His feet to run after His people Israel, persuading them to return to Him.

God used one such prophet to graphically demonstrate His stubborn love for idolatrous Israel. He commanded Hosea, a godly man, to marry Gomer, a prostitute. As she continued her flagrant adultery, Hosea built a hedge around Gomer

