

— — What Love Is — —

“All you need is love.”

***“What the world needs now
is Love, sweet Love;
that’s the only thing
that there’s just too little of.”***

***“Man, I sure do love a good plate
of barbecued ribs!”***

***“Love. It’s what makes a Subaru
a Subaru.”***

The word “love” is used a lot. Mostly incorrectly.

When a teenage girl and boy tell each other, “I love you,” what do they really mean? I believe that level of “love” consists of a hodge-podge of affection, admiration, anticipation of pleasure, and (to some degree) a desire to gain “bragging rights” among their peers. It’s pleasurable, though often painful, too, but it has little to do with genuine love.



Not that I want to pick on teenagers. That view of “love” actually persists in many people well into adulthood or even middle age and beyond.

Why? A lot of it has to do with our culture. In the western world over the course of several centuries it has become common to think of love in terms of romantic feelings. It’s not really love unless you’re “in love,” and of course that make you a little crazy. The phrase, “I’m crazy about you” is often too close to the actual truth.

But if that’s not love, then what is? As a man who has been very blessedly married for many, many years, and who has studied and thought about what Jesus said and did during His years on earth, I believe I can tell you what love is in one word:

Unselfishness.

Think about it.

Far too often when one person says “I love you” to another, it actually means “I will be in a caring relationship with you as long as you continue to please me and meet my needs.” That’s not love at all; that’s selfishness, which is the exact opposite of love. Many marriages are based on that kind of relationship, and in every case—in every case, I believe—one of three things happens: either

- the marriage ends by divorce or death; or
- the two stay together in mutual tolerance but with mostly separate lives; or
- they mature and eventually grow to love each other unselfishly.

The Bible has a lot to say about the unselfish, giving kind of love that cares for and does good to the one who is loved. It’s the kind of love God has for us; the love Jesus taught and demonstrated so beautifully in the four Gospel accounts; the love St. Paul wrote about in his first letter to the Corinthian Christians.

This kind of love has almost nothing to do with feelings. We’re commanded to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We aren’t commanded to have loving feelings. We are commanded to love—to make a decision, to decide to love, and then to act accordingly.

Think of the love demonstrated by the nuns of the Little Sisters of the Poor as they care for the poor, the forgotten, the mentally ill and the dying in India and elsewhere around the world. These women are taught to love the poor and forget themselves, and so they do.

Consider these sayings of Jesus:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”



“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

And the Golden Rule:

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Jesus commands His followers to love others with the same sort of unselfish love that He Himself so perfectly demonstrated, as He denied Himself—his dread of the suffering He would go through—and took up His cross, in order to save our souls.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

So love, the God kind of love, is accomplished by intentionally giving of oneself in order to help or bless someone else. **Love is unselfishness.**



Let's break it down into very practical terms, using the text of 1 Corinthians Chapter 13. First, about why we need to love:

If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

These are some of the essential characteristics of love, from the inspired writing of the Apostle Paul (in **bold print**), with some elaboration from me:

Love is patient and kind, even when there seems to be plenty of cause for impatience or an excuse for a cruel or sarcastic response to another's actions or words.

Love does not envy or boast; instead, it is glad to see others do well and to congratulate those who excel. Love helps others succeed.

Love is not arrogant or rude. It is always polite and considerate, even when there might seem to be cause to react with anger or rudeness.

Love does not insist on its own way. It is willing to be unselfish; to “yield the right of way;” it does not always “have to win.”

Love is not irritable or resentful. It does not habitually get offended or look for something to criticize or complain about. When a complaint is appropriate, love remains respectful.

Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. It gets upset about injustice, and especially about mistreatment of those who are disadvantaged or helpless.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. In other words, love is unselfish in every respect.

Love never ends. Here we need words from 1 John 4:7-8:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Love is the very nature of God. Of course it never ends, because God is eternal. But here's the real point: we are human beings, and since Adam's fall we are born sinful. That inborn sin nature will be with us all our lives. BUT as we become more like Jesus—as we make God's love more and more the basis for our character; so that we love others as unselfishly as we are commanded to do—His love nature will replace parts of our selfish sin nature.

To love is to embrace and live out the Golden Rule. And I'll add one more quotation from Jesus:

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

We can't become unselfish lovers all at once, but God has begun in us the work of changing our sin nature into His loving nature, and His word promises that He will faithfully complete that work that He has begun in us.

Love the Lord with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength that you can bring to that mission. Love others as you love yourself. And the Holy Spirit will join His powerful efforts to your puny ones, and the results will be amazing!



God bless you in Jesus. God bless us all, and perfect His love in us. Amen.

Brother Roland

I Choose Love

It's quiet. It's early. My coffee is hot. The sky is still black. The world is still asleep. The day is coming.

In a few moments the day will arrive. It will roar down the track with the rising of the sun. The stillness of the dawn will be exchanged for the noise of the day. The calm of solitude will be replaced by the pounding pace of the human race. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by decisions to be made and deadlines to be met.

For the next twelve hours I will be exposed to the day's demands. It is now that I must make a choice. Because of Calvary, I'm free to choose. And so I choose.

I choose love ...

No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness. Today I will love God and love what God loves.

I choose joy ...

I will invite my God to be the God of circumstance. I will refuse the temptation to be cynical ... the tool of the lazy thinker. I will refuse to see people as anything less than human beings, created by God. I will refuse to see any problem as anything less than an opportunity to see God.

I choose peace ...

I will live forgiven. I will forgive so that I may live.

I choose patience...

I will overlook the inconveniences of the world. Instead of cursing the one who takes my place, I'll invite him to do so. Rather than complain that the wait is too long, I will thank God for a moment to pray. Instead of clenching my fist at new assignments, I will face them with joy and courage.

I choose kindness...

I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

I choose goodness...

I will go without a dollar before I will take a dishonest one. I will be overlooked before I will boast. I will confess before I will accuse. I choose goodness.

I choose faithfulness ...

Today I will keep my promises. My debtors will not regret their trust. My associates will not question my word. My spouse will not question my love. And my children will never fear that their father will not come home.

I choose gentleness ...

Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself

I choose self-control ...

I am a spiritual being. After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot, rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ. I choose self-control.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. To these I commit my day. If I succeed, I will give thanks. If I fail, I will seek his grace. And then, when this day is done, I will place my head on my pillow and rest.

— Max Lucado

Love Is ...

Love is a lot of good things. Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

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I K G L N A E G T R N F K Y W N J T I G H O R Q J U R Z C U Q
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Words:

ACCOMMODATING
AFFECTIONATE
ATTENTIVE
AVAILABLE
BENEVOLENT
BLESSING
CARING
COMFORTING
COMMITTED
COMPASSIONATE
CONSIDERATE
COOPERATIVE
DEVOTED
FAITHFUL

FORGIVING
FRIENDLY
GENEROUS
GENTLE
GIVING
HELPFUL
HONEST
JOYFUL
KIND
LIFTING
LOYAL
PATIENT
PEACEFUL
PERSONAL

PLEASANT
REASSURING
STRENGTHENING
SUPPORTIVE
SYMPATHETIC
TENDER
THOUGHTFUL
TRUTHFUL
UNDERSTANDING
UNSELFISH
UPLIFTING
WARM