

# I love you - if, because, in spite of ...

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People celebrate St. Valentine's day on the 14th of February by sending to or receiving love-gifts from particular persons. History has it that two saints both called Valentine lived in the days of Emperor Claudius in the third century A.D. Both were martyred on the same day, 14th February. The lovers Valentine Festival has nothing to do with the death of these two saints.

However, the fact that love is the theme of this Festival occasioned me to write about love. The word love is one of the most misunderstood words and therefore very much used inappropriately. Liking is not same as loving a person, in the truest sense of love. Perhaps you are familiar with the cheap kinds of love that kick around. People express their love to you if you meet certain criteria, and vice versa. They send you a Valentine if you send them one and vice versa.

The following is an extract from a book I read about love. It shed much light in my life as far as love is concerned. I think it will be a blessing to you also both now in your college days and in future. Try to get something out of it. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. It is taken from 3 Kinds of Love by Masumi Toyotome, InterVarsity Press, 1976, p. 1-12.

"There is hardly a person in the world who does not want to be loved. The security and satisfaction of being loved by someone is basic to a happy life.

Yet, we know very little about love or how to seek it. Rarely are

we told in understandable terms what love is. Not many have attended a class on love or read a helpful book on it. This most important, indispensable thing in life has been strangely neglected in our education.

There are at least three kinds of love, although some persons may like to distinguish several more. It may be helpful to discuss these three kinds of love. One's happiness may depend on which of these kinds one is seeking.

## I. THE "IF" KIND OF LOVE

The first can be called the "if" kind of love. It is the love which will be given to people "if" certain requirements are met. "If you are good, father will love you." "If you give me gifts, I will love you." "If you become successful and important, I will love you." "If you promise to marry me, I will give you my love." "If you come up to my expectations as a husband, I will be your faithful wife." This is the most common kind of love, and some may not know any other kind. It is love with strings attached, the conditional love, the love offered in exchange for something the lover wants. Its motivation is selfish; its purpose is to gain something in exchange for love.

One form of this kind of love is what is often met in movies, magazines, and novels among other places "If you satisfy my desire, I will love you." Amnon, one of the sons of David, was attracted to his good-looking half sister, Ramar. He pretended to be sick and contrived to have her attend to him in his room. One day he took hold of her and said,

"Come lie with me my sister." But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this wanton folly." Nevertheless, he would not listen to her; but being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her. Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her (II Samuel 13:1-15). This form of love is selfish and it quickly turns into hate in both partners.

Many marriages break up because they are founded on an "if" kind of love. The young bride or the groom is often in love, not with the real, actual personality of the partner, but with an imaginary glorified, romantic image. When disillusionment sets in and the expectations are not met, the former love turns into hate. Tragically, it may not have been their fault; they may not have known that there was any love other than the "if" kind of love.

Sometimes even parental love, usually considered the purest of human love, is no more than this "if" kind of love. A few years ago the suicide of a young lad in Tokyo made the front pages in the daily newspapers. Wanting to please his father by passing the entrance examination to Tokyo University against keen competition, he had studied very hard since his junior high school days, attending extra classes after school. But he failed. Unable to face his father and wanting to drown his disappointment, he went to play for a week at the Hakone Hot Springs. When he returned home, he was confronted by his angry father. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, not only failing the examination but going off to a place like Hakone?" the father reproached him. "But, Dad, I thought you once said when you feel low you like to go to Hakone." The father had no reply to that, and in his anger beat the boy severely. That night the boy disconnected the rubber gas tube which ran from the gas outlet on the wall to the gas heater, but the tube in his mouth to take a lungful of gas, and killed himself. The newspaper simply said the suicide was due to a nervous breakdown. I think the breakdown was caused by the sudden realization that his father's love was conditional upon the boy's meeting his high expectations.

People often look for something more than the "if" kind of love. To learn that there is a truer love and to learn where it can be found may someday mean the difference between your living out your life and simply giving up as this boy did.

## II. THE "BECAUSE" KIND OF LOVE

The second kind of love can be called the "because" kind of love. In this love the person is loved because of something he is, something he has, or something he does. There is a quality or condition in a person which makes someone love him. "I love you because you are so lovely." "I love you because you are so good to me." "I love you because you are so different from others, so popular so wealthy, so famous, etc." We may laugh at some of these remarks, but we ourselves often love some person because of some lovable quality we see in him or because in some way he has won our love.

This may be preferable to some to the "if" type of love. The "if" love which has to be earned would be such a burden, but it would be good to be loved because of what we are. If someone would love us as we are, we wouldn't have to work so hard to be loved. It would put us at ease, knowing there is already something in us for which we are being loved.

To be loved this way, however, does have drawbacks. Since it feels so good to have people love us because of what we are, and seeking the growing feeling of importance we get as more and more people love us this way, we strive endlessly to add to our circle of admirers. Now if someone else should come along who has more of the lovable quality than we do, we would be afraid that those who love us would love this newcomer more. Thus competition and endless effort to win love enter into our lives.

Besides the fear of competition, there are at least two other reasons why this "because" kind of love brings insecurity with it. First, it makes us afraid that we may not really be the lovable person that our lover thinks we are. All men have two sides to their personality, to a greater or lesser extent. There is the side we show to people, and the other side only we ourselves know. We are constantly on guard to hide this second side for fear and those who love us may be disappointed in us and reject us.

Another reason for insecurity in this kind of love is the fear that some time in the future we may change and no longer be as lovable as we are. A very beautiful young woman in Japan was working in a cleaning establishment one day when a boiler exploded, and the fluid burned her face, chest, and hands. Her features were so badly disfigured that in the hospital she always wore a bandage over her whole face and allowed no one to see her except her doctor. The young man to whom she was

engaged broke off their engagement. During the few months she was in the hospital until her death, her parents, although living in the same city, did not come to see her. The love she enjoyed disappeared overnight, because it was the love based on her loveliness. With it gone, the love was gone.

Much love as we know it in our human society is of this kind, leaving us unsure of its permanence. What other kind of love, then, is there?

## III. THE "IN SPITE OF" KIND OF LOVE

The third kind of love is what I call the "in spite of" kind of love. It is different from the "if" kind of love in that it has no strings attached and expects nothing in return. It is different from the "because" kind of love in that it is not brought forth by some attractive quality in the person who is being loved. In this third kind of love, the person is loved "in spite of," not because of, what he is. One may be the most ugly, most wretched, most debased person in the world and would still be loved when he meets this "in spite of" kind of love. He does not have to deserve it. He does not have to earn it by being good or attractive or wealthy. He is simply loved as he is, in spite of the faults or ignorance or bad habits or evil records he may have. He may seem absolutely worthless, and yet he would be loved as though he were of infinite worth.

This is the kind of love for which our hearts are desperately hungry. Whether you realize it or not, this kind of love is more important to you than food or drink or clothes or home or family or wealth or success and fame. How can I say this? Let me ask you just one question. What if you felt in your heart that nobody in this world cared for you, and not one person really loved you; would you not lose interest in food, clothes, home, family, wealth, success, or fame? Would you not ask yourself, "What's the use of living?" Suppose at this very moment you suddenly had a bitter quarrel with the person you cherished most and realized that he or she loved you only for what he could get out of you; wouldn't your life fold up from the inside so you couldn't go on another day? Even if you are somehow going along from day to day thinking yourself reasonably happy, could you live the rest of your life if there was no hope whatever that someday someone will love you with a true, deep, and satisfying love? You would probably despair and end your life, or if you could not go that far, gradually destroy yourself by dissipating yourself carelessly and cheaply until there was nothing left of you but a living corpse.

You are getting along today either because you are receiving some semblance of this "in spite of" kind of love from someone or else hoping some day to find it. But in this society of ours we cannot receive enough of this kind of love to satisfy us fully because everybody is in need of it himself, and nobody has a surplus to give away. We expect some dear one near us to give us this love, but that person himself is also seeking it from someone else. In this world, we only get enough of it to whet our appetites and to show us how much we need it. The greatest scarcity in the world exists in the realm of this "in spite" kind of love.

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