

This Thing Called Love

By

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my wonderful wife Donna. She helped me learn what Love was truly about.

For that I am eternally grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a journey into the most desired and least understood asset of human life. We want to be loved and to Love more than anything in the world. The quest for Love drives us more than any other aspect of human experience. We are willing to die for it.

So what is this thing we are so willing to live and die for? How can we describe it? Where does it exist? I examine these questions as I journey into Love. Few scholarly documents deal with the subject of Love. Indeed, the ones I found about Love were primarily focused on sex or relationships. Almost none provided a definition of Love. It is as if we are born with an intuitive knowledge of Love, as if we had a Love "gene" built into us.

My first writing journey was into the world of Forgiveness. In that journey, I discovered that Forgiveness was all about separation. Separation from God stops us from Forgiving. Our attachment to our grievances takes away our freedom and binds us in a world of suffering. Forgiveness frees us from suffering and creates the space for us to reunite with God. When this occurs we open ourselves to experience Love again. Love never disappeared; we simply chose to ignore it while we courted our grievance.

This thesis defines and describes what Love is. We know instantly when it is present. We also know when it is not. And we do not really know what it is. So please join me on this journey to find out just what Love is.

Chapter I What is Love?

This work is an inquiry into Love. I chose this subject for my Master's thesis because I believe everything in God's universe functions through Love.

The more I thought about Love I began to realize I had absolutely no knowledge of what it was. I could tell you when I did not have it and I could tell you when I did, but I could not tell you what it was. I felt like a Supreme Court justice who once tried to define pornography. He said, "I can't tell you what it is. But I know it when I see it." It appears that Love is a similar concept. I think Love is something like that. You know it when you have it. And you know when you do not. But what it is when it is there is nearly impossible to describe. How do you define Love? The first place I went was the dictionary. There I found a definition that seems clear "a strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties." Love is a strong, deep affection for another. Out of this definition we can develop many forms of Love: maternal Love, familial Love, spiritual Love of God, *agape*, *philos*, and *eros*. The bible has a wonderful definition of what it is:

"Love is patient, Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." 1 Corinthians 13 :5-7

The most valuable thing in the world we have is Love. We know instantly when we do not have it. We revel in it when we do have it. So just what is it? This is how I began a journey into this thing called Love.

What is a deep and abiding affection? According to Webster's Dictionary, affection is "a moderate feeling of emotion". So, then Love could be tentatively defined as a strong moderate feeling of emotion for another that comes from kinship or personal ties.

Affection for another is integral to Love. Affection is the process and result of caring, or being concerned about another. This definition has significant limits. There is a threshold of caring. The threshold of caring seems to be a point when casual concern or humanity is crossed. We focus the caring on a target and broaden our scope to include everything the target of the affection is or does in their life. Even this broadening has thresholds. Thresholds exist at the level of casual friendship; affect special friendships, family, children, and lovers. Each relationship has some special threshold of expansion of the caring scope. This type of Love I will call *conditional* Love.

Then there is unconditional, or God, Love. Here there is no threshold of scope. Unconditional Love covers all that is and has no limits. No boundaries must be crossed to enter its scope. Although there are different levels of caring as far as humans are concerned, with God these levels do not exist.

The specialization humans create around Love is the result of the social and cultural environment into which we are born. Each culture defines the boundaries of human social existence by formalizing the nature of the relationships which individuals within the culture may have, setting the boundaries of acceptable conduct to the particular culture. It defines and limits the expressions of affection between members of the culture.

An illustration of this process is the limitation placed upon on sexual interaction between members. **In** our culture, marriage allows sexual exchange between adults, while exchange is prohibited between adults and children, or between children and children. **In** many cultures it would be improper for an outsider to embrace and passionately kiss another man's wife. Yet, it might be acceptable to hug and kiss the hand or cheek as long as there was no outward sign of sexual desire. All the taboos and structures a society creates bring about caring thresholds and define the separate types of Love humans can express. Love is not a necessary function of marriage in many cultures where marriages are arranged for financial and social-political purposes. However we find historically that even these arranged marriages sometimes can and do result in loving relationships

Most societies value Love and its power in relationships even if it is not a cornerstone of marriage. All cultures have myths and fairy tales about princesses who are saved and find ways to marry their heroes and live happily ever after.

However, there is no limit imposed upon the God like Love. We are free in most societies to express our God like unconditional Love, as long as we do not express it in one of the taboo forms. In this context it is possible for people to have all types of Love for others as long as they do not express it in specific ways that violate cultural taboos. Some cultures and religions consider the "impure" thought a violation of the taboo on behaviors. This is not always easy to enforce, but many try to do it.

Love exists separately from the various expressions of it. Love exists even if unexpressed by the lover. It is not the specific expression that has the power, it is the fundamental caring. So the thresholds of caring we see in culture and societies are the specific expression of the caring not the caring itself.

When we are in the presence of God's unconditional caring, we recognize the Grace by the sense of fearlessness present in and around us. We recognize a freedom manifested in an abiding sense of caring that surrounds and envelops us. This is the effect of the unconditional Love that is Gods Presence. Here we are "Whole Perfect and Complete" here in this present moment of consciousness we could be nothing else because this is how God created us.

Do we have this same feeling in the presence of a human who Loves us unconditionally? Do we have this sense in the presence of our mothers? The sense of caring and (similar to God's unconditional Love) is derived from being

surrounded by love from those who love us is what we are seeking. We know we are loved, but not by the specific expressions or acts of expression. We know we are loved when we are present to caring feeling that emanates from the lover. We can experience these feelings across any distance or boundary. We know without doubt the Love of our mothers and fathers. We know without doubt the Love of our children and wives when we are present to this caring.

How is it then that we begin to doubt? At what point did God suddenly go away and leave you? When did you begin to doubt the presence of unconditional Love? Fear begins to insert itself into the equation when ego is strongest. We doubt when we step out of the present and into the future that could occur, or when we insert our experiences from the past into the future. We believe the evidence we have collected that Love is not permanent.

This doubt is not always sound evidence that love is not present. It is often egos attempt to insert its self-protective nature into our consciousness. After all, it is egos job to keep you within your own cocoon, free from possible outside influences that might harm it. Accepting the presence of love leaves us vulnerable and exposed to being hurt should the love be withdrawn. The potential for withdrawal is obvious to ego; it is not in control of the loving.

This shows that we as the recipient of Love can and do put up barriers to being loved. We construct tests to check to see if it is present in our lives. We are not in

control of the loving process; rather we are the target of it. The person receiving love has nothing to say about the love that is being given. Each of us is free to love someone else, irregardless of whether the object of our affection approves, disapproves, or even cares. Control of Love is the choice of the person doing the loving.

The Loved one is the receiver; the lover is the transmitter. What occurs when the target of the caring is not receptive? What effect does this have on the lover? This interaction is governed by the cultural and social limitations on the expression of Love. This is much different from unconditional God Love, which has no limits or boundaries. This type of Love simply continues exactly as it was. Just as a mother Loves the child who says "I do not Love you any more" in a fit of tantrum, the mother's Love for the child continues unaffected by the Childs rejection.

In the case of human interactive Love there is often a need for a return on investment. Due to social and cultural limitations, there is a need for a specific response to follow a specific expression. There is a socially condoned exchange between the two participants. Is this a different kind of Love?

I suppose we could categorize this as conditional Love as opposed to unconditional Love. Are they different? I doubt it; it appears to me to be more a

question of barter over the contract of expression and acceptance that one has over the issue of the Love itself.

If you as the receiver of Love do not allow yourself to be loved, you will not experience the Love that is present.

The Love can be there constantly,

surrounding you, caring for you, even protecting you, but if you deny the presence of Love then you cannot feel loved.

Love exists in the present moment. Love in the past is only a memory. Love in the future is a hope. Love, conditional or unconditional, in the present moment is experience.

You must love yourself in the present before you can love others. Without loving yourself, the old adage that no one else can Love you if you do not Love yourself holds true. Without self-Love, you are not present to any kind of Love. You are living in a state of false consciousness. There is no sense of Love present to you in the here and now. There is only suffering and sense of unworthiness.

Self-worth is the foundation of self-love. By definition we can only love something we value. If we take care of something or someone, we are valued. This is not an inflated sense of self-worth, but a sure and clear knowledge that you are worthy of being loved. You are worthy because you were created to be loved by your creator. And because there is the unconditional God Love, by definition you have worth. God does not create something is despises. How could the all

powerful source of creator possibly do that? So as mothers love their children so God loves you and if God loves you - you are of inestimable value

This simple truth is humbling and overwhelming when we recognize it. Who am I that God or anyone else for that matter would want to Love me? As human beings we are quite capable of stepping into denial even if we have at some time recognized the simple truth. We have the power to stop accepting the Love that surrounds us and slip back into suffering.

As children we did not have this option. We were born into a knowing of worth and an expectation of Love. As we age we become jaded by our experiences and by our unfulfilled expectations. We gradually learn to doubt.

Doubt is a false path. We doubt the presence of Love, when in reality it is the lack of an unfulfilled expectation of the expression of Love that is missing. We confuse Love with other things such as sex and expected forms of behavior that occur in relationships.

The Greeks had three words to describe Love. *Agape* is used to describe the experience of emotional Love and is a love that can be commanded, *philo* is the love of something more like friendship or familial love yet is a love that cannot be commanded and *Eros* describes the experience of sensual emotion and sex.

We separate ourselves by attaching meaning to activities that are supposed to represent expressions of Love. Activities like the giving of gifts, the acts of romance, and other activities that we as a society associate with Love. For example, a valentine card or gift that is missed (or arrives late) is interpreted to be a clear piece of evidence that Love is not present.

We become more attached to the acts of expression of Love than we are to the presence of the Love itself. We are unable to accept the mere presence of caring, we make ourselves think we need some physical act of expression to prove its presence.

We Love because it is fulfilling. We Love because it is rewarding. We Love because we can. It is our nature to Love. In our history we find over and over the emblems of Love. These are far more valued than the emblems of hate and discontent. We relish the tales of Romeo and Juliet. The Poetry of Omar Kayam and the beautiful images in our memories of the experiences of Love that remain with us forever.

Still we are unsure of just what it is this thing we call love. It is emotion, it is not necessarily rational, and it cannot be bottled or sold. Is it ethereal only? Now more and more I am coming to believe it is more of a verb than a noun for sure. We can experience the receiving of it and we can at the same time revel in the giving of it. The knowledge that we are cared about even when we ourselves may

not see our own value is overwhelming. At the same time the gut wrenching caring we can experience when someone we love is at risk is overwhelming.

Love can stress us as well as wrap us in calmness. The range of experience we can have in relationship to love is almost boundless. I suspect that is why we have such a hard time in defining what it is. It truly is capable of expression in endless variety.

Love is truly experiential. It is not a thing that you can put in your hands and hold. You can't buy it or own it, yet it is the most valuable thing in the world. It is only valuable when it's free. Freely given and freely received. If it has any strings attached, it's not love, it's some other kind of coercion done for the purpose of securing something in return. That is not love

True love has no expectation, no judgment no payoff. True love is the sense of wholeness, completeness and perfection in the eye of the beholder and in the heart of the loved one. Those you love are not necessarily doing what you would like or expect, they are living their lives as human beings being human.

God gives each creation the freedom to be, the freedom to choose how they experience their lives. God does not set limits on their freedom of action. God does not love them less when they do something human. God simply loves them.

You are created by God and LOVED! Oh how special you are. You are valued by God and experienced in wonder by God.

Since we are all individualized expressions of God I sometimes wonder what it must be like to experience everything all at once. The presence of must appear overwhelming. Oh what a wonder is God and the Love that is God.

One of the definitions of love I found was that Love is the glue that binds everything in the universe. In New Thought terms Love is the glue and Law is the action. I thought about this for a long time and what came up for me is that yes, Love is the Glue but it is always personalized. Un-personalized love is simply caring. It lacks that force of valuing the Love object.

The love that we experience profoundly is clearly personalized. It is unique to each and every experience of it. Whether giving or receiving, it is always personalized. The nature of this love is specifically and completely orientated to the recipient from the Lover. It screams out to it "I LOVE YOU!!!" It is not Oh yeah, and I love you to.

I suppose in this context then Love is a specific personal value giving acknowledgment of care by the Lover.

Finally, Love is active. Love is a verb. Love is experiential. Love is not rationalization of the caring act. Love is the embodiment of the act of caring. It is specific and personalized by the lover and the receiver. It is not the same thing as the caring for that unspecific grouping of beings such as children in general. General caring is exactly that, general caring. Not to diminish that emotion and action in humans but it lacks the force the Love, personalized specific and purposeful love. The love that by its very nature decries I VALUE YOU BEYOND MEASURE!

Love is also something we cannot keep to ourselves. Only when we give it away, is it love. Loving without expressing that love is not really loving at all. As a matter of fact, it is selfish and cruel. Not only to the one you love, but especially to yourself. It denies the giving of value, and it denies freedom and self awareness of giving our love to another.

Yes, it is about giving it away. Freely and without expectation. True love, unbounded by any strings or conditions. When we are giving away our love in this manner, we are acting in our true spiritual nature, not our human nature.

When we withhold love we are being human not spiritual. We are acting out of Ego. Ego is smallness and not what God intended the Spiritual Being we are to be. We are greatness we are an individualized expression of God. Our true spirituality would never withhold love.

Yet, our human nature can do this and when it does, we create great suffering for ourselves and for those we love. It is a petty and even vindictive act. So why do we do it? I suspect it is because Ego is frightened of the exposure that unconditional love leaves us open to. Ego is always trying to protect its status quo by its attachment to your smallness especially in relation to your true Spiritual Nature. If you were your natural greatness all the time, think of the expectations that Ego would have to deal with.

Conscious and unconscious giving of our love is another consideration. The true power of our love is in the conscious deliberate and focused love. The unconscious giving is a reflection of our state of being. I believe that the state of being where we are unconsciously giving love all the time is a result of existing in that state of Grace that focused love creates around us. When we are giving focused and unconditional love our whole nature becomes loving and surrounds not only ourselves but all those we allow ourselves to be exposed to. You cannot hide your conscious love. Its very nature is exposing.

Love is not burden. Love is a blessing. We should never look at our loving experience as a burden, if we do, then we are not expressing true love, rather we are expressing some conditional form of caring. Even if our love is not accepted or returned as we might have desired, we are still blessed by the sheer act of loving unconditionally. It is that unconditionally given form that by definition cannot result in a sense of burden or of lack in any form. Only when we have an

expectation can we feel burden or lack. If we recognize the presence of these feelings, we should examine our motives and clear the space for conscious focused unconditional love to be present. The choice is ours.

Chapter II Why Do We Love?

So, why do we love? By our very nature we are loving beings. Loving is a way of giving value to the people we Love. We protect and care for people that have value to us.

We may think that loving is just a form of maternal instinct, similar to what we see with animals and their young. There is some of this in human nature. Some instinctive part of us makes us care for our young just like any other creature on earth. As humans we continue this caring beyond the developmental stage and carry it on through out our lives. We extend the circle of caring from our young to the offspring of our offspring and their offspring etc. Some humans extend the circle of caring beyond the family to the community, and some to the world itself.

As we Love, we find our lives enriched by the feedback we receive. When we love others we are loved in return. This experience constitutes an endless feedback loop that makes us keep on loving.

Love is the only true satisfier. All other things we acquire in our lives are of fleeting value, while the momentary experiences of Love are cherished, remembered for life, and relived over and over again. With each re-experience they fulfill us completely. This is part of the Beauty of Love, the constant reward from the fulfilling experience.

The experiences of Love are everlasting. The moments of profound expression of giving or receiving Love are the highest moments of our lives. The moments of loss of Love are

the most devastating in our lives. We always treat the moments when we recognize that Love is no longer present as a loss. This is how valuable Love is to us.

The experience of being Loved unconditionally is the experience of being complete and whole, which is being in Grace. Nothing is missing or desired. Grace is so profound that it scares us. We are frightened by its very presence, and simultaneously fearful of its loss. Ego, feeling threatened, protects itself by reducing Grace to an unreality. This process creates doubt as we start to measure the individual expressions of the act of loving. Slowly we change from valuing the experience of Love to valuing the specific expressional acts of Love to prove its presence.

We believe in the fantasy of "falling" in Love far more than the reality of being in Love or being loved. We believe the fantasy is the reality of Love instead of the experience of Love. We spend so much of our lives on the how it could have been and how it will be, that we are unable to recognize how it is. Oh how we Love to read our romantic tragedies. We honor Romeo and Juliet or the story of Ruth and her unbending Love. We share stories of unrequited Love.

At the same time we enjoy tales of Love rewarded. We celebrate the joy at celebrity romances and marriages. We cry and share in the dismay of the loss that we think they experience from their romantic separations. We believe the characters they portray on the screen and think we really know them as who they really are, forgetting that they are

acting a part for us to experience and creating the popular illusion of what we as a society think is Love.

We love because it is what we were born to do. Love is why we were created. We are in the image and likeness of an all loving God. We are expressions of an all loving God. God Love is the eternal, unconditional, and undemanding Love. It is Love given to each of us freely and completely, without any expectation of return. I remember being in a conversation with a friend who described what it would be to be Christ like. "To Love each and every thing without exception for absolutely no reason whatsoever."

Could I possibly Love everyone? That was one of the first questions I asked myself when I began my journey to the ministry. I struggle with this everyday. Can I include a Charlie Manson, or Osama bin Ladin in that group of those I Love? Can I keep my human anger and upset from destroying the Love I know I should be present to with each person I come in contact with? Especially when I find my self in conflict with their position on something I value?

Sometimes I find myself waking in the middle of the night involved in an ongoing argument with some person in my life that I am upset with. Often, I am unable to sleep and continue the ongoing dispute in my head for hours until I am reminded of who I choose to be. Then I must step away from my position in the dispute and recognize that this is not the real me. This is the human ego driven me. I choose to be the spiritual me having my human experience and recognizing that I can choose not to succumb to the

ego's proactive nature. Ego's need to protect rightness, and judgment, that are so much of our human nature. I sometimes have to laugh at myself, so wound up in the argument going on in my head that I suddenly realize that all of it is in my head. No one else is here, my protagonist is not here, the whole thing is in my head and I have spent hours of sleep deprivation perusing an imaginary event. Oh how human we can be!

From the unconditional Love that comes to us from God, we can spread our wings by loving everything that surrounds us. This unconditional Love is ours for the taking and ours for the sharing. Since we are individualized expressions of God, created in order that we might know and recognize God, we are made in the image and likeness of God. We are made of the eternal spirit that is God otherwise we would be unable to know and recognize God. We are eternal spiritual beings having this human experience. Learning as we remember what we are. As we recognize our spiritual nature, we begin to recognize the nature of the Love that surrounds us. We slowly learn to take action to share that love first to those closest to us, and then to all those around us. Finally we decide to share it with all that is.

This is the spiritual nature of God that is embedded in our creation. As an individualized expression of God, we are that God Love in expression. We love by our very nature and are loving because our very being is about Loving.

All the activities we encounter here on earth are merely conditions that allow us to learn the effects of our Love. These conditions that we experience allow us to experience all

sides of Love. Here we can freely experiment with our experiences. Here we get to choose how we experience our lives. Each of these experiences whether in denial of or in acknowledgement of Love, is a learning event in our human and spiritual lives.

Those experiences of loss or of unrequited love teach us the very nature of our caring. They teach us how valuable the things we Love truly are. From these experiences we learn the suffering that some experience when they are not present to the Love that is there. We learn about heartbreak when love is withdrawn or rejected. Here we learn the value of Loving and being loved.

Likewise in the experiences of Love shared fully, we learn about the joy and the ecstasy that Love brings to us. We experience the endless range of emotions that Love can bring. Here we learn the blessing of Loving unconditionally. This opens us up to our very nature. It is our Spiritual Self. Here we become true expressions of God, Loving and reveling in the circle of giving and receiving that is the true nature of God.

So as the individualized expressions of God, we are created to Love and be loved. It is our true destiny, our very nature. As God loves so we love, as we love so God loves.

Chapter III

How to Love

I am not sure that I am expert enough to sit here and tell you that I know how you should Love. I have a poor record of successful relationships upon which I draw my knowledge. However, these experiences may have molded me with a clearer understanding of what my experience and desires surrounding Love are.

Most of us never have the experience of sitting down and determining just exactly what they would like their lives to be like. After my last divorce and departure from a nearly 20 year relationship that is exactly what occurred to me.

I had relocated from the Mid-West to Sunny California. I was setting up house as a confirmed bachelor; three failed marriages were the evidence that this was the only logical route for me to take.

Over the next few weeks I got out and went dancing and meeting people. One lady asked me to help her teach a dance class and I readily agreed. Over the next month or so before the class began I had an opportunity to meet her again at another dance and we confirmed the class. I did not realize that she did not know I had a vision problem. Something I rarely pay attention to other than being a safe traveler outside where I use a cane. At other times. I usually keep the cane folded up and out of sight. This time she saw me flip out the cane and go outside for a break. I was still a smoker at the time. Needless to say it must have shocked her because I got a call a few days later and we confirmed that it was not an issue for concern.

When we started teaching the class a few weeks later, I found that we worked so well together we rarely needed to speak about what we were doing; it was as if we each read our thoughts.

After the class, we would leave and she would stop with me at a local restaurant where we shared a glass of wine and conversation then she would drop me off at the singles dance held every Sunday evening and disappear. After several weeks of being dropped off, I decided to ask her why she was taking off, after all I was a pretty nice guy I thought and would she be interested in dating? I did this by email of course, we are modem people.

Her response floored me. It was clear and simple. "If we were to have a relationship, what would it look like"? It being e-mail, I at first started to flip out an answer, and then thankfully, I took it seriously and began to look at what I really wanted in a relationship. What I really wanted in my life. By about 3 :00 a.m. I had written a long and carefully thought out description of what I would truly like my relationship and life to look like. Thank God I spent the time.

Now almost nine years later we are happily and successfully married. We have only had one or two incidents of even raising our voices in disagreement, incidents that we both, to almost the same instant, change the action to change the experience. We live in a loving and mutually respectful marriage.

This came about by first deciding what we each really wanted in a relationship, and then clearly communicating that to each other.

Clear communication and not having unfulfilled and un-communicated expectations of each other leaves us open to endless possibilities. We agree to share our lives where we can, and each still pursues our individual dreams. By communicating these dreams, each of us is able to support the other in their goals. We do not have to feel slighted that some one is doing something for themselves that leaves us out, we are each in support of the others dreams.

Living a life guided by deliberate choices gives you the freedom to act. If you live your life in some expectation of someone else's actions, you leave yourself open to the suffering of unfulfilled expectations. This is where we suffer, and create doubts and lose track of the experience of being loved and loving others. Loving is a conscious act. Being Loved is also a conscious experience. It is a conscious experience when we remember an experience of being Loved. The unconscious experiences are romance, desire, and dreams. They bear no resemblance to the reality.

How do you take the one on one Love of a relationship beyond the boundaries of relationship? I think that first you must realize that the one you love will most surely love others. If they didn't, you probably would not have fallen in love with

them since the ability to love is something we look for in all those we choose to love. Then we learn to look within ourselves where we need to love others in order to fulfill our own desires. It is wonderful to have a one on one relationship, but only if we are both walking along the same road. Only if we are both free to be individuals on their own journeys happy to share the companionship of being together along the way. Otherwise we are in relationships that have requirements, expectations placed on each other that we probably haven't expressed to each other. If we have and we both agreed to the expectations then it is a matter of integrity, not of love that we fulfill these agreements. Where the love is then the freedom is.

Too often, we want to put our love bird in a locked cage, and when we do it withers and dies because it is not free to fly and be the bird we loved before we caged it. Love has little or nothing to do with possession. Yet in our modern society we use very possessive terms to describe our loved ones. Husbands are called good catches, and wives are often treated as part of our total net worth such that when we tire of them the divorce is all about our assets and the cost of disposal. This concept of possession is a major cause of the failure of our human "love" relationships.

We don't have this issue with our God relationships, or do we? Isn't the conflict that rages around the world between religions have the root cause of possessive love for our individual and group concepts of our Gods? Each group feels

threatened by the other that in some way the God they love might be usurped or have to be shared with some other group.

Each group is convinced that they have the exclusive only and right way to the exclusion of any other way that someone else might have. Why if you don't believe their way, you are doomed to hell or some other form of exclusion.

This possessive concept separates individuals from true love in any form. Only when there is freedom without condition is love able to express the full range of its power.

Many religions define the relationship of individuals to the love of God as a subservient one, one that requires us to give up our freedom, in order to be accepted by God. We have to be worthy of God's love in order to be loved. Free of "sin" or at least penitent for our sin. Yet all great religions preach God's unconditional love but fail to practice this fundamental belief.

God's love is without condition or judgment of any nature. It is un-possessive and its greatest gift is the freedom to choose. No wonder we are often confused about love in general when we are taught confusing and contradictory definitions of love's nature.

So in reflection, the most important things to practice when we love are:

Don't hold uncommunicated expectations from the person you love. You must accept love in order to experience love.

Give your love without expectation or condition.

Do not treat the object of your love as a possession.

Chapter IV

The Power of love

So far we have examined what love is and what it is not. We have learned that it is not a conditional thing, nor is it an impersonal thing.

I want to give us a working definition for love that is both general and specific enough that we can use the word in a variety of contexts.

Love is: the Goodness expressing its caring that shows that the giver of love values the object beyond measure. It is a specific and personal expression of the value the giver has for the object of this love. Love is completely unconditional in its nature, holding neither expectations nor judgments of any kind.

In this context, we can now examine the question of how there is power in Love? The answer is actually very simple. Love is the cause that drives the Law.

Dr. Holmes tells us:

"In the beginning there was only love and then there was the Word. "

I used to think that all the conversations in New Thought writings about love was a kind of nebulous fuzzy background feeling that was behind the power of God. Now that I have spent some time examining the nature and specifics of love, it has lost some of the fuzziness I had ascribed to it. Love is not some concept that we don't understand, it is not a power we cannot recognize like gravity where we only see its effect and cannot find its true nature. Love is very clearly the value giving act of specifically caring and valuing beyond measure.

Dr. Ernest Holmes had some interesting commentary on love, here are some of his more notable ones:

"Love is the self-givingness of the Spirit through the desire of Life to express Itself in terms of creation. Emerson tells us that Love is a synonym for God. We are also told in the New Testament that "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. " Love is free from condemnation, even as it is free from fear. Love is a cosmic force whose sweep is irresistible

He goes on to say that *"Love points the way and Law makes the way possible. "*

"First is Love then Law. Then together they are the way the universe works. When we look at life in this way we can clearly see the access to all power. When we forget this fundamental knowledge, we are committed to suffering and doubt, and all its related consequences. ((

Love - the cause, Law - the enactor.

I always thought of Law as being neutral, the thing that does and doesn't know what it is doing. But I now see it somewhat differently. Where I thought of law as say responding to neediness with more neediness, I thought that law was enacting

the thought of neediness and responding to that. But, now I see it somewhat differently.

Law responds to Love, and only to love. Those words that come from love are taken in and acted upon powerfully. But those things that come to Law not from love are as I now see it, simply reflected back. They are not acted upon in the sense that something is created by Law and manifested anew.

In this way it becomes clear that the real power is in the LOVE. When the word is spoken from the continuity of Love, it truly has power and Law responds with creative manifestation with an exponentially more powerful result.

When Law is presented with the word that has no love as its source or purpose, it simply responds with reflection as a mirror. Speak words of greed and you experience greed reflected back at you in all aspects of life. Speak words of hope without the knowledge of love and a true expectation results, and you get to experience hoping and more hoping.

This is the true secret of Love. Love is the cause, the purpose, the result and the very being that is God.

Only when we can see this simple fact can we begin to clearly understand how the universe truly works. Only then do we have real access to the power that God has

granted us as co-creators, as expressions of God being. With this knowledge we are given access to all the power there is.

I see clearly that where we might have given unlimited power to anyone who choose to exercise it by simply putting word into Law with belief could abuse and be corrupted or corrupting. But without Love, there is absolutely no power. There is simply the reflective mirror of Law waiting to be called to action with the magic password "LOVE".

Love by its very nature cannot be employed in any way except for good. One cannot truly love evil or corruption since that would be an act in contradiction to the very nature of love. Thus when Dr. Holmes talks about a power for good in the universe, it is truly a power only for Good whose very source is Love.

When we see the results of choices that do not bear fruit, but bring suffering and dismay, we know that those choices were not made in a context of love. When we look to our relationships and feel wanting or distrust, we know we are not looking in a context of love. Only when we make our choices in the context of love, can we then see the power of creative manifestation at work. Wrapped in love, all things are possible, but without the love, there are always limitations present.

If our only our world leaders would recognize this then we could change the world because they would truly have access to power. We have only to look back

at Jesus to see the power of love in action. His fundamental teachings are based on this simple truth. You begin with love, and then all things are possible.

Chapter V

Putting It All Together

Now comes the hard part. Putting is all together in your life. We come to life willed with all the rules, regulations, expectations, and desires that our culture and our home-life have imprinted on us. We are filled with stories of romance and honor, and how long suffering is rewarded. Well I doubt if they are really the truth. I suspect that are expressions of hope more than anything.

Only when you are in charge of your own life, only when you are freely choosing your own course of action, are you in a position to begin to experience the pure joy of being. Here in our human experience, we need to learn to identify those actions that are from love, and separate them from those that are about some sort of negotiated agreement of how we are going to act towards one and another.

Once you can separate the two, you are free to express your love and to accept love given you without confusion. This is fundamentally important. Unless you separate the giving and accepting of love from the measure of the other persons actions, you will always be in a state of expectation that cannot be fulfilled. The state of loving and being loved is one without expectation or judgment of any kind. All those other states that have some kind of attached expectation are the things of humans and can and are always under negotiations. With this knowledge we can then approach our relationships with others and ourselves from a totally different perspective.

We are now able to know that we are loved and that we love without doubt. Safe in this knowledge we can approach our relationships from positions of openness and caring. We

can express ourselves confidently and without fear. It is this knowledge that true love is safe and undemanding that gives us true freedom. If we find that the person we are in relationship cannot approach us from the same place in love, we can still love them freely but also act in our own best interests in all aspects of our human relationship. We can do this without shame or guilt since we are clear in our understanding of our choices, and are by definition acting only from goodness.

Now that we are back to basics, we know the feeling of being loved and of loving others, let's step back to our basic relationship, the one we have with God. This is where we first experience true and absolute love. When we learn of our worthiness, our very birthright, we live our lives wrapped in this love.

When we are grounded in the knowledge that God loves us, and we stay present to that love, our lives are filled and that love flows into us and through us and out of us because we are being the very creation God intended us to be. It is this knowledge that is so important, that frightens us the most. As humans, we can almost accept the idea of being loved by someone. But all the issues of worthiness and our belief in that worthiness are constantly recurring issues in life. Only when you are present to that one time opening of the door to let God's love into your life is your life forever changed. Once opened, I promise that it will never be closed again.

In the moment you are present to being loved by God, the presence of the State of Grace is like a blanket wrapped around you and life has a completely new and boundless

possibility. The knowledge that you are loved by God, valued by God in the same way you love others, life flows through and out of you and you become a radiating source of energy and goodness. You become a complete expression of God.

First is our knowledge of God's love. Once we have this foundation, our lives can then take a very different course. When we are present to God's love in our lives, that love and its very goodness opens the door for us to access all the power of the Law. Remember that Law only responds to those words that come from the goodness of love.

With this access we can truly begin to co-create our lives and to choose freely how we experience our lives. These gifts from God, the freedom to choose and the knowledge of being truly loved, are the access of our Word to the Law and are the absolute ultimate gifts we receive as our birthright.

With these gifts, we can set a course for our human experience that is grounded in goodness and unlimited in possibility.

How different life can be when you can separate your love experience from the everyday human experience. To be able to make your choices grounded in the knowledge of God's love. Sure in the knowledge of your own love and free to receive the love of others without the need to fear the loss of love. To be able to clearly know that the love you are receiving from others is truly love, and not something else.

The knowledge that we are being loved by someone else and the knowledge that it is truly love is another access to power. Here we can clearly separate those other feelings, evaluate them in the light of day and make our choices freely without fear. We can decide to create relationships with others where it is ok to set boundaries, and expect the boundaries to be honored, because the nature of the agreements of our relationships are clearly negotiated. We no longer need to live in fear or dismay at the actions of those around us. We are free to negotiate and make agreements that we are willing to live with without fear of losing love or of having the love we so desire withheld from us. Now we know the true nature of love and can distinguish clearly from those feelings and emotions we used to think of as love.

We can clearly distinguish between true love, and having affection withheld because of anger. We can now choose to be the observer at some of these human actions, or choose not to accept the passing of the guilt ball from someone. And we can do it without shame. If we act out of love in all our relationships, we can only be fulfilled because all the things we put into Law can only be creative and manifest exponentially leaving us to experience wonder and joy beyond our dreams.

When we encounter strife in our human relationships, we know that it is strife of a human nature, not of a love nature. We can examine our feelings carefully. We can make our choices based on less emotional reactions and more on what is the best outcome for all concerned. This freedom from the stress and fear of loss of love opens us to endless other possibilities to resolve these issues. Without this knowledge and the ability to separate

love from relationship issues we live in constant fear of doing the wrong thing. Of some how causing the loss of love and creating great suffering as a result.

This fear of the loss of love is the most powerful and debilitating of all human emotions. People stay in abusive relationships out of the fear of loss of love. People fear to begin loving relationships because they fear that the love might be taken away once they have it. Yet it is this very fear that is unfounded when we have a clear understanding of what love really is.

When we recognize that the only true love is one that is freely given and has no expectations, we can recognize that our reactions to the fear of losing it can only mean that we are experiencing something that is conditional and therefore by definition is not truly love. With this knowledge, we can step back and reexamine our emotions, we can begin the human process of negotiation if we so choose, and thus develop a relationship that we are willing to accept or not accept as we look at the relationship without the rose colored glasses of imitation love feelings.

So much of our life is dominated by these imitation love feelings. When we are young especially, we are overwhelmed by them and then to top it off we are flooded with hormones to help confuse us further as to love or lust or some combination of the two. Who can remember their teenage years when the first love-lust experience occurred? Everything was so intense. We were sure of our love. Everything was simple and black

and white. Shortly thereafter it got very confusing as our simple black and white concepts of how it was going to work dissolved before our very eyes. What happened?

Well, there was the classic problem of not having a working definition of what love really was, and confusing our feelings with love and the reality of human relationships. While we had as little children basked in the true love of our parents, we had not learned to recognize true love from others and separate the rules of relationships from the rules of true love. So we approached our first love encounter full of "Expectation". That expectation was the big red flag that we failed to see when we took our first journey into the world of human affection and our search for true love among our peers.

So many of us continue to live our lives in the grip of powerful expectations, and we are so often disappointed. Only when we can love without expectation can we experience the true wonder of loving. It is almost classic Buddhism when we look at the cause of most suffering. The Buddhist says its desire, while I use the word expectation.

Only when you have a sound definition for what true love is can you successfully negotiate the mine fields of human relationships. And I suspect that only when you have a clear knowledge of the love that God has for you can you freely release the love you hold in your own heart. Sadly for our youth they must go through trials and tribulations of young love as part of the human experience.

So in order to have a successful love relationship, we need to have our definition of love clearly established. We need to have a solid relationship to God and the love God has for us, we need to be clear in our own loving, that we love without expectation, and lastly we need to be able to clearly separate the aspects of expectation from the aspects of true love in our relationships with others. With this grounding we are then free to create all the relationships we desire with clear boundaries and expectations as we negotiate with all those who are in our human lives.

To this end I offer this treatment.

There is only the One God the source of everything. I recognize this and I open my heart to the outpouring of love that God has for me. I bask in this love. I am surrounded and enveloped in perpetual love, a love that is so powerful and so enriching that my heart soars and love radiates outward from me to everyone and everything. I know that I am a true loving being committed to living a life enriched with Gods love. I reach out to everyone with my love for them as the core of my being. All things in my life are in perfect harmony and I live in the constant presence of Gods Grace. For this I am forever thankful. Thank you gentle Spirit. I release this freely without any expectation knowing that my words of love are acted on by Law and will manifest in wondrous creativity. I say these words.

And So It Is.

Rev. Jim Thompson

It is my hope that this inquiry into the nature of love will benefit everyone who reads this, or comes in contact with my talks on this subject. If I can make a difference in others lives by giving them some insight into the nature of true love and a way to balance our human relationships while still being loving individuals and being able to accept love from others openly and completely, then I will have truly made a difference in my world.

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