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Love Redefined

Dear Friend,

February 14 is the day we recognize Valentine's Day. It is a day in which people who are "in love" with each other demonstrate their love by giving gifts of such things as rings and chocolate and flowers and cards. I think that the people benefiting most from Valentine's Day are those who sell the rings and the chocolate and the flowers and the cards, but that's just my opinion.

We have been taught from the first time we had a crush on someone that this is what "love" is; a feeling, an emotion, something that comes and goes. From then on we associate love with that funny feeling and a fantasy type notion becomes our understanding of love. We come to believe love is something you fall into and out of almost as easily as we put on or take off a jacket. We also separate romantic love from the love of God as though they should have no association with each other. Anyone who depends on "romantic love" to sustain a marriage separate from the love of God is on a collision course with disaster.

Thank God real love is not at all like romantic love. The love of God is real love and is not emotion driven or based on feelings. If that were the case God might love us one minute and be done with us the next.

Look at these words found in 1 John 4:7-8.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (8) He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is Love."

God is love, real love, not a feeling that comes and goes like the changing seasons, as the world defines love. A person who is not born of God does not have the capacity for real love. So, what is it that the world experiences and calls "love"? It is really the counterfeit of real love and is sensual; sense based, centered on feelings and emotions. The love that originates in God gives and is not looking for what can be gained from the relationship, which is completely

opposite to the love found in the world. Generally speaking, the world's kind of "love" takes and is only interested in what "I" can gain from the relationship.

Anytime you allow the world to define something for you like love you have to know that it will be about as far from how God defines it as the east is from the west. You see, the world's definition is all about things like the physical appearance of a person; how they look, whether or not they are pretty or handsome. Think about how shallow that is; using a person's appearance as a measuring stick for determining whether or not this is someone to fall "in love" with. What happens if and when their appearance changes and they don't look the same as before? Do they just stop loving them? If that's the case, then were they ever genuinely in love in the first place?

Far too often I believe the decision to be with a person because of the physical attraction to them **is more about what can be gained by having a relationship with them.** That being the case, what is thought to be love is based on self-gratification and not selflessness. Instead of investing your whole heart in a relationship with no thought for what you will get in return, people say they "love" someone because they know it's what the other person wants to hear, and all the while their real motive is to get something out of the person. That's not love, that's manipulation and it goes on all the time. Think about how many babies have been created because a boy told a girl he "loved" her only so he could have sexual relations with her. To make matters worse, society tells these two that it's okay to end the baby's life so as not to ruin their own lives. How sick is that? Clearly our world knows nothing about real love.

After having grown up in an atmosphere so saturated with confusion about love and romance and physical attraction it is easy to see why people are being married and divorced multiple times. Generally speaking, their expectations of love are not being realized **because they have been taught the world's standards.** I know these are strong statements and they are in no means intended to hurt or bring condemnation to anyone. But, if we are going to correct wrong thinking we must first expose the wrong thinking and I am convinced there is a mountain of wrong thinking surrounding the subject of love.

Let me ask you this, if sin would have never happened could you imagine Adam and Eve in divorce court? Of course not! Why not? Because the love they knew was the pure love of God and not this counterfeit we all have grown up with.

If we loved each other with the love God intended for us to have for one another, would there be relationship problems in the body of Christ that rival those found in the world? I'm sure you will agree that the answer to this is no. That being the

case, how is it that in the one place in which true love is supposed to be on display, we find a void of love and the same problems as those in the world. I believe it is because we have allowed the world to redefine “love” according to their standards and the church has bought into those ideas.

So what’s the answer? **It certainly can’t be that we continue searching from one person to the next for someone to satisfy a deficit in us that the true love of Jesus alone can fill.** I believe that when His love is flowing to us and through us our need for the superficial affection of others is going to drastically diminish.

In case you are wondering how you can know if in fact you are loving with the God kind of love and not just infatuation, the Bible gives us a gauge to help us define and recognize true love. The gauge is found in Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

“Charity (Agape, used to identify love associated with God) *suffereth long and is kind. Charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.*”

The amplified version reads as follows:

“Love endures with patience and serenity, love is kind and thoughtful, and is not jealous or envious: love does not brag and is not proud or arrogant.”

This one verse paints a picture of love that those who are not born again will never be able to experience, because it is unique to God. If there is not kindness or patience then there is no love. If there is jealousy and envy and pride and arrogance, then what is thought to be “love” is merely “love” as defined by the world. (vs 5-8 KJV)

(Love) **“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil.”** (6) **Rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.** (7) **Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.** (8) **Charity (Love) never fails...**

The Amplified version reads as follows:

“It is not rude; it is not self-seeking, it is not provoked (not overly sensitive or easily angered): **it does not take into account a wrong endured.** (6) **It does not rejoice at injustice, but rejoices with the truth** (when right and truth prevail). (7) **Love bears all things** (regardless of what comes), **believes all things** (looking for the best in each one), **hopes all things** (remaining steadfast

during difficult times), **endures all things** (without weakening). (8) **Love never fails** (it never fades or ends)..."

Now, after reading this definition in the light of what you have come to know as "Love" can you see a difference? It's time we redefine what real love is in our own minds and stop allowing Hollywood actors to con us into thinking their version of selfish, self-seeking, only in it for what we can get out of it, kind of love is really love at all.

Knowing God is the primary requirement for knowing love, according to 1 John 4:7-8. Look at it again.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."(8) ***He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."***

Real love begins with knowing God, because God Himself is Love. We have to stop thinking that there is a "love" that we have in a marriage that is somehow completely different from the love that originates from God. Go back once again to Adam and Eve in the garden, the love of God was the primary force from which everything else came into existence. Yes, I'm certain there was a physical attraction between the two, but that was only secondary to the love of God and it was never intended to take the place of the love of God, which is exactly what I believe has happened.

It's time we redefine love back to its original intent and purpose and love one another as God has loved us.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins