

*A Life Learning of Love*

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When I was but a toddler  
All I knew of "love"  
Was what was conveyed in  
The warmth of Mother's embrace.

When I gained the age of childhood  
I only perceived of love  
Through a father's smile,  
A mother's affirmation  
The strength of my parents and  
The safety of my home.

When I became a teenager  
I sensed impending "Love"  
With the glance from another  
With the fleeting touch of a hand  
The heart racing, the breath becoming shallow  
The thrill of excitement  
Replaced the childish vision of love.

When I became a young adult  
I felt the hope and promise of love  
A fresh glimmer of relationship  
The hope of a life together.  
The excitement of passion.  
The thrill of tomorrow and possibilities.

When I finally married,  
Having met the "Love of my Life"  
I was astounded at the possibilities  
I was enthralled at the acceptance

I was enamored with the embrace  
I was awed with the feelings.  
I thought I understood then the meaning  
The sentiment, the reality of "love" in my life.

But the love I knew as a toddler  
Began to fade with the memories of the days.

The love experienced as a child  
Dissipated in the uncertainties and insecurities of life.

The rush of the infatuation experience  
As the young teen explores love  
Feelings that rapidly faded like  
The morning mist in the face of the glowing sun.

The understanding of Love in the early marriage years  
Gave way to misunderstanding and confusion  
A marriage gives way to middle age, I know  
Love must be more than just a feeling.

I know love is absolutely necessary...  
Without it life would be insignificant, meaningless, without purpose  
Without it my activity would become monotonous and dull  
Without it my relationship would be shallow and dry  
Without love, ministry would be without joy  
Without love, I would never accomplish great things.

So in my quest, spanning the last ½ century  
Has been to understand the real meaning of love  
Beyond the feeling and exhilaration  
Beyond the emotion and the thrill  
Beyond the fascination and the splendor

And so the things I have come to understand about love  
Are simple and yet profound.  
I have discovered them  
Hinted at them in my life  
Shouted to me in my spirit  
Lived out to me by my wife  
Embraced by me in my heart.

Love is patient

Love as expressed to me  
Puts up with my shortcomings  
And longs for something more  
It willingly allows growth to occur  
Quickly, or more often slowly  
But waiting for the better man to emerge.  
Love is patient and is allowed to grow  
Love allows me to learn what is right  
At a pace well-suited to me  
It waits for me willingly  
Because love longs for me

Love is kind

Love is gracious where grace is undeserved  
Love reveals a heart that is not anxious to hurt  
Love binds my wounds  
Heal my pains,  
Ease my sorrows,  
Shoulder my burdens.  
Love shown is kind, gracious, good  
It gives me room to cry, feel, mourn and heal.  
Because love is so good to me.

Love does not envy

Groveling is not the language of love  
For love does not wish to see the object  
Ground into the dust, wallowing in pity  
Seeking sympathy or conquest.  
The loving one does not want to see the other

Put down, ridiculed, mocked or belittled.  
It does not become excited because  
It is deemed better in one and not the other.  
It does not seek to improve itself at that expense of its object.  
God does not envy and exalt himself to our shame  
Nor does love expressed between two persons  
It is not jealous of blessings in life  
Because love is not envious but celebrates them in the journey.

Love does not boast  
Sin brags on its accomplishment  
The ego boasts of its abilities.  
Man beats his chest to remind himself of his importance  
People long to draw attention to themselves for praise.  
Yet love does not draw attention to itself  
The lover does not point to himself or herself  
As better, stronger, greater or more loving.  
The non-boastful love simply showers love  
Upon the object of its affection.  
Not wanting the praise or adoration or attention  
Because love finds satisfaction in love itself.

Love is not arrogant  
So many things in live  
Compete for attention and time  
Yet love does not clamor for the focus  
Because it's pride is not in the love but in the loved.  
Love celebrates the beloved not the Lover  
The lover does not exalt himself above the object  
The most important one in love  
Is the object of love, the beloved  
Because love finds joy not in itself but in its loved one.

Love is not rude.  
Love does not push its way to the front of the line  
Nor does love demand incessantly  
Love does not require compromise in ourselves  
Nor does love look to diminish us as persons

With needs, feelings and ambitions.  
It does not require us to abandon ourselves in favor of another  
But expresses itself genuinely for another.  
Love is not rude, pushing another aside  
Because love elevates the person who is loved.

Love does not insist on its own way  
Pushy demands  
Selfish requirements  
Petty insistence  
Is not the way of love because  
It is more interested in the other than itself  
Love is not insistent  
Because love importance is the object not its own desire

Love is not irritable.  
Irritableness arises when demands are not met  
Self centered desires generate dissatisfaction  
Dissatisfaction expresses itself in displeasure  
Displeasure reveals a heart of impatience and irritableness  
And yet this is not love's way  
Love is willing to endure and wait.  
Love is kind hearted and patient  
Love is not impulsive, impatient or irritable  
Because it finds joy in giving itself over to the beloved.

It is not resentful  
Too often people remember  
They remember wrongs done to them  
They look for opportunity for revenge  
They harbor resentment at the ill-treatment at the hands of others  
And yet this is not love  
Every person has been hurt, damaged, dismayed  
Even by ones they loved and who loved in return  
Yet true love lets the hurt go and does not cling to them  
Because love seeks only to love,  
And not hurt in return.

It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoiced in truth.

Love does not take pleasure in that which demeans and debases  
Love does not put down, embarrass or ridicule the beloved  
Love does not find joy in another's misfortune or mistakes  
Love does not delight in evil perpetrated by another upon another  
It rejects the evil in our world and embraces something more  
It celebrates the good, the honorable and kind  
Love rejoices in genuineness, honesty, integrity  
Love longs for good things in the lives of others  
Because it does not want bad but only good to occur.

Love bears all things

Love believes all things

Love hopes all things.

Love endures all things.

When the storms arise, love stands firm  
When tested, love lasts to the end  
When tried, love is willing to strengthen its resolve  
When rejected, love persists in demonstrating love  
When mistreated, love willingly seeks something better  
When the darkness surrounds, love brings light  
When all seems lost, love introduces hope to the heart  
When everything seems hard, love softens the heart  
And softens life  
Love endures it all, because its object becomes most important.

As a toddler, I could not comprehend

As a child, I could not understand

As a teen, I could not fathom

As a young man, I could not envision

The depth, the meaning, the significance of love.

And now looking back

The longing of my heart was for love,

True love, lasting love, genuine love, abiding love.

I have learned the meaning of love  
First from my God who has loved  
In a way that no lover ever could.  
He has been patient, waiting on me to come to him.  
He has been kind, showing me grace beyond all measure.  
He has been not been arrogant, boastful or shaming (loving me as I am),  
He has love me without the resentment or irritability  
His love has endured through all things.  
His love has penetrated all my wrongs,  
His love has triumphed over all my sins  
His love has lasted through all my days.

True love, godly love is not the feeling found in my heart  
It is the decision of the divine to embrace my life  
Envelop my soul, Encounter my experiences  
True love has been expressed to me by the God of the Ages  
The greatest Lover of my soul.

But I have also found a love which resides in flesh and blood.  
And though my lover is not perfect, she has demonstrated love  
The love authored by the divine and demonstrated by His Son  
She has been patient and waited for me to come to her with open heart.  
She has been kind, willing to show me daily grace beyond description.  
She has not been arrogant, or boastful or shaming - loving me just as I was, am and  
will be.  
She has loved me in spite of hurts inflicted  
Regardless of irritability of my heart and soul...  
She has demonstrated a willingness to endure all things  
Her love has been steadfast in all my wrongs  
Her love has triumphed over all our afflictions  
Her love has lasted from the very first until now.

So I am blessed to have spent a life  
Learning the lessons of love,  
True love, godly love, steadfast love, meaningful love.  
I have been an undisciplined student at times  
But my teachers have been patient and loving.  
My God and My Wife  
Teachers and Lovers  
Who have journeyed with me  
Through the course of my life  
And taught me the genuine lessons of love.

The Apostle tells us that there are three things that remain,  
“Faith, Hope and Love...and the greatest of these  
The highest of these...  
The deepest of these...  
The most lasting of these is  
Love.”