

Letters to Young People - 'Love'

by [Gary Young](#) on Friday, February 4, 2011 at 1:40am

The word 'love' gets thrown around a fair bit nowadays. It is used in all sorts of contexts, and can mean all sorts of things. Sometimes people will say "I love you" and refer to a really deep and important relationship, whereas others throw the term around to almost anyone and it seems clear that it doesn't mean a lot at all. Often people ask the question, "What is love?" – the term has come to mean so many different things that they doubt their ability to understand what love is at all. This can be particularly hard for young people – many of you are still coming to grips with your own feelings and emotions, and are not really sure about love or what it means. Well, does it have a meaning at all? Is there some sort of basic, underlying principle that we can point to as a vital component of 'love', regardless of the context and the situation?

Certainly, there are a wide variety of contexts where the word is used. In the New Testament there are two different words which are translated as 'love' which are commonly used, and which cover a fairly wide range of human feelings. There is romantic love, the love of family, the love of friends, and much else – all these are legitimate, and important, uses of the word 'love', and they are things which are important to all of us. One of the words used in the New Testament, however, refers to a very important principle of love – its sacrificial, giving aspect. When we look at love as it is described in the Bible, that one principle stands out – true love gives.

Of course, in any relationship we might have there are going to be lots of other, sometimes very complex, factors to take into consideration. But it remains true, however complex those other factors might be, that true love is all about giving, it is about being truly interested in the other person, truly desiring the best for them, putting what they need ahead of what we want. If someone says that they love you, and yet their interest in that relationship is all about what they want and need, and never about what your hopes and desires are, you might very well question whether they really know what love is. Remember, love gives: if all they are doing is taking, you deserve something much better than that.

Love in its simplest, most basic, and purest form is all about giving the one who is loved what they need; of wanting the best for them and doing what is needed so they might have that. Have you ever looked into the eyes of a friend, of someone that you truly loved, a family member, or whoever – just someone who means a lot to you – and thought you'd do anything for them? Have you said – or just thought – something like:

I love you. I'll do what you need, whatever it is. I'll be there for you, no matter what. However long or hard the road is, I'll never give up on you. I'll spend and be spent, and never count the cost.

I do this not to make you love me, nor to gain something you have, but only because I love you and want what is best for you.

If you never know what I did, if you never understand what I went through, that will not matter. If you can never repay me, if you can never return what I gave, then that is no account, because I love you.

I want nothing of you, I put no expectation upon you, there is no cost or burden to you, for what I give is freely given, and has no thought of recompense.

I do this for no reason more than this simple one: I love you.

That, at its very heart, is what love is. There are, as I said, many and varied layers on top of that – responsibilities, expectations, give and take, and much more – that will exist in any relationship. But for love to truly be love, then at its heart it must have that principle: true love gives. It gives without thought of return. It gives no matter the cost. That is what love is.

Jesus loved not just some people, but all of them. Every single person who walked this earth, in fact. You, in fact. We feel this way about a few people, and we can identify that feeling easily perhaps because of its rarity. Jesus felt that way about everyone, because that's who He died for. Everyone.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15: 13).

Might want to think about that.