



## Love

If you want to learn more about something someone has made, where would you go? Wouldn't you go to the person who made it? For example, if you wanted to learn more about a particular computer program, wouldn't your best source of information be the programmer who designed it? Who would know more about that program than its creator?

Judging by the volume of songs, poems and novels that are written by secular artists on the subject of love, we might suppose that they are the experts. But the apostle John tells us:

*"Love is of God" (1 John 4:7). In fact, John tells us that "God is love."*

(1 John 4:8)

Love has its source in God's being. Who, then, knows more about love than God? God is the expert. Whatever we want to learn about love, we must learn from God, and not any man despite how many letters he might have after his name. We don't need to pick up many books from the library to learn about love. We only need to pick up our Bible.

Nowhere can we find a more complete description of love than in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."*

(John 15:13)

According to our Lord, love is the willingness to make sacrifices for the wellbeing and happiness of others. Love is that devotion which prompts someone to give himself totally for the advantage and pleasure of another. Love is giving oneself. Love is laying down one's time, resources, even one's life for another.

Paul underlines' this definition of love in his *"Hymn of Love"* (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Paul says that love is long-suffering; which means that it is willing to suffer injury from another without retaliation. Love is kind in that it does not seek to repay injury with injury, but injury with kindness. Love does not envy; it does not resent the well-being and happiness that others enjoy, nor wish these only for itself. Love does not parade itself and is not puffed up. That is, love isn't interested in flaunting its own virtues in the face of others to show its own excellency. Love is not rude; it does not behave poorly towards others. Love is not self-seeking in that it does not have its own interest at heart, but is willing to give up what it might rightly claim as its own. Love is not provoked; that is, it is not a volcano that is ready to erupt and lash out at another with the least provocation. From all these descriptions, Paul shows us that love is not interested so much in the self as in the other. Love involves denial of the self for the well-being and happiness of the other.

Where can we find a better example of such love than in Christ Jesus? Out of His love for us, He let go of His rightful honour and glory, and He humbled Himself and became a man. He allowed Himself to be bound, that we might go free. He suffered countless insults, so that we might never be put to shame. He was innocently condemned to death, in order that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God. He even let His blessed body be nailed to the cross that He might cancel the bond which stood against us because of our sins. By all this He has taken our curse upon Himself, that He might fill us with His blessings. He was forsaken, so that we might be accepted by God.

How this love of Christ stands in contrast to the love that is displayed in society. So much of what is called love is nothing else than a selfish delight in receiving what others have to give. Many in the world love people as I "love" my car. I "love" my car as long as it serves my purpose and

satisfies my need. But that love disappears when it gives me too many problems and costs me too much money. I'm not about to make many sacrifices for my car. With this kind of love shown towards people, it is no wonder that more than one third of marriages in Australia end up in divorce.

Let those who contemplate marriage think of the divine paradigm of love, and compare your love with Christ's love. Are you prepared to sacrifice yourself for the wellbeing and happiness of your boyfriend or girlfriend? Does your boyfriend or girlfriend show that same willingness to deny himself for you? Ensure that your love is "true" love, and not the counterfeit that circulates the world. For only those marriages built on the foundation of true love will endure.

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