

True Love

Love is one of the most overused and abused words in the English language. We claim to love almost everything. We love pizza. We love our dog. We love this movie or that TV show. We also love our church or our spouse. We use the word love so much that we have forgotten what it actually means. Romans 12.9 says, “Let love be genuine” (NRSV). Genuine love, or true love, means that you care so deeply about another person that you are willing to put their needs before your own. It is more than a feeling; it is an action. To love means to get involved, to help, to be there when someone needs you.

True love reaches out to all. James 2.1 reads, “My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.” James goes on to rebuke believers who show special attention to people who are wealthy and despise those who are poor (see vv 1-10). The command James gives them is: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (vs 8). True love means that we don’t feel superior to other people and that we don’t judge them based on how much money they have or what color skin they have. True love looks beyond all these superficial distinctions and just sees people—people made in God’s image and people loved by Jesus Christ. True love has a heart that is open to everyone regardless of their race or background or socio-economic status.

True love expects nothing in return. Jesus gave us the following instructions, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14.12-14). True love is given with no strings attached. We don’t give to people in order to receive back from them. We give because God has given to us, because we care about people, and because God will bless us as we do (see Prov 11.24-25).

True love acts when no one is looking. Jesus told us not to announce our acts of charity but to do them in secret (see Matt 6.1-4). If when you do something nice or compassionate you cannot stand it until you tell someone, then you are doing it for the wrong reason. We don’t show love to people so that others will pat us on the back or speak well of us. We show love because we want to help people. Don’t worry when people don’t see the love you show others, for God takes note and he will bless you for what you do.

True love involves action. 1 John 3.17-18 reads, “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” It is one thing to say you love someone; it is another thing to show it. True love goes beyond mere words. True loves means you actually do something to help a person. The greatest example of love is Jesus Christ who willingly gave his life so that we could be saved. Jesus didn’t just say he loved us; he showed us his love on the cross. May we follow in the Master’s footsteps and show true love to those around us.