

Radical Love, the 2 Corinthians 5:14 Way

Say love and chances are, your immediate mental picture is soft, squishy and colored in pastels. If you're over 40, you may think of "Love means never having to say you're sorry," or the "summer of love" in 1967. If you're under 40, you may think of tolerance and kindness and warm feelings.

But those images have little or nothing to do with what love is all about. True love is anything but wimpy or particularly feminine. That impression is a caricature of what real love is all about.

What pictures come to mind when you think of love?

- A mother nurturing her newborn baby?
- A suitor on one knee proposing to his sweetheart?
- Jesus holding out welcoming arms to a sinner?

Yes, love underlies all those images. But if those are the only images of love we focus on, our lives, and our Christian witness, will be lopsided and ineffective.

Is it love to stand by as your child destroys themselves and the family through violence, theft and fear as a result of drug addiction? Is it love to keep giving your spouse the benefits of marriage while they are engaging in infidelity? Is it love to accept a hurting, sick, miserable sinner as they are without providing a way for healing and transformation?

Love is not saying "Anything goes," "I'm OK, you're OK" or "Do whatever you want." That's cowardice, not love. God's not like that. And you and I shouldn't be like that either.

As Bob Goff's popular book asserts and illustrates, **Love Does**. Love may start with accepting things the way they are, but it refuses to let them stay that way. Love does something about

it.

God's Love Is Strong

Our Western picture of "God is love" is much too wimpy. God is not weak. And His love is not some soft squishy bucket of warm feelings. God's love is fierce, jealous, resilient and dedicated to destroying evil and everything that would harm His children.

Both the Old and New Testaments picture God in this way. God cared enough about how the ancients were destroying the world and themselves that He put a stop to it and gave anyone who wanted an "out" in the ark through the flood. He refused to stand by as the Israelites were oppressed in bondage, and He delivered them from Egypt with overwhelming strength. One of the Old Testament's favorite names for God is "Yahweh Sabaoth"—literally "God of armies" (the armies of Israel, and/or the armies of heaven). God's love does!

In the New Testament, Jesus was so inviting the children loved to be close to Him. But He was also so controversial the religious leaders worked overtime to have Him killed. No one in Jesus' presence could have misunderstood the absolute requirement for holiness, and yet those who were the most "holy" by human standards hated Him. You could not have remained around Jesus for very long without being forced to make a decision: either walk away and do your own thing or change everything and follow Him.

God's love does not make Him a heavenly vending machine, or a sort-of-there grandparent whose goal is "a good time was had by all."

No, God's love was displayed best in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus presented a violent disruption to the kingdom of darkness and to the usual order of things in this world. God's love is about doing something, about transformation.

Other Images of Love

Without undoing the “soft” images of love, let’s consider some alternative pictures of what real love is:

- A husband putting himself in harm’s way to protect his wife from danger
- A parent risking a child’s hatred to rescue them from drugs
- A Christian repeatedly showing up in prison to assist those there to experience a radical life change
- A hero risking his own life fighting to win his beloved’s heart—and freedom

Jesus, by words and actions, called those around Him to radical change. “Follow Me.” “Sell all you have and give it to the poor.” “You can only see the kingdom of God if you’re born again.” “Go and leave your life of sin.” That’s Love doing something about it.

Forgiveness is priceless. But if we only see forgiveness as dealing with our past and have no hope of transformation in our future, we are doomed to misery. Love makes a way. God’s love provides for things to be different—whatever it takes to get there.

Love has an object, and it is not satisfied until that person(s) is all that he/she can be. *You* are the object of God’s love. Who’s the object of *your* love?

True Love Must Be Strong

Paul said, “the love of Christ compels us” (2 Cor. 5:14, NKJV).

God’s love compelled Him to give Himself, to go into the pit of the kingdom of darkness and wrest the keys of death from Satan so you and I could be free. It compels Him to keep fighting for your wholeness every day. It provides a future for you, both here and in eternity, that you’d have to be

senseless or blind to refuse.

What does the love of Christ compel *you* to do?

Remember, love has an object. Whom is it you love? What are you compelled to do for the benefit of the one you love? What does your love *do*?

Perhaps your love compels you to:

- Care for your sick child through great suffering yourself
- Initiate that difficult conversation with your spouse knowing it's the only way to better intimacy
- Fight for people (trafficking victims, abused children, those impacted by disaster or extreme poverty, etc.) who are unable to effectively fight for themselves
- Stand up to the enemy in spiritual warfare for your family

Let Christ's love compel you. And let that love *do* something.

Your Turn: *What does Christ's love compel you to do? Who do you love enough to do something for? Leave a comment below.*
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