

Why We Go ‘Lookin’ for Love in All the Wrong Places’—and How to Stop

Sure, others wound us. But many of our wounds are self-inflicted. God created us for intimacy, but we too often end up looking for love in all the wrong places. And what can we possibly hope to do about it now?

It’s not your fault, really. At least it didn’t start as your fault. You never fully got the kind of love you needed growing up as an impressionable child. You didn’t see “learning to love well” modeled in a healthy way. Your early attempts at feeling important, making it, connecting with someone else, getting your needs met, giving something of yourself—most or all of them ended up leading to some kind of rejection, some lack, some wounds that wouldn’t go away. You learned early on that if you were ever to get what you needed, you’d have to claw and scrape and grasp and hold on for dear life.

Some of us seem more wounded than others. If you grew up with parents who loved each other well, stayed together and loved you well, you got a foundation more solid than many others received. But even you have felt the sting of bullying, tragedy, disappointment, failure or just plain old sin.

And so you go looking.

Where We Look for Love

It’s no wonder many look for love in places such as accumulating wealth, prestigious career, controlling other people or illicit or dangerous pleasures. Any little thing that brings relief to your love-starved soul is quickly turned into an addiction: alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, violence, shopping, getting attention, money, relationships and on and

on.

Most people eventually learn that love does not come through things; it only comes through relationships. So you go grasping at relationships. But it's really no different. "Love, sex and rock-and-roll" doesn't fill your emptiness any more than money or drugs. When one person can't fill you up, you go careening to the next relationship, always desperate. *If I can just find the right person, I'll be OK.*

And so you get hooked on people in various ways. Pornography and sex addiction (substitutes for real relationships with people) titillate and promise relief and exhilaration while eating away ever-larger portions of your soul. Serial monogamy, affairs, domestic violence, hooking up, singles having multiple "intimate" relationships—it's all an attempt to get the love-needs met. And the promise of intimacy is never met, always just out of reach.

Sometimes you give up. Sometimes through guilt, societal controls, "God-talk" or exhaustion, you settle into a miserable marriage détente or single loneliness, resigned to be forever lacking, forever hungry, forever unloved. If this is as good as it gets, why waste energy searching for what is never there? If only you can keep the screaming in your soul silenced long enough, perhaps this life will be over.

And then some Christian comes along and tells you, "God loves you." You get told the God is the source of all the love you need. Really? How is prayer to someone you can't see or hear or feel supposed to replace the warmth of a real-life body-to-body nice long hug? How can reading words on a page fill the need to be No. 1 to someone? *Spirituality might be nice when contemplating life after death, but I need someone to love me right now.* Even religion can be "looking for love in all the wrong places."

A momentary pause: There are multiple reasons for pain in this

world (including outright evil), some of them having nothing to do with your own attempts at love. God *is* the Source of all love. I'm making the point that our need for love is deep, and our human attempts at getting love often lead to much more pain.

What to Do Instead

Is there any hope? If you're reading this, you most likely intellectually believe God is where you should go to get your love needs met. But when you're "skin hungry," feeling lonely, fighting the sexual urges and/or feel trapped in unfulfilling relationships, it's hard to get God's love from your "knowing" to your "feeling."

Here are a few things to think about.

1. Realize you are going to dry wells for water.

God pleads with us, "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy? (Isa 55:2a). It's not that your desires are wrong; it's that you're going to places to get filled up that have nothing to offer. All your addictions and miserable relationships are based on trying to get love from someplace that was never intended to give you the love you need.

If you can't get blood from a turnip, quit trying. Give up—on getting your needs met by grasping for something that's not there. Just stop. Decide to do something different.

2. Consciously turn your longing toward God.

David was especially good at expressing how he pointed his desires toward God: "O God, you are my God, early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh faints for You, in a dry and thirsty land with no water" (Ps. 63:1). Learn to do the same.

Healthy human relationships take effort and learning, and they

are terribly important. But if you don't learn to point your longing first toward God, human beings will always disappoint you. Pray or write or sing or cry or draw or in some way direct your longing toward God. Consciously take your heart-emptiness to Him.

▪ **3. Invite God into your feelings.**

Some dimensions of Christianity keep everything mostly in your head. There are truths to learn and behaviors to get good at. But when it comes to the neediness in our souls those can feel completely empty.

Jesus didn't come to give us a new religion; He came to give us life! Listen to His heart-cry: "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). Doesn't sound very intellectual, does it?

If your experience with God has been mostly cerebral, it's time to add another dimension to your Christian experience. Invite God into the "soft" places, the emotional places, the wounded places of your being. This does not negate the importance of Biblical truths, but connecting the needy places of your heart to God's heart is absolutely necessary for you to experience healing and satisfaction.

And when you do that, you'll find out you're looking for love in the right place. Your capacity for experiencing love will grow, and you'll have love to give to others.

Your Turn: *Have you been looking for love in any of the wrong places? How's that working for you? Leave your comment below.*

Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley is both a board-certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained doctor of ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the Fully Alive kind of life that Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website

at .

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