

This devotional reading is an outreach birthed from the reflections of my heart.

As He leads me.....turning dreams into reality, it is my “soul” purpose to provoke life change and promote healthy living (holy living); to be a visible display of God’s transforming power that is available to us all.

It is my desire to share the love of Jesus by encouraging, comforting, and inspiring those who, with determined purpose, want all that life has to offer them.

For more information concerning sharing in song, testimony, or an enlightening word of encouragement, please contact Val Bolinger.

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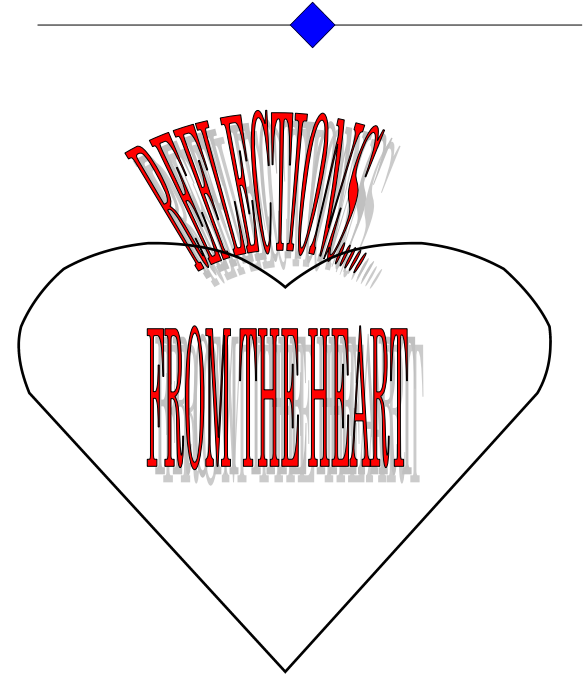
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Note: scripture references taken from Amplified Bible

*References taken from Beth Morre’s ‘Fruit of the Spirit’ Bible Study.

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LOVE IS.....

A God-inspired word for your day

I Corinthians 13:4 “Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. 5) It is not conceited (arrogant and inflated with pride); it is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly. Love (God’s love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it (it pays no attention to a suffered wrong). 6) It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. 7) Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything (without weakening). 8) Love never fails (never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end)...”

That familiar portion of scripture was a tender, juicy, choice hunk of meat! I must admit I’m having a little trouble swallowing all of it....*gulp!*?! Now do me a favor. Re-read these passages and replace the word ‘love’ with ‘Jesus’ and the word ‘it’ with ‘he.’

When I re-read it with ‘Jesus’ inserted, it is very comforting to me. After all, Jesus IS LOVE.

However, when I read it alone and apply it to myself I tend to squirm a little. Do you notice when we’re on the receiving end-the blessing side-of scripture it gives off the ‘warm fuzzies?’ However, when we’re on the giving end, it changes a little bit.

Nonetheless, the power to live according to 1 Cor. 13:4-8 is in us because Jesus is in us.

February, the month of ‘love’ is long gone. On Valentine’s Day many show expressions of their love by *giving* flowers, candy, gifts, or cards filled with heartfelt appreciation to the special ones in their lives. Our *feelings* of love motivate us to express

our love. *We use the word *love* for feelings or responses. However, there are different definitions or varying degrees of love according to Greek terminology. *A common word for love, used by the Greeks is *eros*. Eros is a selfish love; it asks “what can I get for myself?” The word actually means “longing and desire.” I would equate it to a fleshly, surface level; base feeling. The second type of love is *philos*. *Philos, in it’s general term, can be defined as “the love one has toward a friend or companion.” In fact the word can simply mean ‘friend.’ When someone has philos love for another, they typically place that person in a high personal position; or hold them in high esteem. Additionally, philos love comes from a shared experience or having mutual feelings/ common interests. The third type of love is *agape*. Agape is referenced in Galatians 5:22. “But the fruit of the (Holy) Spirit (the work which His presence within accomplishes) is LOVE....” This kind of love is much different than *eros* and *philos*. *Eros* and *philos* can be achieved as part of a natural emotional state (i.e. it can be attained in the flesh). *Agape is divine love that stands in a class all its own. Agape is not a feeling (*eros*) or relationship based on common interest (*philos*). Agape always flows from what is right and best. Agape is not as much a feeling as it is a response. Emotion may accompany agape, but emotion and agape are not the same. (Actually, doing what is right - compelled by agape-can bring negative emotion within yourself.) The perfect example of this thought is found in John 3:16. “For God so loved (agape) the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (KJV) God sent Jesus out of His agape for us. Jesus endured the cross because of His agape for us. However, in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus said “My, Father, if it is possible,

let this cup pass away from me, nevertheless, not what I will, but as You will.” Matt 26:39 My understanding of that scripture would say Jesus -in the flesh-wanted not to go. Yet, his agape caused Him to go. *Agape love is not fueled by the desire of its recipient; it is fueled by the need. Ephesians 2:4 “But God—so rich is He in His mercy! Because of and in order to satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love (agape) with which He loved us, 5) Even when we were dead by (our own) shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive” In simple terms....God came to us through Jesus not because we wanted to be saved, but because he knew we need to be saved. He loved us that much!!! We are all a product of our environment. It’s hard for someone to give what was never received. As such we may have a distorted image of love; a wrong reflection. So, if we don’t truly understand the proper workings of love, how can we give it away purely?

*Get to know your Maker. God is the Perfect Father and Teacher! He’s not only motive by intense love; HE IS LOVE. He will teach us the truth about true love.

* Read the Word; His love letter to you. Meditate on His promises. Every page is filled with love. He is the Perfect Father who displays Perfect Love.

*Spend time with Him through prayer, listening to encouraging Christian music, read some good Christian books on love, or borrow a friends teaching tapes (Heb 11:6... “He is a rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him.”

*Cultivate an atmosphere where He’s welcome to come and sit a while. Pray for a teachable spirit.

*Then allow Him to teach you day by day; moment by moment; in His perfect ways.

* Remember, Love is a Fruit of the Spirit. And, fruit is grown. It doesn’t just appear. Growth takes time. Don’t become discouraged that ‘love’ doesn’t always come naturally. **True love (agape) is supernatural and is**

only provided by the Spirit.

True love is that choice you make to love someone after they've hurt you. True love gives you the strength to press on when you feel you can't press on any further. True love is a choice to help your child pick up all the shattered pieces of their life when they made decisions you counseled them against. True love shows love to people who treat you unlovingly. True love is gentle when strong words are being hurled at you. True love is embracing a person who has criticized and misjudged you. True love is the ability to continue to reach out to that person you know doesn't even want your help. True love is taking a meal to someone who is too ill to cook for themselves.

True love; agape love is an action word. Many times it is not fueled by emotion but by the ultimate good to the recipient. True love is a choice to do the right thing in spite of the surrounding circumstances.

I've heard it said, 'love makes the world go round.' That's pretty accurate.

Think of your current situation. Is God challenging you to pour TRUE love into a situation you would rather have pass from you?

God's perfect word teaches that true love is an action word. It's meant to be given away. Love is something you do, not something you feel. No matter how you slice it.....

LOVE IS A CHOICE.

Selah...