

Looking For That Perfect Love

by Dave Grant

We all long to be loved, but too often for the wrong reasons. Here's a look at why.

Perfect love. It's what we all long for. But as much as we talk about it, I am beginning to suspect that most of us really don't want to be loved unconditionally. We are caught in a double-bind. There is no doubt that we want to be loved, but we want to be loved for the wrong reasons. Let me tell you why.

We are all familiar with the idea of love that is spoken of as conditional or unconditional; and there seems to be at least three basic conditions.

I Love You IF . . .

The first is: I love you **IF**. I will love you if you meet my conditions. Or, I will **accept** you if you meet my conditions. If you will be nice to me, I will be nice to you. If you will respect me, I will respect you. Have you ever heard anyone declare, "After what she did to me, see if I ever do anything nice for her again." My treatment of you becomes conditioned by your treatment of me.

I Love You BECAUSE . . .

The second condition is: I love you **BECAUSE**. I love you because you are handsome or beautiful. I love you because you are smart. I love you because you have power or position or status. I love you because you have a great body. I love you because you give me nice things. This "love" is, of course, always in competition with someone more beautiful, or more smart, or more popular, or a younger body, or a better performer. The competition and comparison make this a very insecure relationship. Do you remember the Geritol ad where this guy says, "My wife takes Geritol and that's why I love her." Can you imagine what she has to do to keep that relationship going?

I Will Love You AS SOON AS . . .

The third condition is: I will love you **AS SOON AS**. As soon as you meet my conditions I will love you. As soon as you measure up to my standard I will accept you. We use this a lot with children. As soon as you make the team, or as soon as you make good grades, etc. (and I don't

want to hear from you until you do, is usually the underlying message.)

I LOVE YOU.

The fourth consideration which is not a condition, simply says, **I LOVE YOU**. Period. Or it could be extended to say, "I love you in spite of . . ." or, "I love you anyhow . . ." or, "I love you for no good reason."

Now how do you think your ego could handle that?! Do you really want to be loved for no good reason? Isn't that what unconditional love is? More often than not, the statement, "I love you," is responded to with the question, "Why?" And when you ask for a "why" are you not asking for some condition? It sounds like, "Please love me unconditionally, but tell me why." That's the double-bind.

The truth of the matter is that most people want to be loved for the wrong reasons. They really want to be loved because they are handsome or pretty. Or, they want to be loved because they are smart. Or, they want to be loved because of some achievement. I am not sure our pride will allow us to be loved unconditionally.

For at least fifteen years of marriage I believed I was loved because. When I came to the realization that I was loved in spite of, it was a real blow to my ego, but it was very freeing.

What I also discovered was that the first three conditions we talked about — **IF, BECAUSE & AS SOON AS**, have nothing at all to do with love, but were a form of barter — an exchange. The fourth one, **I LOVE YOU**, is a gift, not an exchange. Love is either unconditional or it isn't love.

It's no wonder we are confused and frightened about love. Most of our insecurity comes from what has happened to us in life in the name of love. The insecurity comes from being "loved" when you are "good" and not being "loved" when you are "bad." And so we try hard to be good and beautiful and smart so we will be loved. Then we experience

the insecurity because the feeling is that you will never be beautiful enough or smart enough, or good enough to really be loved.

The miracle of God's love and grace can be experienced because he hasn't bartered with us. He doesn't love us if we are good, or kind or decent. He doesn't love us because we are good, or moral, or religious or give to charities. He doesn't even love us as soon as we are good enough. He simply says, "I love you." He loves us because he is love. The only condition is letting him love us unconditionally. We must admit our need for this kind of love. And that's the hard part. The ego really wants to earn it, deserve it, or somehow qualify.

Some time ago, I said to my wife, "I really want to love you unconditionally, but quite frankly, I am finding it to be very difficult."

Now, what makes it difficult? Why, the things she does that bug me, of course. And I've talked to her about what she does and have promised her that as soon as she gets her act together I will love her unconditionally. And I'm a man of my word. (And if you miss my sarcasm I'm in trouble!) Loving can be very difficult, but it has nothing to do with her behavior. It has everything to do with the kind of person I am. Either I am a loving person or I am not.

Do not look for love in this world; but never fail to give it. Do not look for justice in this world; but do not fail to give it.

The wrong reasons for being loved are because I am handsome, smart, efficient or good. The right reason for being loved is that I have humbly received God's unconditional love. He has declared me loveable. He has declared me worthy. Only when I have received and experienced unconditional love am I able to give it.

Let yourself be loved for the right reason. ❗