

CHAPTER 10

What True Love is Not

1) True Love is not a Feeling

Someone has said that true love is similar to a UFO (Unidentified Flying Object). Everyone is talking about it, but very few have really seen it!

In general, the world considers love to be a **feeling**--a strong emotion which overcomes a person, and he "falls in love." Of course, feelings are very changeable and a person can very quickly "fall out of love." This kind of love (based upon feelings) is the kind of love that is usually seen on television, in movies, in books and magazines, etc. We might call this "**the Hollywood philosophy of love**":

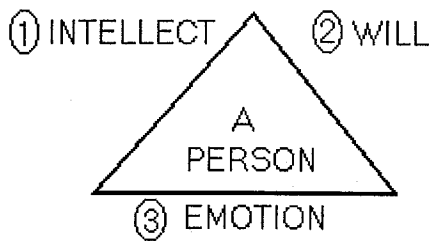
Hollywood, ever since its beginning has taught a pagan philosophy of love. The philosophy is that **love happens**. Love is not something to work at; it just happens. Love comes full blown from the head of Aphrodite (the Greek goddess of love). It's the kind of thing that just is or isn't. It isn't something that you develop, it isn't something that grows, it isn't something that you work hard to achieve, it isn't a thinking thing, and it certainly isn't something that you can will (or decide about). It is something that happens. And when it happens, it happens in such a way that you know that it has happened! It bowls you over; you hear music, see wonderful lights, or have a near psychedelic experience. Such love at first seems wonderful, but what happens when the happening no longer happens? What happens when the happening is over? What happens when the sounds grow empty and the colors turn to gray? What happens when the feeling dies, the embers grow cold, and the lights go out? What happens to a Hollywood-type marriage based on feeling when the parties begin to experience the fluctuating character of feeling? What happens when one or the other begins to have growing feelings for someone else? (*The Christian Counselor's Manual*, by Jay E. Adams, p. 150).

Even the English dictionary defines love as a feeling:

"A **feeling** of warm personal attachment or deep affection" (*The Lexical Webster Dictionary*).

A love based upon feeling is subject to change. Sometimes it is more proper to call this kind of love "lust." This kind of love (or lust) is illustrated in 2 Samuel 13:1-15. According to verse 1, how did Amnon feel towards Tamar? _____ According to verse 15, how did Amnon feel towards Tamar? _____ How could he love her one moment and hate her a few minutes later? Is this true love?

Man, as to his personality, is tripartite (divided into or composed of three parts). The following diagram shows the three parts that go to make up a person:



1. **INTELLECT**—a person has a mind with which he can think and reason.
2. **WILL**—a person has a will with which he can choose and decide.
3. **EMOTION**—a person has certain feelings which can cause him to be sad, mad, glad, etc.

The Hollywood philosophy (view, concept) of love says that true love springs forth from the emotional part of man, and is based primarily upon **feelings**. We now want to see what the Bible teaches about true **love** (Greek word: **agape**). The following three passages demonstrate that **love** (as defined in the Bible) is not a feeling:

1) MATTHEW 5:44.

In this verse, the Lord Jesus gave a command which says, "Love Y _____ E _____." Is this something that a person normally feels like doing? _____ If we followed our feelings we might punch our enemy in the nose, etc., but we certainly would not feel like loving him! It's easy to have the kind of love described in verse 46, because this is what we feel like doing! If love were a feeling, then it would be impossible to obey Matthew 5:44, because we would never feel like loving our enemy!

2) ROMANS 15:1-3.

Romans 14:15 talks about walking charitably or walking according to love. In these verses Paul is talking about how we should love our brother and not be a stumbling block to him. What does a person normally **feel** like doing (see Romans 15:1)? _____ The person who loves his brother will do what (Romans 15:2)? _____

_____ Feeling tells us: "Please self!" True love says, "Put the needs of others ahead of self!"

3) ROMANS 5:8.

Did God see anything good in you that made Him **feel** like loving you? Did God love His enemies (see Rom. 5:10)? _____ God manifested His love towards people who were quite **unlovable** and quite **ungodly** (Rom. 5:6). If God had acted according to **feelings** stemming from His holiness, He would have judged us. We are hell-deserving sinners. Why did God love us? He loved us not because He **felt** like loving us, but because He **chose** to love us according to His mercy and grace. Compare Deuteronomy 7:6-7 (the LORD **chose** to love Israel). Consider again the diagram above. Where should true love spring from? From our intellect, our emotion or our will? _____

2) True Love is Not Getting

Above we considered "the Hollywood philosophy of love" and we learned that true love is not a feeling. Now we will analyze another pagan and unbiblical concept of love. We might call this "the Playboy philosophy of love":

"In the Playboy philosophy, love is **getting**; it means getting what one can out of another person, using the other person as an object for love. It means grasping and holding and satisfying oneself by using another. And when he is through with that person, well fine, she's been used . . . up. That's it. When there is no more nectar in the flower, the bee must flit to the next, and the next, and then to the one after that. Hollywood has taught this too, not only by film but also by the way in which so many of the stars themselves have been notorious flower flitters" (*The Christian Counselor's Manual*, by Jay E. Adams, p. 150).

Playboy emphasizes sex, of course; but the basic philosophy extends into all human relationships. The life of **self** (living for self, pleasing self, fulfilling the desires of self, putting self before others) is based upon the sinful proposition that it is more blessed to receive than to give. What did our Lord Jesus Christ say (Acts 20:35)? "It is

_____ Is true love concerned with **getting** or is it concerned with **giving**? Complete the following verses:

1. John 3:16 – For God so *loved* the world that He _____ His only begotten Son.
2. Galatians 2:20 – . . . I live by the faith of the Son of God, who *loved* me, and _____ Himself for me.
3. Ephesians 5:2 – And walk in *love*, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath _____ Himself for us.
4. Ephesians 5:25 – Husbands, *love* your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and _____ Himself for it.
5. Romans 12:20 – Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, _____ him drink. (compare Matthew 5:44).

Therefore, love is primarily concerned with G _____ !

Proverbs 25:21 is a good illustration of love in action. Is the idea of "**giving**" found in this verse? True love does not follow **feelings** (if we did to our enemy what we sometimes **feel** like doing, we might **give** him a punch in the nose!). No matter how we **feel** towards our enemy, we can certainly choose to **give** him a hamburger and we can choose to **GIVE** him a glass of milk!

CAUTION: Suppose a drunkard or a drug addict approaches you and asks you for \$25.00. If you really love this person, would you give it to him? Do you think he would put your "love-gift" to wise use? Are you really helping him or are you perhaps contributing to his problem? We need to be careful and wise in the way we help people.

True love, according to the Bible, involves four things:

1. **DECIDING** – I must decide that I am going to love the other person (regardless of how I **feel** about him/her), simply because that person has a genuine need and I am able to meet that need. Thus true love begins as an act of the **will**.
2. **GIVING** – I must give of myself for the sake of the other person. I am concerned not about what I can get from this person but what I can give to this person.
3. **SACRIFICING** – Giving always involves a sacrifice and a cost. My love for another person may cost me money; it may cost me time; it may cost me strength. But I am willing

to spend and be spent for the benefit and welfare of the person loved. The cost is certainly worth it (Acts 20:35).

4. **SEEKING** – I must seek the highest and the best for the person loved. I want nothing less than God's best for this person!

How does **Calvary Love** (God's love towards sinners) illustrate the above four points? How does 1 John 3:17–18 illustrate the above four points? How does the following account from the past illustrate these four points?

The awful disease of leprosy still exists in Africa. It is so infectious that no one dares to come near the leper. In South Africa there is a large leper house for lepers. It is an immense space, enclosed by a very high wall, and containing fields, which the lepers cultivate. There is only one entrance, which is strictly guarded. Whenever anyone is found with the marks of leprosy upon him, he is brought to this gate and obliged to enter in, never to return. No one who enters in by that awful gate is ever allowed to come out again. Within this abode of misery there are multitudes of lepers. From the top of a neighboring hill two lepers could be seen sowing peas in the field. The one had **no hands**, the other had **no feet**. The one who lacked the hands was carrying the other who lacked the feet upon his back, and he again carried in his hands the bag of seed, and dropped a pea every now and then which the other pressed into the ground with his foot; and so they managed the work of one man between the two. Such is this prison house of disease!

Who cares for the souls of these hapless inmates? Who will venture to enter in at this dreadful gate, never to return again? Two Moravian missionaries, impelled by a divine love for souls, have chosen the leper house as their field of labor. As soon as they die, other Moravians are quite ready to fill their place.

This incident was related by Robert McCheyne in a letter he wrote on March 6, 1839. What a beautiful illustration of divine love (2 Corinthians 5:14)!

For another studying on the subject of "Calvary Love," see our paper entitled, "**The New Commandment.**"