

What
LOVE
Does



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by

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Love is the God of Peace
– FROM *Anacréon* BY RAMEAU

1. INTRODUCTION

Love is the predominant force in our lives from the time we are born.

We enter this world feeling at one with all that surrounds us – an experience of connection and love. But that feeling fades as we begin to think of ourselves as separate from others and the world.

Deep within we maintain a memory of that feeling and continually seek to reawaken it. We usually pursue it indirectly, hoping for others or the world to bring it to us. The direct way is allowing it to ourselves regardless of the circumstances of our lives.

That feeling seeks to emerge within each of us in this moment – and every moment – as does the sun during an eclipse. We give it many names: joy, happiness, recognition, connection, peace of mind, freedom, nurturance, forgiveness, compassion, kindness, appreciation, and others.

What blocks that feeling is our thoughts about the past, our judgment of the present and our worries about the future. Love may focus on a person, place, or object, but it actually is a feeling independent of them we can allow ourselves. And as we do this it opens our eyes, our minds, and our hearts.

Our priority is meeting our basic needs. Beyond that whatever we do – and wherever we go – it is our quest for love that guides us. Love assures us we are on a viable path in our pursuit of understanding, friendships, relationships, work or career, and even our recreational activities. When lacking that feeling we are less confident in ourselves and the direction of our lives.

When felt, love affects all levels of our being. It is mental, physical, and emotional at the same time. We allow it to ourselves when we feel it from another or when the universe seems to confirm our value by our getting what we want. But soon that feeling fades and we are left seeking it once again. We usually think of love as a goal for the future rather than allowing ourselves to experience it in the present.

Throughout childhood most of us receive love that contributes to our growth and development; at first unconditionally from our mothers,

then conditionally from our fathers. We return to our mothers to reassure us of our value. Our fathers shape our actions by expecting more for their approval as we mature. But these roles are not static; mothers and fathers can provide unconditional or conditional love. Single parents must balance both roles, and others can be parent surrogates. All parents, being humans who struggle to lead their own lives, at times are imperfect and inconsistent in their roles and duties to their children.

Love is our most essential nature that we sacrifice on the altar of everyday living. But that feeling can be resurrected at any moment we decide to bring it back into our lives. As we do this, we gain more confidence to move through our daily struggles.

We spend our lives looking for love – at times in the right places and at times in the wrong ones. In our quest we often fail to differentiate between the best and worst sources – especially as children. We absorb views and attitudes toward others and the world from those close to us or other models. We learn whether the world is a safe place and if people are to be trusted.

For those who fail to get emotional support, it is lack of love that may shape their views

and actions. But no one experiences perfect nurturance and guidance. We all emerge with doubts and fears about our abilities and value, and continue to seek confirmation of our worth throughout our lives.

Love recognizes the uniqueness of every individual. It affirms the value of all human beings, including those of every race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, social standing, those with disabilities and various maladies, even those who have harmed people and need to be kept from others.

There is a myth in our society — and every society — that what we do, or what happens to us, or what others do to us determines our value as a person. But our essential nature never changes: we always have been and always will be worthy of love. When we look beyond the façade people present to the world we see that with greater clarity.

As we extend love to others, we experience it for ourselves. As we deny it to others, we also deny it to ourselves. As we bring it into our activities it transforms them and us.

We continually look outside ourselves for permission to experience love, but only we can allow it to ourselves, and only in this moment. Despite what we have been taught or come to

believe, there is nothing we need do to become worthy of love. No self-improvement can bring it to us, only a willingness to experience it.

The idea that there is something we can or must do to get what we most want is what keeps love from us. If in this moment we simply choose to acknowledge the feeling we seek, it will reemerge. And we can allow ourselves that experience in the next moment, and then the next.

We never can force love to emerge, we only can move out of its way and allow it to come forth. As we experience it there is no hurry; each moment is cherished and enjoyed. Even when experiencing unhappiness we can begin to allow ourselves love, which slowly transforms our mood and view of the world.

In each moment — including this one — we choose love or blame. With blame we hurt ourselves and may or may not affect anyone else; with love we have what we most want regardless of its effect on others. You may tell yourself you can't experience the feeling you seek right now because circumstances aren't right — your past controls you or the world is too full of hate or you don't deserve it or someone is keeping it from you. Circumstances always will provide a reason to deny ourselves love if that is where we choose to focus.

When we perpetually put off the feeling we want for the future, that future never comes. But it actually is our mindset that holds us back. We all have the potential for love within us and can allow it to ourselves in this moment if we choose.

Our descriptions of love are composed of words, but they only point to it. When we look inside we find that love is our most essential self that dwells within us in a place beyond words.

Everything we do in our interactions with others — and even with objects — we can do lovingly. We can connect to the inside of a person rather than just observing from the outside. We can interact from a stance of understanding rather than judgment, including our interactions with ourselves. This brings us the experience of understanding we seek.

We have learned to process our perceptions of others — and ourselves — through our thoughts and to leave out the feeling of connection we once had. The experience of love makes us fully human once again. It restores the most essential part we left behind. It calms the body, mind and soul. It brings our awareness more fully into the present.

Our education usually fails to teach us the essential skills of recognizing the value of others and working together to resolve issues, so

very few of us possess those capabilities.

The vast majority of information we receive from our media and entertainment focuses on what is wrong or missing in our world. It informs us that there always is much strife and little hope. It teaches us that problems must be dealt with by confrontation or violence, and provides no model for how to resolve issues without them. It fails to impart a vision of how to move toward a better world.

The pages that follow provide a guide for how love can be brought back into our lives and interactions. If we choose, we can use that knowledge to move closer to the world we envision. But that depends on us taking responsibility for going beyond being victims of our circumstances. It begins by reigniting what we most want in our lives and then infusing that into every realm of our experience.