

In personal love, we recognize our loved ones as *uniquely* valuable and beautiful. We want to love and care for that person *in particular*, and we commit to doing so. As children of God we all *want* and need to be loved that way: *personally*, for who we are.

Personal love says, "I will hold you close in my heart. I will understand you, serve you, care for you. I will use my mind, my body, my heart to help you. I'll cover you with love, and you'll feel it."

When you love personally, you feel it all—you're vulnerable. You share your heart, and listen to theirs. You care about what is real to them, deep inside. You feel every ripple in their emotions and self-sense. Gone are the old masks, the walls, the distance. Close, personal love is our native habitat. We need it.

Only someone who loves you personally can heal you from loneliness and heartbreak. Granted, when a minister says, "I love each one of you in this congregation," you may be loved—but *how* loved? Compare that to the joy of knowing

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There are so many wonders and beauties to enjoy in personal love. With *so much* treasure/pleasure on the table, so much to desire and acquire, selfish tendencies arise: We want to possess our beloved, and get all the attention, reassurance, and validation he or she can give us. Yes indeed, people often get greedy in personal love!

But when you focus on what you can *get* from someone, you're on a slippery slope: Selfishness turns loving *passion* into insensitive *lust*; "love-making" into self-indulgence. Lasting *loyalty* becomes possessive *restriction*; mutual commitment becomes marathon mediocrity. Free *giving* becomes manipulative bargaining, and sweet love-desire becomes greediness, obsession,

TRUE PERSONAL LOVE

someone loves *you* and wants *you*, and brightens up each time they see you.

In personal love we don't hide behind a function or role. We want to be naked with our beloved, person to person, touching. We want to truly *know* them, and *be* truly known. We want to *stay* together; we *count* on each other to stay.

How personal love becomes universal. Personal love is a deep dive into the soul's depths. Only when you love and commit to someone deeply will they trust you enough to reveal to you hidden treasures from the depth of their being: fragility, tenderness, sincerity, sensitivity, vulnerability, feeling—wonders never shown to those who love them less. And then you realize, "These depths I see in *you* are the same in *me* and in *everyone*." Finally you see: these same awe-inspiring things can be found in the deep ocean of *any* person's soul. *That's* how personal love naturally becomes agape love. It makes you a devotee—first of your beloved, and then of all humanity.

FALSE PERSONAL LOVE

jealousy, abuse. And when we don't get what we want, we react with disappointment and anger. Heaven help us! To "love" someone for what they can give you is *not* personal love—it's not love at all. Real love is for the beloved. It *remembers* the beloved, cares about *their* needs, and wants *them* to be fulfilled. As a true lover, you give to *your* beloved the sweet love, attention, and understanding your heart wants *from* them. Of course we have our own needs, but we never put them first. We focus on our beloved's well-being. Here's the fork in the road: We can go with selfish tendencies that always only end in heartbreak, or we can love for real—generously, unselfishly, consistently—and thereby support and protect the bright and *wonderful* possibilities of personal love.