

Does sex equal love?

"Love alone is the core of human desire"- Rev. Sun Myung Moon

There is a yearning, a hunger, that all human beings have felt but few have satisfied. In every relationship, in every action and transaction, all day, every day, people are seeking true love. The need is universal. Philosopher Erich Fromm noted that love "is the most powerful striving in man. It is the most fundamental passion. The failure to achieve it means insanity or destruction—self-destruction or the destruction of others. Without love, humanity could not exist for a day."¹

Yet, as much as we yearn for love, it eludes us. There is not enough love and where it exists, it is rarely true love. We can identify this absence of true love as the root problem which colors human life with its dark and ambiguous hues.¹

Yearning for intimacy propels [people] into sexual relationships in hopes of finding true love.² In popular culture, sex is the universal gateway to joy, love, wisdom, transcendent experience, personal growth and discovery.¹ The sexual revolution promised men and women more love, happiness and freedom [and] emphasized sex and the body rather than love and the heart.² Men and women relate in a "low-commitment culture of 'sex without strings, relationship without rings.'" Fun is considered justification enough for sexual relations; lovers discarded when someone new comes along, and marriage and parenthood are unnecessary constraints on personal freedom.¹

Now, "with all the fuss about sexual freedom, it's a little hard to stand up and admit it's not what everyone imagines." Author Peter Marin concludes, "We have been liberated from the taboos of the past only to find ourselves imprisoned in a 'freedom' that brings us no closer to our real nature or needs."² It is as if within [ourselves] there is an inner emptiness crying out to be filled but which can never be completely filled.³ Psychologist Rollo May differentiated between the impulse for love and the drive for sex, saying, "For human beings, the more powerful need is not sex *per se* but for relationships, intimacy, acceptance and affirmation."²

Since love and sex are so interconnected, people often mistake a sexual attraction for "the real thing." Philosopher Elisabeth Haich captures the confusion of sex and love in insecure relationships well: "Sexuality mimics love. It compels tenderness and embraces; it forces the lovers to hug one another, to allay one another's pain through the revelations of sexuality, as when true love is exchanged. What follows such experiences? Disappointments, a bitter after-taste, mutual accusations or bleak loneliness, feelings of exploitation and defilement. Neither gave true love but only expected to receive it, therefore neither received it."²

The sexual act awakens that which is most vulnerable in the human heart without being able to fulfill the deep need to love and to be loved with a complete love. Often the motivation for entering this kind of relationship is "what can this person give me" rather

than "what can I give to make this relationship lasting and beautiful." It is not the expression of complete trust and security between two people linked in a profound and permanent way.³ Often these relationships [damage] their ability to love and be loved in a deep and authentic way.² Without a permanent commitment, sexual relations remain fragile. They are subject to the moods, fears and passions of one or the other and under constant doubt: "You love me because I please you today, but what about tomorrow? Do you truly love me for who I am?"³

We need to be aware that what people seek through sex is something other than sex— something deeper, more permanent. Sex and love are not the same. Sex alone cannot substitute for love. Love has to come first, accompanied by trust, responsibility and commitment, arising from a continuous, committed relationship.³ In the context of a committed marriage and the mutual trust and unconditional love it provides, sex amplifies the already present atmosphere of understanding, acceptance and intimacy. In the absence of commitment, sex only aggravates insecurity, lack of trust and misunderstanding, making real intimacy harder to attain.¹ Sex without the love and loyalty that give it meaning is empty and ungratifying. The deeper human need is a heart-to-heart connection.²

Sexual integrity allows us the freedom to develop and strengthen our character so that we can experience the fullness of love. We can train ourselves to love unselfishly and unconditionally with depth and commitment by practicing unselfishness and sacrifice. By developing our ability to love, our sexuality develops harmoniously. It is eventually realized in its fullness—manifested in a selfless love and in the gift of the total self—allowing us to become a true man or a true woman. Wholeness focuses on building the full beauty and strength of the self, which makes happiness possible.³

Principle #10

Our deepest desire is a love relationship of connection and intimacy.

Discussion:

- 1) Open sharing
- 2) Have you ever had an experience of this Principle in your life? Please share freely.

Envisioning the week: How do you hope to see yourself in your attitude/thoughts/actions in this next week?

Sources

1- Educating for True Love (International Educational Foundation)

2- Cultivating Heart and Character (International Educational Foundation)

3- My Journey In Life- A Student Textbook for Character Education (Joon Ho Seuk)

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Yearning for intimacy propels [people] into sexual relationships in hopes of finding true love. Since love and sex are so interconnected, people often mistake a sexual attraction for "the real thing." Yet sex can obscure the meaning of love. Often these relationships wind up hurting them and hurting others, damaging their ability to love and be loved in a deep and authentic way. Philosopher Elisabeth Haich captures the confusion of sex and love in insecure relationships well: "Sexuality mimics love. It compels tenderness and embraces; it forces the lovers to hug one another, to allay one another's pain through the revelations of sexuality, as when true love is exchanged. What follows such experiences? Disappointments, a bitter after-taste, mutual accusations or bleak loneliness, feelings of exploitation and defilement. Neither of the two gave true love but only expected to receive it, therefore neither received it." (CHAC)

In popular culture, sex is the universal gateway to joy, love, wisdom, transcendent experience, personal growth and discovery, worthy of endless participation, depiction and discussion (EFTL) The sexual revolution promised men and women more love, happiness and freedom [and] emphasized sex and the body rather than love and the heart. (CHAC) Men and women relate in a "low-commitment culture of 'sex without strings, relationship without rings.'" Fun is considered justification

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enough for sexual relations; lovers should expect to be discarded when someone new comes along, and marriage and parenthood are unnecessary constraints on personal freedom. (EFTL)

Now, "with all the fuss about sexual freedom, it's a little hard to stand up and admit it's not what everyone imagines." Peter Marin concludes, "We have been liberated from the taboos of the past only to find ourselves imprisoned in a 'freedom' that brings us no closer to our real nature or needs." It is as if within themselves there is an inner emptiness, a bottomless pit crying out to be filled but which can never be completely filled. They never feel "full-filled" or have a sense of completeness. They always feel "a part of me is missing." (MJIL) Psychologist Rollo May differentiated between the impulse for love and the drive for sex, saying, "For human beings, the more powerful need is not sex *per se* but for relationships, intimacy, acceptance and affirmation." (CHAC)

If the deeper human need is a heart-to-heart connection, sexual union can only be a supplement, not a substitute. Sex without the love and loyalty that give it meaning is empty and ungratifying. Some people respond to this emptiness by trying a variety of positions, of partners and practices, but this leads to even more jadedness and lack of feeling. (CHAC)

We need to be aware that what people seek through sex is something other than sex- something deeper, more permanent. Sex and love are not the same. Sex alone cannot substitute for love. If we have sex, hoping to find love, we certainly will be hurt. Without a recognized and permanent commitment, sexual relations remain terribly fragile. They are subject to the moods, fears and passions of one or the other and under constant doubt: "You love me because I please you today, but what about tomorrow? Do you truly love me for who I am?" (MJIL)

Often the motivation for entering this kind of relationship is "what can this person give me" rather than "what can I give to make this relationship lasting and beautiful." It is not the expression of complete trust and security between two people linked in a profound and permanent way. The sexual act awakens that which is most intimate, most sacred, most vulnerable in the human heart-without being able to fulfill the deep need to love and to be loved with: a complete love. Love has to come first, accompanied by trust, responsibility and commitment-- the expression of love arising from a continuous, committed relationship. (MJIL)

We can train ourselves to love unselfishly and unconditionally with depth and commitment. We can start now by practicing unselfishness and sacrifice. By developing our ability to love, our sexuality develops harmoniously. It is eventually realized in its fullness-manifested in a selfless love and in the gift of the total self-allowing us to become a true man or a true woman. (MJIL)

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Sexual integrity allows us the freedom to develop and strengthen our character so that we can experience the fullness of love. Integrity means completeness or wholeness. Wholeness is unity between our mind and body. Wholeness focuses on building the full beauty and strength of the self, which makes happiness possible. (MJIL)

One of the partners may be more committed than the other and, when the relationship breaks up, may feel very distressed and used. In fact, some relationships resemble exploitation in which two people agree to use one another for sexual relief and serve each other's emotional needs temporarily before they are ready for permanent relationships. Sex is too precious and powerful a force to be used in this way. (MJIL)

Cut off from marriage, a sexual relationship is torn from its roots. Outside marriage, The need to relate permanently to another human being in total love and raise a family is as much a social need as a personal one. (MJIL)

Sexual impulsiveness and permissiveness can deform one's character, leading a person to become extremely self-absorbed. Sexually permissive people are like starving people, scrounging wherever they can for food.

In nature, nothing reproduces before it has completely matured. We can train ourselves to love unselfishly and unconditionally with depth and commitment. We can start now by practicing unselfishness and sacrifice. By developing our ability to love, our sexuality develops harmoniously. It is eventually realized in its fullness-manifested in a selfless love and in the gift of the total self-allowing us to become a true man or a true woman. If we don't take the time to go through this development first, we are like a person who tries to swim in a pool before filling it with water. If there is no water, we cannot swim. If there is not enough water in the pool, swimming is difficult or impossible. If the water is deep enough, it buoys us up and we can swim with freedom of movement. In other words, our "pool" of love needs depth before it can hold us up for a happy experience of marriage and parenthood.

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There is a yearning—a hunger—that all human beings have felt but few have satisfied. In every relationship, in every action and transaction, all day, every day, people are seeking true love. The need is universal. It is found in all people at all times and under all different circumstances. Philosopher Erich Fromm noted that love “is the most powerful striving in man. It is the most fundamental passion. The failure to achieve it means insanity or destruction— self-destruction or the destruction of others. Without love, humanity could not exist for a day.”ETFL

Yet as much as we yearn for love, it eludes us. Somehow, the pipeline of true love has been broken. There is not enough love. And where it exists, it is rarely true love. We find precious little, and what little we find is rarely true. We can identify this absence of true love as the root problem which colors human life with its dark and ambiguous hues. ETFL

Now, "with all the fuss about sexual freedom, it's a little hard to stand up and admit it's not what everyone imagines." The sexual revolution promised men and women more love, happiness and freedom. The revolution emphasized sex and the body rather than love and the heart. Peter Marin concludes, "We have been liberated from the taboos of the past only to find ourselves imprisoned in a 'freedom' that brings us no closer to our real nature or needs." Psychologist Rollo May differentiated between the impulse for love and the drive for sex, saying, "For human beings, the more powerful need is not sex *per se* but for relationships, intimacy, acceptance and affirmation."²

We need to be aware that what people seek through sex is something other than sex- something deeper, more permanent. Sex and love are not the same. But what is the difference? Sex alone cannot substitute for love. If we have sex, hoping to find love, we certainly will be hurt. Without a recognized and permanent commitment, sexual relations remain terribly fragile. They are subject to the moods, fears and passions of one or the other and under constant doubt: "You love me because I please you today, but what about tomorrow? Do you truly love me for who I am?" One of the partners may be more committed than the other and, when the relationship breaks up, may feel very distressed and used. In fact, some relationships resemble exploitation in which two people agree to use one another for sexual relief and serve each other's emotional needs temporarily before they are ready for permanent relationships. Sex is too precious and powerful a force to be used in this way.

If the deeper human need is a heart-to-heart connection, sexual union can only be a supplement, not a substitute. However, since love and sex are so interconnected, people often mistake a sexual attraction for "the real thing." Their yearning for intimacy propels them into sexual relationships in hopes of finding true love. Yet sex can obscure the meaning of love. Often these relationships wind up hurting them and hurting others, damaging their ability to love and be loved in a deep and authentic way. Philosopher

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Elisabeth Haich captures the confusion of sex and love in insecure relationships well: "Sexuality mimics love. It compels tenderness and embraces; it forces the lovers to hug one another, to allay one another's pain through the revelations of sexuality, as when true love is exchanged. What follows such experiences? Disappointments, a bitter after-taste, mutual accusations or bleak loneliness, feelings of exploitation and defilement. Neither of the two gave true love but only expected to receive it, therefore neither received it"⁴

Indeed, sex without the love and loyalty that give it meaning is empty and ungratifying. Some people respond to this emptiness by trying a variety of positions, of partners and practices, but this leads to even more jadedness and lack of feeling.

Love has to come first, accompanied by trust, responsibility and commitment. At the heart of sexual intercourse is the expression of love arising from a continuous, committed relationship. Cut off from marriage, a sexual relationship is torn from its roots. Often the motivation for entering this kind of relationship is "what can this person give me" rather than "what can I give to make this relationship lasting and beautiful." It is not the expression of complete trust and security between two people linked in a profound and permanent way. Outside marriage, the sexual act awakens that which is most intimate, most sacred, most vulnerable in the human heart-without being able to fulfill the deep need to love and to be loved with: a complete love. The need to relate permanently to another human being in total love and raise a family is as much a social need as a personal one.

It did not deliver on these promises. Since the breakdown of the monogamous norm, society has been plagued with staggering epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. More insidious have been the emotional agonies of broken relationships, disillusionment and divorce. People are reconsidering the prevailing sexual norm.

Why did the bright ideals of the sexual revolution fail so abysmally?

However, Sexual integrity allows us the freedom to develop and strengthen our character so that we can experience the fullness of love. Integrity means completeness or wholeness. Wholeness is unity between our mind and body, the balancing of all the parts of the self to create a dynamic and harmonious order. Wholeness focuses on building the full beauty and strength of the self, which makes happiness possible.

In comparison with sexual integrity, sexual impulsiveness and permissiveness can deform one's character, leading a person to become extremely self-absorbed.

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Sexually permissive people are like starving people, scrounging wherever they can for food. It is as if within themselves there is an inner emptiness, a bottomless pit crying out to be filled but which can never be completely filled. They never feel "full-filled" or have a sense of completeness. They always feel "a part of me is missing."

It requires a lot of self-control and training to become a musician, an athlete, or a scientist. In the same way we can train ourselves to love unselfishly and unconditionally with depth and commitment. We can start now by practicing unselfishness and sacrifice (for example, helping with dinner when we'd rather be with our friends, giving up our favorite TV show in order to do a better science project or to help our younger brother or sister do homework). By developing our ability to love, our sexuality develops harmoniously. It is eventually realized in its fullness-manifested in a selfless love and in the gift of the total self-allowing us to become a true man or a true woman. Husband and wife are then able to grow together in love and service to a new level of maturity. In nature, nothing reproduces before it has completely matured. If you are given a rosebud, you are given a promise of beauty. You don't rip it open right away so that you can enjoy the fragrance and softness and color immediately. If you did, you would have nothing of value whatsoever. You can only enjoy a rose if you keep it in a protected place and wait for it to unfold. Then it will share with you its fragrance, its color and its softness, all in its own time. If we don't take the time to go through this development first, we are like a person who tries to swim in a pool before filling it with water. If there is no water, we cannot swim. If there is not enough water in the pool, swimming is difficult or impossible. If the water is deep enough, it buoys us up and we can swim with freedom of movement. In other words, our "pool" of love needs depth before it can hold us up for a happy experience of marriage and parenthood.

Only love that is absolute, unique, unchanging and eternal can eradicate free sex. The feeling you get from drugs or alcohol or free sex cannot compare to the absolute joy and stimulation of absolute sex. In absolute sex all the cells in the body and mind activate and connect to the one center. It is supreme ecstasy, far beyond the intoxication of alcohol or drugs. Within its essence lie absolute freedom, absolute happiness, absolute hope, and the absolute fulfillment of all one's dreams. This is true love...(WS)

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In the context of a committed marriage and the mutual trust and unconditional love it provides, sexual relations amplify the already present atmosphere of understanding, acceptance and intimacy. In the absence of commitment, sex only aggravates insecurity, lack of trust and misunderstanding, making real intimacy harder to attain.

By pretending sex is basically a physical matter, the deeper levels of harm—even between partners who agree to use each other—can be officially ignored. No harm means no one has done wrong and no one has to be held accountable. No harm also means that if one feels distress after an uncommitted sexual liaison, then the problem lies within oneself—in being too sensitive or having an overactive conscience or outdated religious values—not in the practice. No harm means that the social fallout can be blamed on socio-economics and no one has to question their personal conduct. No harm means the fiction of sex without consequences can be maintained. Reverend Moon speaks of sexual misconduct as having its gravest consequences on the intangible level. These more elusive negative consequences of nonmarital sexual expression involve the effects upon the individual and personal development, upon the pursuit of loving relationships, and upon the next generation.

When the bond is broken, it “works disintegration in the personality and leaves behind a deeply-seated sense of frustration and dissatisfaction.”⁶ There are many facets of this disintegration of psychological and moral health, especially among adolescents and young adults.

Premature physical involvement in insecure relationships tends to impede development because it compounds self-centeredness, rather than fostering the learning of unselfish love. In marriage, sexual intimacy supports the partners’ mutual love and commitment, while among singles, it is mainly to boost the partners’ egos and gratify themselves, to take rather than to give.

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Unprincipled sex is a notoriously corrupting influence. People find themselves looking at others not as spiritual beings but as bodies to be used and practicing constant cunning to get sexual gratification.

it is not surprising that misdirecting love commonly yields a harvest of guilt and loss of self-respect. When persons have used the most valuable part of their bodies to gain pleasure or love or security, they cannot but feel degraded, even if they are not conscious of the loss for some time. For example, a majority of sexually experienced American teenage boys and girls express regret over losing their virginity when they did.¹² Males both young and old are typically haunted by guilt over the evidence that what had been a momentary pleasure for them was a moving expression of love and commitment to their partner. Females sense something sacred was violated.

Further, making sexual attractiveness and sexual prowess an important basis for romantic connections amplifies the tendency to judge people on what they do and how they look rather than on who they are.¹⁵ Thus anxiety is built into insecure relationships: “Do I still look good enough, perform well enough, please you enough?” When sexual utility instead of one’s whole self is the criteria for attention, there is always the realistic fear that someone else will be more attractive or perform better. The result is the undermining of the belief that one is lovable in a unique and irreplaceable way.¹⁶ Jennifer, 30, explains her experience: “The acceptance, even encouragement of premarital sex makes it very difficult to sustain the fantasy that we are the sole object of love.”¹⁷ Victims of infidelity in particular often feel utterly trashed. Sometimes the lowered self-esteem leads a person into further sexual involvements to prove their desirability, which only leads to further loss of self-respect. It becomes a vicious cycle of reaching for affirmation through sex, failing to attain it, and thereby compounding one’s desperate need.

All infatuations or romantic involvements of some duration are painful when they break up. When sex is introduced, the emotional ties as well as expectations are intensified. Studies have highlighted the role of certain brain chemicals in sexual bonding.¹⁸ Given its original purpose, sex acts like powerful glue that has no way to easily release its grip. Hearts that have bonded through sex, even in a casual encounter, are unlikely to disengage without being torn in some way. For some, the trauma can resemble divorce. For others, the pain is denied and numbed, often with the help of alcohol. The result is similar in any case. Men and women alike admit that they are so afraid of being hurt again that they withhold their hearts even as they yield their bodies to others for the fleeting comfort sex provides.¹⁹ This explains the peculiar indifference that characterizes sexual activity even among the young, what one commentator called “oddly disengaged—emotionally cool while physically hot.”²⁰

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This heartbreak, compounded with the sense of having given themselves so completely for so little return—not to mention the fallout of a pregnancy, abortion or sexually transmitted infection—can help drive young men and women to the brink of despair. One tragic reflection is the rate of teenage suicide, which has tripled over the past 25 years in the U.S., the same period during which the rate of teenage sexual activity rose so sharply. Statistically, non-virginal girls are six times more prone to suicide than are virgins.²¹ They and their male peers are also much more likely to be involved in other self-destructive activities: Running away from home, using drugs and getting arrested, to name a few.²² Finally, the emotional explosion over sexual betrayal can veer to the extreme of rage, leading to violence against former girlfriends or boyfriends and their new lovers. Stalking, assault and homicide at the hands of jealous lovers are daily events; countless people live in fear of retaliation by an ex-partner.

The degradation of love can be seen in the contemporary dating and mating culture where love is rarely even mentioned when discussing sex.²⁴ Even among those who believe that only love is what legitimates physical union, this represents an anemic definition of love, where fickle feelings are the focus, not will and ideals.

“Once burned, twice shy” describes many people after the heartache of the breakup of a sexual relationship, as noted above. The remembered pain of betrayal stands in the way of giving themselves trustingly to anyone else. Females may become suspicious of all males, seeing them as only interested in their bodies. Males can also experience fear and mistrust that can last for years, even into later marriage.

As mentioned above, sex usually multiplies selfishness in an insecure relationship, increasing tensions and conflict. Its addictive pleasures too readily invite rationalization of expectation and demand. Frequently one partner comes to expect sex at every opportunity and to launch into recriminations or worse if refused. In fact, sexual involvement outside of marriage—especially among live-in lovers—is associated with far more violence and other forms of abuse than among the married.³¹ Because we are beings of mind and body, physical intimacy leaves the heart yearning for comparable emotional intimacy. Yet ironically, the sex makes that longing harder to fulfill.³² Sex can easily come to overpower any meaningful communication or other friendship-building activities together, causing the couple to avoid the effort it takes to understand each other and work out differences. One college woman admitted that ironically, “Having sex is easier than talking face to face and having to deal with all the things that come up.”³³ Deprived of quality interaction, the relationship then collapses from within.

Sources

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