

LOVE

1 Love is divine only and difficult always. If you think it's easy you are a fool. If you think it is natural, you are blind. **Toni Morrison**

2 Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope. **Maya Angelou**

3 Love never dies a natural death. It dies because we don't know how to replenish its source. It dies of blindness and errors and betrayals. It dies of illness and wounds; it dies of weariness, of witherings, of tarnishings. **Anais Nin**

4 A friend knows the song in my heart and sings it to me when my memory fails. **Donna Roberts**

5 Age does not protect you from love, but love, to some extent, love protects you from age. **Jeanne Moreau**

6 Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - we find it with another. The beginning of love is to let those we love be perfectly themselves and not to twist them to fit our own image. If a man is to live, he must be all alive, body, soul, mind, heart, spirit. **Thomas Merton**

7 Those of us who have in our history the commonality a suffering from hate, we know that those who won the day are those who chose love in the midst of hate. **William J. Barber, III**

8 Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love." ... I'm on a search for love. I hope that you'll join me. **Martin Luther King**

9 Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love. **Reinhold Neibuhr**

10 A poem by Marge Piercy

To have without holding

Learning to love differently is hard,
love with the hands wide open, love
with the doors banging on their hinges,
the cupboard unlocked, the wind
roaring and whimpering in the rooms
rustling the sheets and snapping the blinds
that thwack like rubber bands
in an open palm.

It hurts to love wide open
stretching the muscles that feel
as if they are made of wet plaster,
then of blunt knives, then
of sharp knives.
It hurts to thwart the reflexes
of grab, of clutch ; to love and let
go again and again. It pesters to remember
the lover who is not in the bed,
to hold back what is owed to the work
that gutters like a candle in a cave
without air, to love consciously,
conscientiously, concretely, constructively.

I can't do it, you say it's killing
me, but you thrive, you glow
on the street like a neon raspberry,
You float and sail, a helium balloon
bright bachelor's button blue and bobbing
on the cold and hot winds of our breath,
as we make and unmake in passionate
diastole and systole the rhythm
of our unbound bonding, to have
and not to hold, to love
with minimized malice, hunger
and anger moment by moment balanced.

from her book of poems, *The Moon is Always Female*, 1980. .

Choosing Love: Exercising the Heart

11 *Rick Hanson writes about feeling mistreated and working through his anger and disappointment.*

I began to realize that the freest, strongest, and most self-respecting thing that I could do was both to tell the person that we were on very thin ice . . . and to choose to love meanwhile.

To my surprise, instead of turning me into a doormat or punching bag, love actually protected and fueled me. It kept me out of contentiousness and conflict and gave me a feeling of worth. I was interested in what the other person was going to do, but in a weird way I didn't care that much. I felt fed and carried by love, and how the other person responded was out of my hands.

I got interested in "loving at will," in how to go to the upper end of the range of what is authentically available to a person in terms of feeling or expressing compassion, good wishes, and warmth. You shouldn't falsify what's truly going on with you, nor let yourself be mistreated. But whatever this range is for you in any moment in any relationship, it's your choice where you land within it.

I became less caught up in how I wanted the other person to think and feel and act, and more focused on my own practice of finding and re-finding some sense of love. It felt kind of like I was strengthening the heart like a muscle. I joked with myself that I was doing love pushups (not the sexual kind!).

--excerpted from his online newsletter *Just One Thing*, September 2019

For Reflection and Discussion

A If you challenged yourself to be more loving, what would you be challenging yourself to do or be? Are you thinking of yourself in a particular role; for example, to be a more loving spouse, parent, church member, etc.?

B Love, love, love--so much talked about, written about, sung about, preached about. Are there one or two songs or poems, sermons or talks that you turn to again and again?

C Is there some way of loving that you are especially good at? Some way of loving that you struggle with?

D How do you relate to the “beloved community” that All Souls aspires to be? Has your role changed over time? Is there one thing that you would like to be more aware of or to begin doing differently?

E How does your experience at All Souls support you in choosing to love, in expressing love, and in feeling loved?

--Mary Beth Hatem, for covenant groups at All Souls Church, Unitarian, Washington DC