

Love That Hurts

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (Luke 6:32-35)

Consider, for a moment, that you might be guilty of self-serving love. Think about it. Recall gift exchanges that sometimes take place during Christmas. It's so nice, isn't it? Not only do family members exchange gifts, but friends do too.

Did you ever give someone a gift, and nothing was received in return? A gift was given with not so much as a "thank you." To top it off, it may have almost been presumed that the gift was deserved — or so it seemed.

Gifts can be forgotten not out of ingratitude but out of sheer forgetfulness. Then another year passes. You again give a gift and, sure enough, you get nothing in return. Except now you can tell this is more than forgetfulness. The recipient never intended to give you a gift in return — ever!

Enough is enough, right? If you are like most people, you probably stop giving. People generally aren't prepared to give when there is no return. The anger, frustration, and futility makes "one-sided gift giving" a waste, and the lack of returned love hurts too much. So the giving ends.

Our love today is very often conditional. It demands a return in order to be dispensed. "I love because you love me." What's worse is that this attitude is generally accepted by everyone. Your friends and family, for example, tell you to stop giving when the recipient does not even express thanks.

The problem with such an attitude is that it can become very harmful. Imagine this scene: your mother is in a nursing home. Because of some form of dementia she no longer seems aware of anyone's presence. Your visits seem fruitless. You talk to her, cry over her, and hold her. But you get nothing in return. To show love hurts, because it isn't and can't be returned.

This is called "sacrificial love." It is the kind of love that is shown when it is neither requested nor appreciated. Our perfect example is Jesus. Romans 5:8 tells us, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Be careful not to become so conditional in your love that you forget the sacrificial love you learned from Jesus. Love until it hurts. He did!

For additional information and resources in dealing with this life topic, visit the Christian Life Resources website at www.ChristianLifeResources.com or call us at 1-800-729-9535.