

Love: The 3rd of the 4 Absolutes:

What does it look like in your life when you are absolutely Loving? Write out a vision for yourself....

"Is it ugly or is it beautiful?" "Is my behavior giving of myself, expecting nothing in return and am I reflecting back the Unconditional Love I am receiving from God?"

The purpose of the 4 Absolutes is to separate God thoughts/behaviors/actions from self thoughts/behaviors/actions. When we are being God centered, we are honest, unselfish, loving and pure. When we are being self centered, we are dishonest, selfish, self-seeking, and afraid, which are the core character defects that underlie our resentments.

We know this from the AA BB: "Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt." (BB p 62)

According to the dictionary definition, love is: "The attraction, desire or affection felt for a person who arouses delight or admiration or elicits tenderness, sympathetic interest or benevolence." It is also defined as "the benevolence attributes to God as resembling a father's affection for his children or men's adoration of God in gratitude or devotion." It is also "affection for, to cherish or to feel reverent adoration for God." (Webster's 3rd International Dictionary, 1964).

We can see from the dictionary definition that love has an element of an emotion, but, love is not what we receive or get from others. Love is really about what we give. Love arouses a feeling in us of affection, benevolence or devotion, based on our actions. We make a decision to give and based on our actions we feel love. Love is NOT a true feeling; it is an ACTION, based on a DECISION. It is about giving love that defines what love is. In the pamphlet, The 4 Absolutes, love is defined as: "the will to extend ourselves for the purpose of nurturing our own or another's spiritual growth." It is also defined as "the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love," and as "the ability and willingness to allow people to be who, and what they choose for themselves, without any insistence that they satisfy us."

Sometimes, it is easier to think of the opposite of love in order to understand what it means. The opposite of love is not hate, but self-seeking. Self seeking behavior refers to a series of thoughts or actions to get what one wants and desires for self. Self seeking is artificially creating a sense of ease and comfort by acting to fill a void. It is indulgence for the sake of emotional satisfaction or escape. (<http://www.soberrecovery.com/forums/alcoholism-12-step-support/203260-selfish-self-seeking.html>)

When we are disturbed or full of resentment, we need to ask ourselves: How was I SELF-SEEKING? What did I do in pursuit of my selfish desires? Did I manipulate people? When my ego was hurt, how did I act out in response? Did I slander or gossip? Justified or not, what harms did I cause, and what self-serving behaviors did I engage in? (<http://jeremybroomfield.com.jeremybroomfield.net/sober/>) As Bill W. said: "If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demands. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these

hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love; we may then be able to Twelfth Step ourselves and others into emotional sobriety. (The Language of the Heart, p. 238)

Love is about balance. In order to love others, we must first love ourselves. We need to know who we are and take responsibility for our thoughts, feelings and behaviors. We cannot truly give to others when we are looking to others to fill the void inside ourselves and give us the comfort or escape from who we are. Otherwise, that is not love -- that is need.

When we are full on the inside: we know who we are and accept and love ourselves as we are. Then we can place the needs of another before our needs, without hesitation or regret. We can be God centered rather than self centered. (<http://www.lifeismaking.com/self-love-loving-others>; <http://leave-happier.com/2011/09/13/love-is-not-self-seeking/>) As it says in the AA 12 & 12 "For it is only by accepting and solving our problems that we can begin to get right with ourselves and with the world about us, and with Him who presides over us all. Understanding is the key to right principles and attitudes, and right action is the key to good living." (p125)

When we are God centered, we experience life as it is, with honesty, joy, gratitude and acceptance. We can show mercy, forgiveness and engage in the pain of another without it turning it into being about one's self. (<http://rlifecoach.blogspot.com/?m=1>)

My vision for when I am absolutely loving:

I stop myself from seeking instant gratification. I choose goodness before gratification. I do what I know to be good rather than what feels good. This is the challenge of program: "How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result, and so into easy, happy, and good living, is the problem of life itself." (AA Twelve and Twelve p. 71-2).

I take responsibility for my emotions and reactions. I choose what I consent to think, feel and do. I realize and accept that I am responsible for all my actions and their consequences in the world. I do not justify my bad actions. "A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love." (AA BB p. 83).

I forgive all people who dislike or disrespect me.

I speak kindly and refrain from gossip and speaking negatively about another person. I sacrifice my need to be right. I refuse to listen to, believe, or participate in gossip. I practice not criticizing, not objecting, not exerting or expressing my opinions and attitudes. I honor and respect the confidences of others. As it says in the AA BB: "We do talk about each other a great deal, but we almost invariably temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance. Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve. We find it better, when possible, to stick to our own stories." (p.123)

I give up being angry. I choose to act not just react to life. I choose not to allow myself to be under the dominion of changing circumstances. I choose to be more than the result of what is

done to me. As it says in the AA BB: "The first principle of success is that you should never be angry.... Patience and good temper are most necessary." (111)

I act with patience and acceptance. I accept life, others and myself the way they are, not how I think they should be. My expectations are the real cause of my suffering. I am being absolutely loving when "I concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world and concentrate instead on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes. "(AA BB pg 477)

I act to please God, and not other people. I stop thinking about what other people are thinking about me. (<http://reformjudaismmag.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=1398>) As it says in the AA BB: "So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it." (AA BB p 83)