
SPECIAL ISSUE LOVE IN DEED

Give-away gift

LES DENNISON is a trade-unionist from the building industry in Coventry.

PASSION TO CHANGE THE WORLD can come from two sources. It can come from deep hatred and bitterness, or it can come from love—not sloppy, sentimental love, but the love that cares and is concerned about the unfortunate. We have never got to stop hating what's wrong in society. But I have learned to stop hating the men I blamed for what is wrong.

I feel the pain of the poverty and degradation of the Third World. I long in my guts that men in our trade union movement feel this pain—because that's where passion comes from.

A word like love has little value unless it becomes a fact through action. In the same way, the love of God can only become real to us through the experience of His forgiveness. This was true for me.

It began when I, a Marxist, met people with unquestionable faith in God who did not become defensive when I attacked their beliefs. Their transparent honesty and warm uncritical care put me on the defensive—my assurance was shaken. I began to wonder if their ideological method and revolution was superior to mine. They said that God would tell me.

Through the agony

This bugged me for weeks. I did not believe in God, but I admired—and envied—the qualities in these people that made it possible for them to respect and care for someone whose ideas were a complete negation of their own.

One day I decided to go into a church. I knelt and tried to pray and nothing happened. I felt cold and uncomfortable and my cynicism grew. I was glad my associates could not see me.

Then the priest came up to me. I told him I was looking for God, but was convinced I was wasting my time. He began to escort me towards the door—but then he stopped and suggested we might go back and pray.

As we prayed the priest said quietly,

'Behold I stand at the door and knock, whoever opens the door, I shall come in.' At that moment I was overwhelmed with an awareness of the evil I had done during the 45 years of my life. The unhappiness I had caused my family—which was breaking up—my associates and my industry swept over me. In the agony of those crushing moments I cried out for help.

It was then that my whole conscious being was flooded with a sense of healing and forgiveness, a giving and receiving of love which brought me through the agony and the pain to a deep inner peace which smoothed out every conflict, hard-knotted gut reaction and resentment. This was the supreme event of my life.

If I truly want God's love to be reflected in my thoughts, and particularly my acts, I have learnt that I must subordinate my will to His and accept the discipline of absolute standards of purity, honesty and unselfishness. I cannot do this without God.

Respect

I have learnt too to listen to Almighty God—and to my wife. I'd always protested my love for Vera, and over the years since that experience in the church I'd grown to really love her. Then one day I had a note from a friend who said, 'Do you cherish Vera?'

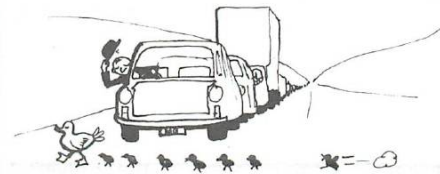
When I sat back and thought about this question I realised I'd never truly cherished anyone or anything in my life before. I'd always expected and demanded that Vera would say and do the things I wanted her to say and do. But now I've come to see that she's a person in her own right. I've learnt to respect the thoughts she gets. I'm sometimes so deaf to the things God wants to say that He has to tell me through her.

Love is more than a philosophical precept. Love is a deed that has cost the giver sacrifice and pain. It is given to you by the Holy Spirit to give away.

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Love is patient and kind

Galvanised into play

Marie Embleton
London

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I experienced a revelation of Christ's love in His total forgiveness of something which had damaged our family life. My husband and I became one as never before and the experience gave faith to our daughter.

This divine love was immediately galvanised into a love for the neighbouring community which is largely of West Indian, African and Asian origin. It was translated into a play which aimed to unite host and immigrant communities. Through portraying the prejudices and difficulties faced by a Jamaican family settling in Britain, it challenged the way of life of both groups. This play, *Britain 2000*, was invited to areas of the country with a high immigrant population.

One Indian family in West London had felt overwhelmed by the rejection they had experienced here. After seeing *Britain 2000* they decided they would care for the other Asian families in their area.

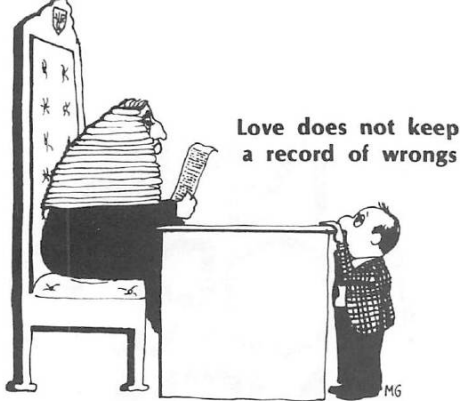
As we travelled, a concern for each other and our respective historical backgrounds began to develop. Our family as well as visitors from overseas has enjoyed Jamaican hospitality in the home of one family who were part of the cast. Their art of drawing the best out of everyone gives a glimpse of what a truly multiracial society could be like. Late one Saturday evening they heard that the home of an Indian, who was also part of the cast, had been struck by lightning while he was away. The father and son, who are builders, dropped what they were doing and immediately went to ensure the safety of their friend's house.

We are no longer producing the play. But we continue to learn as we live through each other's joys and heartaches at the cross-road of cultures in today's Britain.

Love is not jealous or conceited or proud



It is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable



Love's labours

Stella Belden
Hertfordshire

MY PSYCHOLOGY LECTURER at university told us that neuroses were caused by 'actual or imagined deprivation of love'. This satisfactorily explained my personal difficulties. I became a firm believer in the universal human need for love.

Some years later I was in the north of England at the MRA centre of Tirley Garth. It was wartime. Six of my friends were landgirls working a 44-hour week—often more—producing vegetables. My mother and a dozen older women had left their homes in order to clean and run the big centre; a few of us were doing our war service, by cooking, bottling, and catering for the scores of servicemen, factory and office workers, teachers and others who came there. They came looking for the fresh inspiration they needed for the war against human tyranny—in the wider perspective of bringing God's kingdom on earth.

We worked very hard. One day I thought to myself, 'What is all this? My friends and I get up at five for quiet and prayer before spending our day in the vegetable garden and kitchen; my mother, with her limited strength, staggers under tubs of water and gets rheumatic joints preparing vegetables; others serve and wash up between their jobs—and the meals are eaten in only a few minutes! What is the point?'

These questions rumbled around inside me for some time, but then I thought 'What would you do with all the time saved? How would you show that you cared about each other?' Suddenly my resistance to the work evaporated. For the first time I realised that the love I was so keen on was Mother giving up her solitary, studious life and meticulously preparing our raw materials and training others to her high standards; my friends putting so much into their unaccustomed tasks that their vegetables sold as soon as they reached the market; myself and others learning to make rations for thirty stretch to fifty with variety, abundance and appetising presentation; the older women making a big and inconvenient house into a home sparkling with welcome. The whole place was a bright expression of love in dark and difficult years.

Today's materialistic society needs such expressions of love more than ever. I'm grateful for the insight which made me a liberated woman with a cure for neuroses!

Let the tap splash

LEONE EXTON is Managing Director of the Westminster Theatre Restaurant, London.

IT WAS EASTER. To me absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love had always meant 'thou shalt not'—a negative which I did not always adhere to. That day everything changed.

During the 1939-45 war I had been engaged to a Canadian officer—love at first sight. We were nine days from our wedding when I had doubts and we decided to stay engaged but wait. He went back to Canada.

That Easter a year later God spoke to me. He said, 'Absolute standards are not a locked door but an open gate to a whole new way of living. Write to your fiance and tell him that he is free to do what he thinks is right. Apologise and say that you did not know how to really love him, because you did not know how to love Me first.'

I obeyed. He wrote back that he had just fallen in love with someone else. My pride was shattered but my capacity to love other people grew. Just then I was asked to look after a friend who had had several miscarriages and who, if nursed for ten days now, might be able to keep her baby. I did this, and a lovely girl was born.

Old coat

A year later, I met the wife of my former fiance in America. She asked me to pray with her, because she was so afraid he might still love me. This was my nearest experience of the temptation and heartache involved in the eternal triangle.

On my birthday and the anniversary of

our engagement, they asked me to tea with them. At first, I did not want to accept. As I entered that room I felt myself pleading with God for my self-pity and feelings. I felt Him saying to me, 'I have taken this relationship and like an old coat have cast it aside not to be picked up again.' In obedience, real love flooded in, like a tap that is turned on fully and splashes all over the place.

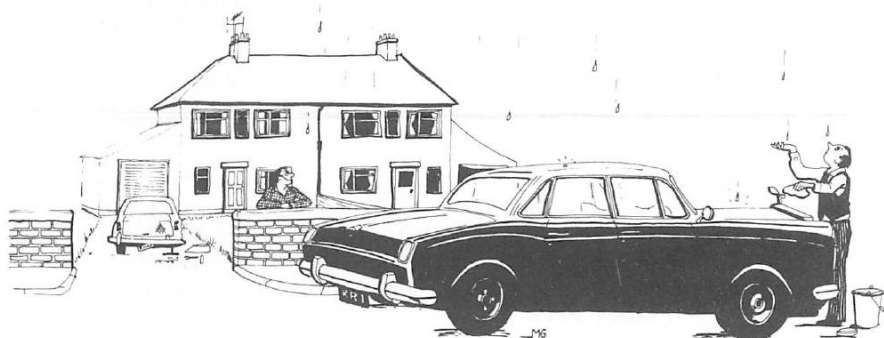
Some years later—on a Good Friday—I heard that another man I'd especially loved had become engaged. It really hurt, and I burst into tears. A friend said to me, 'God must love you very much to leave your heart so bare to His love only.' This was a new thought to me. It meant a decision to dare to let God love me.

Signpost

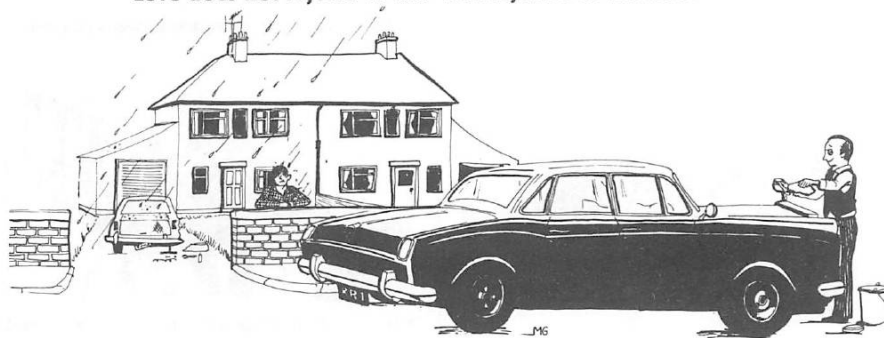
It often falls to the unmarried daughter to take care of ageing parents. It is taken for granted that it is a hardship—but, looked at another way, it is a chance to give back some of the years of tireless love which most parents give to their children.

My father died suddenly and for the next seven years my mother needed constant care and nursing. She had a heart as large as a house, but her illness often made her frustrated and irritable, and then she could say very hurtful things. I had to learn that the love that comes from God is objective and sees beyond the immediate. I now treasure those years as a gift, a time when I could slow up sufficiently to appreciate life and to find a sense of humour which is part of living.

As we polished glasses the other morning my manageress asked me if I had accepted singleness. I remembered a thought which God once gave me; 'I give equally the gift of My Cross which is love and fulfilment. To some I give marriage and to others singleness. Each is My gift.' Every day is an adventure following the signpost 'Love is'.



Love does not rejoice in evil but rejoices in the truth



'Love those who try to shoot you'

by Henry Macnicol

WHAT CAN TURN the force of hate? Good will crumples before it. Appeasement will not slake its thirst. Only the superior force of absolute love will do it.

One year ago, Rhodesia was being torn apart by hatred. Civil war had cost 30,000 lives; millions of women and children were suffering in 'protected villages' and ravaged tribal lands. Cattle were slaughtered and farms ruined. Today there is peace. Men who last year were denouncing one another as 'racist murderers' or 'agents of Satan' now sit together on the benches of the House of Assembly. Soldiers who were hunting each other down are working together in integrated battalions to keep law and order.

Though dangers abound, thousands of families have returned to their homes. Crops are growing in the fields. And the Prime Minister can speak with confidence as Zimbabwe takes her seat at the UN.

Many commentators—including former governor Lord Soames—have found themselves compelled to describe what has happened as 'a miracle'. Miracles, by definition, are the gift of a God of love. But what, on man's side, does it take to accept one? Inspired political wisdom there has been; economic factors and war-weariness played their part; the timing was right. But something more has been at work to loosen the grip of hatred.

Men and women, prompted by the spirit of love, have dared to go where no one else would go, and have built bridges. Their

work strengthens and supports the call of Mr Mugabe for 'new people...with hearts...that refuse to hate.'

Recently a white Member of Parliament received angry complaints from his farming constituents. Trouble was being caused, they said by 'black dissidents'. The MP, who had fought in the bush war on the government side, refused to make any press statement, and went instead to meet the black Army general and talk it out. Exchanging war experiences, they spoke of their love for the country, and began to trust one another. Then they went to the troubled area and told both black and white, 'If we can work together, you can!'

Weapon

Most vivid to many in Zimbabwe is the memory of a black Methodist minister who gave his life serving the 'boys in the bush' whom he loved. Four days before his assassination he spoke to a group of students in Salisbury. He told them, 'We have got to learn to sit down with those we disagree with, those we don't like. We have got to love those who try to shoot us, who put land-mines for us—men who you may know killed your father, mother or children.'

People who accept that uncompromising challenge to absolute love may be the best hope for the building of the new Zimbabwe. One of them is a farmer from Mount Darwin, in North East Zimbabwe. Two years ago, while the war was still raging, he went to the white District Commissioner who had arrested and had him tortured; and asked

forgiveness for his hatred of him. Shaken, the white man replied, 'I should have apologised to you.' Then, risking misunderstanding, the farmer met with his comrades in the bush and told them what he had done. 'Absolute love,' he said, 'is one of the weapons we are needing now.' The guerrillas gave him their support and urged him on in his effort to change the white men's hearts.

Here the farmer describes the experience that led him to do this:

When war came in my country I was arrested, tortured and jailed, and my wife suffered very much too—she was forced into a 'protected village' where she had to build huts herself, normally a man's work, to house the 21 children we were looking after.

While I was in prison, many beloved friends died. This made me very bitter. I just thought of destroying the white man.

Then a Methodist minister, named Arthur Kanodereka, who had been working with us in the liberation struggle, told me of a new hope he had found for our country. He had begun to care for all people, black and white. 'You will never change a man by hating him,' he said. He challenged me to live by absolute moral standards for the sake of Zimbabwe. When I began to try to do this, I became aware that hatred was not the only weapon I could use to liberate my country. There was a better way without bloodshed.

I realised, too, that I needed to apologise to my wife for my treatment of her. This brought me near her, and I became united with my family.

In the past, the more I hated, the more people hated me. When I gave up my hatred to God, many people came to me wanting to know what I had found.

The current and wire

Margot Lean
Oxford

I AM NOT one of those fortunate people who are born with an overflowing love for others, who are at their happiest in a crowd and welcome everyone who comes to their door with a genuine surge of affection.

It takes a miracle for me to love someone else, and at times this can even apply to my nearest and dearest. But I do know that God will instantly give me love for anyone, anywhere and at any time, if I have the wits and inclination to ask Him for it.

The issue is often as simple as being willing to listen to another person with patience and sympathy. This leads on, more frequently than I ever believe possible, to listening to God together. As the other person opens their heart to God, He tells them what to do in the situation which is troubling them—and if I am faithful, this can become a daily habit for them and so help their families and situations.

Carlo Carretto in his book *Letters from the Desert* (Darton, Longman and Todd) says,

'We are the wire, God the current. Our only power is to let the current pass through us.'

My husband, Garth, and I experienced this with a young Australian couple who were studying in Oxford. He was a graduate student, she a clerk in the divorce courts. She expressed a longing for an experience of God because she felt so desperate about the stream of broken marriages she had to record each day. He was a 'talk-aholic', a philosopher who had to argue and take issue on every topic.

Mother's shock

One evening, after reading one of Garth's books, our friend said 'I have three bones to pick with you.' There followed an hour of non-stop monologue—no mean feat with us as protagonists! When he finally ran out of breath it was nearly midnight. We all stood up except for Garth, who said, 'How about trying to listen to God after all this argument and seeing if He has anything to say?'

'Of all the crazy ideas!' I thought. 'It'll all start up again—and I must have my sleep!'

However the couple agreed to try. The young woman jotted a few thoughts down. But her husband, after writing enthusiastically, told us he had just one thought—that

he was frantically jealous of a colleague and should apologise to him. I was staggered.

Ever since then I have realised that God is at everyone's shoulder and will speak the moment a heart is open to Him. That experience gave me a wholly new understanding of how to help people to come into a satisfactory relationship with God.

How can we do this for our children? When ours were young I was scared to cross their wills in case I lost their love.

One day after a dispute with a five-year-old, God clearly said to me: 'Your task as a mother is to bring up your children to love Me, not you.' This was a shock and a revelation. I realised that if I wasn't ready to cross them when necessary, they'd never be able to make any unselfish decisions and would certainly not be able to serve God or other people as they grew up.

Far from being a grim, restrictive decision, this freed me. I was able to be more imaginative and we all found more fun and comradeship together. When my son proposed my health at my sixtieth birthday celebrations he said that what he was most grateful for was my decision to make his love for God my chief concern. I had never realised he knew that I had made such a decision.

Anyone's fuel

JEAN BROWN lives and works in Bombay with her husband and one-year-old son.

THERE COMES A POINT in the life of a commitment to God's work when the drive of duty and the earnest application of rules has to be replaced with a wholly new part. That part is love—of God and one's calling.

Love brings a delight in God's standards—rather than merely tolerance of them as a strenuous necessity. Then I begin genuinely to prefer to be pure. Duty, self-effort keeping your end up, cannot sustain you. They

become brittle and shallow and end in rebellion or breakdown. Love as a fuel enables me to be utterly myself; it is the 'peace which passes all understanding'.

Love is the ingredient which makes moral values workable. Honesty without love is cruelty, purity without love is hard and ugly, unselfishness without love is the worst kind of martyrdom.

Look at them the other way too. Love without honesty is betrayal, love without purity is sentimentality and love without unselfishness is demanding.

When I consciously choose to love more and better, when I am motivated less by what is expected of me and more by a happy desire to do and enjoy God's will—some-where here lies maturity.

Love lets go

A year ago a French couple took part in an MRA conference at Caux in Switzerland. There they began to discover the true meaning of love. Speaking at a conference at Caux this summer, they described this experience and what has happened since. SABINE begins:

LAST YEAR, in spite of twenty years of marriage, I was still a child. Absorbed in myself, I was not aware of the problems around me, nor of the difficulties I created for others. I always found plenty to do, and so I avoided thinking.

When I was a child I regarded certain people with an admiration which I carried almost to the point of worship. And when I met Alain I transferred this to him. I was so dependent on him that I could not be an adult and I was distant from God.

A year ago I realised that my dependence was tying Alain down and preventing him from being himself, and from growing up. After twenty years of marriage we have finally realised that maturity only comes in proportion to one's dependence on God.

ALAIN continues:

FAITH IS the reverse of fear. If you are driven by fear you cling to securities like a child going to bed with his teddy bear. Maturity comes when you throw away

these securities and learn, through a deeper inner life, to live without them.

A year ago I felt I had no problems at all. I had a life without crises—a nice home and family, decent job and good principles. I realised here that this was not leading to anything much, because I was putting up obstacles to the spiritual life which should have been my motivating force.

Maturity has meant saying what I really think to those close to me—which takes a great deal of tact. And I have found myself having to take a stand in my professional life, declaring my principles openly. This really upset things. My director told me to put my ideals aside, because they were incompatible with normal business practices. He said that I should either submit or resign. I did neither. But I did apologise to him for the criticisms I had spread about him.

My desire for security has often made me choose the stronger side. I realised that ten years ago when I fired one of our workers, I had acted under pressure from the director, rather than daring to say what I thought. I have written to this man apologising for my cowardice. I have not heard from him.

We all find security in conformity and facades. A few months ago we decided to invite my director to dinner. We decided to serve a simple meal with no alcohol. I was worried about what he would think. But when he left after a very relaxed evening he thanked us for giving him the chance to be himself. I believe that that evening we all took a big step in maturity.

Indestructible

**Sarla Kapadia
Bombay**

ELEVEN YEARS AGO I lost my husband who left me with three small children. My life seemed pointless, my happiness had been destroyed and I did not think I could manage living the rest of my life alone. These feelings and fears constantly hammered in my mind. I became a bitter recluse.

It was then that I met some people who asked me to try spending some time each morning in silence, writing down—and then acting on—any thoughts God gave me.

This seemed like a crazy idea and at first nothing really happened. But every morning I tried and as the weeks turned into months thoughts began to come pouring in; thoughts about how to care for others which helped me set aside my unhappiness.

I began to learn then of God's deep, abiding love for me and my children which could never be taken away or destroyed.

Now my three sons are all teenagers and together we have many people to care for. But it is still God's love that shows me step by step the way ahead.

No interruptions

**Olive Burnett
retired doctor, Brighton**

THE WORD 'home' means different things to different people. I am an elderly person living alone and I want my home to be a place where people can relax and be still, lay down their fears and lose their restlessness.

This does not necessarily mean having the latest labour-saving gadgets, modern equipment and perfection in every detail. A home is a place where people are more important than things, where standards are high but not rigid, where nothing—and nobody—is an interruption: not even the telephone.

The essential ingredient in such a home is love—absolute not relative—love for the difficult and lonely, for people who feel unwanted, and for those of other races and customs. This kind of love is unshakable through bad days and good, it warms cold hearts and helps people reach their highest potential.



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