

## LOVE

Starting last month, I wrote a letter concerning a portion of the attitude of a Friend identified through the antonym **PLACE**. I hope you remember and appreciate the importance of **Playfulness**. This month involves **Loving friends**.

Twentieth century personalities, and arguably the leading human experts on the topic of love, are Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi. Each talked of love, wrote about love, but more importantly, practiced love throughout their extraordinary lives. I believe they were leading experts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on this subject. Although we are certain that Mother Teresa's model of love was Jesus, there is good evidence that even Gandhi mirrored Jesus' leadership toward the subject to love. In the book Gandhi The Man, he is quoted as saying "Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself" (p. 126, 1997). Additionally, he said "I have not been able to see any difference between the Sermon on the Mount and the Bhagavad Gita...." (p.108).

In addition to living a life dedicated to loving, Mother Teresa wrote in No Greater Love (Teresa, 1997, p. 20): "*What we need is to love without getting tired. How does a lamp burn? Through the continuous input of small drops of oil. What are these small drops of oil in our lamps? They are the small things of daily life: faithfulness, small words of kindness, a thought for others, our way of being silent, of looking, of speaking, and acting.*" Mother Teresa is noted specifically for loving the destitute and dying. Her words also speak specifically for the basics for Cross Roads friends:

1. to build trustworthy and healthy relationships that help individuals find their true home.
2. To connect/reconnect individuals with a Christ-centered role model that will enable them to engage with community, find direction and experience hope.

(I have to comment here, that our own Teresa Clarkin Green, Program Coordinator with Cross Roads is aptly named.)

### 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8

*"Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not conceited, does not act improperly, is not selfish, is not provoked, and does not keep record*

*of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, endures all things. Love never ends."*

If anyone reading this letter has perfected such love you have my permission to not read any further. Despite the hundreds of times I have read the preceding verses about loving others, I think to myself; "I need help, a lot of practice and a cheat sheet. I am thinking of a tattoo on my forearms.

What does love look like? Love:

- Suffers long, bearing annoyances and inconveniences, not losing temper.
- Is kind, taking the initiative to be considerate and helpful.
- Does not envy but rejoices when others succeed.
- Does not parade itself, is not puffed up but instead draws others to it.
- Does not behave rudely or impolitely but acts in a manner worthy of Christ.
- Does not seek its own but always seeks to benefit others.
- Is not provoked but will allow differences of opinion in minor matters.
- Thinks no evil but makes allowances for people's flaws
- Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

I would need longer arms for that tattoo!

Love never loses faith in others and is willing to think the best of them. Love looks forward with optimism, knowing God works all things together for good. Love endures all things and persists. In the end, love never fails and it never ends. We can ask God to perfect our love for Him and for others. If I am honest with you, that is my only hope that God will help perfect my ability to love others. I believe in miracles!

I feel led to share with you my prayer. Lord, have mercy upon me. Please change me. Make me a vessel to share steady and reliable love with my family and friends and all the people with whom I come in contact, so they can sense your tenderness and kindness. Lord Jesus, help me to love more like you. I know you do not expect perfection from me but set me free that I may be a gift and love my fellow humans so they can know your perfect love for them. In Jesus' name, amen.

Sincerely and Lovingly submitted,  
Keith Houff