

The Way of Love



READINGS FOR
A MEANINGFUL LIFE

*Michael Leach, Doris Goodnough,
Maria Angelini, editors*

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Contents

Introduction

page 1

PART ONE

LOVE

1

Fall in Love

JOSEPH WHELAN

page 7

2

*Love Is the Love
of Being Loving*

MICHAEL LEACH

page 8

3

*All Things Work Together for Good
to Those Who Love Being Loving*

THOMAS HORA

page 12

THE WAY OF LOVE

4

Unconditional Love

HAROLD W. BECKER

page 14

Love Notes

ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS, RAM DASS,
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, DONNA GODDARD

page 15

5

When Love Beckons, Follow

KAHLIL GIBRAN

page 17

6

*The Intuitive Knowledge
of the Heart*

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

page 20

7

We Are Love with Skin On

ANNE LAMOTT

page 22

Contents

8

I Know Who She Is

UNKNOWN

page 25

Love Notes

FORREST GUMP (TOM HANKS),
DESMOND TUTU, DOROTHY DAY,
MELVIN UDALL (JACK NICHOLSON)

page 26

9

The Gift of Love

I CORINTHIANS 13: 1-13

page 28

10

The Qualities of Love

ANTHONY DE MELLO

page 30

11

You Will Truly Serve Only What You Love

STEPHEN COLBERT

page 34

THE WAY OF LOVE

12

*Justice Is What Love
Looks Like In Public*

PHILIP WALSH

page 37

13

Love and the Purpose of Life

MOTHER TERESA

page 40

Love Notes

ERICH FROMM, JORDAN PETERSON

VICTOR FRANKL, MAYA ANGELOU

page 43

14

The Daring Adventure of Love

ILIA DELIO

page 45

15

Love Is for Living

CARLO CARRETTO

page 47

Contents

16

Love Is Mysterious

JACK KORNFIELD

page 49

17

Love Sails Me around the House

THOMAS MERTON

page 51

Love Notes

JAMES BALDWIN, ZORA NEALE HURSTON,
FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY, CHARLES M. SCHULZ

page 53

18

What Is This Thing Called Love?

MATTHEW FOX

page 55

19

This Is Love, Become Love, Be That One

ECKHART TOLLE, MEISTER ECKHART,

AND SHERI BESSI-ECKERT

page 60

THE WAY OF LOVE

20

The Power of Love
(or Imagine a World Where Love Is the Way)

BISHOP MICHAEL CURRY

page 62

PART TWO
LOVE OF GOD

21

May We Remember That God Is the Only Love

DONNA GODDARD

page 67

22

What Do I Love When I Love God

ST. AUGUSTINE

page 68

23

God's Signature

ERNESTO CARDENAL

page 69

24

Start with Loving a Stone

RICHARD ROHR

page 70

Contents

25

God Is the Ocean in Which We All Swim

PATRICK T. REARDON

page 72

26

Our Love Flows from the Love of God

SØREN KIERKEGAARD

page 76

Love Notes

I JOHN 4:16, ACTS 17:28, GENESIS 1:26, GENESIS 1:31

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY, COLOSSIANS 3:14

page 78

27

We Love Because He First Loved Us

ROBERT ELLSBERG

page 80

28

I Am Sustained by the Love of God

A COURSE IN MIRACLES

page 82

29

God Is a Mother, Too

VICKIE LEACH

page 84

THE WAY OF LOVE

30

God Is My Everything

THEA BOWMAN

page 87

Love Notes

MEISTER ECKHART, I SAMUEL 16:7,

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, ÓSCAR ROMERO

GENESIS 16:13

page 88

31

Quick, Open the Door,

It's God Coming to Love Us!

MADELEINE DELBRÊL

page 90

32

I Love You for Sentimental Reasons

MARION AMBERG

page 93

33

God

BRIAN DOYLE

page 97

Contents

34

*God Owns a Convenience Store
in British Columbia—*

Who Knew?

GAE RUSK

page 99

Love Notes

SUE MONK KIDD, MAYA ANGELOU, ANNE LAMOTT,
THOMAS HORA, VINCENT DE PAUL

page 103

35

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

LUKE 15:11-32

page 106

36

This Tremendous Lover

DOM EUGENE BOYLAN

page 108

37

Don't Give Up on God, or Yourself

JOSEPHINE ROBERTSON

page 111

THE WAY OF LOVE

38

That We May Love as You Love!

UNKNOWN

page 114

39

"I Am Wherever There Is Love"

JOY SCRIVENER

page 115

Love Notes

MEISTER ECKHART, ST. AUGUSTINE

page 118

PART THREE

LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

40

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

LUKE 10:25-37

page 121

41

Who Is My Neighbor?

FREDERIC BUECHNER

page 123

Contents

42

Love Your Neighbor

CYNTHIA BOURGEAULT

page 124

43

Love Whatever Arises

MATT KAHN

page 126

44

Love from Neighbors on the Margins

EDWINA GATELEY

page 128

45

When You Thought I Wasn't Looking

MARY RITA SCHILKE SILL

page 130

46

*Loving-Kindness:
Blessing Your Corner
of the World with Love*

VICTOR PARACHIN

page 132

THE WAY OF LOVE

Love Notes

I JOHN 4:7-8, ILIA DELIO,
C. S. LEWIS, KURT VONNEGUT JR.,
NICOLAS CHAMFORT
page 136

47

Love Your Enemies
MATTHEW AND LUKE
page 138

48

*We Love Each Other
That's Enough*
RAM DASS AND PAUL GORMAN
page 140

49

Save Your Best for Someone Else
DONNA ASHWORTH
page 143

50

Love at Its Best
JOHN LEWIS
page 145

Contents

Love Notes

GLENN BECK,
ACTS 4:32-35, MICHAEL LEACH
page 146

51

Why Are You Here?
VINCENT P. COLE
page 148

52

Stand Up for the Stupid and Crazy
WALT WHITMAN
page 149

53

Love Deeply
HENRI J. M. NOUWEN
page 150

Love Notes

DOROTHY DAY, DONNA GODDARD,
SØREN KIERKEGAARD,
MR. ROGERS
page 152

THE WAY OF LOVE

54

A Piece of Light

JOYCE RUPP

page 154

55

Tend to What Repulses You

PAULINE HOVEY

page 156

56

Don't Look Away

BRENÉ BROWN

page 161

57

Having Lunch with God

JOSEPH HEALEY

page 162

58

Bishop Morrie Says

It's Not about the Soup

MICHAEL LEACH

page 164

Contents

59

It All Tastes Like Love
FRAN ROSSI SZPYLCZYN
page 169

60

A Marriage, an Elegy
WENDELL BERRY
page 173

Love Notes

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN, GERALD MAY
L. R. KNOST, ROBIN WILLIAMS
page 174

61

Loving the Christ in Others
THOMAS MERTON
page 176

62

Christ, Let Me See You in Others
DAVID ADAM
page 178

THE WAY OF LOVE

63

Christ and Cerebral Palsy

MICHAEL LEACH

page 179

Love Notes

MOTHER TERESA, I CORINTHIANS 12:12

I CORINTHIANS 12:26,

PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, ROBERT ADAMS

page 183

64

Christ in the Subway

CARYLL HOUSELANDER

page 185

65

God's Disguise

MOTHER TERESA

page 187

66

Remember,

There Is the Face of Christ

ÓSCAR ROMERO

page 188

Contents

67

Christ in the Poor

JIM FOREST

page 189

68

We're All God's Children

DENNIS MOORMAN

page 190

Love Notes

A COURSE IN MIRACLES,

JOHN 14:20, RUMI

page 192

Sources and Acknowledgments

page 195

Contributors

page 203

Introduction

Everyone has a philosophy of life. For Terry Malloy (Marlon Brando) in the 1954 movie *On the Waterfront*, it was “Do it to him before he does it to you.” Terry falls in love with a convent girl, Edie (Eva Marie Saint), who asks him, “Shouldn’t everybody care about everybody else?” He calls her a fruitcake.

“I mean,” says Edie, “isn’t everybody *a part* of everybody else?” This is her philosophy of life.

Later Terry crosses paths with Fr. Barry (Karl Malden), whose parish is the rough waterfront of New Jersey, and he too has a philosophy of life. When the mob murders a longshoreman, Fr. Barry stands over the corpse in the hole and preaches to the other longshoremen, one of whom says he should go back to his church:

“Boys, this is my church! And if you don’t think Christ is down here on the waterfront, you’ve got another think coming! Every morning when the hiring boss blows his whistle, Jesus stands alongside you in the shape-up. He sees why some of you get picked and some of you get passed over. He sees the family men worrying about getting the rent

THE WAY OF LOVE

and getting food in the house for the wife and the kids. . . . Every fellow down here is your brother in Christ! . . . He's kneeling right here beside Dugan. And he's saying with all of you, if you do it to the least of mine, you do it to me!"

The words pierce Terry Malloy's heart like the spear that ran through Jesus's side. He starts to see what Edie sees: we are part of one another. His conscience stirs. "Conscience," he complains to Fr. Barry later, "that stuff can drive you nuts!" It drives him instead into Edie's arms and to a new philosophy of life. At the end of the movie Terry carries his hook over his shoulder like a cross and stands up for love, for God, for Edie, and for his neighbors.

On the Waterfront. What a great movie! If you watch it you don't have to read this book.

It's OK if you do both though.

Our point is, everyone has a philosophy of life. And, like love, as the Andrew Lloyd Weber song goes, "It changes everything, how we live and how we die."

Our philosophy in *The Way of Love* is much like Edie's and Fr. Barry's and later Terry's, expressed in a multitude of ways by more than a hundred writers. You can read it from beginning to end or in chunks if you wish and, we hope, find something new or something you forgot that will give you a bit of inspiration or encouragement or assurance. Just as good, you can pick it up every now and then and turn to any old page and, we hope, find something that will help make your day.

Introduction

The book is divided into three parts, each with a basic theme. The theme is like a hub in a bicycle wheel with enough spokes spreading out to keep you moving forward into practical and sometimes surprising places.

Part One, “Love,” does what most books on the subject don’t do. It gives a definition of love. Most books describe love, and make distinctions like *eros* and *agape*, without ever saying in a simple sentence what love is. We like the definition given by Dr. Thomas Hora, a psychiatrist and spiritual teacher: “Love, which comes from God, is the love of being loving. When we fall in love with the love of being loving—*unconditional spiritual benevolence*—Love, or God, reveals itself through us and all things work together for good.”

Part Two then is “Love of God.” Its basic premise is that God is the only love there is. We love because God loves us first. God is not a person outside us but Love and Wisdom within us and all around us. God is all powerful, everywhere active Good. To love loving what is good and beautiful and merciful is to love God. When we are filled with unconditional benevolence we overflow with God.

Part Three, “Love of Neighbor,” is about that overflow. It helps us know what Edie knew—everybody is a part of everybody—and what Fr. Barry preached—we are all manifestations of one God, so what we do to our neighbor we do to the Christ in ourselves. Just as a wave can never be separated from the sea or from the other waves, we can never be separated from Christ or from one another. The wave is in the ocean, and the ocean is in the wave. We are

THE WAY OF LOVE

in God, and God is in us. This is the basis for loving our neighbor as ourself. The implications are mind-boggling.

The Way of Love is the sixth book in a series that includes *The Way of Kindness*, *The Way of Gratitude*, *The Way of Forgiveness*, *The Way of Suffering*, and *The Way of Peace*. Just as we have endeavored to make the three parts of this book, and all the entries in each part, lead one into another, we have tried to make each book in the series an integral aspect of all the other books. Our philosophy is not only that everybody is a part of everybody else, but that everything is a part of everything. Everything on the waterfront is *one*.

With all our love,

MICHAEL LEACH
DORIS GOODNOUGH
MARIA ANGELINI