

Love or Desire?



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In an old episode of "My Three Sons," 18-year-old Chip Douglas elopes with a girl. Can the marriage work? Of course, it can. But it also might not. I knew a similar couple years ago and within two years they were divorced.

In centuries past, there were successful marriages when the couples were even younger than 18, but that is because the circumstances were different. Children often grew up in small towns where boys and girls knew each other since childhood, and they knew who had a temper or was bossy, etc.

Today, however, after knowing each other a short time, they say they are "in love." But are they really? Too often, especially for boys, it's not "love" but rather "desire" that they feel. Therefore, if a boy says he loves a girl she needs to ask, "Why?" If his response only has to do with what he perceives as her physical beauty, the girl needs to be careful because in ten or fifteen years she will not be as "beautiful." Then, if he sees another girl who looks like the original girl did ten or fifteen years earlier, he's gone! This lack of discernment on the part of young couples is often why relationships and marriage break up (about half of all marriages in the U.S. end in divorce).

So, what is "love"? Love includes not only feeling but thought as well. For example, one might feel like doing something (e.g., having sex). But thought concludes that would not be best for the couple. In the case of Chip Douglas, his father

should have said, "I'm sure you have thought of all the reasons to get married, but have you thought of all the reasons not to get married at age 18?" The father could have then asked, "Do you remember when you were 14? Do you think you have changed a lot?" Chip probably replied affirmatively, responding that he had become a lot more mature. The father then could have said, "Chip, you are also going to change between 18 and 22, so why don't you wait a little longer until you have become the final you?"

Love is also sacrificial. Parents usually love their children and make sacrifices for them. If the parents want a new car, but the children need new clothes, the parents often will sacrifice the car and buy the clothes instead. Unfortunately, women sacrifice more than men in a relationship. For example, if a woman wants to go with a man to a concert, and he wants to see a ballgame, she won't even ask him about the concert. But if she doesn't know he wants to see a ballgame, and asks him to go to the concert, he will throw the decision back to her, saying, "Aw, there's this ballgame I really wanted to see," knowing that because she loves him, she will defer to his desire.

The main difference between love and desire is that love is other-oriented and desire is self-oriented. Love is when the male tries to please the female (e.g., "What can I do for her?" or "How can I help her?"). Desire is when the male thinks primarily about how the female can please him. As I alluded to earlier, if a man says he "loves" a woman because she is beautiful, that's really desire because he is actually thinking about how it pleases him to look at her beauty.

Desire usually fades over time (e.g., as the woman gets older, she is no longer as beautiful), but love can increase over time because there will be more opportunities for the man to help or care for the woman, or express his love in different ways. For example, too often men will forget their wives' birthday, so I would suggest writing a love note something

like the following:

“Every Day is Like Your Birthday to Me”

Yes, I had forgotten your birthday,
And I know that's made you sad,
But sweetheart, there's a reason
You should know why I had.

It's because every day I can be with you
Is like your birthday to me.
Every day I think of things I can say or do
That will make you happy!

A prayer, a smile, an encouraging word,
With a loving embrace are my gifts to you.
So please don't be sad I forgot your birthday,
Because every day I love you all the whole day through!

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