

True Love vs. Infatuation

By: Bob Lenz

Oh, the feeling of being in love! When you know that you know it's right! It's got to be one of life's greatest highlights. When it's so awesome that it's difficult to put into words... Just to hear someone say, "I'm in love," with the tone of their voice floating with emotion. There's a sparkle in their eye that proves the fireworks have gone off. When they can finally say, "I've never felt this way about anyone else before, and I know I never will again."

That's the way it was for me when I first laid eyes upon my wife, Carol. Coming home from camp where we had met, the first thing I said to my mom was, "I met the girl I am going to marry." She of course responded, "But Bob, you just met her!"

What my mom didn't understand was that when I looked into Carol's eyes I melted.

I can hear people say, that's not love, that infatuation. They say love is not a feeling, it's a commitment. I disagree, well at least in part. Maybe I'm a bit of a romantic, but if you take away the affection part of my dating relationship, as well as take it out of my marriage, then you take away one of the greatest joys in my life.

Love, in part, is a feeling. The Greeks used the word *eros* to describe romantic love. Believe it or not, the Bible encourages *eros*. The entire book of the Songs of Solomon is devoted to honoring marriage, and how vital romantic love, sex, and intimacy are within the confines of marriage. I am tired of people putting down this part of love.

Although not complete love, physical attraction to another is part of falling in love. Love is also a deep commitment for the betterment of the other person – A vow to unconditionally accept and cherish this person, even when the conditions change, even when you feel like leaving.

Real love is both. I believe commitment and affection are needed to build a relationship that lasts.

Try saying to someone that you weren't attracted to them, but that you were choosing to date them, and promised to be committed to them because that's what real love is. I think it's clear to see that's not love (and the other person wouldn't feel loved). The flip side, which isn't love either, is having just the feeling good part of love.

Real love will work in good times, and in health, and if things get better. But love based on feelings alone will never endure the bad times, sickness, or if things got worse. Maybe that's why 52% of marriages end in divorce. I will bet that when they fell in love, they thought it would be forever. What went wrong? What happened? Was it really love? What is love anyway? And how do you know if you are in love or only infatuated? Infatuation has been defined as "being completely carried away by affections," or "the emotional impulse of love untested by time or circumstance." When the feeling part of love is so strong that it blinds us to reality – that is infatuation. Ray Short puts it this way; "Remember infatuation is a vaccine that immunizes you against seeing anything wrong with the other person. You tend to put your beloved on a pedestal, a paragon of perfection. You live in a sort of Romantic Disneyland."

Real love is not blind. Real love always does a reality check. If it does not pass, it will not last. It is possible to experience all the emotions and affections in a relationship, and not be real love. If my look at Carol would have ended with what I *felt* when I first looked into her eyes, it never would have lasted. But at our next encounter, I watched her inwardly, and saw her personality, her character. It was then that I said to my mom, "If it's not her, then it's going to be someone like her." This also forced me to take a look inside at my own character.

We are celebrating more than 20 years of marriage together. I love my wife more than ever...that is to say, I have more feelings for her than ever and I am more committed to her well being than ever. Because of our commitment to each other, we will grow in love in good times and bad, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, because we are in love!

Real, complete love is forever. Falling in real love includes attraction; staying in real love takes commitment!

INFATUATION VS. REAL LOVE

INFATUATION CARRIED AWAY BY ATTRACTION

"He's hot" – Evaluates outward beauty only ∞

"She's the greatest" – Blind to faults ∞

"We never fight" – Avoids problems ∞

"It was love at first sight" – Starts off quickly ∞

"She's my life" – World revolves around person ∞

"When I'm in his arms" – Too much physical ∞

"I just can't control myself" – Has to have sex now ∞

"We know it's right" – No matter what others think ∞

"How am I doing" – Self-centered, always taking ∞

"You're all mine" – Possessive, jealous ∞

"I hate you being gone" – Separation hurts bond ∞

"Those things don't matter" – Disregard critical issues ∞

"I would die if you left me" – Identity is solely in other ∞

"I would do anything to keep you" – Compromises self ∞

REAL LOVE ATTRACTION AND COMMITMENT

Looks at the total person

Open and honest with each other

Willing to work through problems

Deepens with time

Relationship stimulates individual growth

Verbal communication is high: share values

Willing to wait for sex; mutual respect

Family/friends are for the relationship

Self-controlled, centered on others

Built on trust, encourages other interests

Separation causes reflection/love grows

Share common views, morals, and faith

Has own identity in life and with God

Doesn't compromise principles/convictions

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

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