

What Most People Don't Understand About Love

All the problems of the world could be solved if we simply remember that all we need is love. Love! Love is all we need.

Is it as simple as John Lennon suggests in his iconic Beatles anthem?

The answer is yes. Emphatically, yes!

The problem is not with the truth of the mantra but with the truth of love itself. Love is not simply something we need, in the sense that we need to have it; it is something we need, in the sense that we need to give it. And there's the rub.

The giving of love is the giving of ourselves. It's the overcoming of the ego in the service of another. It's the sacrificing of ourselves for the beloved. In its truest form, it is the laying down of our lives for another. In the absolutely truest form, it is the laying down of our lives for all others. If all of us loved in this way, it would indeed be all we need and all everyone else needs. We would live pretty much in a perfect world. We would, in the words of another hippy anthem, get back to the Garden. We would have found Paradise.

What makes this impossible is the ego, which is summed up in that other hippy phrase that we should simply do our own thing. Doing our own thing is the opposite of love. It is selfish, whereas love is selfless. We cannot love and do our own thing at the same time. On the contrary. Love is choosing not to do our own thing.

And this is where John Lennon and others of his persuasion come unstuck. They need love but they aren't prepared to pay the price that love demands. They want "free love". The

problem is that love is never free because it costs us ourselves. Free love is, therefore, moronic because it is oxymoronic.

There is, however, a paradox that goes much deeper than the oxymoronic level. The paradox is that love leads to freedom and the absence of love leads to slavery. A world in which everyone truly loved everyone else by always sacrificing themselves for others would be a world which would be free of the pain that we inflict on each other through our acts of selfishness. In such a world we would all be liberated from the suffering that we inflict on each other. Choosing to lose our freedom through the giving of love therefore leads to the gaining of our freedom through the liberation of ourselves and our neighbours from the cost of living in a loveless world. This is the paradoxical key that is at the heart of love. We have to choose to sacrifice our freedom in order to gain it.

Is love all we need? Yes, you better believe it! Can it be gained by doing our own thing, as John Lennon and the “free love” hippy generation believed? Absolutely not! If we want the love we need, and if we want to give peace between our brothers and sisters a chance, we’d better stop doing our own thing and start doing things for others.

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