

## Is This Love?

Love is a tricky thing. People fall in and out of it, look for it in the wrong places, and abuse it for their own gain. But there are also those who are in love for life; who love through the hard times; and who show their love by thinking first of the others around them. With the words, "I love you" so easily said, it's a good idea to take a look at what love is and what it should be.

## Love is ... Others

The most important characteristic of love is that it is focused outwardly. What this means is that love does not think of self first. Love always thinks of the other person. If a couple is truly in love, each partner will be trying to do what is best for the other. In other words, love is not selfish, it is selfless. If you are in a relationship where either you or your partner thinks only about his or her own needs, you should question if love is there.

## Love is ... Action

Love is much more than an emotion or feeling. While many relationships start with great feelings of excitement, they rarely stay there. Relationships move on to the point where the true character of each person is on full display. Often, this can be the beginning of difficulties in a relationship. True love is not based on that first emotion. True love will still think of the other person first even when the feelings don't match. True love is making a choice to love even when you don't feel like it. If you are in a relationship where the words "I love you" are said but there are no actions to confirm the words, you should question if love is there.

## Love is ... Uplifting

Love is an opportunity to lift another person up with kind words and actions. A person in love will be encouraging, uplifting, and supportive. A person in love will see the good in his or her partner. They will praise one another to others and never say anything to tear their partner down. A person in love will not use words to harm or put their partner in his or her place. If you are in a relationship where words are used to hurt or to belittle, you should question if love is there.

## What should you do?

Marriage can be hard work. It takes time, maturity, empathy, love and understanding. Here are some suggestions for what you can do to become the mother and wife your family needs.

- **Make a commitment.** What your spouse and your children need most is you. Make a commitment to work on the relationship even when you feel like giving up. Decide ahead of time that you will be willing to do the big things to keep your marriage healthy. These big things may include counseling, moving, quitting a job, ending relationships or standing up to your family.
- **Lead with love and grace.** You need to give love freely to your spouse and children. Never change your love because of how they act. Your love should always be unconditional. To have a strong and healthy marriage you need to start by claiming responsibility for your own feelings. Your spouse's actions cannot make you feel anything.
- **Spend the time.** We have time we can control and time we can't. Show your family you care for them by giving them as much time as possible.

- **Know your family.** You need to spend time talking with your husband and children. You can be the center of your kids' universe just by caring for them with love and appropriate discipline. If there is fighting and problems and you need to end the patterns of fights and problems, choose to react correctly. If you have made the commitment to make your marriage work, it needs to start with you. The key is taking responsibility for your own feelings and making a choice to control what is yours to control. Understand that there are feelings behind what is being said. This will free you, the wife, to understand and empathize with your husband. Choose to see your husband as the person that you love and then respond with love to the need that he has.
- **Work through failure.** Sometimes it seems unfair that you are the one trying to offer love and support, but you are only responsible for your own actions not anyone else's. You cannot be perfect. You will mess up. When you do something wrong, apologize (even to your children if they were hurt by you)

and then move on. You need to show your husband that you love him by supporting him, especially when he is hurt. Remember it next time, and do not repeat the same mistake.