

A special fondness  
June 28, 2009  
Genesis 29:15-30

How Do I know someone is in love?

A man I know has broken up with his girlfriend. But the rest of us know he is still in love by the way his face lights up when he talks about her.

How do I know someone is in love?

I stood here last weekend before a man and woman ready to say their marriage vows. She looked at him and could hardly say the lines, she was so choked up. I could tell by the light in her eyes she was in love.

How can you tell Jacob was in love? He agreed with Laban to work seven years for Rachel's hand in marriage. He was tricked into marrying the wrong woman, Leah. Jacob, the cheater, had been cheated. But he did not give up, he persevered, worked for another 7 years to earn the right to marry Rachel as well. He loved her so much he would not let the trick and his disappointment stop their marriage. He must have loved greatly.

How do you fall in love with someone? You take care of them. Sometimes the feeling of love leads to the care. Sometimes the care leads to the feeling. If you want to love somebody, take care of them. If you love someone because they take care of you, that's not real love, that's need. I need you is not the same as, I love you.

A TV program interviewed couples from another country who had had their marriages arranged by their parents. They said their American friends were getting married for the wrong reasons, and then getting divorced much more often than people in arranged marriages. They said their parents knew better what were the right reasons for getting married. Do you know the right reasons for getting married?

How do I know the love I feel is strong enough to base a marriage?

My answer: If you are more interested in what you can give than in what you can get, it's strong enough. If you are thinking about the other and wondering how you can add to her or his life, rather than thinking about the nice things he or she will do for you, it's strong enough.

The speaker in an arranged marriage said people were getting married for the wrong reasons. Her friends seemed to have the idea that you choose the one you love until you don't love them anymore. Arranged marriages are not the answer in our American culture. God's plan for us is to choose the one you love and then

love the one you choose. Married love is a choice to find new things to love about the other as we go along. New ways to add to their life.

God and God's people made a covenant. God said "I will be your God". The people said "We will be your people". This is a permanent situation that doesn't stop just because one or the other seems to let down. In a covenant, behavior is not measurable, so it requires more trust than a contract. A covenant doesn't set the number of healings God will do, or the number of worship services the people will attend, or the number of God's acts of mercy or the number of crops raised. A husband and wife live in a covenant. We and God live in a covenant. (notes from

How can you tell God loves you? The main character in the book The Shack is Mack. He hears God say "I have a special fondness for you". God showed that fondness by teaching him the lessons needed to quit judging. God taught him his daughter's joy was much stronger than the pain of his loss of her. God patiently showed him the way through his grief to a higher life. That's how God is loving you, too.

How do you stay in love with God?

One of the three simple rules is staying in love with God. The study group will see John Wesley's ways: worship, hearing the word preached, communion, prayer, Bible reading, fasting or abstinence.

You also stay in love with God by caring for God. Just as you love a friend or spouse by adding to their lives by helping with their work, you stay in love with God by helping with God's work. Just as you love a friend or spouse by bragging about them to others, you stay in love with God by bragging about God to others. Just as you stay in love with a spouse or friend by praising them, you stay in love with God by praising him.

Mack heard that God had a special fondness for him. Mack heard God say that about other people, too, but it didn't diminish his sense of God's care for him. Jacob had such a special fondness for Rachel he worked extra years so he could be her husband. Husbands and wives, stay in love with each other.

Christian, God has a special fondness for you. Stay in love with God.

Some of you were here for my Lenten sermon about people leaving Jesus. I said the number one reason for divorces was unrealistic expectations. The husband and wife don't get loved the way they expect. The other person doesn't earn or manage the money the way one expects. The other doesn't spend time with the kids, or handle their emotions the way one expects.

That's why people go away from Jesus too. Jesus doesn't love them the way they want. One gets into a relationship with Jesus Christ for the showers of blessings, or the good feelings, or the escape from loneliness. Then when it doesn't come, they leave. Jesus loves, but perhaps in a different way than at first. But one doesn't look, one doesn't wait on the Lord, one refuses to learn a new way of knowing Christ. One goes away.

Husbands and wives don't give and receive love the same way over a long marriage. God and Christian don't either. If you are looking for only the same feelings you had when you were first saved, no wonder your faith is flat. If you had the visit of an angel and are waiting for another one, refusing to see God in any other place, no wonder your faith is flat.

But God has a special fondness for you. God has got a new sense of love for you somewhere you didn't get it before. Try a different job in church, try a different small group. Maybe it's there.

God loves you. God is bringing you through whatever loss you've faced to resurrection in a new life. God is steering you toward a joy much stronger than any pain you have now. God is overcoming any evil treatment you are receiving by giving you the power to overcome. God loves you.