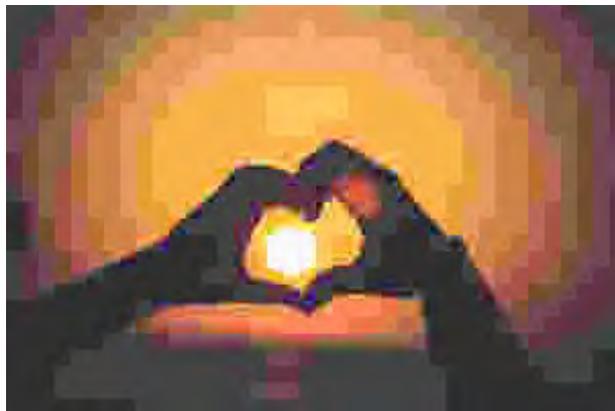


Heart and Conscience - Our heart yearns for harmonious and loving relationships

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Our heart yearns for harmonious and loving relationships. To create such relationships, we first need to learn how to let go of selfishness, focus on what is best for our partner, observe the proper standards of relationship, and live up to our commitments.

Heart of Love

Heart is the irresistible impulse to find joy through loving and being loved (why we live). Joy is the purpose of life (what we live for). Love is the way heart can reach its goal (how we live). Ethical

norms guide the focus of our love (for whom we live).

When we have a mature, cultivated heart, our desires focus more on the well-being of others than on our own comfort. If we have been educated in heart, we experience great joy through expressing love. Vices have no appeal to us. However, when our impulses become undisciplined and self-consuming, it's time to refine a deeper heart.

Culture of Heart

The highest focus of education and the core of culture is the development of heart. The cultivation of heart is set in motion by early experiences with parents and caregivers. Numerous studies have shown that the warm, responsible love of parents nurtures the child's moral center.* Parents prepare their child's heart through feeding and caring for their child's needs. With their eyes, voice, hands and entire body, parents reach out in love to their child and stimulate the child's response.

We all have an inner mechanism that aligns our heart with the standard of goodness. This is the guidance of our conscience that acts as our moral compass by guiding us in the direction of true love. Like heart, the conscience is innate. It is naturally responsive to truth. It is also cultivated and shaped through education, first by parents and then by teachers and other people in a position of influence.

Conscience

Our conscience urges us to place priority on our commitments and responsibilities to others rather than focusing on our selfish desires. It points us towards the highest good. It is the conscience that issues this call to a higher duty and responsibility and urges us to use our talents and energies for the benefit of all.

When we think, speak, and act for the benefit of ourselves at the expense of others, our conscience sounds a warning. If we repeatedly ignore our conscience, we become less sensitive to its voice. Those who didn't experience enough nurturing and guidance may pursue desires that are destructive both to themselves and society. Social norms, community standards, and laws set boundaries to limit such destructiveness.

Heart and conscience are intimately related to each other, and they join forces in the pursuit of true love. Heart is like an emotional and intuitive propeller (powers the motion). Conscience is like a rational and instinctive rudder (sets the direction). Heart motivates us to relate to others with true love, while conscience steers a safe course through expanding circles of connections with others.

Habits of Heart

When parents look upon their children's actions with love, they tend to see truth, goodness, and beauty in them because of their love, even when the children's actions may not have been intended to demonstrate those values. True love experienced in the family will generate what some have called the "habits of the heart." These habits of the heart serve as the basis for relating to others.

Good habits rooted in early experiences of true love cultivate virtue. When loving parents care for their children, a natural pathway for the development of the child's conscience and heart emerges. Individuals raised in an atmosphere of true love know that they exist for the community, for the nation, and for the world.

Since love is so important for establishing our value, when it becomes corrupted or self-centered, it distorts our natural inclination to embody virtue. The bad habits that are rooted in selfish and immature love develop into vices. The way to realize true love is not random, but it is shaped by our habits and guided by universal principles.

True Love

Full happiness comes through the satisfaction of both physical and spiritual desires. These desires find their harmony through a higher principle, which is true love. True love specifies the moral and ethical dimensions of love.

Love is the emotional attraction, through which subject and object partners unite and feel joy. The attraction of love is neutral and can take various directions. True love is the proper direction, cultivated through family ethics. Love that is not true takes the wrong or unethical direction. True love seeks complete, lasting, and all-encompassing joy. When the heart strives for such a joy, its efforts are manifested as true love.

It's clear that there is a lack of true love in this world. Parents do their best, but they too didn't receive total unselfish love. There are varying degrees of true love environments that families create. Although we can find pockets of incredibly loving families, it appears that there is more of a culture of selfishness, self-righteousness, and ill-treatment notably narrated by television and social media. Who can take responsibility to change the culture? Only people who are making a conscious effort to mature their true love!

Even though our hearts want to make a difference in the world and our conscience nags us to take some action, the current culture often discourages our vision. We have discussed the need for faith, hope, and love. Then, we delved into commitment. At this stage, we are ready to defeat the hero's enemy, whether it be confidence, influences, habits, or the desire for comfort. Still, accepting the guidance of a virtuous mentor and surrounding yourself with like-minded people helps.

Inspiration and Support

On my journey, Father Moon is my inspiration from the spirit world and Mother Moon is my mentor on this earth. They have both shown me they are people who pave the way of true love deeper than I have ever seen. Recently, Mother Moon has been encouraging us to make a goal of reaching out to 430 couples and to spread the Holy Marriage Blessing. She told us the Holy Marriage Blessing we received should not remain in our own family. We have a responsibility to display our pride and joy to the people of the world. In the next world, we breathe love as air. Reaching out to others is how we can grow our ability to love.

Sometimes we need to travel on our journey alone but if there are others going the same path, we should collaborate and support each other. The group I can align myself with is called the Heavenly Tribe. Our collective goal is to spread the Holy Marriage Blessing to a million couples in America. Together we create a renewed vision for our community culture and direction. There are resources available for all of us to review. We individually form small groups of people and strengthen our relationships in that more personal setting. Each small group sets some inspiring goals together based on their potentials and circumstances. Finally, our motto is to set it all in motion with some small action.

Contemplation

How do you find joy in loving?

How do you cultivate your heart?

How does your conscience and heart work together in your life?

What are your habits of heart?

What support can you find to support you on your journey of heart?

* Berkowitz, M., "Fostering Goodness: Teaching Parents to Facilitate Children's Moral Development," *Journal of Moral Education*, 27:3, 1998, pp. 371-391; D. Solomon, D., Watson, M., and Battistich, V., "Teaching and Schooling Effects on Moral/Prosocial Development." Virginia Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 4th edition, Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association, 2002. pp. 566 -603.