When Love Costs

“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”
—1 John 3:18, ESV

There are days when loving seems to come naturally.

We enjoy the person before us. Conversation is easy. Kindness rises without much effort. We are glad to give our time because being together is itself a pleasure.

We should receive those days with thanksgiving.

But they are not every day.

Fatigue comes. Disappointment enters. Someone becomes difficult to understand. The warmth we once felt may be quiet for a season, while the responsibilities of the relationship remain.

What does love require then?

We may be tempted to wait until we feel differently.

When affection returns, we will be attentive. When the irritation passes, we will speak gently. When life becomes less demanding, we will make time.

Meanwhile, someone lives with our withdrawal.

That is where our understanding of love matters.

In What Is Love?, I described love as “the deliberate and enduring choice of the will directed toward the true well-being of another.”

Affection can enrich that choice. It brings warmth and delight to our relationships. But another person’s good cannot depend entirely upon the condition of our feelings.

A tired parent still has a child to guide.

A disappointed husband still has a wife to treat with tenderness.

A wife whose patience is strained still has a husband whose dignity matters.

A friend whose sorrow has become repetitive still needs someone willing to listen.

The absence of ease does not remove the person before us.

Nor does it remove the call to love.

John tells us to love “in deed and in truth.” Those words bring love into the decisions we make when no generous feeling carries us forward.

We can listen without preparing a complaint.

We can answer without using our weariness as permission to wound.

We can keep a promise when fulfilling it no longer pleases us.

We can ask what would help instead of waiting to be appreciated.

These choices may seem small.

But a relationship is lived through such moments. Repeated kindness gives another person something dependable when emotions are unsettled.

This does not mean we should pretend.

We may need to say, “I am hurt.” We may need an honest conversation about what has changed. Love can seek counsel, ask for help, and acknowledge that something needs attention.

Truth belongs within love.

We do not serve another’s good by concealing serious wrongdoing or allowing harm to continue. Setting a necessary boundary can be a faithful act of care.

But ordinary disappointment must not become an excuse for abandoning ordinary faithfulness.

We should examine the conditions we have quietly attached to our kindness.

Must I feel close before I act with care?

Must I be thanked before I continue?

Must loving fit comfortably within my plans?

Those questions lead us back to Christ.

He loved us while we were still sinners. His cross accomplished our redemption before we offered any grateful response.
Romans 5:8

We live by a love we did not make convenient.

And the Savior who loved us first supplies grace for the love He commands. We can confess our coldness, ask Him to renew our affection, and obey while we wait.

We need not manufacture a feeling before offering a kindness.

Today, love may require a patient answer, an inconvenient visit, a kept promise, or a truthful conversation spoken gently.

The warmth may return.

For now, the person remains.

When affection grows quiet and convenience falls away, will we still seek that person’s good?

Just a Thought.

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