

Have you ever lost anything? I mean like car keys, or a cuff link, or the TV remote? These all seem critically important at the time. But have you ever lost anything really important? Like leaving your child at the filling station when you're on a trip? That could be a truly great loss. But one of the greatest losses that we can suffer is the loss of love.

I'm talking about more than just losing someone we love. When that happens, we must understand that the love is still there even though physically they are gone. In talking about lost love, I'm not just talking about a separation of people who love each other. I'm talking about when someone you love no longer loves you anymore.

Jesus gave three parables about things that were highly thought of, but which had been lost: a coin, a sheep, and a son (Luke 15:3-32). In this list there is an increasing power of the lost item to love. The coin is just an object with no capacity for emotion. The sheep, like a pet, has some ability for affection. But the son is a person who can bring true love into a relationship.

The story of the Prodigal Son is on the surface just about a boy's selfish desire for independence. But think about the story from the viewpoint of the father and his concern for the loss of his son's love. The father knew he must lose either his son's presence or his love when he was asked to split the inheritance. So he let him go. Think also about whether the son came back because he knew he could get a job or because he also knew that he was loved and he missed the loss of it so desperately?

Which hurts us more, the loss of love or the loss of things? I've known a lot of people who regularly choose things over love. And their relationships wither and die as a result. Jesus told the parable about the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-23), who made a similar choice. He never understood this great principle: **You're rich if somebody loves you.**

Love is a living thing that can either grow or die. It is not like losing your keys; it's more like losing a beautiful shade tree in your yard. Have you ever felt love fading away? Unfortunately, it is somewhat common in marriage, even when it doesn't end in divorce. So many of our songs speak of lost or dying love; it is such a common ailment in our world.

There were many in the Bible that felt the danger of losing love. Others, such as Leah, yearned for love that they never were able to obtain. In Genesis 29:31-32 we see where she bore Reuben to Jacob, and said, "It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." Trying to gain or keep the love of someone else can be as frustrating and unsuccessful as trying to capture a wild stallion out in the wild west.

There are many examples of lost love. Take for instance the story of David and Absalom. David, presumably, had too many wives and kingly responsibilities to pay proper attention to his children. Absalom began to openly work to overtake the throne. He would sit at the gate and tell everyone who had a grievance how he wished that he could be in a position to judge in their favor. Just imagine the slander that he spoke against David. The people who believed Absalom let their love for David grow weak and they rebelled against him.

David could feel the dying of his son's love, but he still loved Absalom. Remember the plaintiff cry in 2 Samuel 19:4, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" David's grief was so strong, probably in part because while Absalom was still alive there was hope that the love could be rekindled.

God created man to share a relationship with Him. He loved His creation and wanted it to love Him back. Imagine God's disappointment when Adam and Eve sinned, thereby rejecting Him. The rest of the Bible is the story of God trying to regain our love. Jesus described it tearfully as a mother hen trying to gather in her chicks, but they would not come (Matthew 23:37). He tried to show them through the prophet Hosea that love could be grown back: "I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one'" (Hosea 2:23). But the Israelites were concerned only with the loss of God's protection and wealth, not the loss of His love.

God feels the danger of losing love, and hurts from it just like we do. There are those who slander Him by saying, "There is no God", or "God doesn't concern himself with you", or "Man merely evolved", causing many to turn away from Him. And I believe He can sense the loss of our love like Jesus did when he knew that power had left Him (Mark 5:30). God is love, and he loves each one of us so much that He gave His Son to die on the cross for us. He doesn't want to lose our love for Him. And we know just how that feels.

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