

from the editor...

Your Love is Better Than Ice Cream: A Valentine For My Wife

What are some of your favorite things-- the things you would give up just about anything for? The things that make you anxious with anticipation; the thing that you reward yourself with when you need or deserve to be rewarded; the thing you think of as a real treat? Is it pizza? Chocolate? Ice Cream? A day at a spa or a day shopping or fishing with a good friend? Snuggling up alone with a cup of tea and a good book in front of the fire or a day in the garage under the hood of the car you're restoring? How about like Julie Andrews sang in *the Sound of Music*: Raintdrops on roses and whiskers on kittens. Or cream-colored ponies and crisp apple strudels, or snowflakes that stay on my nose and eyelashes?

OK, OK, this is suppose to be a Valentine, but it's already starting to spiral out of control. When I initially set out to write a Valentine for my wife, Kate, I struggled to find a way to not end up sounding like a sap. But as I worked on writing this, I figured out two things: 1) You can't stand up publicly and declare your love for someone without sounding a little like a sap, because, 2) love is kind of sappy. But Julie Andrews and the Sound of Music? Maybe if I tried quoting somebody cool like U2, it would be better-- "*I have climbed the highest mountains, I have run through the fields. Only to be with you...*"

Of course that song is titled, "*Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*," so that isn't going to work as my declaration of love either.

Is one of your favorite things spending time with the person you love? Hopefully it is, because one of the things I've learned in the thirty-seven years I've been married (OK, it's only been fourteen, but sometimes Kate and I like to joke that it *feels* like thirty-seven! I know, I know-- this is supposed to be a Valentine!) is that being in love can be one of the most rewarding and powerful things. It can also be one of the hardest.

What does it mean to be in love with someone? That's a really good question, because so many of us do not have good role models for what it means to really be in love, to be a good partner, to be happily married. We all know what love isn't-- because we've seen it on TV and in the movies. It isn't sunshine and fields of wildflowers and laughing in the rain and sexy clothes and really hot sex all the time and everyone looking great, even the next morning. Well, it is for about the first month, but then reality sets in. Real life, and love, isn't like in the movies.

Opposites attract, right, which is one reason love is so hard-- we often fall in love with someone who is fundamentally different-- someone who deals with problems, and who travels through their day completely backwards, at least from our point of view. But that's also what makes them so interesting, that's what attracts us to them in the first place. It's why we find them so fascinating and don't want to ever be away from them. At least for the first month.

There's an obscure little song by Sarah McLachlan called *Ice Cream*. It's sort of a love song, I guess. The lyrics go: "Your love is better than ice cream, better than anything else that I've tried." Great sentiments for a love song. But it goes on to talk about how difficult love is as well. Kate and I chose this song as our first dance at our wedding reception, an unusual choice, I suppose. Love can be wonderful-- better than ice cream-- and it can also be heart-wrenching. We knew it was going to be hard work to be married. We just didn't know how hard.

I've learned a few things about love over the years. Love means being there when you're

really needed. It's having someone who will always take your side, no matter who else is involved. It's about support and about sacrifice. It means knowing that someone always has your back. It's about the way it still makes you feel when you see your partner wearing that favorite pair of jeans. It's knowing that when your partner walks away mad, they will come back. It's being able to compromise sometimes, and not always get what you want, because you know that when you really need something, your partner will understand and will make sure you get it. It's about being compassionate and caring and comforting. It's about being compassionate and caring and comforting, even when you don't really feel like it. It's about knowing just the right thing to say at just the right time-- or knowing right away that you totally said the wrong thing. It's about being able to say you are sorry and really mean it. It's about being willing to help make your partner's dreams come true, sometimes at your own expense. It's about really appreciating your partner, and remembering to tell them what it is they do that makes your life more meaningful. It's about having someone in your life who can point out the flaws in your strongest arguments and help you see the whole picture, because in many ways they are your opposite-- and your conscience. It's someone who thinks you are really funny-- almost all the time. It's about having someone who can watch you make a complete fool of yourself, and still be willing to hug you. It's having a best friend, a best friend who knows your worst traits-- and sees them just about every day-- and still chooses to be your best friend.

How do I presume to know all this? Because my wife has done all this, and more, for me. And I try to do the same for her. Because she is the love of my life.

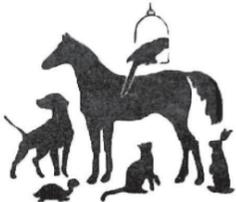
Is our love better than ice cream? Absolutely! Better than Chocolate? You bet! Better than pizza? OK, I hesitated just a bit too long there... but, Yes, of course! She is my favorite thing.

Kate and I wrote our own vows for our wedding, and... well, because it was so long ago, I can't remember what they were. But I do remember one line-- we promised to love each other "...in sunshine and rain." And that, to me, is love in its simplest form. Through good and bad, in sunshine and rain. And hopefully, like in the movies, we even get to laugh in the rain sometimes.

Scott Laird
Editor and Publisher

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