

This is a talk that we gave about love. Love is what we're here for. The reason that we are put on this earth is to learn how to love God and to love other living beings. At the time of death, you're really not going to ask for your bowling trophy, your stock portfolio or your golf clubs. You're going to want to be surrounded by the people that love you. That is what's going to be important to you in the time of death and if you are not surrounded by people who love you, then you will have missed the point of life.

So this, today, is called "How to get a Bachelor's degree in love" – it's the first of a four part series which gives you your Master's degree in love. It's all based on the teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who is the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

I saw a cartoon of two guys talking, and one fellow says to the other person "of course I love people, at least in a theological sense." I don't think anyone would deny that they love people. No one is going to admit that they are a misanthropic person hater, but on what level do you love them? Do you love them as a concept, do you love them theoretically, or do you actually learn how to love individuals?

Every individual is different, there's no two of us that are the same. Within one cubic feet of snow, God creates 18 million snowflakes and no two of them are the same. So loving is not a theoretical or a theological concept. It's something that you learn to do by loving God, who is infinitely variegated in his personality, and recognizing God is present in the heart of every living being. There's too much of us wanting to make everything in our own mold. When they get married, what does the husband do first of all after marriage? You married the girl because you loved the way

she was. You married the guy because you loved the way he was and what's the first thing you did, after the vows were taken, and you hooked them? You tried to change them.

I remember reading a book one time about a communist, and the communist admitted, he said "I love *the* people, I just don't love people." You can't actually love people unless you love God. We love our family members, we love our countrymen, we love our children, and we love "those people with whom we have a bodily connect with." But if your so-called love is based on a bodily connection, it's not really love... its lust, by definition. Love is soul to soul, or soul to the Supreme Soul. If you're getting some self advantage from it, if you're enjoying your kids, or enjoying the benefits of being an American, then that is not love. It is not selfless love, but is actually self-centered love and that's defined as "Kama" in the Vedic Scriptures. It's self-interested love, not really love - its lust. It is self motivated.

Real love has to come as a result of loving God, and realizing that God loves us. God's love for us is unconditional. It is not different yesterday than it will be tomorrow. There is nothing you can ever do that will make God stop loving you. There's nothing you can do. You could commit a heinous act; you commit hundreds of thousands of heinous acts. Society will condemn you. Your own mother and father will walk away from you and disown you... "I don't know him." But there is nothing you can do that will ever stop God from loving you and when you realize that, you will not longer have self esteem problems. You will no longer hate yourself. A lot of people in America and all over the world have seriously low self esteem problems; it's almost epidemic in the world today. But as you realize how unconditionally it is that Krishna loves you, you will never again then have self esteem problems.

If you don't love yourself, you can't give love to other people. You can't give what you don't have. So self love starts with loving God, then loving yourself when you realize how much God loves you, and then you can begin to love other people as well. That's the principle.

So we're talking today about how to get your bachelor's degree in love, and it should be our number one goal in life - to learn how to love. Everything else is secondary: you want to be happy, you want to get comfort in your life, you want to be popular, or well known, or have fun; you want the approval of people, you want to work towards a retirement. Everyone has a dominant life principle, some interest that overshadows all the rest and it guides and dictates us, determining our actions. Now you have to ask yourself – is your dominant life principle to learn how to love people? And if it isn't, then what is your dominant life principle, because everything that you do is going to be colored and shadowed by that.

You know, we have that old song by Doris Day “everybody loves a lover,” and it's true – it's true, but are we lovers or are we lusters? If we are lusters, it means that we are aligned with a particular party, with a particular sect, with a particular interest group. Prahlad Maharajah said we make friends, enemies and neutral parties based on our self interests... “Oh I *love* these people because they are allies in promoting my self-interest. Oh, I *hate* those people because I see them as impediments in promoting my self-interests. I haven't made up my mind about you guys yet, because I'm waiting to see if you're going to promote my self-interests or if you're going to impede them.” So, everybody loves a lover, but everybody doesn't love a luster, nor does a luster love everybody.

So pure devotees are lovers, in fact, because they're not sectarian, they're non-denominational. Someone says “well, aren't you guys another denomination?” “Aren't you Hare Krishnas just like the Catholics, or the Jewish?” “Don't you have a concept of us and them?” Krishna consciousness is not

another sect, it's not another denomination. When Prabhupada, our Guru Maharajah, came to America in 1965, he was once challenged after giving a lecture at the University of California, Berkeley by an Indian student. He said "why have you come to America? We have so many sects, so many denominations, the last thing we need is another one. So you've just come to add another sect, another division when there's already so much division?" And Prabhupada said, "No, I have come to teach what you have forgotten. I have come to teach love of God... real, genuine, love of God, which in itself by definition is non-sectarian." God is the Supreme Being, just like the sun. The sun is not European, or American, or Brazilian, or South American or Asian. It's for everybody. Although it may be called by different names, it's one in the same. Similarly, God is God. He may be known by different names in different cultures and in different communities and Krishna is a non-sectarian name for God which means "all attractive." When we chant,

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare,

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare,

, we are not promoting another sect, we are not promoting another denomination, and we are not starting another religion. We are promoting love of God, which all the sects, all the denominations need more of, otherwise they wouldn't be bickering and at each other's throat. So Prabhupada said "I have come to teach what you have forgotten, which is love of God."

Devotees regard everyone equally with love without discrimination. 500 years ago, Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu sent six of his principle disciples, the Goswamis, to excavate the Holy places of Krishna's pastimes in Vrindavan. During the interval of 4500 years between Krishna's appearance and Lord Chaitanya's appearance, many of those places of Krishna's activity had been lost and overgrown and given over to jungle. And Vrindavan, in fact, was known for having a lot of "Gundas," or thugs.

So there were a lot of thugs in Vrindavan, and Lord Chaitanya sent his disciples to this wild place with wild animals and murderers and thieves and jungle, and they went with faith in the order of Lord Chaitanya and they became far from being victimized, Dhira adhira jana priyam, Vande rūpa-sanātanau raghu-yugau śrī-jīva-gopālakau. They went with a blade of grass in their teeth to indicate their humility; they had the tolerance of a tree which without protest takes the heavy rainfall, the freezing cold, the beating scorching heat of the sun. They went decorated with all qualities in humility and devotion and everybody loved them. When the thieves, the rouges, the gundas would have a dispute, they would go to Rupa Goswami and they would let him abdicate the dispute, and whatever he said they would agree by.

Dhira adhira jana priyam. Devotees are not sectarian or denominational because they don't see in terms of bodily differences: black, white, Indian, man, woman, Krishnan, Hindu – they see the spirit soul, “Sama Darshana.” Devotees are not sectarian in the human society, and they give respect even to the animals and to the ants because they see the same spirit soul there also.

So everybody loves a lover. That can only be one who has this vision of the Supreme Lord as the father of all living beings. Everybody loved Prabhupada. This whole Hare Krishna movement was started and still going on because everybody loved Prabhupada. When I met my first devotee in Australia in 1970, his name was Upendra and I met him on the street. I was coming home from work and he was distributing a Back to Godhead magazine and it so happened that the place they rented for their first Temple in Australia was just around the corner from the apartment where my wife and I were staying so we went over there. Now Upendra was a great first contact. He was a beautiful cook, he could talk, and he was a wonderful musician but over and above that, he had just been Prabhupada's personal secretary for the last year in San Francisco. He and Prabhupada were very close 24 hours a

day and Prabhupada then sent him to Australia... it almost broke his heart. Sometimes that happens. When you want someone to get the real mercy, you want them to depend on Krishna, because it's all too easy when you're right there with a pure devotee, you start to feel smug and complacent, so after one year Prabhupada sent him to Australia. He was grief stricken, he was inconsolable, and we would go to the Temple on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights for the class, but the class would end up being Upendra talking about Prabhupada. It was the only way he could get relief from the separation. He would talk about Prabhupada and tell stories about Prabhupada and that's why we joined - because of Prabhupada.

I have a couple of Prabhupada stories for you, if that's ok. Prabhupada told this joke one time. There's a series of jokes in Bengal about this fellow Gopal Ban, and Gopal Ban had a particular relationship with the King of Bengal. So the King of Bengal once asked Gopal Ban, "what's the difference between you and an ass?" So Gopal Ban got out his measuring stick and he started to measure the distance between him and the king, and he said "it's about 3 feet." Normally, the king would cut off your head for that kind of impertinence, but that was the relationship that they had.

Another time Prabhupada was on an airline and they were playing some beautiful sitar music by Ravi Shankar and Prabhupada had spoken from the Vyasasan. When you speak from the Vyasasan, you have to speak from the point of view of Vyasa Dev in absolute terms, you have to represent Vyasadeva – you can no longer represent you but you are a representative of Vyasadeva. So Prabhupada told devotees "we only listen to devotional music. We don't listen to instrumental music. We listen to bhajans – devotional songs to Krishna." And so, we took that to heart as his disciples and one time Prabhupada sat on a plane on Air India and some nice sitar music came in through the speakers. There

were two devotees and one devotee said “oh, that’s very nice music” and the other devotee said “but that’s Maya, isn’t Prabhupada?” Prabhupada said “yes, it’s Maya, but it’s nice Maya.”

Every year on his appearance day, which was the day after Janmashtami, devotees compile a memorial to Prabhupada, who left in 1977. And this is what Anuttama Das, the President of the Washington D.C. Temple said one year. He said,

We had fun together Prabhupada, and we loved you all the more because of it. Some in your society are trying hard to become Krishna Conscious, but don’t have much joy in their lives. Some work exhaustedly to preach, but aren’t developing much love. Some seek frivolity and occasional chanting, but don’t take your mission seriously. To become pure and to be the force in this world you want us to be Srila Prabhupada, we need balance in our lives and maturity in our hearts. We need to understand you and the example you set for us with broad vision. We need faith, but we must not be rigid. We need austerity, but we also need compassion. We need enthusiasm but we must not lose patience. You have shown us not only how greatness is possible, you have ordered us to strive for it in our lives. If we wish to please you, we must become a society where Indians and Westerners, men and women, rich and poor alike all respect, appreciate and care for one another. There is a difference between sympathy and empathy. If we are to be a real spiritual family, we shouldn’t just show sympathy to other people, but we should show empathy. We should feel their pain as our pain. This is the duty of the Brahmans and the Vaishnavas. Just like the head, if there’s a cut, a laceration and infection in the finger, the head can

say, “well it’s got nothing to do with me; it’s just a different part of the body.”

Or the head could say “it has everything to do with me, its part of the same body and the head figures out how to go to the pharmacy and how to acquire the antibiotics. That’s the duty of Vaishnavas. It’s not just to be sympathetic, but to be empathetic, and to accept other’s pain as one’s own pain and suffering.

Prahlad Maharaja said “I do not want to go to the Kingdom of God until the sufferings of all living beings are first relieved.” He was willing to stay here until every other living being was relieved of all their karmic reactions before going himself to the Kingdom of God.

So we need to feel Krishna’s presence in all living beings at all times. Ordinary people - they can’t help it because they are sectarian, because they are self interested. The results of their speaking are to promote a limited vision of humanity. It’s to get people on one side or another. It may be the good side vs. the bad side. It may be the Democrats vs. the Republicans. It may be the NAACP vs. the Ku Klux Klan. It may be very good, but the *good* is relative. It’s *this* is better than *this*. But when a pure devotee speaks, absolute good is transmitted. It has a magical effect in the hearts of the audience and all the calcium, all the hard-heartedness, all the iron which is encased in the heart becomes dissolved in the liquid of love of God. The result is that people begin to see each other not in sectarian terms, but as eternal parts and parcels of the Lord and as we get that vision, Krishna rewards us according to our different intensities of love for Him. He’s only ready and willing to reciprocate with us – all we have to do is take the initial steps. Everything that we do in life is meant to be done in love. Everything we do. Not just loving people that are cool like us, or people that are Americans like us, or people that are devotees like us, or people that are men like us, or people that are blacks like us... everything that we do should be done in love. And you get your Bachelor’s degree in love when you

learn how to deal lovingly with the parking attendant who's a little surly and not quick to jump at the snap of your fingers; you get to deal lovingly with the girl at the checkout counter who's chewing gum and speaking snappishly to you; you get to deal lovingly with the clerk who can't seem to speak English or maybe speaks English better than you but pretends he can't speak English so he doesn't have to do what you want; and we get to show love when we write emails. Instead of giving into the impulse of the moment and flashing off a nasty email, just consider what you would say if you were face-to-face with that person. Instead of doing the cowardly thing and totally surrendering to the whims of your mind, and your anger, and your sectarianism, and your lust, and your self-interests, just imagine what you would say if you and that person were face -to-face, and then count to 1000, and then go to sleep at night, and then wake up in the morning and then sit down and begin to compose your email. Show a little restraint in your reaction to people's sayings. 99% of the time, what we thought the person was implying wasn't that at all. We completely misunderstood and misinterpreted the action. Then if you react to that which you imagined it to be, it is not at all acting in love – it's a great transgression. When we come face-to-face with Krishna, he won't ask us "how much did you put into your retirement fund", or "how great a sports icon were you," or even "how good a father or how good a mother were you?" He's going to ask "did you learn to love me and did you learn to love other people" or in other words, "did you get it, what you were actually put here for?"

We don't know about love in the United States of America. We know about sex, we know about arousal, we know about attraction, but we don't really know about love because we're not willing to make the kinds of commitments that we need to make in order to feel the gradual development and awakening of love. Love is something you work on. It's not something that you apply to your latest most favorite thing: Krispy Kreme pastries; or I love my car; I love my guns; I love

hunting; I love fishing. We overuse the word and so it has lost its punch – it's lost its meaning. You don't love any of these things. You learn to love. You cultivate love gradually. Lust cannot wait to get, love can always wait to give.

This is a poem by William Break and it talks about the difference between love and lust: "Love seeketh not itself to please, nor for its self hath it any care. But for another gives its ease and builds a heaven in hell's despair." So love is not that which is convenient, love is not what is in your own perceived self interests, but love is for another. Love is giving your own comfort for another's care. That's what love is. On the other hand, "lust seeketh only self to please, to bind another to its delights. It enjoys another's loss of ease and builds a hell in heavens despite." It's interesting that where there is love, hell can become heaven and when there's lust heaven becomes hell. You know, I often wonder about these most beautiful spots in the world: Haiti and San Salvador - look at what lust has done. Some of the most beautiful places in the world have just become hell holes because of lust and greed and unbridled self-interests.

Love and lust resemble each other in some superficial ways, just like bamboo and sugar cane resemble each other. You could easily mistake bamboo for sugar cane, but the difference is that when you take a piece of bamboo mistaking it for sugar cane and bite into it, you break your teeth and you create a lot of pain and a lot of suffering. Sugar cane, when you bite into it, gives and releases lots and lots of sweet. So although lust may cater to our immediate needs, viṣam iva, in the Bhagavad gita Krishna says,

yat tad agre viṣam iva
pariṇāme 'mr̥topamam

tat sukhaṁ sāttvikarṁ proktam
ātma-buddhi-prasāda-jam
[BG 18.37]

, “that which is nectar at first is like poison in the end.” Lust may seem like nectar in the beginning, but like poison in the end whereas love, selfless love, may seem like poison in the beginning, but it is nectar in the end. Lust is the enemy of the soul.

We naturally are lovers. We are naturally lovers of God. One of the first things that Upendra told me on that street in downtown Sydney Australia almost 40 years ago, he said “love of God is dormant within everyone’s heart.” It’s there. It’s not something you have to strive for or import. It’s already there. We’re all naturally lovers of God. In the sixties we wore buttons that said “question authority”, and “don’t trust anyone over 30.” Prabhupada used to say “I’m one old man, I have no money, and these are young kids. I have asked them to give up illicit sex, gambling, intoxication and meat eating. I have not bribed them and yet they are dancing jubilantly like peacocks.” Why is that? Love of Krishna is natural. It’s the natural constitutional position of the soul. You don’t need to bribe anyone. It’s natural. And when a pure devotee comes and speaks, it ignites that which is already within us. It’s like, wood and there’s fire within wood. If you bring fire externally, then the internal fire will combust. So the lover of the Lord, the pure devotee, the Guru, he brings out the love of God which is already within our heart. But failing that, failing good association, not getting the association of lovers, but hanging around all the time with lusters that natural love becomes transformed. Prabhupada gives the example that when milk touches tamarind. One of the things that makes tamarind very good is that it has a little bit of a sour pucker. When tamarind contacts milk, it curdles the milk and the milk becomes sour. So when the soul, the eternal spirit soul, contacts matter and gets

the negative association of other lusty souls in this material world, the natural love becomes transformed into something sour and ends up being wrath because lust can never be satisfied and lust always ends up being anger or wrath.

We are made in God's image and the reason we should love other living beings is because God loves us. We should reflect God's love. We should receive it and we should pass it on. Krishna came all the way from the spiritual world 5000 years ago to deliver the message of the Gita. The problem is not that we don't love God enough, but we don't realize how much he loves us.

Krishna is not really saying that you have to do anything to love him; he's saying basically that he already loves us. All we have to do is accept that it's like an inheritance that you just have to claim. That's all you have to do in order to obtain it. It's already yours. You don't have to get it; you don't have to earn it. You just have to claim it. So Krishna is saying "my love is there for you, it's always been there for you" - throughout millions and millions perhaps of previous incarnations in which we've experienced all kinds of unsavory births due to our past karmic activities, the Lord has never abandoned us. He has always accompanied us as the Super Soul and our well wishing friend throughout thousands and perhaps millions and millions of previous incarnations. Now what kind of love is that? Unfathomable, unlimited love! If you asked your wife, "Dear wife, due to my sinful activities in this life, I'm going to take my next birth as a worm in stool, would you come with me?" "Would you come with me?" That would be a good test of how much she loves you, at yet God has come with us in such degraded deplorable circumstances. He's not said "ok, I'm out of this one. You got yourself into that one, you're on your own buddy." He didn't reject us. There is nothing we did that would make Him abandon us. But really, what He's saying is, in the face of that steadfastness, in the face of that love, why don't we just acknowledge it instead of trying to live independently, trying

to be little gods in our own right, why don't we just accept the one God who is God and take advantage of his support and his strength. We give the example – if you are the son of Bill Gates, what's the meaning of talking about making it on your own and being independent? What's the meaning of that? What's that going to prove? You're the son of Bill Gates. “Well, I'm going to go out and get an \$8/hour job working at a car wash or something.” What would be the point of that? What are you trying to prove? All you have to do is say “I'm Bill Gate's son.” Don't hide it – acknowledge it. And then you'll never be in fear, you'll never be in stress, you'll never be concerned about where your maintenance will come from ever again. It doesn't mean that you're just going to sit and watch TV and say “I don't have to do anything – I'm Bill Gate's son.” No, you'll do stuff; you'll pursue your talents, your interests. Maybe you like to fly a plane, or hang-glide or collect butterflies or something like that. You'll do all the things that we do, but the choices you make will be based on what your talents and abilities are – what you're good at doing – what God created you to do. That'll be one difference. And the second major difference is that you'll not worry about your maintenance. How many people say “well, if I didn't go to work, I'd starve or my family would starve”? What a lot of baloney! Animals don't starve and they're not going to work. Atheists are standing up on the radio and saying that there's no God and God doesn't begrudge them their daily bread. Why is God going to let you starve? That's not the right reason for going to work. You're not going to enjoy your life if you think “oh, I have to work to put bread on the table and put money into the bank.” That's foolish. You're just going to be unfulfilled, stressed out and you're going to die early. When you realize that the Supreme Personality of Godhead loves me unconditionally, not randomly but consistently and he has promised in the Bhagavad gita that all I have to do is acknowledge him then all your maintenance problems are solved so you can do what you were made to do and you can enjoy it and you'll never

worry one tot about where your food and your shelter is going to come from. That's what Krishna wants. He's not asking you to do anything but to just acknowledge him, or to claim him.

Here's what Prabhupada said in a book called The quest for enlightenment,

God is attractive for all living entities. In pictures of Krishna you see that he loves the calves and cows, loves the trees, loves the Gopis, he loves the cowherd boys – for him everyone is a lovable object because everyone is the son of God. Krishna is attractive for everyone and Krishna is equal to everyone.

There is no distinction for God that: here is an animal, here is a man, and here is a tree. No, every living entity is part and parcel of God.

So when we feel that, we'll start cutting people a lot more slack. If you don't feel good about yourself, then you're not going to allow people to be who they are. You may be hurt or rejected, abandoned or betrayed, and you may have scars on the heart. If you don't learn how to love other people, if you don't love yourself, you'll not be able to give to other people what you do not have. An example is given here of a tube of toothpaste. You're only going to get out of the tube of toothpaste what went in. So if we don't have love and self esteem, we're not going to be able to treat other people with love. So what Krishna says, he says

sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo

[BG 15.15]

“I am seated in everyone's heart, and I am poised.” It's like there's a cave with a 1000 watt bulb that's turned off. All you have to do is flick the switch and then the whole cave becomes flooded with light.

We have Krishna in our heart, but we're ignoring him: we're on the cell phone; we're watching TV; we're doing the podcast; we're gambling in Las Vegas; we're thinking about that new car; and we're taking all these courses to get security in life -we're just not tuned in. He's trying to communicate with us, but he's getting the bust signal. And really, all we have to do is just turn on the switch and God's love is unfathomable, it's a tidal wave that'll wash us clean and it will positively affect every single relationship that we have with other living beings.

These are the four attributes of love.

- 1.) It's a choice.
- 2.) It's an action.
- 3.) It's a skill.
- 4.) It's a habit.

Choice:

People say "oh, I fell in love." Falling in love is not like falling in a ditch, it's not something that just happens. It's an action that you make. When you stand before the altar in the Temple, before the Priest and before your family and relatives and you say "I do," you are making a choice to love that one person above all others. You are making a commitment to that person and you can't expect a commitment from that person unless *you* make a commitment to that person.

During a recent membership class we were discussing associations. The example was given of the crowd, the people that orbit in Utah Valley that may like the festivals, they like shopping in the gift store, they like an occasional meal, and they may drop in on the Sunday Feast... that's the crowd or community. Then we have the congregation, which is a slightly inner circle. Those are the people who come regularly. They like the message, it makes them feel good, it awakens doors of self knowledge,

the food's good, for various reasons – they're more or less regular attendees. And what we've instituted here is a once a month membership class. What we're asking of the people who come regularly, is to take the membership class and make a formal commitment. Make a formal commitment to become a member of this Temple. Make a formal commitment to become a part of Krishna's family. Make a formal commitment to these bodies of devotees. And our promise to you is, if you make that commitment, we will make a further commitment to you. We are committed to the spiritual wellbeing of all kinds of people and we work hard 24 hours a day to do that. But if you commit to this Temple, we will be further committed to you. And that's what the membership program is all about. You can't expect a commitment from someone unless you're willing to make a commitment from them. Vaibhavi and I have been working like crazy for 20 years, filling our head with all kinds of details and then people complain, "Well you don't have time for me" or "you should be more of a spiritual personality." But how can we give something we don't have? How can we feed other people if we're starving? So make a commitment to be a member, make a commitment for spiritual maturity, and make a commitment to do some services in the Temple, and manage *your* Temple so that Vaibhavi and I can feed ourselves and then feed you. But if we can't feed ourselves, then we can't feed you. So don't complain if your leaders aren't the spiritual authorities that they should be while you're just hanging out and not making a commitment to shoulder some of the day-to-day burdens of the Temple. That's how it works. So love is a choice that you make. It's not just something that you float around; it's not just something that happens. It's a commitment that you make. You make the commitment to be more spiritual yourself and just watch how this community and this Temple become exponentially more spiritual. It's not going to happen by accident, it's not going to happen through someone else. It's going to happen when *you* make a commitment. Otherwise, it's not going to happen. So that's like the

marriage vow too. You make a commitment that I love this person more than others. If you understand the Krishna Consciousness philosophy - if you appreciate Prabhupada then you make a commitment that I commit myself to the Krishna Consciousness movement, to this Temple and to leaders above all others. And then they will commit themselves to you. That's how it works. And there may be faults on both sides, but the point is, love compensates for a myriad of faults. Our perfection is in loving each other and being faithful and committed to the Krishna Consciousness movement. That is the definition of perfection for devotees. So that is the choice of cultivation.

Action

Secondly, love is an action. It's not an emotion. You can't command your emotions, but you can command your actions. You can't command someone to be sad. We talk about "a quiver in my liver", "an ocean of emotion," lyrics to various love songs and we seem to implicate that those emotions, they just come and they are not actually under our command. Real love is doing something when you don't feel like it. People say "well, I don't feel like doing that. I'll do it when I feel like doing that." But it's much easier to act your way into a feeling than to feel your way into an action. If you say "well, something's good but I don't feel... what if Arjuna had said, well actually, he did say that... in the beginning of the Bhagavad gita Arjuna said "well I don't really feel like fighting today. I see my teacher; my cousins and I feel kind of ill. Krishna, could you feel my brow? I don't think this is my day. Maybe tomorrow or maybe some other combatants"... and Krishna's message is "you do it, you act and then you get the feeling." It is easier to act into the feeling than it is to feel into the action. Anyone who's had a baby that's been crying at night because it's got soiled diapers – you didn't feel like getting up and changing the diaper, but you did it, you acted that way, and then that brought love in its wake. So when we don't feel like loving someone is exactly the time you should do it. I go down to

BYU and run on the track and there are a few people that give me a brilliant smile and they say good morning, and there are some people that when they see me with my OM hat and Himalayan t-shirt they start to smile and then realize who I am and they're like "oh my god, he's not one of us." Well, I could respond in kind and just say "well, I'm not one of them either – see if I care," but what I really need to do is say good morning. If I say good morning to one person, why not say good morning to another person? I need to say good morning... and I don't always do it, I admit, but I need to say good morning to everybody because they are spirit souls that are part and parcel of God and I am representing Krishna and the non-sectarian process of Krishna Consciousness so I shouldn't fall into reacting to them because we are devotees. We are devotees and we are supposed to be on the transcendental platform, not just on the material, relative, reactive platform.

Love went away. Why isn't there the zing in my marriage that there used to be? They come out of the tunnel of love into the sea of tedium. Love dies and fades so often later in marriage because we stop doing the things that started the love in the first place. You want your wife to treat you like a king? Well, do you treat her like a queen? Then don't complain. Here's a cartoon I came upon: "honey I love you so much I'd die for you," and she says "you keep saying that but you never do it." Another cartoon, the guy is coming up on the pier and he's rescued his golf clubs and has brought them to safety. He's passing his golf clubs to his friend asking his friend to "hold these; I have to now go back for my wife." And you wonder why love fades.

Skill

And thirdly, love is a skill. You can learn it and you can get good at it if you practice it. If you want to incorporate something new in your life, for the next 30 days remind yourself to show love to someone

who's unloving or unlovable. You might even have to have a card or a string around your finger. You may not feel like doing it. For 30 days, everybody I pass at the gym, I'm going to say good morning to. I might have to tie a string around my finger to remember to do it, but I'm going to do it for 30 days no matter how little I feel like doing it. I'm going to say good morning, and the thing is, if you force yourself to do it every day for 30 days, it becomes a habit. That's a fact. If you want to alter your behavior in a more devotional way, you force yourself to do something loving every day for 30 days and then it will become a habit. So 30 days is the amount of time you need to set aside for changing your vital behavior patterns and I'm going to start tomorrow, so think about what you can do also. Every day for 30 days find some way you can show love to someone you just didn't feel like loving. Try to figure out how to do that.

Habit

The last point, which follows on the previous one, is love is a habit. It's a habit. It's not something we decide "I'm going to give it here; I'm going to give it there." We get into the habit of seeing everyone as a spirit soul and we act more and more consistently. When you enter into your nuptial vows of matrimony, you don't promise at the wedding day "honey I'll be faithful to you six days a week," or "I'll tell you the truth 90% of the time." You need to do it consistently. So the behavioral pattern to show love to all people regardless of their crustiness or their rejection of you or even their retaliation of you, it's easy to do if you just make it a habit. We have to counteract the habit to put ourselves first. Just pick someone - say "there's no way I could love that" and work on it and make it a habit.

How serious is this issue that we are talking about tonight? It is the issue on which your whole life will be evaluated. It is the issue on which you will be considered to have either passed the test of life or failed it. It is the reason that you have been given life, you have been given a personality, and it

will be the criterion by which you are judged and so this should not be an extracurricular activity. Loving is not something you only do to the extent that it doesn't crimp your style. Loving is not something you do on the side while you're making a lot of money. Loving is not something you do while your team is trying for the trophy. Loving is the central thing that we should be doing and everything else is peripheral so that at the time of death we are surrounded by people that love us.

George Harrison, who was a Krishna devotee, do you know who his last words were to? It was to his wife Olivia, and his son Donny. This isn't a story of George Harrison passing away. This is a story of a devotee passing away surrounded by other devotees chanting Hare Krishna. That is how I would like to die. How about you? Wouldn't you like to pass away in a room where there are other devotees chanting Hare Krishna and speeding you on your way back to Krishna's lotus feet? Money is not going to do that, fame is not going to do that, mundane popularity is not going to do that – only by concentrating on making sweet relationships with the devotees. George Harrison understood that to the point that with his last words, his dying words, he said to the Krishna devotees and to his wife and son “love one another.”

Maharajah Parikshit died being cursed by a Brahman son, being given seven days to live. Having gotten seven days notice of his death, he gave up his crown, he gave up his kingdom, he gave up his gold and he sat on the banks of the Yamuna River and said “I only want to do one thing, and I want to do it exclusively during the last seven days of my life.” He didn't eat, he didn't even drink water. He didn't want to waste a moment of those last seven days, Nityam Bhagavata Sevaya. He only wanted constantly the nectarine topics of Krishna. And his last words were “I pray that if I should again take my birth in the material world, I will have complete attachment to the unlimited Lord Krishna, association with his devotees and friendly relations with all living beings.” This shows his

priorities were in the right place. I'm going to repeat this and let's think, are these "my" priorities? Are these going to be my desires, my prayers at my time of death? Am I working in that direction? "If I should again take my birth in this material world, I will have complete attachment to the unlimited Lord Krishna, association with the devotees and friendly relations with all living beings." A devotee of the Lord is no one's enemy. He may have enemies, but he is no one's enemy. His desire is simply association with other devotees of the Lord and Prabhupada said "that's natural because birds of the same feather mix together." In the association of devotees he knows the result will be complete attachment to Lord Krishna, the father of all living beings. As a good son behaves in a friendly way with all of his other brothers, so also the devotee of the Lord, being a good son of the Supreme father, sees all other living beings in relationship with the Supreme Father.

There are some pitfalls, and I'll just conclude with these: we get distracted. We may know it theoretically but we are too attached to the TV and our favorite shows. Honestly, you can't do both. I'd be lying to you if I said you could watch TV and develop love of God. You can't. You need to make up your mind how your life is going to be spent. If you want to develop love of God and love of the devotees, you need to turn off the TV. You need to take it and throw it in the trash. You need to give it away. Otherwise you can't do both.

Then there are good deeds. There are a lot of humanitarian organizations that will send us solicitations for our time and our money, and you can get very involved in mode of goodness activities but you may not have time for really great things. You can do good things – you can get involved in good things like Green Peace and Save the Whales and Earth Save. You can get involved in good things and miss the time of your life which you could have been involved in great things... in transcendental things. You could skim on your relationships. I have spent a lot of quality time with

my son. We sit down and watch TV for four hours together every night. My father spent a lot of quality time with me, the only problem is that it was on the golf course and all he ever talked about is putting and driving and pitching; which I didn't find very valuable life skills, nor did I think it was particularly relative to loving me. So these are some of the pitfalls. The average American watches TV six hours a day. That's 1,560 hours/year. If those were 12 hour days, he'd be watching TV for 130 12 hour days a year. Instead of making friends with the devotees, we watch reruns of Friends. The same time we could have cultivated a friendship with devotees, we're watching some other people live a phony life on the screen. Instead of working on our own family, we're watching something about someone else working on their family.

The three laws of love are:

- 1.) It validates my faith,
- 2.) It integrates my life and
- 3.) It compensates for my failings.

If you want to get into the White House, you have to show a picture I.D. If you want to get into your programs on the computer you have to have a password and pin numbers. What do you need to get into Vaikuntha? You need to show that you love God and you love other living beings. That's how you're faith is validated – that's how you prove that you're eligible to enter into the Kingdom of God.

The second thing: it integrates my life. Those who are lovers of the Lord are single-minded. Their resolution is not many-branched; they are not splayed out all over the place. Their prime and most important focus is to learn how to love God and love other devotees. And so they are known for their focused attention.

Gandhi said “there is more to life than the speed that we live it.” We fill our calendar, we fracture our family. Families are decimated by velocity. When you spend time to listen to and pay attention to your son, your daughter, your wife – you are telling them that there is nothing more valuable to you than them. You’re giving the moments, the minutes, the days, the hours of your life to pay attention to them and they’re learning from that, and they’re imbibing that, and they are becoming empowered to give that love and pass it on to others.

Love compensates for my shortcomings. Love doesn’t rub it in, love rubs it out. Krishna says in the Bhagavad gita even if you commit the most abominable action, if you are engaged in devotional service you are considered saintly because you’re properly situated. I said earlier - there’s nothing you could do than will make God stop loving you. There is nothing you could ever do to be disenfranchised or disqualified from his grace. That doesn’t give you cart blanche to do whatever you want, because you will be responsible for your reactions but know one thing – there is no way the God is ever going to let you go or relinquish His love for you. So why don’t you just claim it? Instead of acting whimsically and independent, why don’t you just claim it? There’s no one too fallen who’s disqualified from that. Prabhupada said “if you fall down, you use the same ground that you fell down, you push off the ground and you sand back up again with the confidence that Krishna will accept you again.” Of course, sinning and then confessing and then sinning and confessing... that is the worst offense. But if you make a mistake and you do something bad and you are willing to stand up and again be counted amongst the faithful followers of Krishna, he will never reject you.

Kripacharya killed Arjuna’s son. Kripacharya, Kritavarma, and Aswathama, after the battle of Kurukshetra was over, when there were about 2000 survivors on the Pandava’s side; these three warriors from the Kauravas’ side snuck into the tent and slaughtered 2000 soldiers. They slaughtered

them while they were sleeping. It was unheard of, it was abominable. Never before in history had such an un-chivalrous, cowardly thing been done. Kripacharya was one of the perpetrators and yet he was forgiven and later became the tutor of Maharajah Parikshit. When Yudhisthira prepared to retire to the Himalayas, he entrusted Kripacharya as the teacher of his son.

Love covers a multitude of sins, so make Krishna the center. That's our standard of perfection. You don't have to be perfect like Lord Rama was perfect, you just have to be perfect and unflinching and unflinching.

tesham satata-yuktanam
bhajatam priti-purvakam
dadami buddhi-yogam tam
yena mam upayanti te

[BG 10.10]

Krishna says *teṣāṁ satata-yuktānām*. *Teṣāṁ*: "those," *Satatam*: "always," *Yuktanam*: "to those who are always linked to me"... *bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam*. *Bhaja* kind of means worship, but in English you can worship different people. *Bhaja* is only reserved for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You cannot *Bhaja* anyone else. *bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam*: "you worship me in love and devotion," *Satatam*: "always," *dadāmi buddhi-yogam tam*: "to those I give the love and understanding," *yena mām upayānti te*: "by which they can come to me." So that is perfection. Simply make Krishna the center; love Krishna.

Ravindra Swarup Das wrote these beautiful words. "I learned this truth. As we grow smaller, love of God grows greater. As love of the Lord discovers no upper limit, humility finds no lower. Great souls, Prabhupada and his teachers yearn to become less and less."

I started this little talk with a quote from Anuttama's Vyasa Puja offering to Srila Prabhupada, and I'll conclude with another excerpt from that same offering:

Prabhupada, we need to feel genuine pain in our hearts when we see the sufferings and struggles of others in this world, as do you. We need to love others and be willing to give our lives to help them, as do you. We need to feel Krishna's presence at every moment and see his influence in the hearts of all living beings, as do you.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare