



## Theme Resources 2024 :

# What does Love require of us?

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# Introduction

Welcome to this pack of resources which we hope will be a valuable companion during your retreat with QVA. You are welcome to use this in any way which seems right for you, and although the facilitator may point you in the direction of specific resources and activities during the retreat, it is up to you how you use them!

Our theme for 2024 is 'What does Love require of us?'. There is conflict, hatred, and disorder at every level of society at the moment. We see it in the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. We see it in the current political landscape of Britain. We even see it in different conflicts within Religious Society. So many Friends turn to one another and ask "As a Quaker, what can I be doing? What does Love require of me?". This theme will explore conflict resolution, peace, what is meant by "God's Love", what Love can mean for personal relationships, and more.

This is a living document which will be added to over the course of the year. If you would like to contribute something to one of the sections, please do so by email to Kit, Working Retreats Coordinator, at [retreats@qva.org.uk](mailto:retreats@qva.org.uk). Nb. only materials in the public domain may be reproduced here unless with the consent of the originator, but titles and links to any items are fine.

## How to navigate this pack

The resources in this pack are set out in four sections (click a title to jump to each section):

### [Reading & listening](#)

Book titles, excerpts and online links to audio media that you may find interesting and useful.

### [Images](#)

Photos and artwork useful in reflecting on topics, and links to where you might find more online.

### [Prayers, scripture and meditations](#)

Some relevant and inspirational work or, if in copyright, the title and author.

### [Suggested activities](#)

Practical ideas for reflections on the theme.

These are further subdivided into topics drawn from the areas explored in this year's retreats. Facilitators may add ideas to these that are more specific to the subject of the retreat. There is also space for you to add your own resources and you are of course encouraged to share any you feel appropriate with others taking part.

If you are guided to specific resources by the facilitator, they will direct you to the relevant pages and headings.

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Finally, we hope you enjoy your retreat and look forward to welcoming you to other events in the future!

## Reading and listening

“We read to know we're not alone.”

William Nicholson, *Shadowlands*

### Poetry about Love

#### Having a Coke with you

is even more fun than going to San Sebastian, Irún, Hendaye, Biarritz, Bayonne  
or being sick to my stomach on the Travessera de Gracia in Barcelona  
partly because in your orange shirt you look like a better happier St. Sebastian  
partly because of my love for you, partly because of your love for yoghurt  
partly because of the fluorescent orange tulips around the birches  
partly because of the secrecy our smiles take on before people and statuary  
it is hard to believe when I'm with you that there can be anything as still  
as solemn as unpleasantly definitive as statuary when right in front of it  
in the warm New York 4 o'clock light we are drifting back and forth  
between each other like a tree breathing through its spectacles

and the portrait show seems to have no faces in it at all, just paint  
you suddenly wonder why in the world anyone ever did them

I look

at you and I would rather look at you than all the portraits in the world  
except possibly for the Polish Rider occasionally and anyway it's in the Frick  
which thank heavens you haven't gone to yet so we can go together for the first time  
and the fact that you move so beautifully more or less takes care of Futurism  
just as at home I never think of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* or  
at a rehearsal a single drawing of Leonardo or Michelangelo that used to wow me  
and what good does all the research of the Impressionists do them  
when they never got the right person to stand near the tree when the sun sank  
or for that matter Marino Marini when he didn't pick the rider as carefully  
as the horse

it seems they were all cheated of some marvellous experience  
which is not going to go wasted on me which is why I'm telling you about it

*Frank O'Hara, 1960*

*You can also hear a recording of Frank O'Hara reading this poem, set to some music by Fake Fruit [on Spotify](#).*

Having "Having a Coke with You" with You

You asked me if I knew the poem "Having a Coke with You"  
I said I vaguely remembered it but didn't really  
so you recited it in its entirety. We were walking  
from somewhere up by City Hall down toward South Street  
and the whole time you were reciting it I was wondering  
"Was that the last line of the poem?" after each line  
and each time I thought that, I thought it even more  
because as the poem got longer the fact that you were reciting it  
from memory became incrementally harder to believe  
until about two-thirds of the way through the poem  
I stopped thinking about how long it was and just started listening  
which I had been, but only a little, because of all that. Anyway  
then I started listening to it completely, believing  
the poem itself to be the sole reason you were reciting it  
but as soon as you finished you started to talk about how  
you used to think that that poem was just about how  
liberatingly banal being in love with someone was  
but then you said you'd started to think more recently  
it was more about the idiocy of caring about art at all  
when you could spend all that energy caring about someone  
you loved instead, and you said you were wondering where  
I stood on that question now that I had heard the poem  
and I was as struck by the question as I was stunned  
that you could so casually recite such a long good poem  
and that you hadn't even recited it primarily to solicit  
appreciation for your recitation so much as to ask  
what I thought about what you had thought about it  
then, versus how you thought about it now, and this was  
when I knew I wanted to be with you forever.

*Mark Leidner, 2021*

*Leidner tells the story of how he proposed to his now wife and how their love bloomed after the events of this poem [here](#).*

### À la recherche d'Gertrude Stein

When I am feeling depressed and anxious sullen  
all you have to do is take your clothes off  
and all is wiped away revealing life's tenderness  
that we are flesh and breathe and are near us  
as you are really as you are I become as I  
really am alive and knowing vaguely what is  
and what is important to me above the intrusions  
of incident and accidental relationships  
which have nothing to do with my life

when I am in your presence I feel life is strong  
and will defeat all its enemies and all of mine  
and all of yours and yours in you and mine in me  
sick logic and feeble reasoning are cured  
by the perfect symmetry of your arms and legs  
spread out making an eternal circle together  
creating a golden pillar beside the Atlantic  
the faint line of hair dividing your torso  
gives my mind rest and emotions their release  
into the infinite air where since once we are  
together we always will be in this life come what may

*Frank O'Hara, c.1960*

For another poem about love, I would recommend *While the Child Sleeps, Sonya Undresses* by *Ilya Kaminsky*. I won't include it in this as it is explicit, but if you wish to read it with that in mind, [please see the link here](#).

### The Long Drought is Over

My Beloved has come home with the rains,  
And the fire of longing is doused.  
Now is the time for singing, the time of union.  
At the first thunderclap,  
Even the peacocks open their tails with pleasure and dance.

Giridhara is in my courtyard, and my wandering heart has returned.  
Like lilies that blossom under the full moon's light,  
I open to him in this rain: every pore of my body is cooled.  
Mira's separation and torment are over.  
He who comes to those who love has remembered his promise.

*Mirabai, 16th Century, translated by Robert Bly*

### Love Song

How can I keep my soul in me, so that  
it doesn't touch your soul? How can I raise  
it high enough, past you, to other things?  
I would like to shelter it, among remote  
lost objects, in some dark and silent place  
that doesn't resonate when your depths resound.  
Yet everything that touches us, me and you,  
takes us together like a violin's bow,  
which draws one voice out of two separate strings.  
Upon what instrument are we two spanned?  
And what musician holds us in his hand?  
Oh sweetest song.

*Rainer Maria Rilke, c.1900, translated by Stephen Mitchell*

*For interpretations and analysis of this, [see here](#).*

*Brian McLaren suggests a continuing source of hope not dependent on the outcome:*

If we can see a likely path to our desired outcome, we have hope; if we can see no possible path to our desired outcome, we have despair. If we are unsure whether there is a possible path or not, we keep hope alive, but it remains vulnerable to defeat if that path is closed.

When our prime motive is love, a different logic comes into play. We find courage and confidence, not in the likelihood of a good outcome, but in our commitment to love. Love may or may not provide a way through to a solution to our predicament, but it will provide a way forward in our predicament, one step into the unknown at a time. Sustained by this fierce love (as my friend Jacqui Lewis calls it), we may persevere long enough that, to our surprise, a new way may appear where there had been no way. At that point, we will have

reasons for hope again. But even if hope never returns, we will live by love through our final breath.

... We feel arising within us this sustained declaration: We will live as beautifully, bravely, and kindly as we can as long as we can, no matter how ugly, scary, and mean the world becomes, even if failure and death seem inevitable. In fact, it is only in the context of failure and death that this virtue develops.

Hope is complicated. But ... even if hope fails, something bigger can replace it, and that is love.

*Choctaw elder Steven Charleston places love at the centre of our hope. When he says:*

The key to stopping the environmental apocalypse is not science but love. For decades now we have been staring at the scientific reports. They have not sufficiently inspired us to change our apocalyptic reality. But where science has failed, faith can succeed. We must help humanity rediscover [Mother Earth], their loving parent, the living world that sustains them. We must help them feel her love just as we show them how that love can be returned. And it can begin by gathering people around two simple questions: Where were you in nature when you experienced a vision of such beauty that it took your breath away? And how did that make you feel? If you can answer those two questions, you are on your way to meeting the Mother you may never have known before.

### Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

*Mary Oliver, 1986*

May The Light Of Your Soul Guide You

May the light of your soul guide you.

May the light of your soul bless the work

You do with the secret love and warmth of your heart.

May you see in what you do the beauty of your own soul.

May the sacredness of your work bring healing, light and renewal to those

Who work with you and to those who see and receive your work.

May your work never weary you.

May it release within you wellsprings of refreshment, inspiration and excitement.

May you be present in what you do.

May you never become lost in the bland absences.

May the day never burden you.

May dawn find you awake and alert, approaching your new day with dreams,

Possibilities and promises.

May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.

May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected.

May your soul calm, console and renew you.

*John O'Donohue, 2007*

We give thanks

We give thanks for places of simplicity and peace.

Let us find such a place within ourselves.

We give thanks for places of refuge and beauty.

Let us find such places within ourselves.

We give thanks for places of nature's truth and freedom of joy,  
inspiration and renewal, places where all creatures may find  
acceptance and belonging. Let us search for these places in



the world, in ourselves, and in others.  
Let us restore them. Let us strengthen and protect them  
and let us create them. May we mend this outer world  
according to the truth of our inner life  
and may our souls be shaped and nourished  
by nature's eternal wisdom.

*Michael Leunig*

### I No Longer Pray For Peace

On the edge of war, one foot already in,

I no longer pray for peace:  
I pray for miracles.

I pray that stone hearts will turn  
to tenderheartedness,  
and evil intentions will turn  
to mercifulness,  
and all the soldiers already deployed  
will be snatched out of harm's way,  
and the whole world will be  
astounded onto its knees.

I pray that all the "God talk"  
will take bones,  
and stand up and shed  
its cloak of faithlessness,  
and walk again in its powerful truth.

I pray that the whole world might  
sit down together and share  
its bread and its wine.

Some say there is no hope,

but then I've always applauded the holy fools  
who never seem to give up on  
the scandalousness of our faith:  
that we are loved by God...  
that we can truly love one another.

I no longer pray for peace:  
I pray for miracles.

*Ann Weems, 2010*

## Podcasts

A Quaker Take podcasts:

<https://soundcloud.com/qwitness>

'Transforming Society' by Bristol University on 'Radical Empathy':

<https://soundcloud.com/bristol-university-press/how-radical-empathy-can-bridge-racial-divides>

## Books and reading recommendations

*All About Love* by bell hooks

- *hooks intentionally spells her name without capital letters to highlight the importance of the work over the person.*

**Excerpt: "There is no special love exclusively reserved for romantic partners. Genuine love is the foundation of our engagement with ourselves, with family, with friends, with partners, with everyone we choose to love"**

[Arabic Expressions of Love](#), an article written by Bayt Al-Fann

*This article translates and describes 11 words that are used to express love in Arabic. Bayt Al-Fann is an organisation that highlights Islamic and Arab art (Bayt Al-Fann means Art House or House of Art in Arabic). Their website says:*

- *"Mission: Our mission at Bayt Al Fann is to build understanding between cultures and to create a sustainable world while amplifying Islamic art heritage and culture and preserving it for future generations. It's a big mission, but we're passionate about achieving it and making a positive impact in the world.*
- *Vision: Bayt Al Fann envisions a world where the arts are a powerful tool for building bridges between cultures, fostering empathy and understanding, and promoting positive social and environmental change. We aspire to be a leader in the global arts community, recognised for our commitment to excellence, inclusivity, and sustainability."*

Here is the article without pictures:

“Arabic is one of the most romantic languages. It has at least 11 words for love and each of them conveys a different stage in the process of falling in love.

Let's explore expressions of love in Arabic...

**Habibi or Habibti (حبيبي/حبيبتي)**

In Arabic, **habibi** (masculine) and **habibti** (feminine) means “my love”. Arabs use this as the most common expression of love - for friends, family, and sometimes, even strangers.

**Rohi (روحي)**

**Rohi** means “my soul mate”. So calling someone **rohi** means you’ll love them a lot longer than your life - for eternity.

**Hayati (حياتي)**

A beautiful word which means my life. The addressee is supposed to [be] special or be very dear to the speaker. This term is equal to darling, sweetheart or love.

**Eayni (عيني)**

Meaning my eyes. Eyes are considered to be a treasure in the Arab world. So, calling someone **eayni** means you’ll treasure them forever.

**Albi (قلبي)**

The universal sign for love is, of course, the heart. Thus, with that in mind, it’s only natural to call somebody **albi** or “my heart”. Plus, everybody knows that your heart, like your love, is something you can’t live without.

**Ma Atyaback or Ma Atyabeck (ما أطيئك/ما أطيئك)**

This is the equal to saying “How cute are you?” in English. It’s used much the same way: when somebody does something that you find cute, you’d say **ma atyaback** or **ma atyabeck**.

**Bahlam Feek or Bahlam Feeki (حلمت بك/حلمت بك)**

When you’re in love, it’s common to say things like you’re dreaming of your significant other. **Bahlam feek** (to male) or **bahlam feeki** (to female) is translated to I’m dreaming of you or you’re in my dreams.

**Ya Amar (يا قمر)**

Comparing someone to the moon is one of the most romantic ways of expressing love in Arabic. It’s the bright light shining on a dark night. “**Ya amar**” means “the moon” and it is a beautiful way to express love.

**Omri**

Because one way to say “my life” is not enough, Arabs also use the word **omri**, which also directly translates to “my life,” but also “my darling.”

**Tu’burni (تقبرني)**

Literally meaning, “bury me”. it means you hope that they put you in the ground before them because you couldn’t bear living without them.

**Wahashtini (وحشتيني)**

**Wahashtini** means “I miss you” and it’s a famous saying among Egyptians say to tell their beloved how they feel the minute they are apart from each other.

**Ana Bahebak or Ana Bahebik (أنا بحبك/بحبك)**

Finally, there’s the simple, tried and true straightforward way to say “I love you” – **ana bahebak** (masculine) or **ana bahebik** (feminine).”

Sources and inspiration can be found at the bottom of the original article on the Bayt Al-Fann website, linked above.

## Images

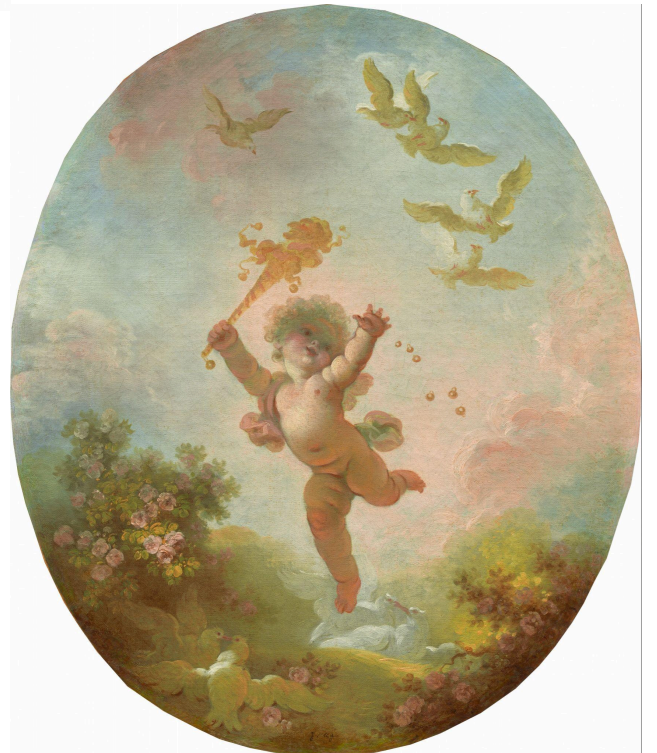
***“It is good to love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love is well done.”***

***Vincent Van Gogh***



***“Love the Sentinel”, Jean Honoré Fragonard, c. 1770***

***“Love as Folly”, Jean Honoré Fragonard, c. 1770***





***“The Blindfolding of Cupid”,  
George Romney, after 1797***

**L'OEUVRE**  
RUE TURGOT, 22

SAISON 1897-1898  
4<sup>e</sup> SPECTACLE

**L'ÉCHELLE**

Alfred	Mlle Bess
Henriette	Mlle Hortense Morel
Charles	M. Armand
Émile	M. Armand
Julie	M. Dumas
Mme Lohier	Mme Tiers
Jeanne	Mlle Badois
Leclercq	M. Besson
Alfred Lohier	M. Dumas
Duval	M. Paulsen
Un comédien	M. Valin

**LE BALCON**

Julie	Mlle Fanny Massé
Alfred	M. Gaston Lemaire
Armand	M. Gaston Massé
Henriette	M. Paulsen
Le Diable	M. Armand

**L'ÉCHELLE**  
Trois actes de M. GUSTAVE VANZYPE

**LE BALCON**  
Trois actes de M. GUNNAR HEIBERG  
(Traduction de Coeur PROZOR)

Éditions spéciales du programme artistique de l'Art et la Bohème (rue de Beauregard)

***“L'Échelle; Le Balcon”, Alfredo Müller, 1897***

## Prayers, scripture, and meditations

*“In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart.”*

*John Bunyan*

*In this section, words like God, Christ, and the Lord will appear. Many Friends do not use these words when they talk about what they do or don't believe in, so as you read along please feel free to replace those words, in your head, with something that suits you better.*

### Passages from [Quaker Faith and Practice](#)

2.03 Some Friends are able to recall with clarity the first occasion on which they attended a Quaker meeting. While I cannot remember when or where I did so, I do have a vivid recollection of the meeting which I began to attend regularly.

It was held in a rather hideous building: the meeting room was dingy. We sat on rickety chairs that creaked at the slightest movement. The whole place gave little hope that those who worshipped there might catch a glimpse of the vision of God. It was in stark contrast to the splendour of the Anglican churches to which I had been accustomed, where through dignified ritual the beauty of holiness was vividly portrayed.

However, it was in this unlikely setting that I came to know what I can only describe as the amazing fact of Quaker worship. It was in that uncomfortable room that I discovered the way to the interior side of my life, at the deep centre of which I knew that I was not alone, but was held by a love that passes all understanding. This love was mediated to me, in the first place, by those with whom I worshipped. For my journey was not solitary, but one undertaken with my friends as we moved towards each other and together travelled inwards. Yet I knew that the love that held me could not be limited to the mutual love and care we had for each other. It was a signal of transcendence that pointed beyond itself to the source of all life and love.

*George Gorman, 1973*

2.10 *Thomas Kelly (1893–1941) was a scientist from Ohio who taught philosophy at Earlham and Haverford colleges. Towards the end of his life he had vivid experiences of the love of God, of which he spoke and wrote, in his Testament of devotion.*

In this humanistic age we suppose man is the initiator and God is the responder. But the living Christ within us is the initiator and we are the responders. God the Lover, the accuser, the revealer of light and darkness presses within us. ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock.’ And all our apparent initiative is already a response, a testimonial to His secret presence and working within us. The basic response of the soul to the Light is internal adoration and joy, thanksgiving and worship, self-surrender and listening.

*Thomas R Kelly, 1941*

10.22 Part of the creative experience of a community is learning how to deal with conflict when it arises, and Friends are not usually good at this. ‘Speaking the truth in love’ is a Quaker cliché, but ‘papering over the cracks’ is the principle more commonly acted upon. Conflict met in ‘brokenness’ of spirit can take a meeting a long way on its spiritual

journey, whereas unresolved it deadens the life. We are a small Society. Clashes have always arisen, just as they arise in any family group. In one sense the members of a family know each other too well, in another sense not well enough. It is impossible to impress one's relations, but they can be a great stand-by in time of need, and it is then that they come to know each other better, if the bond is strong enough.

*Joan Fitch, 1980*

12.17 And all such as behold their brother or sister in a transgression, go not in rough, light or upbraiding spirit to reprove or admonish him or her, but in the power of the Lord, and the spirit of the Lamb, and in the wisdom and love of the Truth, which suffers thereby, to admonish such an offender. So may the soul of such a brother or sister be seasonably and effectually reached unto and overcome, and they may have cause to bless the name of the Lord on their behalf, and so a blessing may be rewarded into the bosom of that faithful and tender brother or sister that so admonished them.

*George Fox, 1669*

19.03 I was under great temptations sometimes, and my inward sufferings were heavy; but I could find none to open my condition to but the Lord alone, unto whom I cried night and day. And I went back into Nottinghamshire, and there the Lord shewed me that the natures of those things which were hurtful without, were within in the hearts and minds of wicked men... And I cried to the Lord, saying, 'Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils?' And the Lord answered that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions; and in this I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings.

*Journal [of George Fox], 1647*

20.07 Later on I was meditating, imagining Light and Love surrounding the world leaders as they gathered: 'Free them from fear', I asked ... but then I couldn't go on. I realised that all I could honestly ask was for myself to be freed from the fear which only an hour ago had threatened to ruin my day. All I could do was to come to terms with my own brokenness and make peace with myself and then with my immediate environment. And remembering the conflicts and problems in my life at that moment, even that seemed beyond me.

*Susan Lawrence, 1984*

20.67 And all Friends take heed of jars and strife, for that is it, which will eat out the Seed in you; therefore let not that harbour in your bosoms, lest it eat out the good in you, and ye come to suffer in your own particulars. Therefore dwell in love and life, and in the Power and Seed of God, which is the honourable, royal state.

*George Fox, 1656*

21.07 It is by our 'imperfections' that we move towards each other, towards wholeness of relationship. It is our oddities, our grittiness, the occasions when we hurt or are hurt, that challenge us to a deeper knowledge of each other. Our sins have been said to be stepping-stones to God.

*Kenneth C Barnes, 1985*

21.20 Isolation of spirit ... comes to most – perhaps all of us – at one time or another. There are times in our lives when the tides of faith seem far out, times of dryness, times when we do not feel the comfort and guidance of God's hand. At such times we may stay away from meeting feeling that it does not give us the spiritual help that we need; or it may be that we continue to go and are to outward appearance actively engaged on the meeting's life and business, while, within, we feel the agonies of isolation and the longing for light to lighten our darkness. I can think with thankfulness of Friends who have brought light to my darkness – perhaps a single sentence, a friendly letter, a walk on the downs: their help was perhaps given unconsciously, but it was because they were sensitive to God's leadings that they were able to do it. Do we seek to be the channels of God's love and caring? 'Caring matters most.'

*Edward H Milligan, 1951*

22.42 Love is the will to nurture life and growth in oneself and in another... Love is personal; it is the sacred trust of living things. Likewise, love is neither need nor dependency. 'I need you' is not the same as 'I love you'. Need as the basis of a relationship may lead one person to suffocate another through demands. Need may drive me to manipulate, intimidate, or coerce you into fulfilling me.

Love is so vastly different! It is freeing; it acknowledges the separateness of the beloved. It treasures the unique otherness of the beloved that is each one's contribution to the relationship. Love calls for submission and sacrifice. It does not seek to possess, but rather to empty itself in nurture of the loved one.

*Donald A Green, 1982*

26.30 What is love? What shall I say of it, or how shall I in words express its nature? It is the sweetness of life; it is the sweet, tender, melting nature of God, flowing up through his seed of life into the creature, and of all things making the creature most like unto himself, both in nature and operation. It fulfils the law, it fulfils the gospel; it wraps up all in one, and brings forth all in the oneness. It excludes all evil out of the heart, it perfects all good in the heart. A touch of love doth this in measure; perfect love doth this in fullness.

*Isaac Penington, 1663*

26.32 Perhaps more wonderful still is the way in which beauty breaks through. It breaks through not only at a few highly organised points, it breaks through almost everywhere. Even the minutest things reveal it as well as do the sublimest things, like the stars. Whatever one sees through the microscope, a bit of mould for example, is charged



with beauty. Everything from a dewdrop to Mount Shasta is the bearer of beauty. And yet beauty has no function, no utility. Its value is intrinsic, not extrinsic. It is its own excuse for being. It greases no wheels, it bakes no puddings. It is a gift of sheer grace, a gratuitous largesse. It must imply behind things a Spirit that enjoys beauty for its own sake and that floods the world everywhere with it. Wherever it can break through, it does break through, and our joy in it shows that we are in some sense kindred to the giver and revealer of it.

*Rufus Jones, 1920*

26.41        What is my religion? My friends, my teachers, my God. And who is my God? He speaks within me; if I mishear, my friends correct me; if I misdo, I look to Jesus Christ. How then am I taught? I hear in the silence, I ponder in solitude, and I try in the noisy crowd to practise it. What do I learn? To put gaiety before prudence, grace before pleasure, service before power. What am I commanded? To seek patience in suffering, humility in success, steadfastness always. What is forbidden me? To reject another's love, to despise another's wisdom, to blaspheme another's God. And to what purpose? To help others, that we may enter the Commonwealth of Heaven together, each to find our Being in the Whole.

*Frederick Parker-Rhodes, 1977*

26.47        If you allow me to have Christ simply as a friend, he may become what you call God; if you force him on me as God, he cannot become a friend.

*Pierre Ceresole, 1920*

### Passages from the Bible

31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice;

32 and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

*Ephesians 4:31-32 (21st Century King James Version)*

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Romans 8:38-39 (New King James Version)*

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you;

Bind them around your neck,

Write them on the tablet of your heart,

*Proverbs 3:3 (New King James Version)*

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

*1 Corinthians*

## Passages from the Torah

שנאה תעירר מדגים ועל כל-פושעים תכסה אהבה:

Hatred stirs up strife,

But love covers up all faults.

*Mishlei (Proverbs) 10:12*

עד שיפוח היום וגסו הצללים אלק ל אל-הר המור ואל-גבעת הלבונה: כלך יפה רעיתי ומום אין בך: {0} אתי מלבנון כלה אתי מלבנון תבואי תשורי | מראש אמנה מראש שניר וחרמון ממענות אריות מהררי נמרים: לבבתני אחתי כלה לבבתני (באחד) [באחת] מעיניך באחד ענק מצורניך:

When the day blows gently

And the shadows flee,

I will betake me to the mount of myrrh,

To the hill of frankincense. Every part of you is fair, my darling,

There is no blemish in you. From Lebanon come with me;

From Lebanon, my bride, with me!

Trip down from Amana's peak,

From the peak of Senir and Hermon,

From the dens of lions,

From the hills of leopards.

You have captured my heart,

My own, my bride,

You have captured my heart

With one [glance] of your eyes,

With one coil of your necklace.

*Shir Hashirim (Song of Songs) 4:6-9*



## Suggested activities

*“One of the most important things you can do on this earth is to let people know they are not alone.”*

*Shannon L. Alder*

### *Phone calls in the diary*

Go through your address book and put a note in your diary or calendar for when you will contact each friend or family member by phone or email to arrange to meet up (or have a Zoom call if you live far apart).

### *Tabletop labyrinths*

Choose one of the patterns below, download and print out as large as you are able. Then on a sheet of paper thin enough to see through to the plan, trace over the design as a drawing meditation.



Go back to the drawing again later, following the path from the edge to the centre of the labyrinth with your finger slowly. As you meet each turn, stop and consider someone you love. What do you cherish in them? What do you share with them? What do you hope for them?

Apart from friends and those close to you, the meditation could also be used to consider strangers, people with whom you are at odds, yourself, and/or God; as well as in any number of different ways.

### *Recording and listening back*

Hearing your own voice recorded can be disconcerting... But listening over and over again to a poem that you have recorded can also help move beyond the sound to the deeper meaning of the text.

Find a poem that has moved you and record yourself reading it. Take several goes if you're not happy with the first attempt.

### *Sharing cookies*

Based on the 'fortune cookie' concept from Chinese culture, these are treats for other people of both a culinary and supportive kind...

Staying safe and within the law, you could bake a tray of these and leave a tub outside someone's door. The messages inside are optional, but could be as simple as 'call if you want to chat' – platitudes not necessary!

### Ingredients

1 egg white  
drop of vanilla extract  
4 tbsp plain flour

4 tbsp caster sugar

pinch salt

### Method

If including, write messages on small strips of paper to fold into the just-baked cookies.

Preheat oven to 200C/Gas 6. Line 2 medium sized baking trays with greaseproof paper.

Whisk the egg white with the vanilla until frothy without allowing it to go stiff. Sieve together flour, castor sugar and salt. Fold into the whisked egg until combined. Add a tiny amount of water if necessary so that the mixture just dribbles off the mixing fork.

Once the oven is hot, deposit 2 teaspoonfuls of batter at opposite ends of one of the trays, spreading each into a thin, flat circle. Bake for 5 minutes, till the edges are golden but the middle is still pale. Remove them and if using, place a message strip on each. Then quickly shape them, first by gently folding and pinching opposite edges together, then carefully pressing the unfolded centre onto the rim of a container or glass, pulling the tapered points down either side of the rim.

Place the finished folded cookies on a rack to cool.

### *Action for Happiness*

The Action for Happiness initiative is 'a movement of people committed to building a happier and more caring society [which promotes] a fundamentally different way of life – where people care less about what they can get just for themselves and more about the happiness of others. See <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/calendars> for daily tips on actions that help build connection and community.

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