

The Strength to Love

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The strength to love is not measured by the amount of good deeds, nor the amount of strength that we think it takes to muster up the courage to say the simple words “I love you” to those we care about. The strength to love lies within the ability to open the mind and enable a sense of understanding for others. A balance between tough mindedness and tender-heartedness creates unconditional love and peace among people.

King references three different types of love in his speeches during the time of the Civil Rights Movement. The first is that of *Ethos*, which is a “romantic love for your mate”, however, King defines this as a selfish love. The second type of love that he discusses is that of *Phili*, “or the love that is an intimate affection between personal friends. These are people you like”, King says. Finally, King explains the love of *Agape*, which he defines as “more than romantic love... more than friendship...it’s understanding” (King). The love of Agape is the true strength of the human heart and mind. The greatest challenge of our society is setting aside our differences and allowing compassion to overwhelm our ambitious minds to settle into a tenderness and gain a sense of understanding for others.

In our current society and that of King’s time, one might tend to define love in terms of Ethos and Phili- as if love exists only with those who are romantically involved, or with those we like, which usually consist of people who happen to agree with our perspectives on social, political and moral aspects of life. However, it is with courage and the release of a selfish mind-set that we learn to love those whom we don’t particularly like or tend to agree with. Real love for others

takes a true disregard of all pre-judgements. Truly loving someone requires a person to allow themselves to escape from their personal beliefs in order to listen and comprehend any reason or understanding for another person as a whole. This interaction is strongly associated with the concept of peace in contrast to violence. The idea of nonviolence is the result of Agape love. Peace is achieved by “redeeming good will towards all men” (King). This means that there are no exceptions to those who we strongly disagree with. When one loves all people unconditionally, their strength to love is strong.

Strength can be associated with many things: strength of the human body, strength of a nation or even strength of a relationship between peoples. However, the strength of love is not that of a physical matter. The strength of love lies in the mind. The ability to broaden one’s view on different perspectives. To accept a person for who they are wholly, despite the contradictions to one’s own beliefs. A person’s ability to accept people as they are and “loving every man because God loves him”.

Love is ultimately the result of a balance between tough minds and tender hearts. The tough mind is capable of analyzing supposed truths and deciphering for themselves, the false from the truth. A tough minded person is profound and self-determined, which allow them to make their own decisions and create opportunities for themselves in many different aspects of life. In contrast, a soft-minded person is gullible and prone to acting, or not acting, due to influence of irrational fears. This allows for a soft-minded person to accept half-truths and be easily swayed by those wishing to take advantage of their gullibility. A real world example is that of Hitler and the Holocaust. Hitler’s realization that he could manipulate soft-minded people is what cause thousands to commit mass murder. Their inability to analyze and ultimately think for themselves, caused Hitler’s followers to simply follow inhumane orders. The mind-set of a soft-minded

person is limited to a narrow perspective, allowing no room for reason and narrowing their sense of understanding, therefor, taking away their ability to act with compassion and love. A strong-minded person tends to have an open mind, which allows them to make decisions for themselves after their critical analysis of false knowledge claims and superstitions.

Although a strong mind is a necessity for understanding, there is also a need for balance between the mind and the heart. A hard-hearted person lacks the compassion that is necessary to truly love another. The hard-hearted person is disconnected from all that contributes to the sense of humanity. A tender heart is required in addition to a tough mind in order to balance out the personality of an open minded person. A tender heart is created through the sum of compassion, warmth, and passion. These characteristics of a tender heart tend to override the judgmental thoughts one might have, and enables them to treat others, despite differences, with respect and ultimately *true* love.

King's message of *The Strength to Love* conveys the necessity of balance between tough minds and tender hearts. He expresses that this balance will bring people who strive to achieve it, a sense of understanding for all people which will open the opportunity for unconditional love for all of God's children. Ultimately, understanding and love will contribute to the great dream of world peace.

We must remember the dream.