

CHRISTMAS 2024

Love

A remembrance by Greg Smith

Love -

Take a minute...

What's the first thing that comes to your mind?

A person, a place, a moment?

A kind of Love -

An affectionate, attractive Love, an admiring Love, a Love based on loyalty, a showing of Love through kindness -

The list can go on and on.

Love - or at least the use of the word - has been overused.

Today the use of the word "Love" is much less meaningful.

Although -

Love in word and action has impacted each of us in vastly different ways.

Take a moment and reflect on how Love has affected you.

Love, for me, is embodied in one word...

Amy

The plethora of experiences that come to mind as I see her photo, say her name, or think of her.

Amy's impact - having lived with and been around her for 35 years and more so in the years of her absence - has become more clear to me with each passing day.

Amy's life was an example of a kind of Love spoken about in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a...

"Love endures with patience and serenity, love is kind and thoughtful, and is not jealous or envious; love does not brag and is not proud or arrogant. It is not rude; it is not self-seeking, it is not provoked [nor overly sensitive and easily angered]; it does not take into account a wrong endured. It does not rejoice at injustice, but rejoices with the truth [when right and truth prevail]. Love bears all things [regardless of what comes], believes all things [looking for the best in each one], hopes all things [remaining steadfast during difficult times],

endures all things [without weakening]. Love never fails [it never fades nor ends].” 1
Corinthians 13:4-8a

Amy, yes, was flawed; imperfect as we all are.

Yet what a blessing it was for me to live my life within Amy’s sphere of influence! Amy’s Love toward me and others was different. It wasn’t natural.

A Love given in spite of circumstances. A Love given not looking for its return. A Love that Amy poured into each of our lives - not only into my life, but into the lives of our children, her extended family, and - even at times - strangers she had just come into contact with.

Why? Where did this Love come from?

How did Amy’s Love from a heart of humility come to be manifest in service to those in need? A Love, by God’s grace, we were all exposed to.

The Answer...

Amy had experienced a real, authentic, sacrificial Love in her own life.

God had, at some point, reached down and touched Amy. I can’t say the day or hour Amy followed Christ - I can only attest that Amy did!

Amy didn’t speak Scripture. Amy *lived* Scripture before us.

At an earlier age Amy’s family and Mom were going through a painful time. Amy encouraged her siblings and together they made and gave their mother a gift of encouragement along with this promise from God’s Word...

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds (healing their pain and comforting their sorrow).” Psalm 147:3 (AMP)

I’m not here to say that Amy was never angered or upset - she was. But she never let that anger take hold; she never let the sun go down on her anger.

I remember thinking shortly after I had met her, “Who is this person and where did she come from?”

Amy was a gift from God to all of us.

Amy showed me in word and deed that real, authentic, sacrificial Love is different - very different - even unworldly, unnatural. Something special.

Amy was ever always about everyone else but her.

Even more so as Amy faced her greatest battle, always deflecting to make sure that it wasn’t about her. Amy’s abiding confidence in Christ, her Savior, Comforter, Friend - and His promises shown through as her care and Love gave me and us all comfort in the midst of her storm!

Amy with humility and grace took each day in stride as she accepted and yielded to the circumstances she had been given.

Christ used Amy to show us what trust in her Savior's Love and care looked like in one of His children.

Amy's life points us to Christ - real, authentic, sacrificial Love perfected in Him.

Christ's life was always, always about others...

"No one has greater love (nor stronger commitment) than to lay down his own life for his friends." John 15:13

Wow - what Love, what kindness! For the Bible says this about mankind...

"As it is written and forever remains, there is none righteous (none that meets God's standard), not even one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, no, not one." Romans 3:10-12

And yet God in Love provided...

*"While we were still helpless [powerless to provide for our salvation], at the right time Christ died [as a substitute] for the ungodly. **Now it is an extraordinary thing for one to willingly give his life even for an upright man, though perhaps for a good man [one who is noble and selfless and worthy] someone might even dare to die.** But God clearly shows and proves His own love for us, by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:6-8*

"He made Christ who knew no sin to [judicially] be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God [that is, we would be made acceptable to Him and placed in a right relationship with Him by His gracious lovingkindness]." 2 Corinthians 5:21

Christ did this for all (the nonseekers, us) who believe in Him.

*"Amazing love! how can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?" **

Amy rested in this great Love from God, lived out in the many moments of Amy's life - especially those moments of stress, strife, and the unknown.

For it was in those moments Amy's sweet, calming spirit shown the brightest.

How did Amy stay so calm, so positive, so up beat?

Amy knew she was Loved - really and truly Loved - by Christ and her heavenly Father. For many times in her life Amy had seen what counterfeit, inauthentic, selfish appearances of Love looked like.

Amy, though, knew the difference that only real, authentic Love can provide - embodied in her calm, sweet, peaceful spirit.

God has been so good to me. I am so blessed.

God didn't have to Love me. God didn't have to send His son to earth to atone for the sins of all who believe.

God didn't have to send Amy into my life - real, authentic, and sacrificial, friend, confidante and soulmate, who showed me Christ's Love in spite of my failings.

God gave us two wonderful children, grandchildren, and the Love of our family and friends.

I pray as you remember Amy's life and her Love for each of you, that you will begin to come to grips with the Author and Source of that Love - the One whom Amy entrusted her very life to for all eternity.

Jesus Christ

And in doing so - like Amy - you can with confidence enjoy the same God-given trust that only resting in Christ alone can give today, tomorrow, and through all eternity.

*"What blessed Trust - to trust Him whose power will never be exhausted, whose Love will never weaken, whose kindness will never change, whose faithfulness will never fail, whose wisdom will never be overruled, and whose perfect goodness can never be impaired! You are happy, if this trust is yours! So trusting you will enjoy sweet peace now and glory later, and the foundation of your trust will never be removed." ***

Amy trusts Him.

"In whom do you now trust?" Isaiah 36:5

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year - may God bless you all!

Love, Greg

** From the hymn "And Can It Be," by Charles Wesley (1730)*

*** From "Morning and Evening," by Charles Spurgeon, edited by Alistair Begg*

The Video

I would encourage you to watch the video.

Yes, the video by now is familiar. Though, the lyrics in the selected songs drive home the love Amy conveyed to me in our years together.

Acknowledgements

Once again I want to thank my brother-in-law Chris for his usual magic and my good friend Steve for his thoughtful read-throughs and editing advice.