

The Love Book

by Marvin Payne

(This was first published by a company called Bookcraft in 1980.
Some years later it was re-titled "Love And Oranges" --um, not the company, the book.
The company was re-titled "Deseret Book.")

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Chapter One, Bad Words

The words "romantic love" are bad words. Not bad like heck or phooey, but bad like "glaphum." Glaphum is a bad word because no one will know what you're talking about when you use it. Same with romantic love.

The idea of "romantic love" has a lot of stupid connotations, because everybody uses that idea to sell stuff, like paints to put on your body or chemicals that make you smell not like people, or to sell cars or cigarettes. (Can you believe it? Burn a certain kind of leaf in your mouth, and if you're anywhere in the vicinity of a meadow a gorgeous blonde will come dancing out of the woods at you. I think congress passed a law against that kind of advertising, but I think it was because of cancer and not because of love.) Or things that make your breath smell like candy. (Take the Certs Breath Test, right now. Did it work? Cool, clean feeling? When's the last time you had a Cert? October? See? It always works! You could eat an onion and not take a Certs and the Certs Breath Test would work. What's that? It's many years from when this book was published and you don't know about the Certs Breath Test? Believe me, it doesn't matter!)

A few summers ago I was driving up to Alberta, Canada, to play some music for some folks. Somewhere in Idaho I felt an urge to write a song for Marie Osmond to sing, about love. And I wanted the word love to be the main word in the chorus lyric. Only after I got about two bars into the song, a chilling realization hit me: if I had her sing love big and loud and often in this song about a boy and a girl, and if the song got to be a hit, there would be whole segments of the listening public that would think she was singing about

burning leaves and gorgeous blondes, or candy breath or glaphum or sex or lipstick or something. So I got scared away from writing what was going to be a happy song about love. Instead, I began writing a sad song called "I Can't Say Love Anymore," and recorded it myself. But if I can't use the words romantic love because of all this, how else can I describe "the unique love that a certain boy feels for a certain girl, or that a certain woman feels for a certain man"?

So here's what it means when I say "romantic love": When you hold hands with somebody else to make "him" jealous, that's not what I'm talking about. When you start a fight so you can make up, that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about when her feelings are suddenly as important as your own. I'm talking about when he does something magnificent and gets a blue ribbon or a medal, and you're not jealous; you just smile a lot. Also, it feels good to stand back and applaud with everybody else instead of jumping up onto the pedestal with him. You want him to walk tall--head up, clear-eyed. When he stumbles, you're sad; and there's no way you could ever allow yourself to be any part of the reason he stumbles.

You want to sacrifice for him--sacrifice your plans when he wants to be a missionary, sacrifice the dance when she's sick, sacrifice your selfishness when she has a better idea than sitting in the car. If she were in an iron lung, even, you'd rather be with her than with anyone else. You don't honk the horn in front of her house. Also you might get a rush out of holding her hand.

Say there's a room in your mind where all your good feelings go to hang out and talk things over while you're asleep. In there is the feeling you had when your little brother said he wished you were his den mother. In there is the feeling of eating watermelon after a lot of hours in the sun on the welfare farm. In there are the feelings you had at your grandfather's funeral, when the veil suddenly got thin because now somebody you knew that loved you was on the other side. In there are the feelings you had when you stood up and bore your testimony for a while and then had to be quiet for a lot of seconds because you knew that your very next words would have tears falling through them. Then your Romantic Love feelings come in, and they smile and all the other feelings smile back like bright angels; and the love feelings sit down in there and never blink funny or sweat or itch, but feel really good, like they're where they belong.

That's what I'm talking about.

Chapter Two, Superman

I was five years old when my love life collapsed. It was a hurtful thing but the wounds had nearly healed when I saw the movie Superman and the hurt came back. Don't get me wrong--the movie was great; it's just that it reminded me of when my love life collapsed.

I was in kindergarten, same as you. In kindergarten if you had a dollar-and-a-quarter and a Cheerios boxtop and the patience of Job, you could get mailed a Superman T-shirt from Battle Creek, Michigan. So attired, you were qualified to pursue the most wonderful thing in a young boy's life, which was Lilli Purcell. Whole gangs of little supermen would chase Lilli Purcell around the playground, throw her to the sand, and kick her senseless. Now please don't get any weird ideas about love being associated with intense physical pain. It's just that we were five years old, and the idea of holding hands or putting our mouths together was utterly abhorrent to us. Chasing and kicking seemed at the time like a pretty good substitute.

All this meant that we thought Lilli Purcell was cool. She loved it. So did you. So did the supermen. But not me. I had the dollar-and-a-quarter and the boxtop, but not the patience. So I just climbed to the top of the monkey bars and loved Lilli Purcell pure and chaste from afar.

And felt bad. One day when I came home from kindergarten my older sister could see how bad I felt. She said something like, "Boy, do you look like you feel bad!" And also, "How come?" So I told her, and she took compassion on me and said, "No sweat! I'll make you a Superman T-shirt! Right now!" Well, that fairly blew me away.

Next morning I showed up at kindergarten all excited, my little kicking-tow just twitching with anticipation. I took off my jacket, spun around and everybody started laughing their heads off. The shirt. It had looked great at home. But of course I'd been looking at it through a soft vision of flying sand and Lilli Purcell's petticoats. Now in the hard glare of everybody's laughter I could see the problems. First, it was white. Not blue. White. A white T-shirt out of my drawer. Next, the "s": not the sinewy, swelling Krypton "S." It was this limp little Sesame Street "S" going down. Then the shield enclosing the "S": not that spiffy oil company logo shield. My shield was round. A circle. Boy, did they laugh. Wow.

I remained loyal to my feelings for Lilli Purcell, though. All through first grade, every time when Mrs. Bennett with the blue hair pulled my ears in reading it was because I was

daydreaming about Lilli Purcell. Second grade, when my heart nearly burst with joy upon discovering that my dad and her dad once went out of business together. Third grade, when I held hands with three girls at once to make her jealous, and wound up crying and making a dodo out of myself when she fell for the new kid from Holland (How can you compete with an accent!). Fourth grade, when I found out what kind of car her mom had (white Olds with red top, the kind of car with portholes) and about crashed my bike every time I saw one like it.

But it was fifth grade when it all came to a head. I vividly remember praying every night in the fifth grade. Something like, "If there is any way, in the Great Plan for the world and its inhabitants, that Lilli Purcell can be made to love me, I'll keep all the commandments. I'll keep commandments I'm not even old enough to understand yet. Thou canst make up whole new commandments, hard ones, I don't care--I'll keep them all. Because she's so skinny and so smart and plays kickball so good and I have loved her ever since I first saw her lying there on the sand, gazing up, smiling, senseless. But. If there's no way. If in all the destinies of men and stars such a thing is not meant to be; if it would violate some grand eternal plan for Lilli Purcell to love me, how 'bout Janis Robison?"

The answer was "no." It came in the classic Doctrine and Covenants manner a stupor of thought. Of course, I hadn't read the Doctrine and Covenants, so I didn't accept the answer and kept the stupor. Here's a tragic picture: a little fifth-grader, muddling around in a stupor of thought, walking headlong into trees, bikes, adults. Stupors manifest themselves in different ways. With me it was that I slept a lot in class.

It lasted clear into high school. (My memories of high school are very dim. It'll be a problem when my oldest son comes to me on the night before high school full of anxiety and worry: "Dad, what about high school? How do I handle it, Dad?" Much shrugging of shoulders. "Don't know, son. Watch 'Happy Days.'") My grades plummeted. I was a social lump. My parents took me to doctors. They all said, "Nothing wrong with this kid. Just lazy." Then they took me to a Mormon doctor. He looked me over, thumped here and thumped there. "No worry. It's just a stupor of thought. Have him repent and call me in the morning."

I'm not sure if I repented, but somewhere in there I fell in love with Christine Welch and the stupor went away.

There is a message in here. It's that your feelings are real they count, no matter how young you are. You know that. But I was worried that you might not think that I know that. I do. Now more about Christine.

Chapter Three, Holding Hands and Having Babies

I loved Christine Welch. Most people my age look back on when they loved Christine Welch and say, "I was too young to love Christine Welch." (Note: I wrote a song in those days to that effect. It was called "Too Young." It was recorded by a weird band from San Diego and became a hit in France for about three days. This is true.) But they're wrong, those people. Because I really did love Christine Welch. I defended her honor hundreds of times in my mind; and even one time I defended her honor with my actual hand, with which I hit this guy's head real hard for making fun of her goodness. And he was bigger than me. How about that?

I used to hold hands with Christine Welch. It felt wonderFUL! I loved it! It was one of the greatest things in my life. Much greater than food, for example.

Now, if somebody had come up to me in those days and suggested that holding hands with Christine Welch had anything remotely to do with having babies, two things would have happened in quick succession. Thing number one: I would have hit that person quite hard in his face for saying such a dirty thing about my sweet Christine. Thing number two: while he was still lying there, groaning, writhing, bleeding on the ground, I would have quit holding hands with Christine Welch.

But age and wisdom and a lot of earnest hand-holding have taught me two other things. Other thing number one: holding hands has a lot to do with having babies. The feelings that make you want to hold hands with Christine Welch and then make you enjoy it are the very same feelings that make you want to have babies and then enjoy it, too. (It might be hastily added here that no babies have been reported as the result of holding hands. So relax.) Other thing number two: not holding hands with Christine Welch is a drag.

So let's learn about rosebuds, about which there is a chapter right now.

Chapter Four, Rosebuds

Opinions may differ on this, but I think rosebuds are okay. I guess a lot of people think so, because there's a whole industry devoted to the manufacture of bud vases. If you were from another planet and you flew to Earth for a few minutes and saw a rosebud and thought that the rosebud always had been and always would be exactly as you saw it (always a rosebud), you would probably fly off again saying, "What a swell thing I saw on Earth."

Also, acorns are nice. I don't know what kind of case can be built for the aesthetics of an acorn. I mean, I don't know how to convince anybody that acorns are marvelous and good; but one thing's for sure, it's hard to meaningfully badmouth an acorn. Acorns have a right to be here. They make sense. And to some, at least, they are beautiful. If there were no yesterday, and there were to be no tomorrow, today would have been just a tad fuller because of the acorns.

Now love. I mean boy and girl (single) hand-in-handing, head-on-shouldering, arm-in-arming, caring about each other. If you were born when you were seventeen years old and died when you were eighteen, the world would be a better place if you had been in love during that year. The sun would shine brighter, the grass would be greener, the flowers would smell sweeter, the sky would be clearer, etc., etc. If we take this plain old worldly forget-about-yesterday-and-don't-sweat-tomorrow point of view, love between a boy and a girl is really beautiful. Those sweet fragile feelings are kind of their own reward.

But in the Kingdom, we have this way of looking at things in relation to eternity. It's a natural thing, because we're eternal creatures. It's why we take pictures of sunsets, and write songs about feelings before they fade. We want to make things eternal, so we look into the visions of the tomorrows of things.

When we look through the rosebud into the visions of its tomorrows, what do we see? Right, a rose. When we look through the acorn into the visions of its tomorrows, what do we see? An oak. But why? I mean, why a rose? Why don't roses blossom into eggplants or hockey pucks?

It sounds like a stupid question, but it doesn't have a stupid answer. I'm not asking "How?" Anybody with a half semester of botany could give a fair answer to that. I'm asking "Why?" The most enlightened researcher would have to answer that the main reason rosebuds don't blossom into conga drums is that none of them ever has--at least not when anyone with some professional credibility was watching. Once again, Why?

The reason that rosebuds blossom into roses and not into something else is that the Lord commanded them to, and, being a lot more faithful than most humans, the rosebuds usually succeed. Acorns are commanded to blossom into nothing but oaks. It's the right thing for them. What's more, they love to do it.

Just as surely and naturally as rosebuds are supposed to blossom into roses and acorns are supposed to spring into oaks, Romantic Love is supposed to blossom into something greater than itself. That thing is Family Love--not just Family but Family Love. And the reason is the same: the Lord commanded Romantic Love to blossom into Family Love (see Genesis 1:28, 2:24; 1 Corinthians 11:11; D & C 132).

That may be hard to believe, because from a botanist's point of view, it's hard to verify. You see, in the world all around us, Romantic Love seems to blossom (blossom like a cancer) into all sorts of things more perverse and weird than eggplants. But that's just because people aren't as obedient as rosebuds.

Now, it's fairly easy to see that even though rosebuds are glorious and beautiful and nice, roses are more glorious and beautiful and nice. Whatever there was that was good about an acorn, there's a lot more of it about an oak. And so we're glad to admit the wisdom of those particular blossomings. But is Family Love better than, or more than, Romantic Love?

Who are our Romantic Love models? All those people on the silver screen and TV who are physically perfect. We don't know if they're morally perfect, or mentally perfect, but wow, are they ever physically perfect! And we, we've always hated our chin (scratched it) or eyes (tried to get them lined up straight) or our fat (just wished we could get some big shears and cut it right off) or our nose (wondered why it had to lean off to the northwest like that). Why? Why? I used to hate my hair. Then I traded it for skin, which always lies right where you want it to and doesn't flap around in the wind. But my mustache is lopsided. You can't win. Unless you're on the silver screen and in love.

And there they are, kissing and kissing and kissing, and making us feel like nothing could ever be so glorious and beautiful and nice as to have an okay chin and be in Romantic Love.

Now, by sobering contrast, who are our Family Love models? Mom and Dad--these hopelessly square people. They like Lawrence Welk. They jog in wingtips. Nice folks, for sure, but glorious and beautiful? We're not so sure. First of all, they're not physically perfect (far from it), and second (and worse!) they kiss so dumb. He's off to work, he pauses at the door and turns for her to hand him his lunch, they kiss: "Smack." Can you

believe it? "Smack!" They go "Smack!" Two "Smacks." And the two "Smacks" are not even at the same time. It's like "Smack, Smack." And there's two feet of daylight between the smacks! Tell me, is that a kiss? Last night on the silver screen there were Farrah Foxy and Byron Beautiful just gnawing on each other. What glory!

What glory? Listen, Mom and Dad quite enjoy that little thing they do each morning. Don't deny it to them. They just don't have to prove their love to the movie-going public. There might be some advantage to that gnawing kind of kiss--maybe it's nutritional, I don't know. But Moms and Dads like that other way because they know they love each other, and that's all it takes most times to say it.

If you think the fire is out, though, you're probably not using both sides of your brain. You're probably old enough to know that you didn't make this earthly scene by being discovered under a leaf in the cabbage patch. You are the evidence that the fire of affection that warmed Mom and Dad a thousand years ago in the Romantic Love days has gotten a whole lot brighter, deeper, and more dramatic.

If you think sixteen-year-old evidence is inadmissible, then how about Mort, who's one-and-a-half and slobbering around on the kitchen floor? You might have trouble connecting something as gross as Mort with affections that are bright and pure and glorious. So in the name of science, take Mort and throw him into the tub. Put some water in the tub first. Then splash him all around (wash his hair even--he won't like that, but this is in the name of science) and tickle him with the soap. Then towel him down until he's pink and his hair is sticking straight out. Then run him naked across the living room rug and watch him stumble and laugh. Now the connection is easier. He's beautiful. And he came through the love between Mom and Dad, like a rainbow through the joy of a storm.

Chapter Five, Two Dramas

First

The setting is anywhere you are. The characters are you and Satan. There is one prop: a rosebud.

Satan: (with guile) Hey kid, that's a really nice rosebud you have there.

You: Nice of you to say that.

Satan: (cunningly) Do you believe there's a rose in there?

You: Sure, I just now read that in a book.

Satan: (temptingly) Why don't you open up the petals and have yourself a rose, instead of just a rosebud?

You: Hey, what a good idea! Why didn't I think of that? (You peel back the petals and are seen standing at last with a dead empty stem in your hand. Satan exits into the audience, laughing his head off.)

The End

Second

The setting is the same. The characters are the same. Only the rosebud is changed to an acorn.

Satan: (deviously) Hey kid, that's an extraordinarily nice acorn you have there.

You: Well, nice as an acorn can be, I guess.

Satan: (diabolically) Do you believe there's an oak in there?

You: That's what they tell me in this book I'm reading.

Satan: (obviously) Why don't you crack open the acorn and have a look at the oak?

You: (redundantly) Wow, okay!

(You crack the acorn, and the lights go down on you, standing there with little crumbs of cracked acorn scattered around your feet. You wait for Satan to laugh, but he seems preoccupied with two young people holding hands in the third row.)

The End (maybe)

Chapter Six, Trees

I'm not sure what happens to roses after they've done all they can as roses. I like to think they're resurrected, glorified and eternalized, even brighter and fuller and softer and sweeter than they were before. But I know what's supposed to happen to Family Love.

In Doctrine and Covenants, in section 132, it says that if two people love each other this much--enough to live worthy of each other, offering their whole lives to each other, sharing dreams and victories and sorrows, asking the Lord to seal this love forever, staying loyal to those love promises, being faithful and kind to each other, going often to the Lord together, asking again and again to be filled with love for each other those two people may walk by the angels and the gods that are set to guard the way to eternal life and glory. Those shining guardians will look them through to the center and see the purity of their love and then smile and let them pass into exaltation.

And then it says exactly what exaltation--godhood--is. Here's the definition, very tight, very clean. It says that such sweethearts will pass into their glory, which glory shall be "having babies forever and ever." (That's a "poor man's way" of saying "a fullness and a continuation of the seeds" which is scripture talk for "having babies forever and ever"--spirit children.) Is there any more to it? Any more to godhood? Just this: having babies forever and ever--and loving them. That's all. All we know, anyway. Think it through. All the Lord has done for us, the creating, the teaching, the correcting, the reaching out, the feeding, the sacrifice, the saving these are the things you do for your babies if you love them like he does. Babies come in that eternal world, too, through the love between man and woman. Eternal Man and Eternal Woman.

So back in this world, we carve our initials in the trunk of a tree. We're seventeen and single and in love and it seems like a traditionally acceptable thing to do. We lean against the trunk (it's a nice thing to lean on) and we look above us. We know now that the first branches of this kind of feeling are Family Love. But the branches reach higher than that way higher. They're tangled with the stars. There's a name for those high branches, way up where the brightest blossoms and sweetest fruit hang--the name is godhood. And here we are, leaning against the trunk, Romantic Love.

And there are roots. These feelings don't just simmer up as new chemicals emerge and mix in adolescence. We lived before, with heavenly parents. We knew them. We saw them and wondered at their beauty. We could tell that they loved each other. We heard it ring, saw it vibrate, felt it warming us. We were the proof of their love; our spirits were spun from their love. We wanted what they had. We looked on their beauty and wanted it badly enough to go over the edge into earth life--this risky, darkened, foreign place. We wanted it badly enough to die for it. But we'll get it only if we live for it.

The world doesn't see the whole love tree. They can see the heart carved on the trunk with the little arrow and initials; they know something about holding hands and how it feels, but they don't know where it goes or where it comes from. They don't see the branches or the roots--just that chunk of trunk. And their fondest hopes (like ours) are anchored to that trunk. But for people who don't have the vision of trees that comes with revelation, the trunk is floating in the air--not rooted and not reaching.

Chapter Seven, Chain of Words

There are three words I like a lot. They form a chain. Each word has a bright meaning that overlaps and locks into the meaning of the next word. More about the chain later. First the words:

Word one--*Lover*. I probably learned this word before you did, and Satan may have changed the meaning of it while I was away on my mission, or when I was off fishing in the Uintahs, or maybe last Saturday morning while I was locked away with my little boys watching cartoons. He does that, you know--changes the meanings of words when we're not looking, so you and I can't talk to each other. What the word meant when I learned it was a boy who holds hands with a girl and thinks she's the greatest thing since peanut butter--and vice versa. I trust you can relate to that. Most of you have done some kind of hand-holding, if only in your minds.

Word two--*Father* (or, of course, *Mother*). Maybe you don't relate this one as well as word one. I do, like crazy, because I am one. It's the best when everybody's asleep, even Mom, and Joe wakes up and he's four years old, and you can't sleep either, so you send out for a pizza. Believe me, it's great--except you have to give him most of your pepperonis. If you don't want to be a father (or, of course, a mother) for any other reason then be a father so you can have a pizza with Joe at two in the morning.

[INSERTED SPECIAL REQUEST: Hey, could you do all the "father/mother" gender adjustments for the next while? It would save me a lot of writing. Thanks. Back to the book...]

It's really a merciful thing, too, that I can be a father now. Do you know that in the

resurrection only the gods will be able to have children? And here I am for the one moment in all eternity when I can taste what God feels always. And here we are at the next word.

Word three--God. Neither you nor I can relate to this word so well, because we're not gods and won't be in this life. But maybe there's another reason why it seems so far away and hard to relate to: maybe we simply haven't tried. What I'm saying is that if most of us know how it feels to be a lover, and a lot of us know what it feels like to be a father (or, of course, mather), then maybe all together we have the beginnings of an idea of what it feels like to be a god--only we never realized it.

You see, there's the chain. When a person learns and feels and does the things a faithful and wise lover learns and feels and does, he will become a father. The one leads to the other as simply as spring warms into summer. The links are locked.

And when a person learns and feels and does the things a faithful and wise father learns and feels and does, he will become a god. Just as simply.

When God promises us everything he has, he's not just offering us some real estate in the clouds and a place in the choir. He means everything he has. And what he mostly has is children, and a swelling universe of love for those children. He wants us to have that joy; he has commanded us, through his Son, to have that joy.

He wants us to be lovers so we'll become fathers. He wants us to become fathers so that we can become gods. And to help us want it too, he's filled with Loverhood with good feelings, and Fatherhood with good feelings; and those good feelings multiplied over again a million times and shot through with light and peace are the feelings that warm the heart of God.

How do you break a chain of words? If I wanted to break this one, as Satan does, I'd keep you from associating these three ideas. Consider Lover. First off, I'd lie to you about what the word means. I'd tell you that when you dress rich and smell good and drive fast and lots of girls try hard to make you feel good, then you're a lover. You're not, but I'd say that you are.

But suppose you didn't believe me and you really did fall in love with somebody. Then I'd tell you that you wouldn't want to wreck it all with boredom by being true to each other.

But suppose you wanted to be true. Then I'd tell you that getting married would take all the color and excitement out of it, so why not just live together?

But suppose you felt like your love was worth running up a flag for, and shooting off some

flares for, and keeping the law for, so you got married anyway. Now the chainbreaker would be worried, because Lover has almost been linked with Father. So now I tell you: Marriage is great; you finally have each other; you're all alone together. Keep it that way. Don't waste your precious love on children. They're a hassle, a ball and chain. Who needs them? Besides, it's immoral to let more people into the world than there's room for. But you get carried away with the idea of little feet pattering around, and you get yourselves pregnant. The chainbreaker used to panic here, but not any more. Now I'd say: Just kill the baby. Everybody does it. Because they changed their mind. Because they have "a right to control their bodies" (which is true: they did have a right to control their bodies--just a few months ago, when they didn't want to), or because of the environment. Or because they would rather play tennis. (There are people right now who have killed their babies to preserve their tennis game. This is documented.)

But you don't listen, and you have the baby alive. You're a father. Now what?

I'd try to break the chain between the words Father and God. And I wouldn't have to try all that hard, really, because Satan has already broken it in the minds of most of the people who've been alive in the last sixteen hundred years. This is how he did it.

Along about the Fourth Century, he got the Roman Emperor Constantine to call meetings to decide what God is, because by that time the apostles were dead and nobody seemed to know, and all the disagreement on the subject made for bad politics and unhappy emperors.

There were no prophets in the Fourth Century (or at least none were invited to the meetings) so no one could ask them, and it seems that the idea of asking the Lord himself never came up. So after looking around to see what respectable people believed (mainly the Greeks, who were, of course, the most respectable ever), and after some earnest debate (some people got killed), they voted on a God who is not really a person, who has no body, parts, or passions, and who is a kind of floaty spacy thing (like "The Force" in Star Wars). Furthermore, it was decided that God and his Son and the Holy Ghost were sort of scrunched together into a fog.

Does that sound like Father? Could you ask a floaty spacy thing to lay its hands on your head and give you a blessing when you were sick? How could it even know what "sick" means? Are we created in the image of a floaty spacy thing? For hundreds of years now, pretty near everybody has thought so. So in the ongoing war between truth and error, Satan wins a significant battle. He makes all the Father stuff into poetry.

It happens to be very beautiful poetry, but to the world it's just poetry. Why do people

who don't believe that God really is Father call him that? Eliza R. Snow, who was devoted to the Bible long before the restored gospel was presented to her, wrote in the beautiful hymn "O My Father" these words:

I had learned to call thee Father,
Through thy Spirit from on high;
But until the key of knowledge
Was restored, I knew not why.

What key? What knowledge? Simply that God is not poetry. He's real.

Without that key, I reckon there are two courses open to people.

COURSE NUMBER ONE: If you think that God is not really Father, then you might conclude that all this Loverhood blossoming into Fatherhood is way beneath him. He even probably thinks it's all pretty small and nasty. Maybe the thing that would most please him would be to avoid the very appearance of this kind of love. So, if you're a guy, you go off and live with many other guys and be a monk. If you're a girl, you go off with just ladies and be a nun. I don't mean to shrink these people; they bring a lot of comfort to large portions of the human family. But these people are never moms and dads, and they'd probably be great ones.

COURSE NUMBER TWO: If you think that God is not really Father and that he cannot even relate to the feelings you have that might make you one (in other words, your love feelings), then maybe you'd believe that he doesn't even care how you do your love life. Couldn't you then kid yourself into thinking that sex urges are just like itches and that if you moved in with different boyfriends and girlfriends it would be a lot easier to scratch them away? (The itches, not the boyfriends and girlfriends.) The chainbreaker might even softly suggest (maybe loudly suggest) that the sex of that person of the opposite sex needn't be all that opposite. As long as you are kind to the homeless and don't kick cats.

Satan is delighted with either of these courses. And all he has to do to get us to follow one of them is make us think that the Lord doesn't really care all that much how we do our love life, or our father life, because it doesn't really have anything to do with God, or with the kind of life God leads. So Satan makes us think the chain is broken. Or preferably, that there never was a chain.

But hold on! Don't we know better than that? We were Born in the Church, Crossed the Plains, Pushed Handcarts, and were Buried Along the Trail. The Church was organized

on April sixth. We joined on the seventh (and were living the Word of Wisdom already on the fifth). Can all this chainbreaking possibly happen in our heads? Can it cloud our hearts? It does.

It does, because we live in the world, but we don't manage the world. We don't make the movies, the TV shows. We don't write the songs. We don't publish the magazines or design the billboards or the clothes. We don't write the textbooks or peddle the thousand smells that are supposed to create love. Who does all this stuff? The people with broken chains in their heads, chains broken because Satan broke them--generations ago. And he did it to their parents and their teachers. And their judges and their juries and their coaches and their heroes and their gas station men. And who among any of them ever even heard of the idea that Loverhood blossoming into Fatherhood and Motherhood is the beginning of Godhood? Nobody.

There's a test you can use to measure the effect all this chainbreaking has had on your head. There is one question on the test: Do you believe the Lord cares about your love life? I mean as much as he cares about your go-to-meeting life? That's the test. The answer is yes.

Be it known that however much the Lord wants you not to kick cats or rob banks or play basketball on Sunday, he wants you a thousand times more to know he cares about these fragile love feelings that can make you someday like him. Because these feelings have everything to do with who he is and the kind of life he leads--Eternal Life, which is Eternal Man and Eternal Woman creating together for always and ever, without limit or ending.

We call him Father. We, who alone in the world understand what it means to sing "I am a child of God," really mean it. And Father has told us that the love feelings we know in our lives, if they're right and faithful and clean, will link like gold into the very meaning of his life.

Chapter Eight, Chastity Night

They used to have this thing they called Chastity Night. At least, I think that's what they called it. Memories get foggy. (The event itself was a little foggy, even at the time.) Anyway, I seem to remember it as "Chastity Night." It happened once a year at a meeting of the Young Men's and the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Associations, which they also used to have, every week. I don't know what the Young Women did to mutually improve; but the Young Men played basketball, which may explain why we could never get close enough to the Young Women to find out how they mutually improved.

They wouldn't tell us in advance about Chastity Night being on the schedule, because if they had we wouldn't have come. As it was, we innocently dribbled into the foyer where a large Bishopric person confiscated our basketballs and barred our exit from the building. So we went into the chapel.

All the boys sat utterly flush left and all the girls sat utterly flush right. They could have made the center section removable and extended the basketball floor into the chapel on MIA nights. We had these leaders with horrible vision problems from trying to relate to boys and girls at once.

But we sat down and looked at the stand to see what was so special about tonight. And what to our wondering eyes should appear but this couple of people who looked like they were on their way to get married--he in a dark suit and she in her wedding dress. Only we knew that they'd been married four years already because we knew their children and because the groom's suit wouldn't quite button in the front, and the bride's dress had these sundry bulges and almost-ripping-out places and had mellowed into this basic yellow color.

Well, after we heard the ads and recited the scripture together, these two escapees from the top of a wedding cake started in on us. He was easy enough to handle--he only spoke for about a minute and a half because he was embarrassed to death and even in his suit would rather have been playing basketball. But she. Wow! She talked for a whole fat hour and forty-five minutes, it seemed like. This was her favorite subject in all the world.

The boys were cringing against the wall, wanting the rocks to fall on their heads, feeling just like you do when you have that dream about suddenly finding yourself at the movies with just your underwear on. The girls were on the edge of their pews, leaning dangerously forward. They really liked this sort of thing. At least they acted like they did. (But then, I even acted like I liked basketball.)

She talked about the excitement of beginning a "hope chest"--cramming it full of washcloths and pillowcases, having it overflow to a closet, then under your bed; so that by

the time you're eleven, your parents are adding on to the house to accommodate washcloths and pillowcases. One thing is, you'd be in pretty good shape if you ever got really sleepy or dirty. Funny, though, she never said anything about towels or sheets. I guess you could always sew together a dozen washcloths and have a good enough towel. Maybe that's what they learned to do while we played basketball.

Then dating. Gang dating at first--army dating would be preferable, the kind you have to charter a bus for. Then when you're older (thirty-one might be okay) you go just the two of you for nice dates with many corsages with which you wreck the family encyclopedias, pressing them. On the first date you cannot kiss, but it's okay on the second. (HUGE THING IN PARENTHESES: When I went to BYU as a freshman, there was an article in the Daily Universe that must have been written by this wedding-dress lady: no on the first date; yes on the second. I got the feeling that if you didn't put your mouths together on that second date, maybe you weren't a good member of the Church. It never occurred to anybody on the editorial staff that a kiss might be thought of as kind of a sacred thing. That's when I came very near to becoming a college drop-out.) But she didn't tell us anything we really needed to know, like do you close your eyes? Do you hold your breath? Do you go "Smack"? She only said that it was okay on the second date.

Then the proposal, which you could tell she liked a lot because he had to get on his knees.

Then the printed literature, the direct-mail promotional material. These days it's a lot more fun than it was then, because now you can put your picture on it and a little bit of top-forty song lyric and some glitter, and maybe glue in a stick of Doublemint. In those days, the only way you could use to impress somebody was how many different envelopes you could stuff a single invitation into. Also you stuff a little piece of tissue paper in there, in case the person got really touched by the invitation and needed to dab a tear. Actually, more dangerous than tears was the hernia the postman could get from lugging the thing up the front steps.

Then the night comes. The viewing. You have the whole church gym all to yourself--the ultimate triumph over basketball: little white wicker things folks have to walk through, several miles of crepe paper, big white paper accordion bells hanging from the baskets (don't bump these--dust from a thousand viewings will go "poosh" all over the place).

And the ritual at the cake table, this fine traditional moment so full of symbolism and feeling. She cuts the cake, their very first piece, to offer in love this gesture of sustenance to her new husband. The guest hush. Banks of photographers poise. MMWA! She straightarms cake all over the guy's face. A thousand flashbulbs. Guests going "Oh, wow,

how cute!" "Hey, that's clever!" "Gee, I never saw anybody do that before!" Cake hanging from the groom's face.

Then she talked about the presents. Tables and tables piled high with Osterizers. So many Osterizers you could stand them base to base and put a peach in the first one, push the button for a second or two, immediately pour the peach into the second, push the button, pour it into the third, and continue all the way down to the end of the Osterizers as fast as you could pour and push. By the time reached the end, you could Osterize that peach into thin air! You could breathe a peach! Peach vapor! Great new product! See what love can do?

More about the bridesmaids, the punch, who caught the bouquet. Right here I began to get the feeling that that moment in the gym was for her the absolute pinnacle of life, and that from getting married in the temple, the rest of life was just a downhill slide into the celestial kingdom.

(This is probably the truest part of this chapter. Apparently she looked at marriage as this huge ending, the pot of gold rather than the rainbow-bridge home. Standing there, all decked out in that dress that was getting yellower by the minute, she was going on and on and on about all this stuff that has nothing to do with the bright beginning that temple marriage is. She was preparing me for when I got to BYU and once every semester found in my Daily Universe a fat advertising supplement called "Bridal Fair" or "Buying Your Way To Celestial Bliss" or "Diamonds Are A Righteous Person's Best Friend" or something like that. All the gold-and-jewels people in Provo, and the invitation printers, and the reception hall owners, and the wedding-dress makers, and the baby-blue tuxedo renters, and the full-color photographers, and the black-and-white photographers, and the albino photographers, and the second-hand stores that buy up unwanted Osterizers--all these banded together and tried to convince us in fourteen pages that without them we could not be married. And in all the pictures there was the Temple, even in the Osterizer pictures. But one person didn't need convincing. And she was at large and behind the pulpit and loving it.)

But then she got scary. She'd say, "Young people, you have to be chaste. If you aren't chaste, you may cram cake, but you won't feel good about it! Young people, if you don't keep yourselves chaste you may have to buy your own Osterizer!" Then she'd lean out over the pulpit, fix us in her stare and say, "Furthermore, young people (now she'd be almost growling), if you are unchaste (!!),... (Big Pause) ...your eyes'll fall out! You're teeth'll melt! Your ears'll burn and slide down the sides of your neck, and cool, and stick there!"

Then she sat down.

And we were chaste.

Like crazy.

Chapter Nine, Oranges

Let's say life is a sidewalk. Running alongside the sidewalk is a conveyor belt, moving along at the same speed you're walking. On the conveyor belt are these big, bright oranges. The oranges represent the kind of love expressions between a man and a woman that lead naturally to the conception of a child. They look good, but on each orange is stamped in purple ink the word bad, and you believe it, because anybody wielding a purple stamp must have a lot of authority. I mean, when you've seen Sunkist on an orange in the store, did you ever doubt that they meant it?

You, being the law-abiding, commandment-keeping kid that you are, do not touch the oranges, although they look awfully touchable, and they're always (always) within reach.

Down the sidewalk a little way is a kind of archway, or short tunnel maybe, through which the sidewalk goes--also the conveyor belt. The archway is called "Getting Married." It's not called "Being Married" or "Honeymoon," it's just called "Getting Married"; and it represents the forty seconds or so that it takes for someone with authority to say, "I now pronounce you man and wife." It's dark in there, and you're not really sure what's going on; you wonder how a piece of paper from city hall is supposed to change everything.

You pop out the other side; you're married. And there's the conveyor belt rolling out of the darkness right beside you and stretching out ahead. On it are oranges. They look like the same ones--big and bright and juicy--but on each one is now stamped (in purple ink) the word good. Great! They always looked pretty good anyway. So you're about to eat an orange and suddenly you think you see some purple smearings underneath the word good. Could it once have said bad on this orange, and somebody in the dark rubbed that off and stamped good? Or is there magic in the tunnel that actually turns bad into good? You wonder. You're confused. But only for a moment, because you're starving to death and, after all, it says good, and in purple ink even, and so you eat the orange.

And then you get a bellyache. A figurative bellyache. Incidentally, the orange was good; the second stamp was right. But you get a bellyache anyway, because there's a whole big

part of you that believes with all its heart that the orange was bad, because during the most impressionable years of your life, those years when everything you saw and heard went way down deep inside, all you saw stamped on oranges was the purple word bad. There are people thirty years farther down the sidewalk--people who have grandchildren--who are still getting bellyaches from eating the oranges. That's pretty sad.

Erase everything I just said. New sidewalk, new conveyor belt, new oranges, new archway-tunnel, all standing for the same thing as last time. Here you are on the seventeen-and-single end of the sidewalk, heading for the tunnel. But this time the oranges are all stamped good. So you say, "That's more like it," and you walk along, smiling at the oranges, admiring their color and roundness and orangeness, looking forward to "Getting Married" so you can have some. You walk into the tunnel and out the other side. You're married. You reach out and take some oranges off the belt. They still say good on them, and that seems to harmonize with all your earlier feelings; so you eat some and have no bellyaches and ride off into the sunset and live happily ever after. Beautiful ending.

Only not really the ending, because you are of course now asking, "hey, if they were stamped good back before 'Getting Married,' why didn't I eat some then?"

Believe me, that's a good question. It deserves a good answer. Let me try. The reason you didn't eat some is this: They're the Lord's oranges. They are holy. They are sacred. They belong to him. There is strength and power and sweetness in the oranges that belong to those who are Eternal Fathers and Mothers--Eternal Lovers.

There may come a day when the Lord will share the oranges with you. Or right now you can steal them. What happens if you do?

Have you wondered why we keep hearing the proverb that fornication and adultery are second in badness only to murder? What can we steal that's more holy than life? It's the holiest thing. What comes next? The power of life--love, with its fair expressions, its fragile promises, its delicate joys, and its miraculous consequences.

Two people may fornicate. The only worse thing they can do together is kill someone--or kill each other. (And in a sense, they already are killing each other, by degrees, until they are, as the Book of Mormon says, "hardened," past feeling" or, as the New Testament says, simply "dead." Immorality withers love and sucks life always.) And yet "the world" says it's more serious to steal a car than to steal those oranges. There isn't even a fine for petting. Here's the world, saying that a crummy stolen '52 Buick with no windshield and three wheels has more value than love and the power of life. But you don't have to listen.

You walk into the tunnel, "Getting Married," and it's not dark at all. It's light--white and gold. It's the Temple. And you give your worthy life to your lover. And you walk out on the other side, and you're married. And you reach out and take the oranges, right? Almost, but not quite.

The Lord is standing on the other side of the conveyor belt. You know him now; you've made promises to him. He's made promises about your love. You reach out to him, and he hands you the oranges. They're sweet, they're beautiful, they're cool and good. And you got them in the right way (some would say the only way). Anything less is something like theft. Take the oranges before you get to the arch, and however sweet the smell and heady the taste, they'll turn to ashes in your mouth.

Chapter Ten, Ashes

Here's the definition of "ashes in your mouth": what's left of love after it's been eaten by worms of lust and selfishness and embarrassment and then squished out of worm bellies and scorched--then placed (where else?) in your mouth.

Once I knew a guy named Fred who had a girlfriend named Sally. Sally and Fred swiped oranges. We all knew it. So having read this book, and knowing exactly what to look for, we all stood around waiting for their love to turn to ashes in their mouths. It did. And they didn't love each other anymore, and on a bitterness scale of one to ten ("one" being bitterer than anything you've tasted, and "ten" being so bitter you think death would taste better) these ashes were about six.

But what if, having been taught the truth, they just kept on smiling and swiping oranges and laughing at us and using this book to squeeze the grease out of tortillas? Just be patient.

It's five years down the road now, and there's a baby. But Sally and Fred haven't changed in their hearts. No reverence. Just fun (which is not quite the same as joy, incidentally). Lots of fishing in their undershirts and drinking beer and fooling around on the side, and lots of laughs. Suppose that now the love changes to ashes. The baby looks up at Sally and Fred. The bitterness at this point would have to be about seven-plus.

But let's suppose the ashes haven't come yet. Now they're sixty-seven and like to have the grandkids visit. Some of the grandkids are swiping oranges, and it all comes rushing back

in memory--nervous thrills followed by darkness and confusion, then mistrust--all the time this deep wedge of mistrust. It all comes back, and nights are full of TV now and quarreling over how to spend the Social Security. And both Sally and Fred are maybe even feeling like after all these years somebody should say they're sorry. But they've long ago forgotten whom to say it to, and each feels like the other ought to be the one to say it. Love's dead. And the ashes are a solid nine.

Try this: Somehow they get all the way through to eighty and still have some warmth for each other. No sacrifice or humility or service or faith, but warmth--a real dependence, even. In all their prejudices, simple vices, and minor bellyaches, they are bound together--crutches to one another. They die, and awaken on the other side (and are maybe a little surprised at this development). Sally looks frantically for Fred. Fred shouts Sally's name till he's hoarse. Then he sees her. And she seems young again and beautiful for him to look at in a way he'd forgotten about. And she sees him, and to her he is tall and strong and fair. And they want to have each other forever, to get serious now about the poetry they heard on earth, to love and bear the fruit of love and have joy in their still-blossoming family. But they neither marry nor are given in marriage in heaven. And each has a mouthful of ashes.

Well, I don't know but what mercy keeps them from tasting the ashes for a while. Maybe, because of the choices they made in their lives, they can't taste either the bitterness of the ashes or the sweetness of sweet things. I just don't know, and I won't till I die. But if I had those ashes in my mouth, and morning was breaking all around me, and I stood across from one I had loved, on a bitterness scale of one to ten those ashes would have to be about thirty.

Chapter Eleven, Mouthwash

In your bishop's upper left-hand desk drawer, there is a bottle of mouthwash. And he wants to share it with you. The hard part is that it's not Lavioris, nor Cepacol, not Scope, not any of those kinds that make mouthwashing fun. It's Listerine. And you have to leave it in for a long time.

But it makes your mouth clean. Sweet breath. No taste of bitterness left. And boy, are you ever glad! The ingredients are listed on the label: artificial coloring, artificial flavor, genuine organic non-recycled repentance.

The Listerine is a gift from the Savior to the bishop. The glad feeling is a gift from the Savior to you.

Chapter Twelve, Hands

Into whose hands will you entrust these precious feelings of love? If you are selfish, or irreverent, or even simply ungentle, you are placing your love feelings in the hands of Satan. What will he do with them? What can he do with them? With all his shrieking, salty, starving passion, he hates them. Would you hand your sandwich back and forth to someone who'd been mashing worms barehanded all day for fun? Then why place your love in hands like Satan's?

On the other hand, there are other hands. Being faithful, being prayerful, keeping the counsels and trusting in the promises, you can place your feelings of love in the Lord's hands. Does he know what to do with them? He gave them to you. He smiles over them, and they warm him. His glory brightens as your love grows. And he gives you more.

Chapter Thirteen, Cups

You're crawling through the desert. You crawl up to me. I have in my hand a cup--a real nice cup, silver, with jewels. I offer it to you. You think, Great! Only then you see that there's nothing in it. You look up at me. I say, "What's the matter? It's a great cup!"

Is that dumb? Yup. Here's a poem by my friend Carol Lynn Pearson.

If God is Love,

The source,

The spring,

Should not the lover

Pilgrimage there-

Reverently

Seeking supply?-

That the cup he gives

Will not be dry.

("The Source" from the book *The Search*,

Doubleday and Company, Inc.

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The idea is that we are the vessels. We can be filled with good things and/or bad things--jealousy, anger, tenderness, forgiving, hate, love.

Love? You mean love isn't just something you do? No, not any more than gasoline is something you do. It's something you get in order to power something you do. There is gasoline (noun) that enables you to drive (verb). There is love (noun) that enables you to give (verb). Carol Lynn's idea is that we have to get our vessels filled before we can really comfort any thirsty-for-love people, and that the Lord will fill our cups if we go to him, asking. He is the source of love.

Now, Carol Lynn is a great lady, but she's not a prophet. Mormon was, and here's what he said about pure love coming from God.

"My beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure." (Moroni 7:48).

Love is a gift from God. That's the idea. It's true. The supply is limitless. Our responsibility is to clean the inside of the vessel (let the Crest and Clairol people worry about the outside) and then try to become true followers of the Savior so that when we ask for the real water of life--love--the Lord can fill us. Then we do the things that make us like him; we empty ourselves out into the thirsty life of our loved one and go back to the Lord for more.

You may know someone who's getting married soon. Watch him or her closely. Sometime soon, probably just a few days or hours from the altar, that person may share with you this

fear: "I love him now with all my heart, enough to give him my body, my mind, my trust, my children, everything. But [and this is always really cold and scary] what about five years from now?" Believe me, it's an almost universal occurrence, that sudden rush of fear. But why? I think there are two reasons.

REASON NUMBER ONE: All our experiences with these feelings have ended with a fading of the feelings. In high school, I fell in love maybe monthly. That means I had to fall out of love monthly, too--otherwise some very thorny social problems might have arisen. Looking back, I can see that lots of times it wasn't really love. It was more falling in like, or in infatuation, or thinking that if I was seen holding hands with somebody or other, then somebody or other else would think I was cool.

But sometimes it really was love--really good and lifting feelings that led to helpful giving and not vain taking. But every time, I'd wake up several weeks into the thing to the gray awareness that the feeling was gone. So we'd break up and say, "Wow, it was really good, but what did it mean? And where did it go?"

Well, my attitude in those days was that in Romantic Love three's a crowd. And that went for the Lord, too. Sunday was for him, and sometimes prayers were for him, and always certain regions of my heart and mind were for him. But I never included him in my love life. It was inconceivable to me then (and maybe is to you now) to do something so strange as to pray before I picked up my date, asking the Lord for the feelings I needed so I could bless her life, whoever she might be; or, once we were together, to center our conversations around his goodness to us; or even to try to get myself to fall in love with somebody who might understand the above things. And so every time, not going to the well, I ran dry--I just ran out of love. Does that sound kind of simple? It is. Unless we believe in the Source, why should we believe that marriage is some kind of magic thing that will make what has always happened (falling out of love) never happen again?

REASON NUMBER TWO: The world has this thing called "the Honeymoon Approach to Romantic Love," and a lot of us believe in it instead of in the Source. It goes like this: Love is something you kindle up inside yourself and then go warm somebody with. Nobody knows what actually lights the match, but it's probably something magical, and that's the beauty of it.

The idea is that you marry somebody and immediately get such a gigantic bonfire going that it'll take a really long time for it to go out. Somebody told me the other day that the average burn-out time is eighteen years: then you can do it all again. The poets support this kind of idea when they write about the fierce flames of youthful love and the embers of old age.

Well, embers are great; it's hard to meaningfully badmouth an ember, but the very next thing embers do is become ashes.

Of course, if your timing is right and your initial bonfire big enough, then maybe it'll take a really super long time for your love to burn out--maybe even until right before you die, which is perfect because when you got married the minister told you that love comes to a screeching halt at death anyway, and this way you can avoid the embarrassment of showing up in Heaven still holding hands with each other--and you can save the angels the extra bother of taking away your wedding rings and reminding you that it's "just friends" now.

(Apology for not really knowing about this: I'll admit it, the pictures of heaven I keep in my mind are incredibly bright, but incredibly hazy. My heart says the Lord won't take our love away if we're not gods, only the kind of love that fills worlds with our children. But couldn't you get the impression that the minister means business when he says "till death do you part"? Maybe our hearts hold expectations that we keep secret from our heads. Maybe the minister's does, too. But love does often fade, and he seems to suggest that's okay.)

Can I risk being so bold as to say that my sweetheart and I never had this fear we've been talking about? That we went to the temple full of confidence and faith? That my father told me later that he could see eternity in our eyes as we gazed at each other across the altar? Not because we were on the bright edge of translation, but because kind friends and leaders and a loving Father in Heaven helped us to believe this doctrine that love is a gift from him. We knew ourselves well enough to reckon our own supply might not last through the first five months (let alone the first five years) but it didn't matter, because we had found the well, and the sweetness of that water would bring us back again and again.