

The Love I Can See

Oceans. Whippoorwills. The undying sun. Through the years, people have tried at an impossible task: to put love into words. There have been sweet pictures painted by an honest tongue, and melodic poems as true as the tune of a spring-fresh songbird, but still, a single word which to attribute to love has yet to be found. Even the most genuine efforts fall short in summing up the universal presence of love. Why? Because love, I find, is action.

When I think of love, I consider it best shown through acts of compassion, a consciousness of other's distress coupled with the desire to relieve it. Love is a kind hand on a hard day, a smile in sadness, and understanding in the most confusing times of your life. Love is the embodiment of the kindness we try to instill within our children everyday. Love is patience, humility, and sincerity. Love is most abundantly found in the snapshots of moments where compassion was chosen, and thus left its mark on an individual. Love is not a deep philosophical theory, a lost cause, or a rare commodity best saved for a later date, but instead is woven into the fibers of our personal lives.

Some moments are brought to mind when I consider this personal love, this compassionate call to everyone.

First, I visit in my mind moments I can see throughout the pages of history. I specifically think back to the 1920s, when a group of four men made a life-changing discovery. Frederick Banting, Charles Best, John Macleod, and James Collip are credited with discovering insulin in 1923. This was a scientific breakthrough that literally held the power to save lives. However, their love was not demonstrated in their work, but rather in the decision that followed. They famously sold the patent for insulin to the University of Toronto for one dollar, stating it did not belong to them, but to the world. Rather than seeking profit, love chose to selflessly save others.

Second, I recall the moments where I have been blessed to see compassion first-hand. One such occasion was when I was gifted the opportunity to work with a disaster relief fund following a devastating natural disaster. The actions I witnessed that day were truly incredible. People of all ages worked from dawn 'til dusk, unloading boxes, organizing the donation center, packing kits, cleaning up the debris, donating supplies, bringing food, and helping to support in every other way possible. That day was so special because it was packed with thousands of moments where love saw other's needs, and took action to fill them.

Another event where I experienced the manifestation of active love was watching family friends turn into just family. Having people who genuinely care is one of the greatest forms of love. With them, I was able to have the daily assurance that I would be seen, heard, remembered, valued, chosen, and supported. Whether it was a birthday surprise after a long day of practices, a message from my best friend checking on me when I'm out of town, having someone to sit with when I was used to sitting alone, getting the privilege of watching their kids grow up, or just having people who listen to me when I need to talk my feelings out, my bonus family and closest friends show me love through their actions every time I get to be with them.

Love is so many things I've seen in my personal life from people I know, but often love is shown from unexpected places. Think for a moment of all the numerous times a stranger or mere acquaintance has gifted you the compassion we all so desperately need from time to time. Think of amusement park workers who go out of their way to make a trip even more

special for you. The cashier who makes friendly small-talk and gives you tips on their favorite products. The restaurant server who is determined to make you smile. A librarian that remembers you, and makes time to talk to you. A co-worker who never speaks a harsh word, even on the most stressful and frustrating days. The people standing next to you in long lines or on boring bus rides, who somehow show you kindness in the most ordinary, but unforgettable, ways. I often think back to my first time at a specific group function. I barely knew anyone, and had no friends to rely on. While I was sitting alone, excluded from the conversations around me, someone I barely knew from past interactions started to speak with me. We had a conversation that lasted the length of the dinner, and I left feeling a stronger sense of inclusion than I had felt almost anywhere I had been that year. Their kindness was unnecessary, for they could have spent time with their friends, but their choice to be compassionate shaped the way I viewed things for years. To this day, I think back on that occasion, and I find myself inspired to treat others with the same compassion I was shown that evening.

I have been blessed to see love in action my entire life. From game nights with my family, late-night talks with my best friend, and unexplained kindness from new connections, love has found its way to me time and time again. These experiences have instilled within my heart one enduring belief- you may not feel that love can change *the* world, but it will always hold the power to change *someone's* world. And if you ask me, that's more than enough.