

# God, the Lover of Life

Richard Rohr

*Love is who you are. When you don't live according to love, you are outside of being. You're not being real. When you love, you are acting according to your deepest being, your deepest truth. You are operating according to your dignity. —Richard Rohr*

**D**rawing from my many years of teaching, I can honestly say that the most powerful, most needed and most essential teaching is always about love. *Love is our foundation and our destiny.* It is where we come from and where we're headed.

As St. Paul famously says, *“So faith, hope, and love remain, but the greatest of these is love”* (1 Corinthians 13:13).

My hope, whenever I speak or write, is to help clear away the impediments to receiving, allowing, trusting and participating in a foundational love. God's love is planted inside each of us as the Holy Spirit who, according to Jesus, *“will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you”* (John 14:26).

Love is who you are. All I can do is remind you of what you already know deep within your True Self and invite you to live connected to this Source.

The first letter of John reminds us, *“God is love, and whoever remains in love, remains in God and God in her or him”* (1 John 4:16). The creation story in Genesis says that we were created in the very *“image and likeness”* of God—who is love (Genesis 1:26; see also Genesis 9:6). Out of the Trinity's generative, loving relationship, creation takes form, mirroring its Creator.

If we are truly created in the *“image and likeness of God”*—then our family of origin is divine. We were created by a loving God to be love in the world. Our core is original blessing, not original sin. Our starting point is positive and, as it is written in the first chapter of the Bible, it is *“very good”* (Genesis 1:31). We do have a good place to go home. If the beginning is right, the rest is made considerably easier, because we know and can trust

*God, lover of life,  
lover of these lives,  
God, lover of our souls,  
lover of our bodies,  
lover of all that exists . . .  
In fact, it is your love  
that keeps it all alive . . .  
May we live in this love.  
May we never doubt this love.  
May we know that we are love,  
That we were created for love,  
That we are a reflection of you,  
That you love yourself in us  
and therefore,  
we are perfectly lovable.*

*May we never doubt this deep and  
abiding and perfect goodness.*

*We are because you are.*

the clear direction of our life's tangent.

*We must all overcome the illusion of separateness.* It is the primary task of faith to communicate not worthiness but union, to reconnect people to their original identity *“hidden with Christ in God”* (Colossians 3:3). God's job description is to draw us back into primal and intimate relationship.

## LOVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Love is not really an action that you do. Love is what and who you are, in your deepest essence.

Love is a place that already exists inside of you, but is also greater than you. That's the paradox. It's within you and yet beyond you. This creates a sense of abundance and more-than-enoughness, which is precisely the satisfaction and deep peace of the True Self. You know you've found a well that will never go dry, as Jesus says (see John 4:13-14). Your True Self, God's Love in you, cannot be exhausted.

Material gifts decrease when you give them away. Spiritual gifts, by contrast, increase the more you use them. Yes! You get more love by letting it flow through you, just as modeled by the Trinity. If you love, you will become more loving. If you practice patience, you will become more patient. If you stop the Divine Flow, you will be stopped up (“sin”).

understand the command to love one’s enemies, it has to disregard the message as naive, which is exactly what most of Christian history has done.

Jesus’ rather clear teaching on love of enemies has been consistently ignored by all the mainline churches. Christians have been fighting one war after another, and excluding, torturing, and killing enemies right and left because the false self can never understand the

gospel. Yet we have been baptizing, confirming, giving communion to, and even ordaining false selves throughout our history. It is probably unavoidable, and God surely must be patient.

Once, after I gave an anti-war sermon, a businessman came up to me and said, “Well, Father, maybe in an ideal world. . . .” I know he meant well, but that’s what we’ve done with most of the teaching of Jesus. We interpret his meaning for some ideal world. Of course, the ideal world

is never going to come so we can just ignore 99% of the actual teaching of Jesus, as the institutional church (and I too!) have usually done. We concentrate instead on things that Jesus never once talked about, like birth control, homosexuality, and abortion—bodily “sins” because the body can most easily carry shame. We shouldn’t disregard bodily shame or addictions, but they are not the core problem.

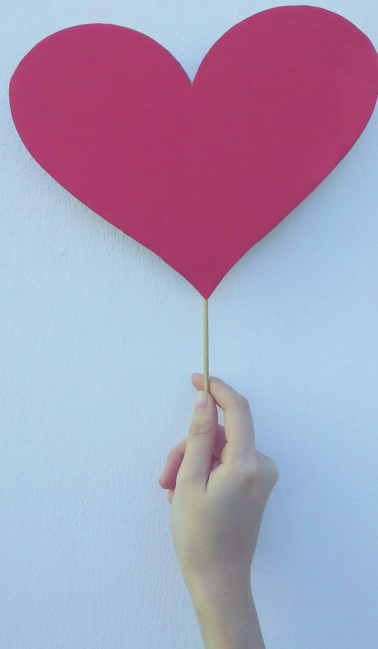
Jesus focused on issues of power, prestige, and possession—which all of us have largely ignored. I don’t think the church has had intentional bad will. It has simply tried to get the false self to live the gospel, and that will never work.

In other words, we’ve tried to have a church without fundamental transformation. □

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**Love is not really an action that you do. Love is what and who you are, in your deepest essence.**

**Love is a place that already exists inside of you, but is also greater than you.**



Love is not something you can bargain for, nor is it something you can attain or work up to—because love is your very structural and essential identity—created in the image of the Trinity. When you are living in conscious connection with this Loving Inner Presence, you are in your True Self. God is forever united to this love within you; it is your soul, the part of you that always says yes to God. God always sees God in you—and “cannot disown God’s own self” (2 Timothy 2:13).

Many Christians live with a terrible sense of being rejected, because their religion is basically a worthiness game where no one really wins. That’s precisely not the Good News. It’s bad news.

The gospel will always be misinterpreted by the false self in terms of some kind of climbing or achieving. Since the false self can’t even