

Love is a many splendoured thing 3

Affection

Affection is like the air that we breathe, or water to a fish. We only notice it when it's absent.

Affection is the most "natural" kind of love

The basic Hebrew word for love is *ahav*. Like our word "love" it can mean a wide variety of things.

First appears in Genesis 22. *Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, Abraham!* "Here I am," he replied.² *Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."*

In Genesis 25 the word is used to point out that Isaac and Rebekah didn't love their two boys equally. They had favourites; Isaac loved his oldest son, Esau, but Rebekah loved the younger son, Jacob.

Affection is the most natural kind of love, the kind of love that you expect to find in family relationships.

We share affection with the animals.

Affection is absolutely necessary. Without it, most children wouldn't grow up to reach adulthood.

Affection can extend far beyond family

Affection is our love, not only for our family, but for others that we share our lives with out of no choice of our own, people who just "happen to be there" in our lives.

That includes our pets.

Also with animals that we most clearly see the negative side of Affection, the need to be needed.

Affection can easily be taken for granted

Affection is often assume to be provided, ready made by nature; "built-in", "laid-on", "on the house". We think we have a right to expect it and we get upset when others don't provide it.

But love can't be demanded, even if it is expected.

Affection is taken for granted when we impose upon those close to us on the basis of their affection. We show disrespect for each other at home in ways we would never dream of treating strangers.

But lack of affection is devastating

People can survive without romance in their lives. People can survive without friends. But lack of affection leaves lasting scars.

Take away

What are you doing to express affection to those around you?

Parents, your children will learn to love, or not love, from you.

And beware of taking other people's affection for granted. It may not be spectacular, but affection is a precious thing. Value it.