

Question: A quote from a popular movie from the 1960's says, "Love means never having to say 'I'm sorry.'" Would Jesus agree with this statement?

The movie, "Love Story," was very emotionally stirring. "Love means never having to say I'm sorry" may work in the movie and in some situations in life; but I have a problems with applying it in most situations in life. But I do believe Jesus teaches us that genuine love will do whatever is necessary to undo any pain or heartache we may have caused, even if we must say, "I'm sorry." Unspoken words are not always understood in the way we may think they are, even when love is present. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his followers they must go and be reconciled with any brother in faith who may have something against them before the heavenly father would accept their gifts and their worship (Matthew 5:23-24). Love means accepting full responsibility for our failures and/or weaknesses, honestly confessing our sin and seeking the forgiveness of God and anyone who has been hurt by our actions.

Finding the humility to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16) is hard to do, especially to someone we have personally offended. Confessing a mistake or sin is a way of saying, "I'm sorry," "I messed up," "I apologize," "I hurt you," "Please forgive me." Some individuals feel such honest confession is groveling and that this is beneath their dignity. Unfortunately, some of these same individuals expect anyone who has wronged them to grovel before being forgiven. Other individuals are willing to apologize, but their words are often defensive and accompanied with either attempts to justify what was done or to blame others. They may even make accusations against the one from whom they ask forgiveness. No doubt, the offended person has his/her own sins; but the time for saying "I'm sorry for what I did to you," is not the time for casting stones at the offended person. This is not what love does (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Saying "I'm sorry" is the loving thing to do not only for the one offended, but also for ourselves. The psalmist said: "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. . . When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long" (Psalm 32:1-3). Unless he is without conscience, an offender will bear a burden of guilt that will rob him of joy and inner peace until he finds forgiveness and

reconciliation. On the other hand, an offended friend who has no opportunity to say, “You’re forgiven,” may live with a festering resentment and bitterness in his soul. A truly loving person will not want to do these things to herself or another person.

“Love means never having to say you’re sorry” may make good fiction for movies and books. However, in real life, love means acknowledging our errors and seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with God and with one another. If you know you have offended someone, why not demonstrate genuine love by going to them in humility now seeking forgiveness and a renewed relationship. We need one another too much to allow problems to remain unresolved for long. Real love means saying without any reservations, “I’m sorry. Please forgive me.”

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