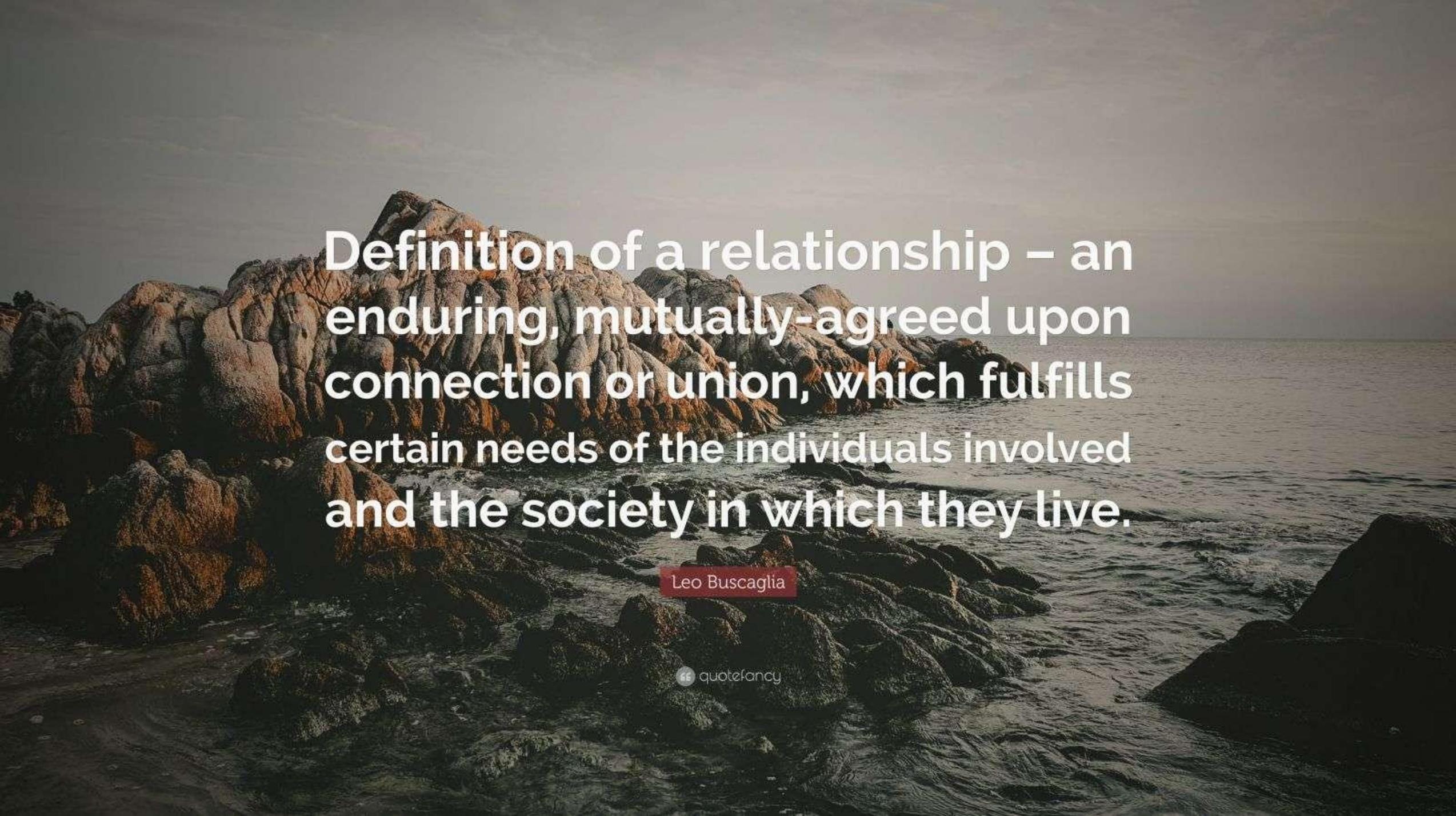


WE USED TO  
LOVE HER



“I Used To Love H.E.R. is a hip hop song by the Chicago-born rapper Common Sense. It was released in September of 1994. The song describes a metaphorical relationship with a woman before ultimately revealing at the end that he was talking about Hip Hop. The song details Common’s changing relationship with hip-hop, describing its evolution from a soulful, conscious art form into a more commercial, mainstream phenomenon that he feels has lost its integrity.

After listening to this song again, I wondered how each of us would describe our relationship with Masonry if we thought about it in this metaphorical sense.

A photograph of a rocky coastline at sunset or sunrise. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, oranges, and greys. The ocean is calm with gentle waves lapping against the dark, jagged rocks in the foreground. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

**Definition of a relationship – an enduring, mutually-agreed upon connection or union, which fulfills certain needs of the individuals involved and the society in which they live.**

Leo Buscaglia



## 5 STAGES OF RELATIONSHIP

# 5 RELATIONSHIP STAGES

- HONEYMOON STAGE- (EUPHORIC STAGE)
- POWER STRUGGLE STAGE- (DISILLUSIONMENT STAGE)
- STABILITY STAGE-(EARLY ATTACHMENT / ADAPTATION)
- COMMITMENT STAGE- (DECISION / DEEP ATTACHMENT)
- BLISS STAGE- (CO-CREATION STAGE)





## **THE HONEYMOON STAGE**

The very first stage that we experience in a new relationship is the honeymoon stage. This stage is marked by intense attraction, unrealistic expectations, infatuation, and euphoria. You get butterflies whenever you think about your partner, and everything feels fresh and new. You spend a lot of time communicating with your partner, sometimes staying on the phone late into the morning. Sometimes you don't even say anything. You just sit on the phone breathing until you fall asleep. Your mind only allows you to see the good in them because it is imagining the perfect life that you are going to build with them. The flaws that they have don't trigger any alarms or red flags. You make excuses for them, attempting to bring your fantasy relationship to fruition. Almost everything that they do is charming and endearing. During this phase, you are usually only meeting the part of the person that they want to share with you. As time goes on, they reveal more about their true self, the mask falls off, and the honeymoon phases usually ends around this time.

## **THE MASONIC HONEYMOON STAGE**

The Masonic Honeymoon phase usually begins the same way for many of us. We see Masonic brothers doing stuff in the community to set themselves apart from the rest of society. There are different reasons that I have heard from potential brothers about why they want to join the fraternity. Some do it for the public display of brotherhood that they see. Some think that being a Mason gets you out of parking and speeding tickets. Some think that being a Mason will somehow make them more popular with the ladies. Whatever the reasons, many join Masonry with false expectations and with rose colored glasses. They come in excited and ready to prove themselves. Many brainstorm and think of new and exciting ways to make the organization better. They come to our meetings expecting the brothers to be united and all working towards the same goal. That older brother that made a rude comment was just trying to make him a better Mason. The disorganization is just an area that a new brother like them can fix. The number of members at the meeting are smaller than the one that they saw at the community service event, but he knows that they will come eventually. He feels that the bond is amazing and nothing or nobody can convince him otherwise.

**When the honeymoon phase is over, what's left is the continuous choosing of the other person.**

Jedidiah Jenkins



## **THE POWER STRUGGLE STAGE**

The power struggle stage follows the honeymoon stage. This is the stage where the initial romance fades and partners start to reveal their true selves. Attitudes and behaviors that we kept hidden during the honeymoon phase start to emerge. This stage is characterized by conflicts, challenges, and a struggle for control. You fight for your own wants, needs, and relationship expectations. The funny little quirks that you once thought were adorable suddenly become annoying. You may be tempted to ask yourself did I pick the wrong person. While not all relationships break up at this stage, it is common for couples to get stuck here and eventually decide to end the relationship due to a failure to resolve these inevitable conflicts and work as a team. Other partners avoid conflict because they don't want to argue. This sometimes leads to them becoming detached and distant. They are there physically but are mentally detached from the relationship that they once wanted to build.

## **THE MASONIC POWER STRUGGLE PHASE**

The Masonic Power Struggle stage usually occurs when the new brother starts to really settle into their place in the Lodge. They start to see the Lodge Brothers for who they really are and not the picture-perfect example that he imagined that they would be when they first met them. They are sometimes left sitting idly by with nothing to do. If they do have an idea, it is usually shot down because it wasn't done that way in the past. He shows up to Lodge meetings expecting to see it full, but he quickly realizes that the faithful few are the ones that carry the lodge. That rude brother keeps making comments and he is getting tired of biting his tongue. The brothers that only joined for selfish reasons fall off quickly during this stage because they learn that Masons do get tickets. Becoming a Mason also didn't make them more popular with the ladies. Most ladies in the club have no clue what a Master Mason is, and those Eastern Star Sisters refuse to date him. They still see him as the lame that he was before joining. Sometimes brothers will become argumentative during this stage. They don't have anything constructive to add, they just want to make sure their voices are heard. Other times, they silently protest by not doing anything to support the leadership or their goals. After all, this is a volunteer organization, and the leaders can't make them participate. A lot of brothers get stuck in this stage and it doesn't allow them or Masonry to grow like it should.

IT'S NOT ABOUT  
WINNING  
OR LOSING;  
WHEN  
OUR  
RELATIONSHIP  
IS A POWER  
STRUGGLE,  
EVERYONE LOSES.



## **STABILITY STAGE**

The Stability Stage is a period of calm, security, and deep companionship. It is characterized by mutual respect, effective conflict resolution, acceptance of flaws, and shared goals. The need to change their partner is no longer as important as it was during the power struggle stage. Communication is key during this stage. Couples learn to fight in a way where both partners win. This is the stage where you realize that you are never going to change your partner and you give up trying to. Couples set clear boundaries, negotiate differences, and define role expectations. The danger of this stage is couples sometimes get complacent with the new-found peace, and the relationship stops growing and stagnates. To grow, relationships require couples to step outside their comfort zone and even challenge each other to push the relationship to higher heights.

## **THE MASONIC STABILITY STAGE**

The Masonic Stability stage is marked by Brothers accepting each other as individuals. I may have a different way of solving a problem but I'm open to listening to how you would solve it. We have come to reality and let go of many of our delusional ideas that we had about Masonry. We realize that even though we have differences amongst some brothers, we should have the same goal of making Masonry the best that it can be. Sometimes the peace found in this stage is a result of Brothers walking on eggshells and being afraid of disturbing the peace. Many bite their tongues out of fear of hurting a brother's feelings and pushing them away. The truth though is that we are an organization of men. We should be able to communicate, disagree, take criticism, and still work together to make the organization the best that it could be. Sometimes those hard conversations are just what is needed to propel us to higher heights. Sometimes good brothers come back during this stage with a more realistic idea about Masonry. It is about brothers coming together, communicating, and letting each other know any issues so they can be solved.



The enemy of stability  
can be complacency.

Ross Brown



## **THE COMMITMENT STAGE**

The commitment stage is a stage in relationships where partners mutually and intentionally choose to build a life together, moving past the initial excitement of the "honeymoon" phase to build a deeper, more stable bond. During this time, couples focus on accepting each other's flaws, developing a shared future vision, and proactively working through conflicts to strengthen their connection. It requires work on the part of both parties to keep the relationship exciting and vibrant because it can sometimes feel too easy and make them lazy. Keeping the spark alive will be very important because you won't have the feelings of euphoria that existed during the honeymoon phase. This is the stage where the couple realizes that they don't need each other, but they genuinely want each other. Couples create a "we" system that allows them to guide their actions by recognizing their interdependence. What one partner does and how one partner feels affects what the other partner does and how the other partner feels.

## **THE MASONIC COMMITMENT STAGE**

The Masonic Commitment Stage is the stage where Brothers decide to be dedicated to Masonry despite any issues that may exist within it. If a brother offends them, they are still dedicated. If they don't get a certain position, they are still dedicated. They are determined to see this relationship through to the end come what may. Many in this stage realize that the unrealistic goals that they had in the honeymoon phase will never happen. It still gives them strength to try when they think back to what they thought Masonry could be if Brothers wanted it happen. They are still determined to make it work though because of the love that they have for Masonry and the Brothers in it. They know that they could leave the Order, and they would be just fine. If they left, Masonry would continue to exist. The knowledge that they are better together keeps them attached. They must be part of the solution, and their dedication keeps them bound together.

# Commitment

“Commitment means staying loyal to what you said you were going to do long after the mood you said it in has left you”



## **THE BLISS STAGE**

The Bliss Stage of a relationship is also called the co-creation stage. It occurs after couples have navigated challenges and stabilized their relationship. This is the stage where the couple feels like a unified team and can start working on external projects. It is easier to focus on the external things because they have done the work to fix the internal issues in their relationship. They have a deeper connection, know how to resolve conflicts, and think about the other person's needs. They feel a true sense of fulfillment when they get to see what the two of them created together. Some of the excitement and euphoria from the honeymoon stage can return a bit, but it is grounded by the lessons learned from the previous stages.

## **THE MASONIC BLISS STAGE**

The Masonic Bliss phase is a stage where the brothers in Masonry have gotten Masonry to where it needs to be. The work must be continued to keep their place in the world, but they can think about how they can grow and build in the world at large. Before, some of our goals were things like getting titles, growing our bank accounts, and increasing our lodge membership. Now we are at a place where we are doing great in all those areas. We can now focus on things like creating foundations, businesses, and uplifting the community in ways never imagined before. This stage and the commitment stage work hand in hand because as the work and status grows, so must your commitment. The beauty of this stage is that you get to witness all the accomplishments and achievements with brothers that have mutual respect, love, and dedication.

Bliss is not a feeling but a state of being. In the state of bliss, everything is loved.

Deepak Chopra

## DEFINITION OF LOVE

**love:** |luv| - *n.*

1. an intense affection for another person based on personal or familial ties
2. the deep tenderness, affection, and concern felt for a person with whom one has a relationship.

# HOW THE BIBLE DESCRIBES LOVE

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, NIV)



# IS YOUR LOVE SELFLESS OR SELFISH

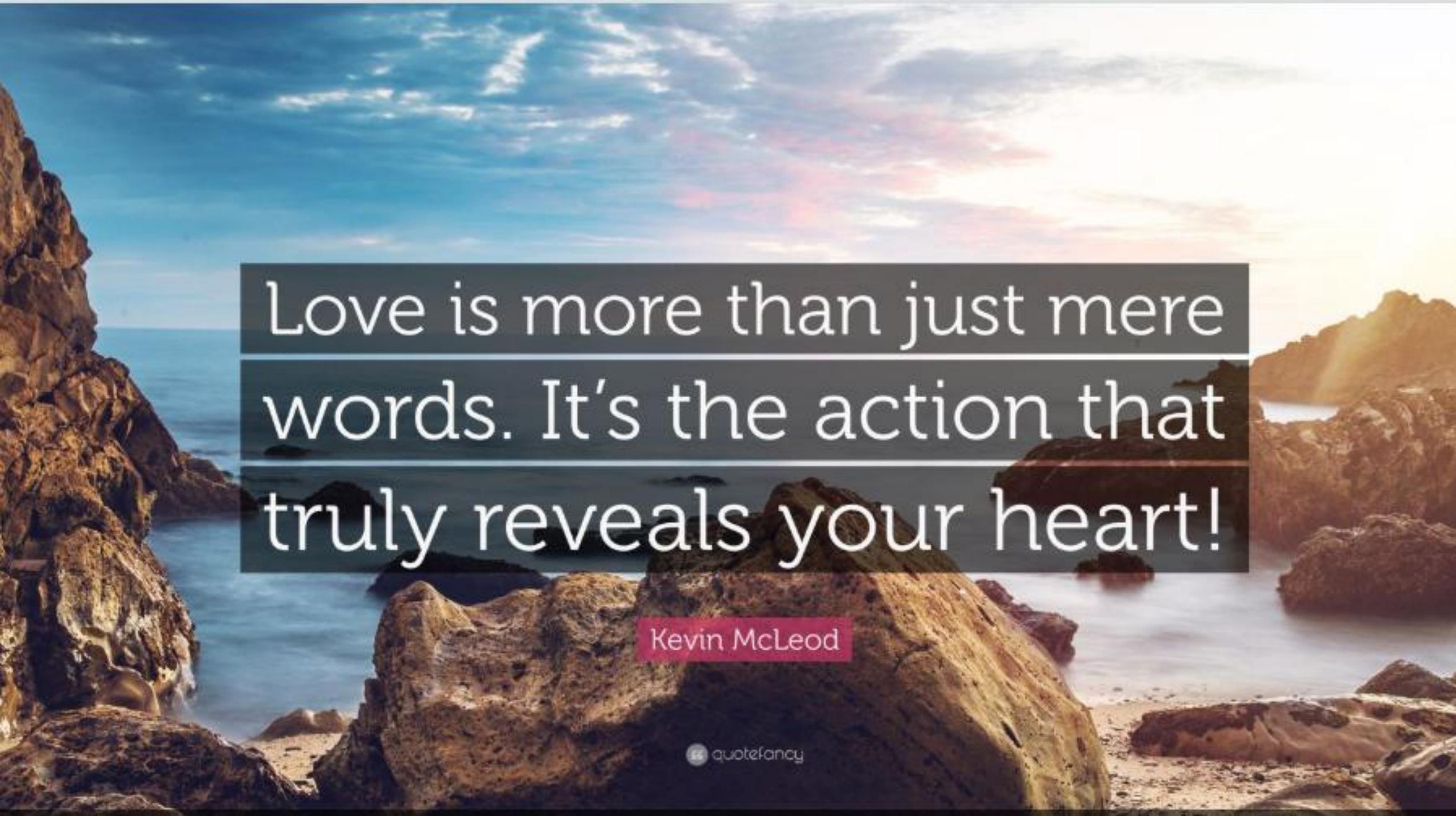


## **SELFLESS LOVE**

Selfless love is a genuine care and affection for another that prioritizes their happiness and well-being without expecting anything in return. It is demonstrated through acts of kindness, generosity, compassion, empathy, altruism, and forgiveness. In Masonry, it is working hard work to make the Order the best it can be even if we don't get a title or recognition. It is being a man and brother of your word. If you tell a brother that you are going to do something they should be able to count on you to honor your word. It is supporting the elected leadership in their aims to make Masonry better knowing that you may not get the credit. It is continuing to be part of the faithful few until the day that more brothers come aboard and help in the mission. It is volunteering to make your community better knowing that you won't be paid to do it. It is even loving a brother despite how they treat you or how they treat Masonry. Selfless love isn't a reason to ignore your own wants and needs in the relationship but, it is a reason to not make yours the only focus.

## **SELFISH LOVE**

Selfish love is reflected when one partner prioritizes their own needs and desires over their partner's. The selfish partner is usually self centered and only focuses on what they can get rather than what they can give. They expect the relationship to only cater to them. The love is usually taken away or limited if the other partner stops providing what they want. In Masonry, this can be reflected in the way a brother supports the aims and purposes of the organization. I've personally seen brothers refuse to support an event or fundraiser because they don't want a certain brother to get recognition. They would rather keep Masonry in the dark, if it means that another brother isn't going to get the shine that they think that they deserve. They sometimes pay their dues just to wear a t-shirt but aren't really interested in seeing the Lodge succeed. They don't come to meetings, but they are the first to show up for a photo opportunity or a party. They refuse to work with certain brothers to make Masonry grow because they refuse to let go of long held grudges. It is really all about them. I often tell newly elected leaders to watch out for the Ruffians in their lodges. After all, one of the major things that separated the Ruffians from the other Masons was the fact that they put their own goals and desires over the plans laid out to benefit the collective. Selfish Love is really no love at all.



Love is more than just mere words. It's the action that truly reveals your heart!

Kevin McLeod

# WHAT TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP ARE YOU IN?

## Healthy

A healthy relationship means both you and your partner are:

- Communicating
- Respectful
- Trusting
- Honest
- Equal
- Enjoying personal time away from each other
- Making mutual choices
- Economic/financial partners

## Unhealthy

You may be in an unhealthy relationship if your partner is:

- Not communicating
- Disrespectful
- Not trusting
- Dishonest
- Trying to take control
- Only spending time together
- Pressured into activities
- Unequal economically

## Abusive

Abuse is occurring in a relationship when one partner is:

- Communicating in a hurtful or threatening way
- Mistreating
- Accusing the other of cheating when it's untrue
- Denying their actions are abusive
- Controlling
- Isolating their partner from others

## **IF WE ARE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH MASONRY, HOW ARE WE TREATING HER?**

If we reflect on our relationship with Masonry, our feelings have probably changed during our transition from Eager Entered Apprentices to Mature Master Masons. We all know that we first became a Mason in our heart, but have we honored our vows and stayed a Mason in our heart? For some the love has gotten stronger and it is shown by the way we support her. For others, Masonry has gone from being their true love to just being a side piece that they only call when they want something from her. Are we protecting Masonry from those that wish to cause her harm, or are we the ones hurting her? Are we supporting her growth and development because we see a future with her or, do we just stay because we don't want to lose the time and money invested because it's cheaper to keep her? When we see that the relationship is growing stale, are we thinking of ways to spice it up, or are we satisfied with continuing to do the same things repeatedly knowing that we will get you the same results. Relationships take a lot of work to be successful and you usually get out what you put in. We need to take time to analyze the relationship and make sure that our efforts are putting us in the best place to achieve the results that we want. It's never too late to try to do better. Everyone has the capability of being a great partner if they are willing to put in the effort.



**“It’s not what you are capable of; it’s what you are willing to do. Plenty of people are capable. Fewer people are willing.” - Mike Tomlin**

## **IS MASONRY FULFILLING OUR NEEDS**

Everyone in a relationship has certain needs and desires that must be fulfilled for them to feel like they are in a successful relationship. When needs aren't fulfilled, it can lead to a sense of regret and a desire to leave. It is a hurtful feeling to give your all to someone but not have them reciprocate the same feelings and energy in return. Relationships can't be one sided. Both partners must be able to communicate what they need and be willing to try to meet the needs of the other partner. If you feel like Masonry isn't meeting your needs, you can't be silent about it. Like the old saying goes, a closed mouth won't get fed. Many Brothers are sitting around upset with Masonry and Masonry doesn't even know that there is an issue. Nobody is too small to let their voices be heard about what they need to feel fulfilled. Nobody should think that they are too big to listen and to try to meet those needs. The desire to meet each others needs should be an important goal and the relationship should be more successful if this goal is met.

Ignoring your partner's needs and still expecting a happy relationship is like ignoring your plants need for water, and expecting a beautiful garden.

## **NOW I AIN'T SAYING SHE A GOLD DIGGER**

Being financially stable should be a prerequisite before getting into any serious relationship. Most women don't want a man that they need to take care of. Many women like to be supported, catered to, and treated like a queen. Masonry is no different in that regard. It takes money to be in a relationship with Masonry. The amount of money needed could be a lot depending on how long you are with her and how far you go into the relationship. Many think that giving her a little bit of money each year is enough to support her. No. That is just the bare minimum to stay with her. Masonry loves to travel. Sometimes multiple times a month. She likes to see her men well dressed in uniforms and miters. She likes for her man to wear fancy collars with jewels on it. If you are serious about your relationship with Masonry, you will constantly be coming out of your pocket to support her lavish lifestyle. Masonry won't refuse to date you if you don't have a lot of money, but it honestly won't be the best experience. At best, you will be extremely limited in the things that you will be able to do with her. At worst, her brothers will get tired of always having to carry you. You must be able to bring something into the relationship other than your presence. Masonry won't turn you away for being broke but you must support her financially to get the best out of the relationship.

A man without money has no voice.  
Fix your finances before you try to  
fix the world.

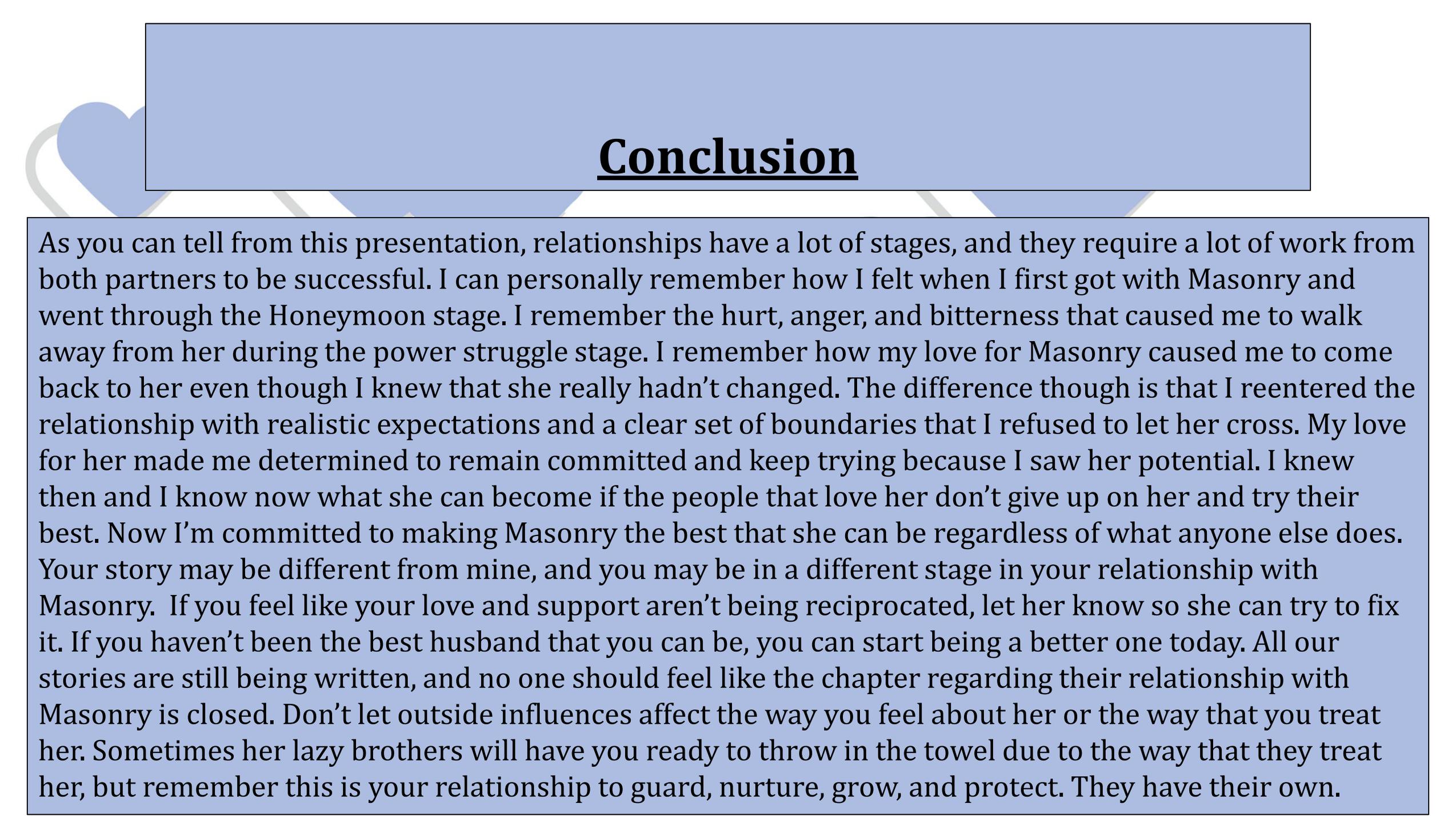
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## **CULTIVATE A CHRIST CENTERED MARRIAGE**

Placing Christ at the center of your marriage involves you first prioritizing your relationship with Him. A relationship with Him will provide you with divine direction, deeper love, and enduring strength that will help you navigate many of the difficult challenges that you will face. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:25 that husbands are supposed to love their wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. While Masonry is not a religion, we need to make sure that we keep Christ in the center of our relationship with her. It gives you a stable foundation to build on and a great defense for when the enemy tries to come against your marriage. We should start doing church visitations on a more regular basis, pray for one another, and truly treat each other not just as Masonic brothers but also Brothers in Christ. One thing that I had to learn the hard way is the relationship with Masonry will never be perfect because it is made up of imperfect people. Christ is the only perfect being and we all have an excellent compass to follow as we strive to be more loving and Christlike in our relationship.

**THE GOAL IN ANY GOD-CENTERED  
RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE TO  
CONTINUALLY POINT THE OTHER PERSON  
TOWARDS CHRIST, NOT CONTINUALLY  
DRAW ATTENTION TOWARDS YOU.**

**- LESLIE LUDY -**



## Conclusion

As you can tell from this presentation, relationships have a lot of stages, and they require a lot of work from both partners to be successful. I can personally remember how I felt when I first got with Masonry and went through the Honeymoon stage. I remember the hurt, anger, and bitterness that caused me to walk away from her during the power struggle stage. I remember how my love for Masonry caused me to come back to her even though I knew that she really hadn't changed. The difference though is that I reentered the relationship with realistic expectations and a clear set of boundaries that I refused to let her cross. My love for her made me determined to remain committed and keep trying because I saw her potential. I knew then and I know now what she can become if the people that love her don't give up on her and try their best. Now I'm committed to making Masonry the best that she can be regardless of what anyone else does. Your story may be different from mine, and you may be in a different stage in your relationship with Masonry. If you feel like your love and support aren't being reciprocated, let her know so she can try to fix it. If you haven't been the best husband that you can be, you can start being a better one today. All our stories are still being written, and no one should feel like the chapter regarding their relationship with Masonry is closed. Don't let outside influences affect the way you feel about her or the way that you treat her. Sometimes her lazy brothers will have you ready to throw in the towel due to the way that they treat her, but remember this is your relationship to guard, nurture, grow, and protect. They have their own.

Our relationship with Masonry will only be as good as the effort and energy that we put into it. We all used to love her in our own special way, but our actions will show if we still feel the same way or not. Our love for her will show by the way we show up for her when she needs us. It will show by the way we defend her when she is in danger. It will show by the way we support her financially when she needs help. It will show by the way we treat her brothers because you can't love her but not love them. Empty words and promises just won't cut it when it comes to proving your love for Masonry. It is all about your actions. So, when you say that you love her, ask yourself if your actions have shown that love in all the areas mentioned. This isn't said to judge or question your love for Masonry. Your answer is personal. You don't how to answer to anyone. Just know that Masonry has a lot of good brothers watching you that already know the answers based on your actions. Anyone can say that they love Masonry, but your actions either support or undermine that claim. Also know that Masonry's brothers won't just sit around and watch your hurt and abuse their sister without saying something about it. So, love her the right way or leave her alone.