



Love and living in times of the coronavirus

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There are a few subjects as complex as love, loving and living – and of course death. Loving and living do not only influence life but they shape death and dying, for dying better is shaped by how one lives. There are different kinds of love. There are different ways of loving. Living to love, be loved, loving to live and to forgive, for better or worse, are some of the best gifts to humanity and gifts we can give ourselves in a generally hostile world where love often suffers. Loving oneself and to love others must be one of the best gifts one can give to her/himself.

As the world battles the coronavirus, one wonders what could be expressions of love in times of Covid-19. The Colombian Nobel prize winning author Gabriel García Márquez covers these intriguing subjects of loving, living and dying in many of his outstanding novels. The two that stand out are: *Love in the Times of Cholera* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In *Love in the Times of Cholera*, Márquez brilliantly portrays a love triangle that helps us understand loving, living and dying. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (my all-time favorite), we learn about loving, living and dying – and forgetting – in a town that has no contact with the outside world.

Although it is hard to define love, we know what love is not: love is not envy, love is not jealousy, love is not obsession and other things that can be confused with loving. Loving is special. It is not hard to see love when there is love. Indeed, love can be pain: just like pain, love is universal. To love should not be equivalent to benefits of loving and being loved. One can love helplessly but suffer because of loving. We can never know for sure how those we love feel. This is both the beauty and curse of life, love and living. Love cannot always be clearly communicated. To love at times may mean letting go of those we love but it can never be that we harm those we love because of love.

The power of love is that we can always devote ourselves for those we love: we do what we can so they can live better, we work harder so humanity can improve, we love so we can be loved, we do that which is good because of love. We live for love – we love to live. Many people have sacrificed a lot so we can be where we are: that is love. In return, we are called upon to deliver the greatest love of all so we can all thrive and the future can be better than we found the world we live in.

Love gives us hope. Love inspires. Love strengthens us at moments of weakness. When in doubt, we remember that we are loved and that we love. When we are discouraged or exhausted, love keeps us going. Love teaches us forgiveness. We grow

through loving. Through love we do good and we can keep going, even in moments of adversity. We are sometimes in shadows of love, which elicits confusion and at times can cause pain. We are reminded that when we truly love we cannot judge, and we must love selflessly. Even in instances when those we love let us down, our love for them does not have to die. We learn to live with disappointments.

Love is faith; having faith to those we love that love can be repaid with love. It is about the commitment to a better future. It is about connecting deeply with those we care about. It involves giving back, for we have been loved so we can love. Through being loved we can love better.

One of the most powerful lessons in *Tuesdays with Morrie*, a memoir by an American author Mitch Albom about a series of visits Albom made to his former sociology professor Morrie Schwartz as Schwartz gradually dies, is that we can all love. We have all loved. We all have been loved. We shall love. We love and live, and live to love. Most importantly, dying well depends how well one lived. As Morrie says, as he stares at death, "once you learn how to die, you learn how to live".

I am wondering what could be expressions of love in times of the coronavirus.