

Why Does Lovelessness Destroy Me?



3

“Because of the hardness of your hearts...”

Mt 19:8

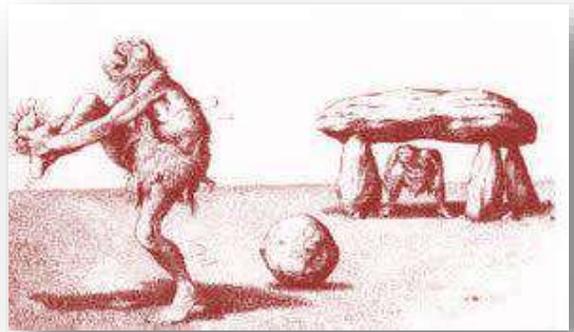
4 THE IMPROPER USE OF FREEDOM: SIN

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Throughout these sessions we are going to take a three-step journey following the story of James, a soccer player.

The first step is that of giftedness and training; second, injury; and third is the treatment.

1

I WAS MADE TO...



JAMES

CALLED TO LOVE

Ever since I was little, my greatest desire has always been to be a soccer player.

Everyone who knew me would tell me that I had a special gift: the way that I ran, my mastery of the ball, the way I could see the plays...

I have spent a lot of time preparing myself for this game.

I have trained for several hours a day for years. My diet is ideal for an athlete like myself. I am physically and mentally ready to face this and many other games. I am the perfect soccer-playing machine.”

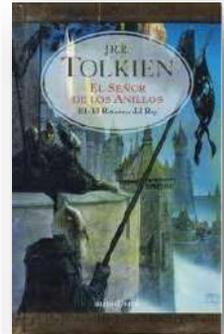
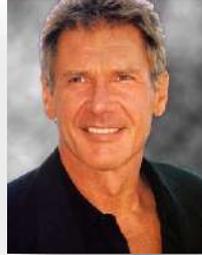
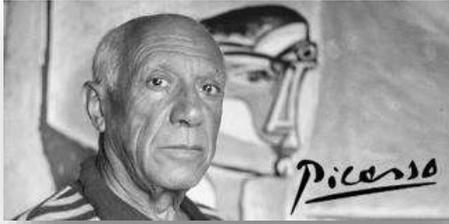
After reading this statement, do you think that all people have the same capacities?

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2 What qualities stand out about these people?



BUILDING UP LOVE



Do you think that they were born with them? Is it something innate?

Do you think that there is some type of capacity shared by all human beings? What is it?

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3 Next, James tells us a little story about his parents:



“One time, my parents bought a lamp for the living room. The lamp was...hideous! But, surprisingly..., my dad liked it... and my mom liked it, too.

When I was alone with my dad, he confessed to me that he didn't like the lamp at all, but...my mom liked it, and he wasn't going to contradict her.

Later, my mom also told me that they bought it because my dad liked it, even though she thought it was really ugly.

After sharing a few laughs as a family, we finally changed out the lamp in the living room.

Why do you think that James's parents acted this way? Were they thinking about themselves? Where did they put their heart?



Think of a concrete example of when you have seen a generous love: in your parents, siblings, in a friend or acquaintance, etc.

Share it with your classmates.

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"I am made to...?", the answer is to LOVE.

Some people have special qualities or gifts for a certain activity: sports, music, literature, dance, that we don't all share. Nonetheless, there IS something that all human beings have in common, an innate capacity that I have as a person: the capacity to LOVE.

Only in responding to this call to LOVE will I be happy. Only in giving and sharing love will I become truly happy.

2

BUT THERE ARE WOUNDS...

THE WOUNDS OF THE HEART



"One day, I step onto the soccer field and....OW!!! What was that?

A pulled muscle? A sprain? Did I tear something? ... my knee?

I still don't understand what happened: a misstep, skipping a warmup, overuse...It caused an injury. Something is keeping me from doing the activity that I love so much, to which I have been called."

JAMES

James hurt himself and can no longer play football. Since he has to spend some time recovering, he starts to read a Mythology book and tells us this story:

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Narcissus is a handsome young man, son of the river god Cephissus and nymph Liriope. When he was born, his parents consulted the prophet Tiresias, who gave them the following answer: *"He will live to old age if he never contemplates himself."* Because of his great beauty, everyone fell in love with him, maidens and young men alike, but he rejected every one of them.

Also the nymph Echo fell in love with Narcissus. Echo had displeased Hera, and was condemned to repeat the last words of whatever was said to her. She was, therefore, incapable of professing her love to Narcissus. But one day, while he was walking in the woods, he became separated from his companions.

When he asked, *"Is there anyone here?"*, Echo happily responded: *"Here, here"*. Unable to see her hidden in the trees, Narcissus yelled out, *"Come!"*. After responding, *"Come, come"*, Echo came out from among the trees with open arms. Narcissus refused to return the love of Echo.

So Echo hid away in a cave and began to prepare her revenge. In order to punish Narcissus, she sought the help of Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance. Nemesis made Narcissus fall in love with his own image, reflected in a pond. Unable to leave his reflection, he ended up throwing himself into the water and drowning. A beautiful flower grew on the spot where his body had fallen, paying honor to the name and memory of Narcissus.



Narcissus at the spring.
Oil on canvas attributed to Caravaggio.

4 Had you heard this story before? Do you know what it means to BE A NARCISSIST?

What happens to Narcissus?

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Do you think that NARCISSISM can be a “wound” on the field of love?



Is being a narcissist the same as having a healthy self-esteem or knowing how to care for oneself?

What are the consequences when we withdraw into ourselves?

Think of an example of something that “wounds love”:

5 James has two friends who are students: Joe and Zach.



Joe and Zach are great friends. **Zach** is really strong and has always defended Joe when he was in a tough spot. Protecting his friend has often cost him more than a good fight.

Joe is who you might call “the brain”. He listens to the teacher a little bit and already knows the whole lesson. He always gets the best grades. For him, it’s really important to get good grades because he wants to study abroad!

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Tomorrow they have a math test and even though **Zach** has worked really hard, he still doesn't understand the material. Unless a miracle happens, he will fail. **Joe** has an amazing handle on the material, and with just a little bit of review, he'll have it all "under control".

So **Zach** asks his friend for a favor: "Please, come over and explain it to me. Otherwise I'm going to fail". **Joe** still has to do his own review. If he helps **Zach**, he'll have to review the material really late, when he's tired.

Joe knows that he'll get a good grade...but he wants a 100. He's not willing to let a distraction ruin the GPA that he's worked so hard to get. He has two possible answers:



"I can't do it," he lies to **Zach**, "I'm having a hard time with it and if I don't spend the night cramming I'm going to fail."

"Ugh!", he thinks, "this is going to mess up my plans. I'm not going to be able to study until I get home and I'll have to stay up late. But...he's my friend and he needs me." And he says: "Of course I'll help you!!"

Reflect on the two possible attitudes of **Joe** and think about which one of them you would like to find in a friend: the first or the second?

Imagine that you have another type of problem. Which type of person do you think would react better?

Which of these two "**Joes**" do you think would make a better boyfriend? Why?

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6 After taking a look at the story of Joe and Zach, analyze the meaning of the following sentences. Give a real-life example that corresponds to them, and then change their meaning into a concrete positive action.



- Give priority to my own personal desires before respecting other people.

- Utilize the image of another person's body in a distorted way.

- The other is an object for my gratification.

- Live out your sexual impulse as if it were just an urge.



There are significant wounds that prevent me from truly loving.

Some of these wounds are found on my body, and others in my person: selfishness, looking only at myself, difficulties seeing the other person, lack of generosity or forgiveness or self-donation.

There are other wounds that come from the outside, from the attacks of the "world" that I can't beat.



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When I have a stronger love for the things of this world than for people, it becomes very difficult for me to truly love them.

When I accept a disjointed vision of the person and of sexuality, the separation between sexuality and love, and the vision of the person as an object rather than the subject of a relationship, I am destroying myself; I am living love badly, and I hurt both myself and others. I break and destroy myself.

When sin enters my heart, it is easy for lovelessness to appear in my relationships with others, even with those whom I care for the most.

Just like there are wounds that are annoying at the beginning, but which end up getting worse and causing a serious problems, so too there are behaviors that, as time goes by, can cause such a grave deficiency that they make it impossible for me to love.

3

...and TREATMENT

A HEALED HEART



"This injury hurts!!

Not just my foot. The pain radiates through my whole body and I can't control it. I can't cure it. What's happening to me?

Soon, the trainer steps out onto the field with his assistant. They give me a painkiller and an icepack to help with the inflammation..

A bad break! They have to operate!. Rest and rehabilitation...

I have to do my part: get better in order to keep going!"

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7 Answer the following questions:



Have you ever experienced a pain so strong that it affected your entire body?

Can you control your pain by yourself?

Can you cure an illness without help? What kind of help would you need?

8 Relate the "injury" and its treatment with SIN-LOVELESSNESS, giving an example that shows and explains this relationship.

SITUATION	EXAMPLE
Injuries cause pain.	
When something hurts a lot, we think what we could have done differently to avoid getting hurt.	
We can't cure ourselves. We need help.	
When we are sick we can be contagious to others, and our illness always affects those around us.	
The doctor diagnoses, treats, and heals.	
We also have to do our part in order to heal.	

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Lovelessness and sin destroy me. The acts of lovelessness hurt not only me, but also affect others.

When the pain of sin affects me I need to be cured, and this healing does not depend on me. I need the help of another, and must do everything in my own power to collaborate with them.

There is a "doctor" who perfectly diagnoses the wounds of love, who knows how to cure them with incomparable gentleness and who gives a personalized treatment that is suitable for every wound of the heart.

This "doctor" has assistants that he himself has chosen with much care, and he has prepared them for this mission with tenderness and patience. This is the good news, that ALL wounds can be cured. I only have to do the "rehab exercises" that I see He who truly loves - CHRIST -, doing.



Just like I go to a physical therapist to tell me which exercises will help me heal an injury, in the case of sin, I can go to a priest.

I have to pay attention to the love of Christ, who will teach me to love. First, he will teach me to forget everything that makes it impossible for me to love. Then, he will make it so that I can love better every time, so that every time it will be easier and more satisfying than the "love" that I used to give only to myself.

I can prevent lovelessness by training and exercising the virtues of love.