

## The power of love scares darkness away

Mark Pavilons

Through song, I once vowed to protect my beloved, and keep the vampires from your door.

When the chips are down, I'll be around, with my undying, death defying love for you.

Love really is a force from above and it's so pure, it's the only real treasure.

Those sentiments, depicted in 'The Power of Love,' a 1984 hit by Frankie Goes to Hollywood, was our wedding song in 1995. One of the co-writers of the song admitted that love is the only thing that matters in the end.

For us humans, love is the one thing we're all capable of. It's something inherent, a powerful quality we're programmed to seek out and enjoy. Despite centuries of study and philosophical meanderings, we still can't put our finger on this one truly human characteristic. And yet most of us have felt it, and continue to enjoy its raw power.

Poets and writers have long espoused love as the one true happiness in this life.

I wrote several pieces of prose in my teen years, before I really knew what love was. I have experienced true love with only one person, my wife Kim.

Ileana D'Cruz advised us to love yourself for who you are, and trust me, if you are happy from within, you are the most beautiful person, and your smile is your best asset.

Countless others have said that in order to love others you must first love yourself. Here's one of the biggest dilemmas, for we're not really taught self-esteem or self-love and many of us suffer from a lack of self-worth, self-confidence and self-love. I think we can muster up the energy that love stirs inside and direct it to those who are important in our lives. Love is the only real treasure, but we don't need to be in awe of this treasure chest to know its beauty. All we have to do is pry it open.

Loving someone deeply gives one courage, Lao Tzu once said. This courage often translates into action, but not necessarily the buying roses, going out for dinner kind. It's much deeper than that.

In my mind, loving a spouse and family is a commitment to serving them in a way. My dad's dying words to me were to take care of my family. He was not one to show his emotions or love for us, but there's no doubt it was deep within his heart.

'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you,' said Jesus Christ.

Previous generations were brought up a bit differently. The societal rule of thumb was graduate from school, fall in love, get married, have children, get a house and live happily ever after. This edict still applies somewhat today. But we've discovered that the 'happily ever after' is often fraught with hurdles that range from economic challenges to a changing workforce and a huge swing in social norms.

As parents, we've also come to realize that our expectations for our children are basically out the window in the traditional sense. Post-secondary studies, careers in the new millennia, even finding love, are all a bit more complicated today. Parents also learn that in matters of the heart, all we can do is gently encourage, advise and recommend. We hope for the best, and hope our kids don't get hurt too badly.

As well, men and women have very different ways of showing their love. The Mars and Venus approach has merit.

I was once a hopeless romantic, and Kim has even kept some of my love poems, written to her on restaurant napkins. I expressed myself through the written word. I was also quite attentive back then, something I need to still work on.

I see my role as husband and father as a relentless worker bee, ensuring everyone in our household is safe, protected and that we have a roof over our head and the bills are paid. That takes a lot of energy, and it can take its toll on us mentally. I worry about these things constantly, so much so that they tend to squeeze out some of the more pleasant thoughts and loving actions. Sad, but true.

Some of us tend to be doers and show our dedication through chores, errands, fixing things, even doing the dishes and helping the kids with their homework.

My love for my one true love hasn't waned one iota and yet I know that gestures are more effective than words, or thoughts.

I'm reminded that kids learn what they live, and that PDAs (public displays of affection) are important. Our kids may find it icky but no matter, I still squeeze my wife and hold her tightly in between making lunches and taking out the trash. I have it on very good authority that hugs were actually invented to let people know you love them without saying anything!

Not overly romantic, I admit, but love is like an energy, rushin' in, rushin' inside of me.

Valentine's Day is a reminder to appreciate those you love, and it's not about fancy gifts or excursions.

We may not know what our purpose in life is, but one thing is clear. Finding love, holding onto love and experiencing love are the

best parts of this existence. We are most alive when we're in love, according to John Updike. Love is also seeing the beauty in our spouses and soulmates. And this easy, peaceful feeling washes away the sins of the world. As comfortable as we get sometimes, we should still look deep into our spouse's eyes and recognize the spark, the light that gives us such joy. Love is the light, ?scaring darkness away.?

