

# Do the One Thing that Changes Everything

What I gleaned from the life of Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1-28) was her ever-increasing capacity to choose love over hate. Honestly, her story challenged me in a way I hadn't been challenged before. Hear me out, here, please. I find it easier, in some ways, to hate than to love.

- *Hate lets my anger rage like a wildfire—with no concern for what is hurt along its way.*
- *Hate thrives when I post social media bites that harass or put down or mar someone's character.*
- *Hate loves to burrow in my soul like a mole in its hole—digging tunnels of grudges, unforgiveness, and pain—that keep me in the dark underground of negative emotions.*
- *Hate wins when I shut down and offer a loved one the silent treatment—which is acting like they are dead.*

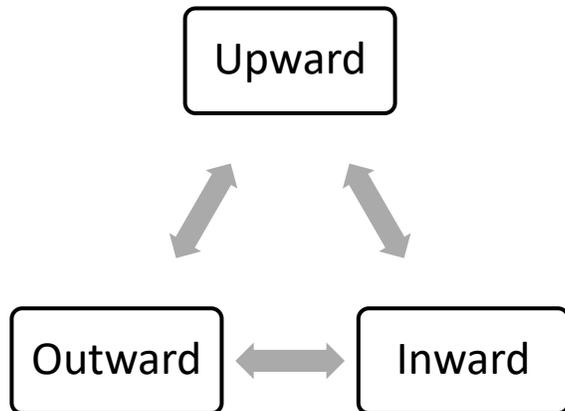
Love, on the other hand, asks more of me.

- *Love sees my pain and wants to release me from it.*
- *Love thrives when I finally open my heart and say, "Help me."*
- *Love flows like a mighty rushing river when we speak healing words—flooding lives with light, love and laughter.*

In his book, *The Four Loves*, author C. S. Lewis described love this way: "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."

Over the next few days, be intentional with your thoughts concerning our three-fold connection of authentic love: authentic love looks upward (to God), inward (to the heart), and outward (to others). Consider:

- Am I doing the one thing that changes everything? Choosing love over hate?
- Your words and actions, both verbal and non-verbal.
- The thoughts and writing prompts after each of our three connections.



### **Authentic Love Looks Upward (to God)**

John 3:16 (AMP) tells us, "For God so [greatly] loved *and* dearly prized the world, that He [even] gave His [One and] only begotten Son, so that whoever believes *and* trusts in Him [as Savior] shall not perish but have eternal life."

It is hard to accept that Jesus died for you and me, but he did.  
Feel his hand lifting your chin.  
Hear his voice calling your name.  
Hold his hand as he leads you forward.  
There is no greater love than God's love for you.  
Whenever you doubt that, look upward to God.

Writing Prompt: *When I looked upward to God today, I sensed/felt/thought/experienced:*

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### **Authentic Love Looks Inward (to the heart)**

It is utterly impossible to deeply love another human being without first receiving love from God. As we look upward, seeking this love for others, God can and will give it to us. First John 4:7-21 tells us of this miraculous gift. It is a long passage, but so worth spending the time to read:

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not

know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so, we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world, we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: 'Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.'"

I know that God can and will give you love. He has done this for me and will do it for you. It is a miraculous gift, yes, but we have a miracle-giving God.

Writing Prompt: *When I looked inward today, into my own heart, I sensed/felt/thought/experienced*

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## Authentic Love Looks Outward (to others)

Once we receive this gift of love, we offer this gift and grace to others. We cannot keep this God-given love to ourselves. It is impossible. It will overflow to everyone in our spheres of influence.

Authentic love also discerns that loving others will also, at times, require us to live in the tension between tough and tender love:

- Sometimes love walks away from unhealthy, negative relationships.
- Sometimes love sets healthy boundaries.
- Sometimes love seeks wise counsel on the how's of loving others well.
- Sometimes love speaks truth when it is very uncomfortable.
- Sometimes love says no.
- Always, love respects the value, worth and dignity of another human being.
- Always, love looks to the Greatest Lover of All, Jesus.

I found 1 John 2:3-7 so very helpful, "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."

This is a lot to take in, I know. A whole lot. Especially when you've been hurt so very badly by someone's words or actions. Yet, when we bring this pain to the cross of Christ, truly seeking emotional healing and spiritual maturity, God honors our heart's cry. Give this process the time it needs.

Writing Prompt: *When I looked outward to others today, I sensed/felt/thought/experienced*

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For you: Cut and paste this simple reminder to choose love > hate.

