

Saying Love¹

A shortcut to the Bible

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inspired by GF, supported by JL and DR

dedicated to all those who struggle with life or are relatives of
mentally ill people

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A few weeks ago, I heard a pastor speak who is a counselor in a psychiatric ward. He said many things during his talk that I don't necessarily agree with. But one sentence stuck with me: "You know, despite all the precautions in the psychiatric ward, we probably have one suicide a week. And I bury some of those people. When I see how many friends and relatives are grieving, I think to myself: if they had known how many people were grieving, they wouldn't have killed themselves."

¹ This English version was automatically translated with DeepL. The original version was written in German. Please note that the unique composure and rhythm of the original text cannot be fully reproduced in the translation. Nevertheless, the content hopefully comes across.

² Created with the Bing Chatbot.

That's true. I am convinced that this is true.³ We don't have to think about suicide to understand that. Many of us are already dead, even though our heart is still beating. Whenever we don't feel ourselves and don't shine, we are a little dead. There is a very simple reason for this: we are not radiating love. And we can only do that if we feel loved. That sounds like a line from a poetry album. But that doesn't make it any less true. Just as the 10,000 deaths by suicide every year are a truth. Every single one of them is one too many. But how can we change that?

For a long time, I didn't realize that the question of how to "prevent" death was in me. For a long time, I thought that perhaps my vocation was to make people happier. Of course, that's not mutually exclusive. More happiness means less death. And I know what I'm talking about. I was anorexic for almost 10 years, a few more years "a little". 15% die from the disease. I'm still alive. I'm grateful for that - so grateful that I could cry with love inside me almost every minute. Because this is also exhausting in the long run, I am writing these lines here for you, dear reader. You will soon understand why.

Do I want to write a "religious" guide or "convince" people of theology? No, that's not the point, even if my faith has helped me. But this little piece of writing is intended for ALL people. Even for those who have nothing to do with the Bible and going to church. If you think you don't need it, you don't need it. That's it. In the end, the Bible is also very simple. "Faith, love and hope." That's what two testaments and 66+ books are all about. Anyone who has understood and internalized the deep meaning of these three words even without reading the Bible, who also LIVES them, no longer needs books - not even the Bible or Buddha or any other companions.

When it comes to LIVING the biblical message and thus love, I have arrived at the actual content of my text. That's where "simple" comes to an end, at least in the first step. Because feeling love and saying love are worlds apart, I maintain. I am even convinced that the majority of pastors who talk about love in church every week on Sunday are NOT able to speak about love in real life. What I mean by "saying love" is quite simply: "I love you." I don't mean, "You're a great person, so many appreciate you, you're so smart, I miss you." No, I mean: "I love you." Has your pastor ever said that to you?

I'm not trying to set you up with your pastor, criticize pastors or remind you that you don't have a pastor. I just want to show you that even people who have theoretically dealt with love in great depth, e.g. in the form of biblical teaching, are also "only" human. And this is precisely where the magic of our humanity lies. We are loving beings. And, no matter what the Bible says and how much God has a hand in it, we live among people, talk to people, touch people (yes, and of course animals and plants too, but they should be mentioned here anyway). What I want to say is: yes, faith in a God who loves us helps us through the dark hours. That was and is the case for me. But if this God and his

³ At this point, it is important for me to make it clear that this is not about guilt. Neither relatives nor friends are "to blame" if a person kills themselves. Ultimately, he/she is solely responsible. The following text therefore does not claim that suicides can be prevented by "saying love". There are certainly parents, spouses or friends of people who are tired of life who communicate their love and affection openly and cannot "prevent" suicide in this way. Nevertheless, my own experience and my knowledge from my long involvement with certain mental illnesses is that the feeling of loneliness, inferiority and being alone can be alleviated, at least temporarily, by the open verbal expression of emotions by loved ones. This is subjective and experience-based and does not claim to be universally valid. In particular, aspects of age, social status, level of education and cultural background also play a role here. This text is intended to encourage reflection and action. It is up to the reader to take something from it for their own life or not.

love do not show themselves through the living people around us, then there is a great danger that another little light will soon be burning in the cemetery for someone whose time had not yet come.

When it comes to human coexistence, it's always about communication. And I'll leave that as a keyword for now and not give any scientific definitions. I studied communication science, among other things, and people who need to take my word for it are welcome to read my CV and my academic books to convince themselves of my knowledge of the field. For these few pages here, communication simply means that we humans receive and send signals. We do this with everything we are - our words, our gestures, our body energy, indeed, our whole BEING. We communicate constantly and without pause. And the more reflective we are, the more we think about this communication and interpret signals from different angles.

The end result is that we don't believe the world or ourselves - especially not love. As a survivor of anorexia, I know what I'm talking about. But I'm just an example of the 28% of Germans who suffer from mental illness every year. What they all have in common is that they have lost one thing: They have lost faith in themselves. They don't trust themselves. And they also don't trust themselves when it comes to "understanding" the signs of others. Paradoxically, they understand all of this very well and they also sense much more than others. But their intelligence, their knowledge and their illness make it impossible to follow their "gut feeling" and simply "believe" what they hear/see/sense. This is exactly where love becomes so difficult and downright tragic. "She/he knows that I love her/him. I don't need to say that." Yes, exactly, that is NOT enough.

The sentence "I love you" takes courage. It is the greatest sentence that one person can say to another. I am convinced of that. It doesn't matter if you, dear reader, are convinced of other things and phrases. I'm not here to argue. It's completely ok. Everyone is allowed to believe in anything if it makes them happy and more loving. I just want to show what I believe in. And reciting the creed once a week in church is different from turning to your girlfriend or partner or mother a minute later and saying: "I love you." Why is that so difficult?

My answer is quite simple: because only in very rare cases and only at the end of a long process, often our whole life, do we love ourselves so much that we can really say it without expecting anything, without fear, without emotional dependency. This is precisely why illnesses and strokes of fate are such a gift. They send us on this journey unchecked - whether we want to or not. Our survival instinct tells us that this is the only way to get well. We have to leave our self-built fortress, our tent. We have to descend into the deepest valleys within ourselves in order to rediscover - to FEEL - the love within us and for us.

Once we have achieved this, what the Buddhists call the loss of the ego happens. In the Bible, we also find this in John with the words "I am". A person who only IS has lost his ego insofar as he is aimless. By this I mean that he no longer WANTS anything. He doesn't want to shine, convince, work himself to death, earn money, look good, pretend to his great love... He just IS. His presence is enough. And above all, this person doesn't have one thing that every other one of us still has before going through all the valleys and finding true love: Fear. By this I mean the fear that we will be hurt - both physically and mentally. We can only be hurt because we are social beings and long for love and warmth. This is programmed into us. And when someone hurts us with words and actions, it sends the message: "You are not loved." This is exactly what we are afraid of when we do NOT say "I love

you" - the negative reaction of the other person. And this is exactly where self-love comes into play - unconditional self-love.

By "surviving" illness, loss and other strokes of fate, we gradually learn that, to put it very briefly, there is no other person we would like to go through the world with. That sounds paradoxical at first, but it is true. We learn that WE are the person we love so much. Without this person, we would no longer be here. And this person is great just the way they are. He is always there, as long as we are really "with ourselves". It is precisely this person who, through their own long healing journey, has achieved something that many run away from. He has discovered pure love within himself. And for those who believe, this is divine love. That is great. It is overwhelming. It's so great that you won't kill yourself afterwards - whether with addiction or in any other way.

Nevertheless, the "problem" remains that we humans are made of flesh and blood. And that means we have needs that have to do with contact. A hand that caresses us touches more than just our skin. It touches our soul because it "makes love". A person we sleep with, who we feel "inside us" (I don't just mean heterosexual sex), does the same, at least if it is connected to love. A person who sits next to us on the couch and just holds us IS LOVE. And that's good for us. At first glance, we don't "need" it to survive. Because food and drink are enough for that. But the case of anorexia in particular shows how closely the two go together.

And even after we have reached such a conscious state as many an awakened person like Buddha and co. have, we remain human beings with needs that cannot be satisfied by divine love alone. Doubts, fears and challenges will always arise. We then face them with greater strength. We have learned that we no longer need others in a dependent sense. But we WANT them in our lives so that we can enjoy them - so that we can live each day to the full. And what do these people often NOT do, despite all the other things they might do and think and mean and assume? They don't say: "I love you."

That's all I wanted to say before we get down to business. My sentences here, my SAYING, should help you to be the loving and beloved person you really want to be. A big part of why we don't get up every day as happy as we want to be is because we don't do things. At the end of life, we often regret what we didn't do. This is old wisdom for all those who have dealt with the dying. And it is well known that thinking about death often helps. How often do we go to bed with the "guilty" conscience that we actually wanted to say xy this and that? And I don't mean bad words. I mean something sweet. And even if it wasn't something dear: the mere fact that you spend time with a person means giving them time to live.

With these lines, my shortcut to the Bible is already over. I'm sorry if you were expecting a catalog of homework assignments. There is no such thing. My words here are everything. I have told you, dear reader, that I love you. Otherwise I wouldn't be wasting my life typing these lines for you and opening my heart to you. My words here are an intervention that can send you on your journey. It is very easy at the end, but very hard at the beginning. At the end is the sentence: "I love you." You can say it if you still have a voice. You can even shorten it and say it in other languages. It doesn't matter at all. You know how to do it. You also know who you want to say it to, regardless of the consequences. You don't expect an "I love you back" at the end. You want to GIVE your love. This makes you lovable and you will also receive love. This is the paradox that some call God.

The difficult part is getting there. I want to encourage you to do so. It is worth it. As you know from my preface on suicide and mental illness above, you are saving lives. You don't have to become a pastor or therapist to do this. They are all just "middlemen". You alone can make sure that fewer of them are needed or that the few can be there for more people. You alone can find your own path of faith. You alone know your deep wounds, to which you can descend and which you can let go of. You alone know your conflicts that you have not been able to resolve because you are afraid. Psychological problems and blockages are solved "simply": you face your fear. You go through it. You say things that you were afraid of before. As soon as you have done it once and feel how beautiful it is, you feel new and have the courage to take the next step.

You can become who you really are - a loving and loved person. Start with that. Say what is inside you. The time is NOW. The New Year invites you.

About Silke



Dr. Silke Schmidt is a trained literary and cultural studies scholar, author and coach. She specializes in bibliotherapy and has developed the method of "literature-based self-experience" (LBSE). It helps clients deal with personal and professional struggles in order to develop self-love and unfold their creative potential.

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