

What is your recipe for love?



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Do you feel the love in the crisp air of February? Do you express affection for your loved ones in grand or subtle ways? Are you in a lighter, happier mood as you join John Paul Young in singing “Love is in the air, everywhere I look around” ... “Love is in the air, every sight and every sound”? Or would you rather just skip this month dedicated to all things love because love has been difficult or challenging for you in one way or another?

Have you ever thought that perhaps February, particularly Valentine’s Day, has become excessively commercialized? With all the hype, pressure, and high expectations, Americans spent nearly 26 billion dollars on Valentine’s Day last year and it’s expected to rise this year. As so many try to find the perfect gift, plan the perfect date, and profess their love perfectly, does this pressure for one single day detract from the genuine goodness of simply loving one another well all year round? If love were a constant presence, would there even need to be a day dedicated to extravagant displays of love? Additionally, for those lacking love in their lives, is this month a little extra difficult to get through?

If we were to imagine a love continuum, ranging from a lack of love to a complete abundance of love, where would you place yourself today? When considering where to place yourself on this continuum, do your thoughts revolve around how others love you, or do you focus on how you extend love to others? Perhaps it’s worth considering that these two aspects are intricately connected.

In my experience, it seems that the love we receive is often a reflection of how we love others. However, it’s not about loving in order to receive, rather, it’s being so filled with love that it naturally spills over onto those around us.

But if you are not filled with love because nobody is filling you, how can you possibly overflow with it? Certainly, you cannot pour out love if your “love-cup” is dry. And you cannot expect other people to do the work of filling your “love-cup”. So where do you go to fill it up?

You must go to the well that never runs dry—to the One who IS love (1 John 4:16)—to the One who makes us strong in His love (Eph 3:17)—the One who loves us and shows us how to love so that we can better love others (John 13:34).

Notice I didn’t say, you “must get” from the well, but instead you “must go” to the well. Getting it is not costly. Going is costly (time, energy, effort). You must pick up the “love-cup” that is your heart and daily visit the well where the Living Water awaits to fill it past its brim to overflowing.

Maybe you are skeptical about this recipe for love. If so, I wonder, have you ever tried it?

I love a good tried and true recipe! Over the years, I have collected many, altered some to make them better, and developed my own—both with and without gluten. It fills my soul with joy to cook for others and delight their taste buds with my creations and cooking abilities.

Though I still get occasional opportunities to cook for my children when they come home, I cook far less than I used to. But when we seek to bless and love others through our God-given gifts, God opens new opportunities to use them. One way He’s done that for me is by giving me a whole shop family to make great big meals for once a month.

Last year, I made my “famous” (and a top favorite at the shop) Taco Lasagna. One of our newer team members, Brady, had never had the dish before, really enjoyed it, and asked me for the recipe. Since I had put it on the gluten-free website I had recently created (another way to share my gift!), I sent the link to him. The following weekend, Brady and his girlfriend made my Taco Lasagna. He then reported back to me that it “wasn’t very good”. I joked with him and said, “Maybe because it wasn’t made with love”. But the recipe was perfectly fine, and if followed to the tee as others have done, it would have tasted just like the one I made for him at the shop.

Let’s just pause here a moment so I can explain this peppy fun apron I am wearing in the photo. I am not keen on the word “boss” but when your whole shop family buys you a “Boss Lady” apron like this for Christmas (Was it out of love or expectation for more meals? We might never know...), you promptly wear it while you serve Taco Lasagna for the January lunch meal! Okay, back to the story...

There are all sorts of good recipes in the world—for life, for love, and even for auto care. The question is, are we following them to the tee?

When it comes to your vehicle, what recipe do you follow? There seem to be two tried recipes—Repair and Care. But the question is, are they true (proven good)? It’s no secret that a tried recipe is not always a true recipe. So what’s the difference? And if you tried it once, is it a bad recipe, or did you fail to follow all the directions?

I recently heard a podcast where Gary Brecka was talking about the difference between repair and care when it comes to our bodies. He has a “care” approach



where he emphasizes maintaining one’s health through a balanced whole-food diet (no sugar or processed foods), regular exercise, and supplementing based on individual needs. To help others understand he related it to the auto industry by stating, “A good mechanic fixes a car, a great mechanic keeps a car from breaking”.

Would you say this is true? How do you approach auto repair? Like the love continuum we talked about, let’s now imagine a repair-to-care continuum. Where would you place yourself on it? Are you at one of the extremes or somewhere in the middle? Certainly, if you own your vehicle long enough, there will be repairs in the future. But do you know the value of preventative maintenance to keep your vehicle as healthy as possible?

Several years ago, a new fleet company became a customer of Babcock Auto Care (notice the care in the name). The fleet company had previously been a customer of a repair shop. So, our way of doing auto care was a whole new concept. Previously, their vehicles would break down often and require emergency repairs. Inspections were only done to tell them the things that were broken or close to breaking.

Of course, it is important to know what is broken on a vehicle, but our approach is different. We do digital vehicle inspections—not only to reveal what is in disrepair but also to share what is recommended to keep it at its healthiest. We share our findings and recommendations with customers and help them make informed decisions.

I would love to tell you that the fleet company immediately understood and believed our care over repair recipe. But they didn’t. However, over time, as we educated them and showed them the value of maintenance, they began following our recipe and quickly catapulted to the care end of the spectrum.

Though the payoff to this new way of auto care is not like happy taste buds after enjoying a new tried and true recipe, it does yield other great benefits as it becomes “true”. Here are some of the advantages to regular vehicle maintenance:

Savings

- Helps identify and address potential issues before they become major and more costly repairs
- Longer life of the vehicle
- Higher resale value with a documented history of maintenance
- Maintains warranty so future problems have a better chance of being covered

Smooth

- Ensures that all components of the vehicle are functioning optimally, leading to better fuel efficiency and overall performance
- Keeps parts well-lubricated with clean fluids and in good condition for a smooth and comfortable driving experience

Safety

- Regular inspections include checking and maintaining systems (including the braking system, which is crucial for safety)
- Proper tire maintenance, including rotation and alignment, contributes to better traction and reduces the risk of accidents

Peace of Mind

- Knowing that your vehicle is in good condition provides peace of mind and confidence in its reliability for daily use or long trips
- Fewer breakdowns

If you haven’t yet tried this recipe of care over repair, I encourage you to give it a shot to find out how true it really is.

Speaking of true things, let’s get back to the heart of the matter of love.

Have you heard of the book, “Holiness, Truth, and the Presence of God” by Francis Frangipane? It’s a sweet book so chock full of goodness, that I often revisit it. In the middle of the first chapter is a statement that spoke so deeply to my soul that I paraphrased it, wrote it on a sticky note, and put it on my computer screen at work. Frangipane writes, “Truth is knowing God’s heart as it is revealed in Christ, and it is knowing our own hearts in the light of God’s grace.” This, my friends, is the heart of my recipe for love. When we go to the well to fill our “love-cups” with Living Water (time with God in praise, prayer, and in His word), we get to know God’s heart as it is revealed in Christ. And when we get to know His heart and feel the depth and breadth of His love for us and for all He created, despite our sins and flaws (the concept known as grace), then we start to be filled. What’s more, as the Living Water abundantly pours in, our cups begin to overflow (Psalm 23:5).

In Psalm 23:5, David uses the expression about a cup overflowing to help us understand the abounding and overflowing nature of God’s presence, provision, protection, and power. God’s blessing on David wasn’t just for his life but it was designed to spill over so that it could bless others. The same holds true for you and for me.

Are you taking your “love-cup” to the well that never runs dry? Are you being filled with all that God has for you? Are you using the gifts that God has given you, even the small ones (like cooking!), to allow His love to overflow from your heart and into the lives of others?

As I have been writing this article a song keeps popping in my head. Have you heard of “Fill My Cup” by Andrew Ripp? I invite you to go there now, tap your foot to the beat, and sing it with abandon. Then join me back here...

The chorus goes like this:

“Fill my cup, Lord
Run it over
Give me love, give me joy
Give me peace
Fill my cup, Lord
Run it over
I am Your child in need
Lord, I need You”

Then an extra good chorus follows:

“Fill my house up with hope
Fill my plans up with purpose
Fill my wounds up with healing
Lord, I need You
Fill my days up with meaning
Fill my future with vision
Goodness, grace, and provision
Lord, I need You”

Oh, my friends, how I want all these things for you! It really is the perfect recipe for love.

Don’t believe me? Taste and see (Psalm 34:8). Follow my recipe for the rest of this month. Unlike the billions of dollars spent on love this month, there is no financial cost with my recipe! But it will cost something (everything good does)—it will cost time, energy, and effort. These things are our most precious commodities. But I can assure you from personal experience that your ROI (return on investment) will be 100-fold and you will find that my tried and true recipe for love will become yours too.

Dear God, may we shift our focus of love in February from worldly things, that do not last, to You, the Everlasting One—the source of love who fills us to overflowing. As we begin to overflow, help us to use the gifts You have so lavishly given us to pour love into the lives of others. Thank You that we can love others because You first loved us. Your recipe for love is the only One we need. Amen.



“We care for people and fix cars!”