

On Falling in Love

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

Falling in love with the person one is going to marry is no doubt the most thrilling experience in one's life. It is an exhilarating time, as if living on cloud nine, and the sight of the person we love is the most beautiful sight in the world. But where does this wonderful emotion of love come from?

The experience of love for the human being begins soon after birth between the helpless infant and loving parents. Have you ever looked at an infant in its mother's or father's arms, awake or asleep, totally secure and protected? All of the love that infant experiences is totally unearned. It is unconditional. And for the infant it determines its view of life: is the world warm and benevolent or cold and malevolent? Is life a source of happiness or misery?

Not all infants are fortunate enough to have parents who love them and tend to their needs. But all human infants are totally dependent on others to feed them and cloth them during those first few years of life. And if that early experience is one of pain and frustration, that individual's view of life will be an unhappy one. But even an individual with a damaged childhood need not turn into a dysfunctional human being. Many of them, humbled by the lack of early love are able to respond positively to the love of others. The power of love should never be underestimated.

That is why I believe that homeschooling parents will generally have good marriages that endure because of those early experiences of love. When parents not only feed and clothe their children but also teach them, the experience of parental love is that much greater.

Some years ago I came across an interesting survey in one of the popular magazines. The survey asked children what they wanted most, and the answer was "more time with my parents." I've never forgotten that response, and it explained to me why the homeschool movement has grown as it has.

And so, love begins as a feeling of warm attachment and security in the infant who experiences the tender kisses of a parent, the times of feeding, bathing, and clothing, the parents' constant concern for the well-being of that tiny, helpless child.

But as the child grows older, learns to speak the language, and finally to walk, it experiences a new emotion known as separation anxiety. The result is that emotional attachment replaces physical attachment. It is a necessary part of growth and the development of an independent sense of life. But the emotional attachment will endure for the rest of one's life.

Dysfunctional families are the victims of emotional confusion and frustration. Their members were not able to develop the needed secure and warm attachments that come naturally with loving parents in those early days of total dependency. That is another reason why homeschooled children will no doubt have better marriages than those who come from dysfunctional families.

Love is at the heart of homeschooling, and that is why it is a superior form of family life and education. It provides happiness between parents and children and among the siblings themselves. When homeschoolers meet other homeschoolers there is a mutual sense of what family life can be when it is filled with children. They want to repeat the happy times they had with their own parents.

Since no two families are alike, generalizations about homeschool families have to be taken with a grain of salt. I'm sure there are some homeschool families that don't quite live up to the ideal we have set.

Each homeschool family is like a little academy. Some families are musically oriented, others are more devoted to the arts, and others to science and invention. The interests of parents are easily conveyed to their children, and children are free to develop their own interests. Homeschooling families are known to create their own family businesses in which everyone takes part.

But there comes a time when the young adult will seek a love relationship outside the family. And where will that young adult find a future mate? Perhaps at church, or at a homeschool support group, or at summer camp, or at a graduate school, or even via an Internet acquaintance with another homeschooler. But you can be sure that the homeschooler will bring to that relationship an expansive sense of love acquired from parents who gave that child their time, knowledge, encouragement, and love of God.