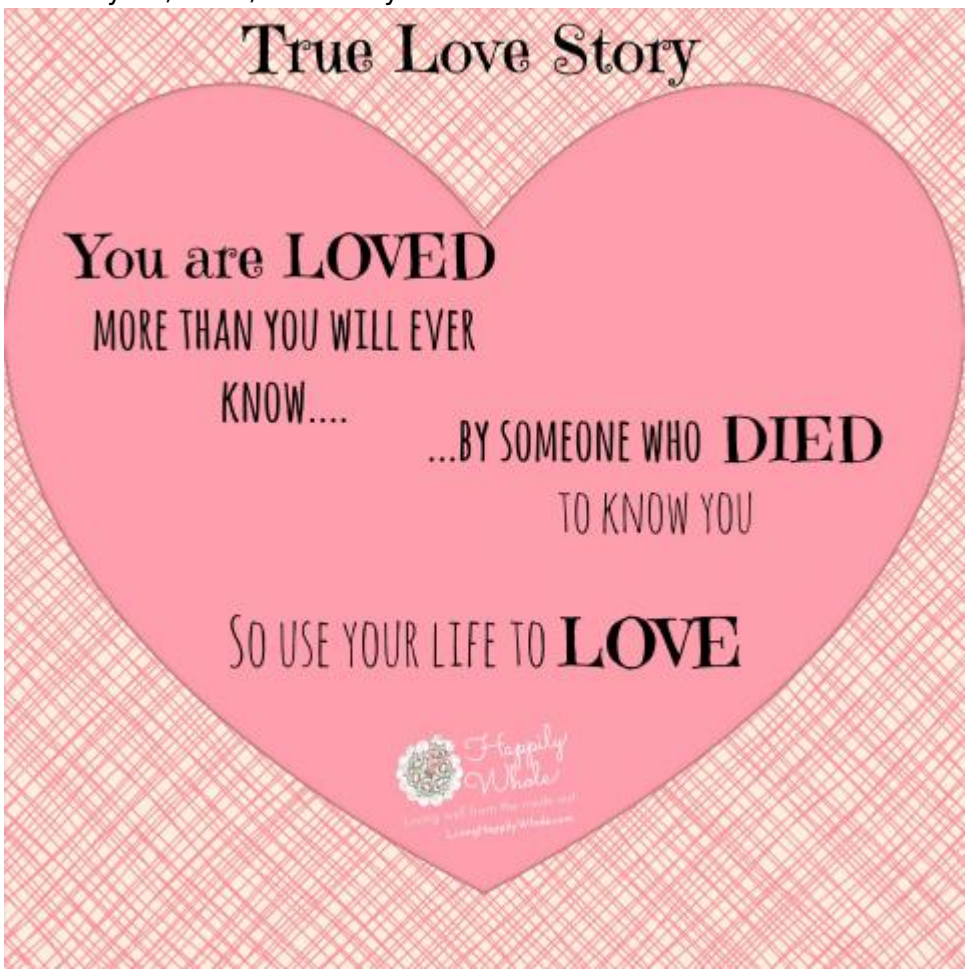
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A True Love Story

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Don't we all just want to feel true love? Whether we admit it or not, our very existence aches for an affection so deep there's never a cause to doubt. Our human hearts long for an ***unconditional, unwrappable, gentle, unjudging love***. The kind of love that looks at us from veiled eyes so our sins aren't exposed and our ugliness looks a little like beautifully blended patterns in the actually tainted tapestry of our thoughts and actions.

We desire a defenseless love, one that approaches our imperfections blindly. ***This kind of affection could affirm our value even when we're feeling utterly vulnerable walking the line between a morning's hasty selfishness and a day end's edginess.***

So we hide our flaws and faults. We mask any unattractive marks left by our selfish mistakes and sinful human nature. Because, won't hiding our authentic selves make receiving this true, unexpected, unfathomable, unwrappable kind of love possible?

I'm not so sure. Living unexposed can only last so long. And that's why we must look beyond the world upwards!

God makes impossible love possible. He gives us the kind of unwavering, limitless love we long for! He freely puts value into us when we feel valueless and vulnerable.

How? How can He do this for all of us forever?

I think I've finally figured it out***: GOD IS LOVE***. I've heard it once or a million times! But until I really realize GOD IS LOVE, I can't grasp how ***when He gives me love He's actually giving me HIMSELF!*** And when God gives Himself to us, there's nothing flimsy, faulty or fragile about it.

God, giving of Himself, took this idea of unwrappable love, the kind that cannot be contained by proverbial boxes, and wraps us in it.

His hands crafted unconditional love from His very character and planted it into our ugly realities.

And He went one step more. God came to earth in the form of His Son, the person of Jesus, to fill the whole world with His sacrificial love simply to save us!….To save a whole lot of sinners who were trying to hide….to save US, who still try to hide. Our God, our King, loves us so much He came to die on a cross to take us from the darkness of hiding and expose us into light where He could unconditionally love us.

"Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him." Romans 5: 6-8 (the Message translation)

And with this inexplicable, perfect, unwavering love God blindly **pursues us** and we realize the veil we've always been hiding behind falls away and our whole ugly lives are exposed! But ***HE STILL LOVES US THE SAME.***

Even when we've wandered so far from His presence we've forgotten what it feels like to simply pray, He still pursues us with a perfect plan to re-wrap us in His everlasting, unending, unconditional love.

It's amazing how our ugliness or inattentiveness doesn't make us unlovable to Him. As soon as we know how much we need His sacrifice to save us, we realize our bodies are empty cavities until salvation's love fills us. Then He sees us as untarnished, unblemished objects of His perfect affection.

And here's another amazing thing! The free gift of God's love envelops each of us in a way perfectly fitted for us. We never have to wait for the right kind of gift! We never need to peek into the package and return His love unopened or ask for more because He already knows exactly the right

combination to fill our needy hearts.

So we can uncover our authentic selves because we're already loved just the way we've always longed for! No need to cower or be afraid to expose our human exposure. We can confess it and come to the Cross! Our fears, flaws and failures don't need to tarnish our attempts at living out loud in His love.

In fact, ***the only thing left for us to do is live out His unwrappable, unconditional, gentle, unjudging love!*** Because He keeps pouring it into us as we pour it out. As we learn to live saturated in God's love, the only thing we CAN do is give it away, loving others with all we've learned about real unwrappable, unconditional love.

We are held so precious in the eyes of the only One who loves perfectly that we escape darkness and death with the ability to pour His perfect saving love into the world around us.

Now, that's a true love story that comes full circle and keeps on saving souls!

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