

She, and many other women, suppose that they love their husbands, when, unfortunately, they have not the beginning of an idea what love is. Let me explain it to you, my dear lady. Loving to be admired by a man, loving to be petted by him, loving to be caressed by him, and loving to be praised by him, is not loving a man. All these may be when a woman has no power of loving at all, = they may all be simply because she loves herself, and loves to be flattered, praised, caressed, coaxed; as a cat likes to be coaxed and stroked, and fed with cream, and have a warm corner.

But all this is not love. It may exist, to be sure, where there is love; it generally does. But it may also exist where there is no love. Love, my dear ladies, is self-sacrifice; it is a life out of self and in another. Its very essence is the preferring of the comfort, the ease, the wishes of another to one's own, for the love we bear them. Love is giving, and not receiving. Love is not a sheet of blotting-paper or a sponge, sucking in every thing to itself; it is an out-springing fountain, giving from itself. Love's motto has been dropped in this world as a chance gem of great price by the loveliest, the fairest, the purest, the strongest of Lovers that ever trod this mortal earth, of whom it is recorded that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Now, in love, there are ten receivers to one giver. There are ten persons in this world who like to be loved and love love, where there is one who knows how to love.

Harriet Beecher Stowe  
Ruth & Willie Pyramus