
TRANSCRIPT

January 28, 2018

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GRETCHEN MCGRATH, HOST: Hello, I am Gretchen McGrath and today I am here with my dad, Dave McGrath. During this interview, we will be focusing on the complexities of love.

MS. MCGRATH: When you ask many people today what love is they often think of the romantic love. Do you think there is an importance for having a clear definition for love? Do you think it should be taught?

DAVE MCGRATH: I think that romantic love is a type of love that we think of frequently, but it's not the only type of love. There are broader concepts of love that we all experience, self love as an example, non romantic love that we feel for friends and family members. I think that having a clear definition of love may make it easier for all of us to determine whether or not we are in fact experiencing love consistent with that set definition, but I think in some ways it's too limiting because it presupposes that there is one right way to define love and incorrect ways to define love and I don't think dichotomously like that. I think that there are different ways to define love in different situations and for different people.

MS. MCGRATH: Do you think it is our responsibility to educate others about love? If so, how can we reach different groups of people? Should we just focus small for now and impact the people we interact with on a daily basis? Do you find yourself educating people about love when you get the chance or is there a time and place for that?

DAVE MCGRATH: First, let me say that I certainly think that love can be taught so I don't think that love is something that we necessarily come into the world with intrinsically in some set way. I think it's something as evolving and something that we can all learn... so aspects of love that I think of: respect, kindness, fairness, compassion, empathy those are things that I think we are all naturally predisposed to, but they find their fullest expression and meaning after we've had opportunities to be taught and to learn about each of those things. I don't know that I'm intentional about my efforts to educate others about love or about these companion concepts, but I hope that I'm an example to others in the way that I live my life. I certainly try to be. Like love generally, I am imperfect but I hope that I am able to teach others with whom I interact, but maybe I need to be more thoughtful about educating others and more intentional about it.

MS. MCGRATH: "Being present" is very powerful and loving, but sometimes that idea can be confusing and unclear on what that looks like in different situations. Sometimes I overthink it and try to hard to be present, in which case while someone is talking I know I should be a good listener and hear them, but then distract myself by wondering if I am coming off that way to them, and then I am doing the opposite. Do you have any words on how to be fully engaged and in the moment with all different audiences?

DAVE MCGRATH: First, I would say that we are all distracted by our noisy minds and by our internal dialogue, and it impedes our ability to really connect more deeply with others. One of the things I love to do here on campus is to walk the labyrinth (in nice weather when there isn't snow on the ground) and it helps me to quiet my mind and to quiet the internal dialogue because when our minds are overactive, we tend to be self conscious in our interactions with each other and that's not optimal to a deeper connection. Type of connection that we need to feel more connected to other people so we need to find ways to quiet that internal dialogue: meditation, yoga, labyrinth walking, whatever it is.

MS. MCGRATH: How can you love people who say disrespectful things and stubborn in their ways? Is this an individual process or something that should be taught in order to build a more loving community?

DAVE MCGRATH: Well, I think that love can coexist and often does coexist with pain and hurt, but that doesn't mean that it should be confused as being part of love so that while you'll see pain and hurt at times when love is present that doesn't mean that pain and hurt are elements of love. I don't think that they are, but if you think about deeply loving somebody that you haven't seen in a while, we miss that person and we sometimes thinking about that feeling as an ache or pain or hurt that we feel and the longing for the person so in that way those feelings of pain and hurt coexist with our feelings for love for that person with that particular moment is distant. I don't think that acts of violence and abuse are parts of love. I think they are antithetical to love.

MS. MCGRATH: In a loving society, what does justice look like to you? How do you differentiate between equality and equity?

DAVE MCGRATH: Well, when I think about a just society I see a society in which fairness is paramount, kindness is paramount and when I think about principles of equality and equity I distinguish between those two things because while they are similar I don't think they're the same thing. Equality is treating everybody the same and equity I think of more as providing times additional opportunities to certain people. So for example, if you think about the Americans With Disabilities Act, the ADA, and people with disabilities you may have a policy that allows all people to enter a place of public accommodation, but that doesn't mean that a person in a wheelchair is going to be able to gain entrance to the place even though that person has equal opportunity in some sense. If you build a ramp and provide special access to that person, I think of that more as equity. Doing something additional to allow that person who's coming from a different place to really enjoy the same privileges and opportunities as others. And you can think about that individual example in other contexts and so if you think about the movie "Lion", which you recommended to me, thank you that was a terrific movie, and in particular the brother who really was struggling with some particular challenges based on the place that he had come from which isn't illuminated in the movie but we can imagine, so in some ways he had equal opportunity as the protagonist in the movie. They were both raised at some point forward in the same home in New Zealand, but because they didn't come from the same place they didn't really have the same opportunities, not really. The other brother, I think equity would provide more, maybe more nurturance maybe more help for him so he might enjoy life, and his expression of life to the fullest if he were given special nurturance and opportunity. I'm drawn more to equity I guess than principles of equality knowing that individually and collectively those of us who maybe have more advantages need to be more giving to those with fewer.

[Sound bite of music]

MS. MCGRATH: Do you think it is okay to have an attachment to consumerism and material goods, and feel happy when you get things?

DAVE MCGRATH: I guess it's okay and we all maybe derive some sense of satisfaction from materialism. I don't think any of us particularly in this society are immune from that, I wouldn't confuse that though with love or happiness. I cannot think of anything that I've ever owned or any possession that I've ever gotten that has resulted in any kind of enduring satisfaction. I think that those are fleeting instances of satisfaction or even happiness.

MS. MCGRATH: Lama Rod Owens said to our class, "figure out what your work is and go do it", and people have different personalities of course, so do you think some people are more suited for different types of social justice

work or do you think if it matters enough to you, you just have to put yourself out there even if you are reserved and it feels uncomfortable?

DAVE MCGRATH: Yes, I do think that certain people have certain gifts and abilities that are more suited to different aspects of the social justice cause than others. We have individual differences and pretending that we don't I think isn't helpful, but I also agree that we all have our place and there are all things that we can do and we all have talents and abilities different but valuable, and so we all have a responsibility to use those talents and abilities to overcome reservations that we might have, redescence that we might have to be uncomfortable in, ways that are beneficial for our own growth and then beneficial for society. It might be that social justice takes the form of something that is very public and in other ways it can be something that's more private. So I read a book recently called *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson and the book talks about and centers around one person in particular down south who is wrongfully convicted and on death row and Attorney Stevenson's efforts to free him to gain justice for him. And while Attorney Stevenson, for example may be ultimately the one who is very public about the cause, maybe even arguing in the supreme court, he still has people behind the scenes writing briefs doing legal research; all important parts of and necessary parts of that cause for justice. Not all of them equally public but all of them very valuable.

MS. MCGRATH: Do you think of forgiveness as being more beneficial for yourself or for the person who hurt you?

DAVE MCGRATH: I don't think of it as being more one way or the other. I think of forgiveness as being equally beneficial to both the person being forgiven and the person that's doing the forgiving. I think it's essential to both people.

MS. MCGRATH: Would you ever ask for space or a break from someone you love? You are being pulled in many directions which can be draining, but I wonder if you would set boundaries and tell people "no, not right now" when people ask for your help. It is important to care for yourself too.

DAVE MCGRATH: This is interesting because I haven't really reflected too seriously on this but if I were to it wouldn't surprise me if I actually have an easier time setting boundaries with those people that I love. It's those who I am associated with, acquainted with but not in a deep loving relationship when they ask me to do something even if I'm overloaded at the time with other things, I find it difficult to say no. I want to please them, I want to help whatever the cause is, and I have some difficulty setting boundaries. I think when you're with those with whom you are in a loving relationship you are more used to, at least I am, setting reasonable boundaries with each other and respecting those boundaries. I do think it is critical for us to do that. If you think about caregivers of all sorts, a more extreme example would be a caregiver family member whose working in a hospice type situation with somebody who is terminally ill. Those kind of situations illustrate I think particularly the importance of caregivers taking time for themselves, replenishing their stores of compassion and energy and empathy all of which is important not only for themselves but for whom they are caring.

MS. MCGRATH: Do you think it is hard to have self confidence today since people take it as a judgement when it is actually their weakness? Is self love misunderstood because so many people are lacking it?

DAVE MCGRATH: I think there may be some confusion abounding, regarding self love and self confidence. I don't think of self confidence or self love as flashy or showy, I think of it as quiet, humble secure. I don't think that truly self confident people who feel a sense of self worth and self love independent from any extrinsic approval. I think that they derive their sense of worth and love intrinsically and when you're able to reach that place you don't need the approval of others in order to feel that, and I think the flipside of that is that when you crave extrinsic

approval and you're showy in your outward appearance of confidence there's a lack of authenticity in that, and I think people pick up on that and they perceive that insecurity that is just beneath the surface of the showy confidence, and I don't think people are attracted to that the way that they are attracted to quiet humble secure confidence.

MS. MCGRATH: When people we walk by for example glare at us, why do you think we automatically think it is something we did when maybe they are thinking about something completely different or having a bad day?

DAVE MCGRATH: I think this goes back to our comment about internal dialogue and our sometimes excessive inward focus and so when we're walking around in our lives and 80-90% of the thoughts we have are self directed, it's not surprising to me that when we catch a glance from somebody or are trying to interpret somebody's comment or body language, which may have nothing at all to do with us and everything to do with them and whatever their experience is at the moment or the moments leading up to it, that we misperceive that as somehow the result of something that we've done or some attitude that they have toward us when in fact it may not have anything at all to do with that, so I think it's part in parcel with being excessively inwardly focused.

MS. MCGRATH: Do you think you need to love yourself before you can love the community? What do you do for yourself and your own well being?

DAVE MCGRATH: My mother, your grandmother told me 25 years ago or so "no matter where you are, there you are" and I always thought that that was a profound bit of advice and essentially what she meant was that until you love yourself, until you've done some self exploration your level of awareness and your level of happiness, your ability to care for other people is all going to be impeded and so the real discovery, the real adventure starts at home. It starts with each one of us and it's inward and we can travel the globe and we can see interesting things and meet interesting people, but our ability to fully be immersed in those experiences and to give of ourselves as part of those experiences is going to be adversely affected if we don't first fully understand ourselves. I don't think of the mind and the body and the spirit as separate, I think of them as integrated. I'm imperfect but when I am spending sufficient time to care for myself, I am praying, meditating, spending sufficient quiet time, to connect with myself, physically I'm exerting myself at different times, I'm spending time in nature, when I need to be alone I take time to be alone and when I need to interact with others and to be social, I take time to do that and when all of those things are balanced, I feel good and strong.

MS. MCGRATH: Do you think love ultimately triumphs?

DAVE MCGRATH: I do. I think that if you look at the arc of your own life, as I look at the arc of my own life, it hasn't been all good and it hasn't been all loving entirely but it has been overwhelmingly loving and overwhelmingly good, and I think that if you look over the arc of people's lives individually and as a society love is, to the extent that there is a battle between love and whatever it's opposite is, hate, I think love is dominant, has been, and is now and will forever be dominant over hate. The press and the media might have you believe otherwise because they seem to be excessively focused on sensationalizing and entertaining and focusing on negative aspects of human behavior but there are countless examples even in the most oppressive places on earth where love abounds, and I wish that more of those examples were published and shared and those stories of love, empathy, compassion that really are countless and limitless in our world would receive more light and more illumination so that all of us would understand that. It doesn't mean though that there aren't threats to love, there are threats to love and it isn't just hate and violence, I think that there are real threats to love like apathy, disconnectedness and I don't know that technology is helping us to connect in a more significant way or to get us to feel more deeply towards one another, in fact I think it may be having the opposite affect and so there are threats to love: apathy, disconnectedness, hate, violence, so we need to remain vigilant about those threats and if you think about Stevie

wonder's song, "Love's in Need of Love Today" that's a call to action, that's a call to mindfulness about love and so we can't be apathetic and just assume that we can do nothing, have no role or responsibility in perpetuating love. We all have a role and a responsibility to perpetuate love, and it requires each one of us to act in a loving, kind, compassionate way and I guess to educate others about that.

MS. MCGRATH: Thank you for sharing your ideas and being here today.