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*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

*1 Corinthians 13:4-8a*

Over the years I had come to believe that love comes in many layers. To me, love was a complicated puzzle that I needed to solve before going on missions. Going into Peru, I thought I understood love. After all, I had experience both giving and receiving it. Secretly, I even thought I was pretty good at loving people. It was not until I got to Pucallpa that I realized how wrong I was. Everything started out great. I was pumped and excited to be there. But as time passed, it became increasingly difficult to love the people, both the Peruvians and my teammates. Sometimes it was that people's hearts were so hard that it was impossible to penetrate their walls. The more I tried to love, the more disappointed I was when nothing happened. Sometimes, I did not *feel* like loving. It became tiring to love and I felt drained of my energy. Yet, I would be so frustrated that I could not to love more. Why was it so difficult to love? I had an idea but it wasn't until my birthday that I actually confronted the problem.

As the last notes of "Happy Birthday" were sung, I knew I would be asked to come into the middle of the circle to be prayed for. As I made my way into the middle I had to wonder. These people, the *jovenes* and most of the missions team, had only known me for three weeks. They didn't know what I was struggling with or what was in my heart. They knew nothing of my past and only got a small glimpse of who I am today.

What could they possibly pray for? Why would they want to? But as the *jovenes* and my teammates prayed for me, the realization hit me like a freight train. I was floored to the ground, tears of shame and thankfulness flowing freely down my face. I had been so selfish. These people knew exactly how I was feeling and yet they were still able to love me. I knew they were just as tired but they prayed with such fervor and passion. It was so unnatural that I knew it had to be supernatural. I had been so blind! It was such a simple concept I had known in my head but had not reached my heart. I was burning out because I was trying to love with *my* love instead of *God's* love. I had gotten so caught up in trying to love others that I had stopped allowing myself to receive God's love. Instead of receiving from God, I had tried to fill that need through the love of others. How could I think human love would be sufficient enough to help me to love others? God's love is everlasting, infinite, and the only sufficient source because God *is* love.

I no longer view love as being complicated. On the contrary, I believe it is quite simple. As I love God and receive His love, loving others will come naturally. It is so very straightforward yet so difficult not to obscure with my own sinfulness. Loving with God's love is one of the hardest lessons I have ever learned but it is one that I am excited to continue learning.