

## Analyzing What “Love” Means in Popular Music

As a society we seek to be entertained by others through music, TV, and movies. That entertainment inundates us with unhealthy notions of “love” to the point where we think that is the normal and true meaning. Here is an example of a love song that conveys a misunderstanding of “love”. I chose this popular and catchy song for two reasons. First, my daughter Cara had used it for her morning alarm so I heard it often. Second, the lyrics make a point about how people don’t appreciate their own beauty, which is a far too common problem. The song is "What Makes You Beautiful" by One Direction. The song was released in September 2011 and became the most pre-ordered Sony Music Entertainment single in history. It reached number one on the UK Singles Chart. It has more than half a billion (600 million!) YouTube hits. Below are the lyrics with my annotations in bold blue preceded by my initials “CJF”.

### "What Makes You Beautiful" – by One Direction

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJO3ROT-A4E>

You're insecure,  
Don't know what for,  
You're turning heads when you walk through the door,  
Don't need make-up,  
To cover up,  
Being the way that you are is enough,  
Everyone else in the room can see it,  
Everyone else but you,

**[CJF: This verse stresses a most common occurrence among young people especially females (it is also common among adults but the song is targeted to the young). That is, self-doubts and insecurities tend to overwhelm individuals to the point where they fail to embrace their beauty. When your own beauty becomes discounted in your eyes and mind, it allows even more self-doubts and insecurities to take root. This is a valuable point the song makes...but then loses it in subsequent lyrics.]**

[Chorus]

Baby you light up my world like nobody else,  
The way that you flip your hair gets me overwhelmed,  
But when you smile at the ground it ain't hard to tell,  
You don't know,  
Oh, oh,  
You don't know you're beautiful,  
If only you saw what I can see,  
You'd understand why I want you so desperately,  
Right now I'm looking at you and I can't believe,  
You don't know,  
Oh, oh,  
You don't know you're beautiful,  
Oh, oh,  
That's what makes you beautiful

**[CJF: The chorus line “I want you so desperately” is the very common and very incorrect confusing of neediness with love. People who have desperate neediness will believe and say they are “in love”. “I love you so much it hurts.” Possessiveness, dependency, and neediness have nothing to do with love of the other. “Joy in the existence of” is not possessive, needy, or dependent. Think of a friend you know that you like but wouldn’t say you love. If that person said to you, “I want you so desperately”, would you be less comfortable being with them? What if instead they said, “I find great joy in your existence” would you find that flattering? Being loved is warming, being desperately needed is unappealing.]**

The last lines in the chorus, “You don’t know you’re beautiful, that’s what makes you beautiful” may sound sweet but they are not accurate. People who know they are beautiful, convey their beauty in the way they carry themselves, in their speech and manner. They convey it without arrogance. Confidence and humility is beautiful. Shyness can be endearing but if it comes at the cost of confidence, it can be frustrating. A person who cannot accept their beauty, even while frequently being told of it, will eventually no longer be told it. It will seem pointless even counterproductive to continue saying something that is never believed. ]

So c-come on.  
You got it wrong.  
To prove I'm right  
I put it in a song.  
I don't know why  
You're being shy,  
And turn away when I look into your eye-eye-eyes,

[Chorus twice more]

**[CJF: If shyness prevents someone from looking you in the eyes--even turning away from you when you look in their eyes--that creates a distance between you. That's not beautiful. Notice that this is a love song that never uses the word “love”.]**

Here is a 1977 song by the “soft rock” group named Bread. One can like songs even while thinking the lyrics are trite (the Beatles “I Want to Hold Your Hand”), unrecognizable (songs in another language), or dumb (like this song). The melody, the music, the voices, the flow and enunciation of words (regardless of their meaning), harmonizing (among voices or between voices and instruments) all can outweigh the lyrics. Read these lyrics and see that what is being described is neediness, not love. “I can’t live without you” is not an expression of love but the cry of a low sense of self person looking to define themselves through another.

### **"Lost Without Your Love" – by Bread**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duvUutB\\_TWU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duvUutB_TWU)

Lost and all alone  
I always thought that I could make it on my own  
But since you left I hardly make it through the day  
My tears get in the way  
And I need you back to stay

I wander through the night  
And search the world to find the words to make it right  
All I want is just the way it used to be  
With you here close to me  
I've got to make you see

That I'm lost without your love  
Life without you isn't worth the trouble of  
And I'm as helpless as a ship without a wheel  
A touch without a feel  
I can't believe it's real  
But someday soon I'll wake  
And find my heart won't have to break

Yes, I'm lost without your love  
Life without you isn't worth the trouble of  
All I want is just the way it used to be  
I need you here with me  
Oh darling, can't you see  
If we had love before  
We can have it back once more