

What is Love? - Deacon Stephen Ulm (06/24/2017)

Love is not simply stating that you love someone while they are standing in front of you. When you say I love you to someone, that person may be able to discern if your statement is in fact true. Do you love someone only when you see them? When they are in the Church?

Love is being able to genuinely care for someone's well-being, even when you don't see them, or when they don't do the things you want them to do, or they act in a way that you don't necessarily approve.

The Ancient Greeks had Seven (7) different words for Love.

1. Eros - Sexual Passion - Erotic

Named after the Greek god of fertility, and it represented the idea of sexual passion and desire. But the Greeks didn't always think of it as something positive, as we tend to do today. In fact, Eros was viewed as a dangerous, fiery, and irrational form of love that could take hold of you and possess you.

2. Philia - Brotherly Love

Philia concerned the deep comradely friendship that developed between brothers in arms who had fought side by side on the battlefield. It was about showing loyalty to your friends, sacrificing for them, as well as sharing your emotions with them.

3. Storge - Natural Affection - Empathetic/Understanding

It is the common or natural empathy, like that felt by parents for offspring. Rarely used in ancient works, and then almost exclusively as a descriptor of relationships within the family. It is also known to express mere acceptance or putting up with situations, as in "loving" the tyrant. This is also used when referencing the love for one's country or a favorite sports team.

4. Ludas - Playful Love

referred to the affection between children or young lovers. We've all had a taste of it in the flirting and teasing in the early stages of a relationship. But we also live out our Ludus when we sit around in a restaurant bantering and laughing with friends, or when we go out dancing.

5. Pragma - Longstanding Love

This was the deep understanding that developed between long-married couples.

Pragma was about making compromises to help the relationship work over time, and showing patience and tolerance.

6. Philautia - Love of Self

The clever Greeks realized there were two types. One was an unhealthy variety associated with narcissism, where you became self-obsessed and focused on personal fame and fortune. A healthier version enhanced your wider capacity to love. As in: that if you like yourself and feel secure in yourself, you will have plenty of love to give others.

7. Agape - Unconditional Love - Love for Everyone

This was a love that you extended to all people, whether family members or distant strangers.

Agape love is always shown by what it does. The love of God for man and of man for God. God's love is displayed most clearly at the cross.

Love is complicated, Love can be hard. If Love was always easy, there would have been only one word for it.

So, how can we show love for one another?

1. Proverbs 17: 27-28 - Listen Without Interrupting

27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

When you listen to one another, you better understand where the other person is coming from, and can gain a better understanding of how they feel. Hearing is not the same as listening.

2. James 1: 19 - Speak Without Accusation

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

The tone in which you say something (How you say something) is as important as the message you wish to convey. When you speak from love, it can be stern, but should be done in a way that the person you are speaking to doesn't feel like you are attacking them.

3. Proverbs 21: 26 - Give without Sparing

26 He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Also known as "You can't take it with you". Stop being greedy. When you are in Love, you think about others and their needs, and if you have what they need, give it to them.

4. Colossians 1: 9 - Pray Without Ceasing

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Praying for each other is an action of love. Praying shows that we care enough for that person that we are asking God to watch over them. Praying allows God to give us a better understanding and appreciation for that person.

5. Proverbs 17: 1 - Answer Without Arguing

1 Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.

Loving someone doesn't mean that you won't disagree with them. We need to be able to communicate with one another, still being able to disagree, but without being argumentative. Arguments can lead to resentment.

6. Ephesians 4: 15-19 - Share Without Pretending

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

When you do something for someone, but you aren't doing it in the right spirit, you gain nothing. You might as well not have done it at all. Don't expect reciprocation. When you do something for someone, don't expect that person owes you anything, don't expect that because you did this, they should do that.

7. Philippians 2: 14-15 - Enjoy Without Complaint

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Nothing brings down good spirits like a complainer. Negativity breeds negativity. Enjoy the good things in life while they are happening.

8. 1 Corinthians 13: 7-8 - Trust Without Wavering

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Trust is the ability to believe that the other person will do what is in your best interest, even when they are absent. Without trust, there cannot be love. We must learn to mutually trust each other. Think of trust with respect to faith. We have faith that the Lord will provide for us, we trust in the Lord that this will happen.

9. Colossians 3: 13 - Forgive Without Punishing

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Forgiving is not the same thing as forgetting. When you forgive someone, this means that you release that person from the responsibility of their actions. When you truly forgive someone, you don't constantly remind that person of the wrong they did to you. This does not mean that you will grant them easy access to do that same act against you, but you no longer hold them responsible for their past. Christianity does not mean you are a doormat.

10. Proverbs 13: 12 / Ecclesiastes 5: 4-5 - Promise Without Forgetting

12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

When you make promises to do something with or for someone, you should follow through, without having to be reminded. Failing to live up to your word can lead to loss of trust, and eventually loss of love.

Additional Biblical Definitions of Love – New Testament

Luke 6:31

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Luke 6:35

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

Romans 12:9

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Romans 13:10

Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

Mark 12:31

The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

1 John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.