

## **February 11, 2024 - The Four Loves: Unconditional Love (Agape)**

Scripture Passage: 1 John 4:7-21

1. Agape love can be described as the unconditional, gracious, sacrificial love of God that we are meant to share with others. How does this understanding of love differ from other forms of love?
2. While modern movies tend to focus on romantic love, can you think of an example of Agape love found in a movie?
3. Read 1 John 4:7-8. Many Christians find these verses to be a key passage in the Bible. Do you agree? Why or why not? Do you think this passage can be misapplied?
4. Read 1 John 4:16. How does this verse shape our understanding of spiritual growth? How does this passage lead us in further growth?
5. CS Lewis writes about Agape love as the love which works for the good of another person. What does it mean to love someone well when the recipient does not want our love? Do we truly know what's best for someone else?

6. Can you describe a time when your practice of love toward another person grew more prominent over time?
7. How does perfect love cast out fear?
8. What hinders us from living with Agape love?

### **Going Deeper**

9. Describe a time when you received unconditional love from someone. How did this experience affect you?
10. How have you experienced Agape love in other areas of love, like friendship or romantic love?

## **February 4, 2024 - The Four Loves: Romantic (Eros)**

Scripture Passages: Song of Solomon 8:6-7;

Ephesians 5:21, 25

1. Do you remember when you first “fell in love.” How did that relationship develop?
2. How does romantic love grow over time?
3. How do you define and pursue eros love in a culture that often emphasizes romantic relationships but may not fully recognize the diverse ways individuals experience love?
4. Love is the most powerful force on earth. How can love best flourish and grow in relationships?
5. Romantic love is more than feelings. Love is a verb and requires action on our part. How can couples best express romantic love to their spouse or significant other?
6. Men and women are “wired” differently. Each has different needs. How can couples be responsive to the needs of their spouse or significant other?
7. Song of Solomon gives a graphic description of the passionate nature of romantic love. How can

couples maintain a passion for their spouse over time? What are some specific spiritual practices that can be employed to keep the romance strong in marriage?

8. The book of Ephesians talks about members of a Christian household being “subject” or “submissive” to one another out of reverence for Christ. Marriage is a mutual “partnership” between two very different people. How can couples grow in their partnership with one another?
9. What advice would you give to a couple that is planning on getting married? What can you share with them that would be helpful in building a strong marriage?

### **Going deeper**

10. For those who are single or single again, how do you navigate and express your desires for romantic connection in a healthy way?
11. For those currently not in a romantic relationship, how can self-love and self-care contribute to a healthier approach to eros love in the future?

## **January 28, 2024 - The Four Loves: Friendship**

Scripture Passage: 1 Samuel 18:1-5

See also Proverbs 18:24

1. When you were growing up, what were your most meaningful friendships like?
2. Have you experienced situations where friends influenced you positively or negatively? If you are willing, describe those experiences.
3. In his book *The Four Loves*, author CS Lewis says that real friendship is mostly forgotten in modern society, especially when compared to earlier times. Do you agree that true friendship is hard to practice today? If so, what makes true friendship difficult?
4. Lewis makes a distinction between companions and real friends. What's the difference—in your opinion—between acquaintances (like social media "friends") and those with whom you share genuine, deep connections?
5. The story of David and Jonathan is part of a larger story of political turmoil and the emergence of the true king. Their story depicts true friendship in a tense, pressure-filled situation. Jonathan sacrifices his claim to be king in order to help David ascend in power. How does true friendship entail sacrifice?
6. How much do you prioritize spending quality time with friends?

7. How have your friendships helped make you a better person?

### Going Deeper

8. Has a friend ever had to challenge you, hold you accountable, or show you tough love?

9. Sometimes friendships change and even come to an end. If certain friendships have ended in your life, how have you processed these endings?

## **January 21, 2024 - The Four Loves**

Love is the highest calling of the Christian life. Jesus called us to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

This week, we will reflect upon Affection (Storge) love. This is the most basic of loves. Examples are familial love and affection between two very different people (like Michelle Obama and G.W. Bush, see C.S. Lewis, "The Four Loves," page 59).

A great Biblical example is that of the affection Ruth had for Naomi.

Suggested Scripture: Mark 12:30-31; Ruth 1:6-18

1. Why is it so difficult to love well?
2. Jesus gave us the greatest commandment, which is to "love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second is like unto the first: love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31). Is it possible to truly love our neighbor unless we first love ourselves?
3. Ruth and Naomi were totally different people, yet they shared a deep and abiding affection for one another. (Ruth was married to Naomi's son. He died, and Naomi's husband died as well.) See Ruth 1:1-5.  
Ruth and Naomi shared "Storge" love for one another. How did that affection evolve despite their cultural differences?
4. Think of a person that you have much in common with. How did your affection grow for that person?
5. Can affectionate love grow for others, even when we are completely different? Feel free to offer an example of "Storge" love in your life.

6. One of the famous verses in the Ruth story is Ruth 1:16:  
“Where you go, I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.” Ruth’s love and affection grew for Naomi as they did life together. How can you grow in your love and affection for other people? How can the church help you in developing new relationships? In deepening existing ones?
  
7. We live busy lives, and sometimes tasks take precedence over people. How can we reprioritize relationships with people and realize that’s what matters most?
  
8. Think and commit to pray this week about how you can take a step forward in deepening your relationship with another person.