

- ***READ I Corinthians 16:13,14*** This upcoming Thursday will mark the day that many people in this country and across the world will celebrate love in the form of Valentine's Day. (You're welcome to my fellow guys with significant others!) While there is nothing inherently wrong with celebrating such a day on an annual basis, there are some who would take issue with Valentine's Day.
 - One common complaint is that Valentine's Day is only encouraged for the economic value that comes with it. Some see this day as a purely materialistic day, and the reality is that there is at least a little substance to this claim. Consider that over the last 6 years there has only been one year in which consumers did not exceed their spending from the previous year. In 2014, consumers spent \$17.4 billion, and that has grown to the \$19.6 billion that was spent last year in 2018. The average consumer spending during those 6 years was \$18.7 billion annually. (thebalance.com) Those are some massive numbers that are spent in the name of the Day of Love.
 - There is also a common complaint (mostly from the ladies) that guys are only ever willing to show affection and love on Valentine's Day. Sure they are appreciative of what is done on that specific day, but how many of us have either heard it said or said ourselves that the love should be seen all year long? How many of us guys go all out this one time during the year in order to buy some good will for the rest of the year? Again, there might be at least a little validity to the complaint.
 - The reality is that we, as a society, might very well spend far too much money celebrating the holiday of Valentine's Day. We might very well be guilty, especially us guys, of not being as romantic and loving as we ought to be. These things could very well be true, and if the ladies really wanted to get us...they would remind us often of this verse here in **I Corinthians 16:14** where Paul clearly tells us that everything we do has to be done in love.
 - However, that brings up a question of great importance...What exactly is love? It cannot be denied that to love is important because God Himself is described as being love (**I John 5:16**), but we first have to figure out what exactly it is. We're by no means the first people to ask this question. Song after song has taken the deep dive into love, and one of my favorites was performed by the group "Foreigner", and with a quick tip of the cap to them I'd like to echo their famous line. I, too, want to know what love is. In this famous song, the man singing in the song believed that the woman he was singing to not only wanted her to show him, but he had full confidence that she could show him true love. We, too, want to come to know what love is this morning, and I am so happy to know that we have someone who we can have full confidence in is able and willing to show us exactly what love is and the impact it should have upon us in this life. Of course, the one who is able to show us love is our great Father in heaven who, again, is the very essence of love. Let's begin by looking into the Bible and the languages that it was originally written in that will help give us insight into the different types of love that exist.
- I. 5 different words are translated "love" in the Bible and in the original languages.**
1. **AHAB** (Hebrew): intense close & emotional bonds.
 1. If you're like me then you saw this word and immediately thought of the wicked King of Israel who was named Ahab. I can't think of anything concerning this man that would make love come to my mind, but that is simply a coincidence because my research showed me that Ahab's name means something more along the lines of "uncle", "brother", or "father." Nonetheless, this Hebrew word that is translated "love" in the Old Testament can describe a variety of different kinds or degrees of love, but it generally refers to an intensely close and emotional bond. Most often the meaning of that type of word can be determined by the context of what is taking place.
 2. It is used to describe Abraham's love towards his son Isaac (**Genesis 22:2**), Isaac's love for his son Esau (**Genesis 25:28**), and Jacob's love towards his son Joseph (**Genesis 37:3**). The same

word is also used to describe romantic love such as that which was expressed between romantic partners. It is the word used to describe the love between Isaac and Rebekah (**Genesis 24:67**), Jacob and Rachel (**Genesis 29:18**), and even Samson's love for Delilah (**Judges 14:16**). It is also the Hebrew word that was used to describe deep love that men should have for God and fellow man. It is the word used to describe the love that we have for God that consists of our heart, soul, and might (**Deuteronomy 6:5**). It is the love that we are to have for our neighbor. (**Leviticus 19:18**) It is the love that we have even for ourselves when we are committed to gaining the wisdom of God. (**Proverbs 19:8**) I don't consider myself overly-learned in the original languages at all, but the use of this single word in the Old Testament is vastly different from the New Testament and 1st century because there are at least four different words that are translated love, but that in and of themselves are known to describe different types of love.

2. **EROS**: romantic or sensual love

1. This Greek word finds its origins in Greek mythology. The Greek goddess, Eros, was the goddess of love, sexual desire, physical attraction, and physical love. In Roman mythology, Eros' parallel would have been Cupid. This word would have been quite commonly used within the first century vernacular because sexual promiscuity was rampant even in that society as it is today. In fact, it is the origin of our English word "erotic."
2. From what I could tell in my reading and research, by the time of the New Testament writings the word was nearly eradicated except amongst the most debased of society. However, in previous centuries the type of positive and pure love described by *eros* could be found within the writings that we know as the Song of Solomon. That entire writing speaks about the deeply personal and romantic love found between husband and wife. That type of physical love is the type of love that is under consideration in **Hebrews 13:4**.

3. **STORGE**: Familial love... "natural affection"

1. This type of love is the natural love that relatives and kinfolk would have for one another. This is the type of love that we would expect to be natural between parents and children, brothers and sisters. This is the type of love that could be used to describe the love that was present between Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.
2. Interestingly, the word *storge* does not appear in the Bible by itself. Instead it is found while being used in compound words such as *astorgoi* which can be found in **II Timothy 3:3** where Paul says that evil men that Timothy will face will be "unloving" and *astorgous* which is found in **Romans 1:31** and is also translated as "unloving." *Philostorgos* is another compound word including *storge* that is found in **Romans 12:10** and is translated in the NASB as being "devoted to one another in brotherly love."

4. **PHILIA - PHILEO - PHILADELPHIA**: love, care, respect, & compassion for fellow humans

1. Out of all of the Greek words that I would think we would be most familiar with, it certainly would have to be this group of words which is where the city Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, got its name from. This understanding of the meaning of the city's name really says it all for this type of love is the neighbor sort of love, care, respect, and compassion that God expects for us to have towards all other people that we might come across in our lives.
2. While these three words are three distinct words, there is much about their meanings that overlap. Each of these words contain the root word *phil* which means love. It helps to make up numerous words within our English language such as philosophy (the love of wisdom) and philanthropy (the love of fellow man). This love towards our fellow man is the love that Jesus said would prove to everyone that we are His disciples. (**John 13:35**) That root of *phil* is found in the word *philostorgos* that we have already mentioned as being present in **Romans 12:10** and is translated "devoted to one another in brotherly love."

5. **AGAPE - AGAPAO: highest form of love — fully sacrificial love**

1. This type of love that is found in the Bible is the height of love that can be experienced in this life. It is the love that God Himself feels for us. It is God's immeasurable, incomparable, and unconditional love that He has for us. It is the type of love that we learn from God when we consider what He was willing to do in order to redeem us from the bondage of sin and death. It was His *agape/agapao* love that caused Him to send Jesus to die for sinners. (**John 3:16**)
2. This type of love is the love that God commands that we have towards our enemies. (**Luke 6:27**) This differentiates this type of love from the *phileo* type of love because that type of love is often based upon the good interactions that lead us to *phileo* love. *Agape* love demands that we love others regardless of what they have done to us. Again, the love that God had for us when He sent Jesus for sinners (**Romans 5:8**) is the type of love we are talking about as being the highest form of love we all should be striving to achieve within our hearts. When we read our Bibles, we only see this one word "love", but I hope we have come to recognize that love can mean different things depending on the word it is translated from and the context we find it in. So what then are we to do with this knowledge of love? We hopefully have a general idea of what love is, but what does love look like? What does it demand of us?

II. **Love originates in our hearts, but it must also be expressed in our actions.**

A. **It can be easy to drift to extremes when discussing the subject of love.**

1. Usually those who are the least experienced with love think of it as simply being those warm and fuzzy feeling that fill our bodies the first time we hold hands with a crush or the first time we kiss after a date. We might think of love as simply being this internal feeling, but the reality is that love is so much more than a feeling. Love isn't simply something that we feel, but it is supposed to be something that we do. This isn't to say that we don't feel love deep within us. In fact, I would argue that it is from deep within us that love originates. It originates in the heart and soul which seems to be why it is that God tells his people to be sure that they love Him with all of their heart, soul, and then comes the might/strength. (**Deuteronomy 6:5**) It is also very important to notice that directly following this strong admonishment is the taking of this love and using it to push these people to make sure that they are teaching their children they are raising.
2. I can't think of any other place in the Bible where all of this is more aptly shown than where we began our assembly in **I Corinthians 13**. I appreciate this text so much because it shows us the two different sides of love and the way they go together.
 - a) **I Corinthians 13:1-3** make it crystal clear that our hearts must be properly into whatever it is that we might be doing in the name of love. We could all of the "right" things humanly possible such as speak with tongues, prophesy, move mountains, feed the poor, and even give our bodies to be burned, but if we have not been properly motivated by our love for God and others then Paul says that we have basically wasted our time and energy.
 - b) He then follows that up very quickly to balance things out by showing that yes we need to have the proper heart, but that this loving heart should move us to behave and live in a certain way. The qualities listed in **I Corinthians 13:4-7** are descriptions, but these descriptions are supposed to describe the type of person we are and heart we have by the deeds that we carry out because of that love. We need to feel true love, but we also have to be willing to show that love through what we do.

B. **We must find the proper connection between what we feel and what we do.**

1. It truly is a strenuous process to train ourselves to make sure that we are properly balanced in our motivations and the actions that come as a result of our motivations. Some of the saddest verses that can be found within all of Scripture are actually recorded from Jesus's sermon on the mount in **Matthew 5-7**. Specifically in **Matthew 7:21,22**, "Not everyone who

says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but He who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'" It seems pretty obvious to me that these people had a deep love for God within themselves for they wanted to do things in the name of the Lord.

2. However, they had failed to consider that love demands more than just some sort of actions. It demands proper action. *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"* These words of Jesus simply go on to further solidify that that our love for God must not just move us to do something, but it ought to move us to do the proper something. There was a reason why Jesus said plainly, *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."* (John 14:15) John would again go on to later write in I John 5:3, *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."* The feelings of love...good and great! The actions motivated by love...good and great! However, we must always keep in mind that two love of God will only lead us to the place where we will serve Him as He would have us to serve Him.

III. Our failure to love others shows God that we don't truly love Him.

A. Which type of love are we supposed to have?

1. We are often very general in the way that we use the word love. How many of us are guilty of telling our spouse that we love them as we get off the phone and then we turn around and talk about how much we love some insignificant something that is within our lives. Obviously we don't mean that we have the same love for stuff that we have for people or even God, so it is good to be able to differentiate the types of love that exist, so that we can understand how it is that we are to love.
2. For example, we are not supposed to have *eros* love with all people because that is a special type of love that is only supposed to be reserved for the marriage relationship. Additionally, it might be that we simply can't possess *storge* love because we don't have close relatives in which we could love in that way. There might not be a single person in our lives that have earned the *phileo* type of love that is reserved for a true brother or sister who has our backs. The only love that I can find that we are to truly have at all times is that unconditional love for God and our fellow men who were all made in the image of God. *Eros, storge, and phileo* types of love all have a place in our lives given the proper context, but regardless of our station in life, God demands that we practice *agape* love in everything that we do, and He doesn't demand such without having good reason, and that reason can be found within the Bible.

B. God demands that we practice true love towards Him and our fellow man.

1. The entire letter of I John makes it abundantly clear concerning the importance of love, but it also is very clear about what will happen if we reject love for others. *"The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."* (I John 4:8) If we fail to be a people that are cultivating a true sense of love in our hearts that will be expressed in continual loving action then we will be a people who fail to be in fellowship with a loving God. The only way that we can be in fellowship with God and abide in Him is if we love one another. (I John 4:12)
2. The love that we have for others is directly correlated with the love that we have for God. It is impossible for us to lessen in our love for others while growing in our love for God. John seems to agree with this being the case based upon I John 4:20, *"If someone says, 'I Love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother who he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."* This isn't simply a suggestions, but again this is a commandment given to us by God. *"And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."* Our love for others is often the proving ground to show whether or not we truly have a deep abiding love for God.

So what is love? I think we have seen this morning that it is kinda a loaded question because the Bible talks about love in different terms. However, what should be more simple are the clear commands to follow. We are to be a people who first and foremost love God, but then we ought to give every effort to make sure that this confessed love is actually within us, and that can be done through our actions. Let's all enjoy a fun day of love and chocolate, but let's first and foremost remember the love that we have for God and the overwhelming appreciation for the people He has blessed us with in this life that we have come to love so very much. Love is a feeling, yes, but it is also clearly evidenced in our actions in all that we do, and may it be done to the glory of God alone..