

What is love:

The definition of love in Merriam-Webster is: affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties. maternal love for a child. (2) : attraction based on sexual desire : affection and tenderness felt by lovers.

Concepts:

For many people the concept of love is based on what has been seen or read in books, television, Movies, or what has been explained by family and friends. When we start to feel love manifest in our lives it is often influenced and compared to these concepts that we see in society. Love feels like a beautiful emotion that fills us with happiness, comfort, a sense of belonging and feeling of completeness. While all of these feelings can certainly be encompassed in love, there is also a far deeper biological effect of love that can help us understand God's insistence that we live our lives through love.

Reality:

Love is crucial for survival in both this terrestrial life and in our spiritual life. Paul tells the church in Corinth that his work is meaningless without love.

1 Corinthians 13 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3** If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Paul is imploring the church in Corinth to walk in love even stating that his life is meaningless without love. Paul will continue in the chapter by saying the greatest tool that you can possess as a believer is LOVE.

Types of love

Eros: Desire, Attraction, Physical Love

Derived from the name of the Greek God of attraction, and Desire, Eros is the love formed between a couple initially based on attraction. That attraction eventually forms into desire and that desire can move towards stages of lust. This is a love that is permitted in the bible only between the union of a married couple. Paul warns the church in Corinth that they should enter into marriage to avoid lustful desires (1 Corinthians 7: 8-9). However, within the marriage this love is condoned by God and encouraged to create a strong bond between a couple.

There is perhaps no better example of this than the words of Solomon

Proverbs 5: 18-19 May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.**19** A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her bosom satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 Live happily with the woman you love through all the meaningless days of life that God has given you under the sun. The wife God gives you is your reward for all your earthly toil.

Agape: God's Immeasurable, perfect love

Agape speaks of a divine love that is without exception and in the purest form. This is a sacrificial love without limits. **For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).**

Storge: Familia love

Derived from the Greek word for "family love", Storge refers to the love from a parent to a child or the love between siblings.

Philia: Friendship love

Derived from the Greek noun Philos meaning dearly loved or beloved. This refers to the love between friends and close relationships.

Philostorges:

This is a hybrid form of both Philia and Storge and refers to a love so strong between brothers that you become family. The translation in Romans 12: 10 is referring to Philostorge.

Romans 12:10 In-Context Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

The Biology of Love:

Now that we understand the types of love, it is time to understand what love can do to us and what the lack of love can cause us to feel.

"Love is deeply biological. It pervades every aspect of our lives and has inspired countless works of art. Love also has a profound effect on our mental and physical state. A 'broken heart' or a failed relationship can have disastrous effects; bereavement disrupts human physiology and might even precipitate death. Without loving relationships, humans fail to flourish, even if all of their other basic needs are met (Carter, Porges, 2012)."

One very important factor to remember is that love is a function of the brain and not the heart. People thought for centuries that love was a function of the heart because of the way your heart reacts by pumping faster in situations of attraction, desire or even friendship but the truth is that love is a function of the brain.

What does love do to us

The front of your brain is home to the prefrontal cortex that governs your rational decision making but below the brain is your hypothalamus that controls lust, attraction and attachment. The hypothalamus can disrupt the prefrontal cortex allowing our desire for love to cause us from thinking rationally. Paul has already recognized this when he implores the church in Corinth to marry first before giving over to their lust. In other words, listen to your prefrontal cortex before you act with your hypothalamus.

The Hypothalamus : Sends the signals to produce testosterone and estrogen for Lust Sends Dopamine, Serotonin, and Norepinephrine producing attraction Sends Oxytocin and Vasopressin producing attachment

Dopamine: released when we experience things that feel good such as intimacy but also spending time with friends and family

Norepinephrine: released when there is attraction making us act giddy, excited, and euphoric but also serves as a blocker for appetites and can cause insomnia.

Serotonin: lack of serotonin can lead to loss of appetite and desired mood

Oxytocin: Produced in large quantities during intimacy, but also attachment

What does this mean to us?

Paul tells us that the most important tool to have is love but the process of how we love can vastly affect who we are and how we act towards others. The dopamine that we produce in our brains can provide euphoria and attraction but can also be over-pushed causing the want to commit adultery, use irrational behaviors and extreme bouts of jealousy. Oxytocin can help us feel strong bonds; it can also be over elevated and produce prejudice. Studies have shown that uncontrolled arousal can turn off areas of our prefrontal cortex (decision making) if we choose to ignore the signals. These ignored areas are critical thinking, rational behavior, and self-awareness (Harvard Medical, 2017).

Dr. Wu (2017) a contributor for Harvard explained: Love can be both the best and worst thing for you – it can be the thing that gets us up in the morning, or what makes us never want to wake up again. I'm not sure I could define "love" for you if I kept you here for another ten thousand pages. I can help Dr. Wu define love:

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a - "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

Here is a response to Dr. Wu's comment from a student: "I often wonder if we were created In a God likeness and image. And he loved us first. That's how we know love. That perhaps that was his purpose. That we would seek him . Because he is the only one that can truly fulfill that void and reveal the true meaning of his divine grace."

Can we exist without love in our hearts

The very simple answer to this question is “NO.”

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The words “command” and “must” state that love is a necessity in our walk with God and none can know Jesus without love in their hearts.

1 John 4:16 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

What to do when we are feeling unloved

1. Pray, God is always listening and is actively loving you
2. Surround yourself with positive people in positive places (church is a great start)
3. Avoid self-medicating (drugs, alcohol, gambling and other vices produce the levels of dopamine and oxytocin that can drive depression
4. Seek help from trusted friends and professionals

How do we obtain the love that God requires from us

Above everything ever taught to you, everything you have believed and everything you hold as truth, this must be the most important, “You have always been loved and will always be loved. Before you took your first breath, God’s love was on you and around you. Through your hardest, loneliest moments God has been holding you closer than you could ever be. Our job is not to obtain an already existing love but to perpetuate that love o to others and show it manifesting in our lives.