

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

Biblical Love

I Corinthians 13:4-7

1 Love can mean so many things to you. 2

Do you love your wife the same way you used to love your girlfriend? 3 Do you love your children the same way you love your wife? How about loving strangers?

How about hamburgers? 4 Do you love people the same way you love hamburgers?

Do you know what love really is? What kind of love would God be pleased with? His love; surely! 5

To be a successful lover, you need to find out what God's love is and then, duplicate that! 6

I. What is Love?

What is love? ⁷

In July 1959, the Playmates summed it up this way, “What is love? Five feet of heaven in a ponytail. The cutest ponytail that sways with the wiggle when she walks.” ¹

The present world’s concept of love is that it is simply a romantic attraction. They fall in love!

She has a pretty face, a beautiful figure and a sweet personality. She enjoys waiting upon him and is quick to learn his desires.

He is tall, dark and handsome. He has drive, is a natural leader, commands attention and people seem to respect him. Yet he is gentle and courteous to women. He makes her laugh.

At the end of the Hallmark movie they come together, kiss under the mistletoe, and that’s that! Happy ever after! Right?

¹ “What is Love?”, The Playmates, July 1959.

Most of the time, after a while, the couples start to tire of one another. Many of the characteristics that appealed to each of them are now beginning to pull them apart. About half of them decide to pick up their toothbrush and split in search of someone else.

Did they make a mistake and choose the wrong person? Likely they simply came into a relationship armed with the wrong expectations. ⁸

The Greeks had a word for it. In fact, they had four words for it. The ancient world's concept of love was wrapped around these four concepts. ⁹

All of these words had a common idea; **giving of yourself to satisfy someone else's need. The four words embed the motivation for that act. ¹⁰**

The first word ² expressed the idea of **giving of yourself to get satisfaction in return. It was the primary word for sexual immorality. We get our English word “erotic” from this word. You might use**

² ἐράω.

this word to say, “I love hamburgers!” This word is not found in the New Testament. ¹¹

The next word ³ is **giving of yourself to your marriage partner**. It was a congenital obligation or duty. Marital love in ancient times may or may not have involved genuine affection. This word is also not in the New Testament. ¹²

The third word ⁴ means **giving of yourself because of a relationship you choose**. This is the word used to show genuine physical affection. It is used several times in the New Testament and is used there sometimes as the word “kiss”! The object of this love is special to the one who gives it. We get our name “Philadelphia” for the city of “brotherly love”. ¹³

The final word ⁵ is **giving of yourself to satisfy someone else’ need simply because the need is there!**

¹⁴ This is God’s love for you!

³ στέργω.

⁴ φιλέω.

⁵ ἀγαπάω.

This is the love that gives sacrificially to satisfy someone else' needs. It is given regardless of how attractive they are. It is given regardless of how deserving they may be. It is given generously without any expectation of receiving anything back in return.

This is the love God wants you, His child, to have for everyone else! In fact, He commands it! ¹⁵

II. How is This Love Expressed?

How is this love expressed? This is where our Bible passage for the day fits in. ¹⁶

It's from First Corinthians, chapter 13, verses 4 through 7. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ¹⁷

In verse 4, love is expressed through **patience**.⁶ ¹⁸
This word means literally to be slow to express your temper. When one trial after another keeps hurling its fiery arrow do you complain, “Why me, Lord?” ¹⁹ Or, do you raise your shield of faith and attack with your sword of the Spirit? ⁷ Remember verse 7 here, **Love endures all things!** ²⁰

Next, in verse 4, love is expressed through **kindness**.
²¹ Kindness ⁸ literally means “serviceable”: ²² like going the extra mile. ⁹

King Philip of Spain was probably the most devout religious person of his day. But he was responsible for the Spanish Inquisition murdering thousands of his subjects believing he was serving God! ²³ You may be zealous for your faith; but your faith must be balanced with love! When that woman was caught in

⁶ μακροθυμέω.

⁷ Ephesians 6:16-17 - In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

⁸ χρηστεύομαι.

⁹ Matthew 5:41 - If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

the very act of prostitution would you have had her executed? Or would you have said with Jesus, **Go and sin no more!** ¹⁰ ₂₄

Again, in verse 4, love is expressed by **not being jealous**. Are you jealous of your wife or girlfriend? That's not God's love! Are you jealous of someone else's successes? I was!

It had taken me an incredibly long period of time to graduate from seminary. I was the pastor of a small church, taking a light academic load each year at school, so I could minister to my church family.

One day I loaded my small youth group into my car (it was that small!) and took them to our church's national youth convention a couple hundred miles away. It was a wonderful trip for us.

The keynote speaker for the convention was a former friend of mine. We attended the same classes in college! But he became a tremendous success at the

¹⁰ John 8:1-11.

ministry he chose to devote his life to. I felt like I was stuck professionally.

I found myself sulking during one of the main convention sessions and felt confused. Then, it dawned on me. I was jealous of him! He was successful; I was not.

Beware of attitudes. That was not God's love! ²⁵

Finally, in verse 4, love is expressed by **not bragging** or being inflated with your own importance. How humble are you, really? What do you think about your own abilities and achievements? ²⁶ Romans, chapter 12, verse 3, **For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.** ²⁷ Your prayer needs to not only be, "Lord, build me up and encourage me" when you need it; but also, "Lord, help me to look at myself realistically"! ²⁸

Now notice in verse 5, love is expressed by acting graciously and **not insisting on your own rights**.²⁹ The word “grace” in the Bible¹¹ is showing favor to others. It’s not being selfish.

When you make decisions, is it to please God and to help others; or to advance your own interests? Where does my freedom in Christ end and my responsibility to Him begin?³⁰

I am responsible for what others think of my Christian faith! The Book of Romans makes a big deal out of this! The churches at Rome were mixed congregations with some Jews and folks from non-Jewish backgrounds. Some tension had been caused by the diversity of their religious cultures. There appeared to be an insensibility about the kosher practices when they would get together for meals. The Jews wanted to eat strict vegetarian which caused tension with the people from non-Jewish

¹¹ χάρις.

backgrounds. The apostle had to address this issue here. ³¹

Romans, chapter 14, verse 15, **If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.** ³²

Romans, chapter 15, verse 1, **We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.** ³³

Also notice Romans, chapter 14, verse 21, **It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.** By sacrificially giving of yourself to accommodate your brother in the Lord, you can actually “give” till it hurts! (Or give till it feels really good!) Be willing to bend a bit to satisfy your brother’s desires. ³⁴

Also, in verse 5, love is expressed in **not being easily angered.** ³⁵ Do you have a quick temper? You need

God's love to fix that! ³⁶ God would have you be **slow to become angry**. ¹² ³⁷

Then, in verse 6, love is expressed by rejoicing **when truth** rather than falsehood **is proclaimed**. ³⁸

Finally, in verse 7, love is expressed in believing in, hoping in and enduring **the cares** and **burdens** of others. ³⁹

Let's do more than just talk about love. If you are sincere about pleasing God start doing something about it!

Love without expecting love in return and you'll be loving the way God loves!

Husbands love your wives! Parents love your children! Families, love strangers into the kingdom the way God intended.

Love not just in words only, but in actions!

<http://www.biblelifemessages.org>

¹² James 1:19 - My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.